

Including Non-Dominant Languages in Educational Policy Change

Key Actors and Agency



Edited by
Kimmo Kosonen
and **Carol Benson**

Bilingual
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Including Non-Dominant Languages in Educational Policy Change

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We dedicate this book to all champions of non-dominant languages – teachers, storytellers, authors, linguists, advocates – whose commitment creates educational opportunities for young learners and gives them a voice in their own lives.

We honor the memory of Barbara Martin Napanangka, tireless promoter of Warlpiri language and culture and esteemed contributor to this book.

Contents

Contributors	ix
Introduction to the Volume: Background to the Framework, Key Concepts, a Meta-Level Study of the Authors and Summary of the Chapters <i>Carol Benson and Kimmo Kosonen</i>	1
1 Towards the Inclusion of Non-Dominant Languages in Education: Analyzing Trajectories of Policy Change, Key Actors and Agency <i>Kimmo Kosonen and Carol Benson</i>	14
2 An Actor-Focused Approach to a Theory of Change Supporting Multilingual Education in Cambodia <i>Jessica Ball and Mariam Smith</i>	40
3 Why the Top Needs the Side: The Interplay of State and Non-State Actors in Bringing in (and Keeping) NDIs in Thailand's Classrooms <i>Mirinda Burarungrot and Kirk R. Person</i>	60
4 The Revolving Door of Agentive Spaces for Change: Analyzing Trajectories of Change in Timor-Leste's Multilingual Education Program <i>Melody Ann Ross and Kerry Taylor-Leech</i>	82
5 The Dual Role of Ethnic Basic Education Providers as Above and Below Actors in the Quest for Multilingual Education in Myanmar <i>Molly Kay, Non Sorn and Sam Marip</i>	103
6 Teacher Agency and Synergistic Actions Among the Top-Side-Bottom Actors in the Philippines <i>Maria Mercedes Arzadon and Fernigil Colicol</i>	127
7 Tamazight in Moroccan Education: The Importance of Teacher Perspectives <i>Franklin A. Eneh</i>	146

8	The Role of <i>Militants</i> in Advocating For a National Bilingual Education Policy in Senegal <i>Erina Iwasaki</i>	166
9	Implementing the Kazakh Language Education Policy in Kazakhstan: Policy Change from Below and the Side <i>Gabit Zhumatay</i>	186
10	Language Policy and Practice in Two Endangered Languages in China: Change from the Side Without Civil Society Institutions? <i>Stephen A. Bahry</i>	204
11	Warlpiri Schools in Australia's Northern Territory: Sustaining Change from Below with Championing from the Side <i>Emma Browne and Barbara Martin Napanangka[†]</i>	227
12	Intercultural Bilingual Education in Chubut, Argentina <i>María Pía Maití</i>	250
13	Reconsidering Unified Kichwa as an L1 in Ecuador: Change from the Side and Below <i>Nicholas Limerick</i>	270
14	Possible Worlds: Concluding Thoughts on Temporalities and Non-Dominant Language-in-Education Policies <i>Kara Brown</i>	289
	Index	300

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Editors

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Molly Kay (pseudonym), MA, is a multilingual education adviser for language education programs and policy. She has worked with NGOs and INGOs to strengthen community-based, non-dominant language education programs and policies in Southeast Asia, primarily Myanmar. Collaborating directly with communities, she has implemented large-scale program evaluations, as well as impactful curriculum development and teacher training workshops in basic and higher education. Her work also includes designing opportunities for students to access education scholarships.

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Barbara Martin Napanangka[†], BEd, was a leader in Warlpiri education who began her career as a literacy worker in the 1980s in the Central Australian communities of Lajamanu and Yuendumu. She graduated from the Bachelor Institute Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (RATE) and became a senior teacher and cultural advisor for Yuendumu

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Introduction to the Volume: Background to the Framework, Key Concepts, a Meta-Level Study of the Authors and Summary of the Chapters

Carol Benson and Kimmo Kosonen

Background

This book is designed to explore language-in-education policy change, specifically the integration of learners' home languages in multilingual education (MLE), a theme with which both of us have enthusiastically engaged as researchers and technical consultants throughout our careers. When our scholarly pursuits first led us to collaborate decades ago, we found resonance between Kosonen's experience in Southeast Asia – and more broadly in the Asia and Pacific region – and Benson's work in Sub-Saharan African and Latin American countries. Since then, we have each expanded our regional emphases, continuing to find common ground as well as noting where each local and regional context provides unique lessons to be learned. Annual conferences of the Comparative and International Education Society have provided not only meeting spaces, but also ways to reflect on our ideas with diverse scholars working in similar spaces. Many of those scholars are esteemed contributors to this book, joining some of Benson's former (post-)graduate students from Teachers College, Columbia University, and colleagues from universities and international organizations who we have met through our work. We are particularly pleased that both our field and this book are including more and more members of non-dominant language communities as respected research collaborators and authors.

This is our third book on the theme of Language Issues in Comparative Education. In the first, whose sub-title was *Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Non-Dominant Languages and Cultures*, we brought together chapters on language-in-education policy, community and parent voices, classroom and teacher voices and researcher analyses to explore issues of language(s), culture(s) and power in education (Benson & Kosonen, 2013). That collection of chapters drew linkages between the experiences of Indigenous people of the Americas, multilingual Africans and ethnolinguistic minority people in Asia by discussing efforts to bring non-dominant languages into education. We framed the collection by setting forth a set of definitions and concepts in the field of multilingual education as they applied to the Global South, particularly in middle- and low-income multilingual countries. We also introduced the innovation of providing each chapter abstract first in a non-dominant language, exposing readers to the written form of languages that have been overwhelmingly neglected in education (much less in publishing) – and demonstrating that scholarly literature can indeed be written in these often minoritized languages. We continued that practice in our second edited volume, whose sub-title was *Policy and Practice in Multilingual Education Based on Non-Dominant Languages* (Benson & Kosonen, 2021). We framed that collection of chapters, which addressed policy, implementation and research methods in multilingual education, with our characterization of the state of MLE in the context of educational development.

The central challenge of this third edited volume is to critically examine the framework that we developed and presented in the second volume (Kosonen & Benson, 2021: 25–56) and test its usefulness in describing and analyzing language-in-education change processes. We continue to expand on the concept of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ change processes (e.g. Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003) and even the idea of ‘meso’ or intermediary levels (e.g. Chua, 2018; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), which the contributors of this volume explore with us in diverse ways. Our own experiences of working with change agents at different levels of government, civil society, educators, ethnolinguistic communities and international agencies have allowed us to identify key actors and actions from above, from the side and from below that have contributed to policy change. The scholars and practitioners in this volume examine contexts with which they are familiar to help us look for patterns of influence and examine which change trajectories seem to be most successful in sustaining pro-MLE policies – and why. They also help us question our categories, particularly the side level, and further develop the framework.

Our contributors use the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework as it was designed, for analyzing language-in-education policy change over time in any particular country or context. The timeline is determined by the researcher based on salient actions taken or events that occurred

in the history of the policy change, meaning that the analysis can begin at any arguably important time and continue to present. Policy change from above involves actors at central government agencies or legislative bodies whose actions manifest as official written policy statements or decrees; change from below is initiated by grassroots organizations or non-dominant language communities whose actions usually take the form of demands or challenges to the status quo; and change from the side involves technical and/or financial inputs from national or international actors working in implementational spaces like teacher training, language development and curriculum development. We have noted that the boundaries between side actors and those from below or above may be fuzzy at times, and researchers may choose to identify those actors in different ways depending on their understanding of the context. We find that the framework benefits from the porous boundaries between levels and from the breadth of the side, both of which allow researchers the flexibility to view actors on the ‘below’ or ‘above’ edge of the side, or of any level. Overall, we continue to find that the three levels of the framework allow researchers to map trajectories of change to predict which combinations of actions will have the best chance of success in terms of large-scale implementation and sustainability. We provide further details about the framework in Chapter 1.

Key Concepts

We have given considerable attention to defining the key terminology and concepts in past volumes; here, we use the same terms, offering only concise definitions of key concepts. To ensure consistency – and to facilitate comprehension among an international readership – all contributing authors have been asked to be consistent with these, or to explain if they diverge due to specificities of their contexts or positions.

We retain the distinction between dominant and non-dominant languages. We have been joined by many colleagues in using the term *non-dominant language (NDL)* to refer to a language or language variety spoken in a given state that is not considered prominent in terms of number, prestige or official use by the government and/or the education system (Kosonen, 2010). These are the languages on which we focus efforts to improve educational access and quality. Referring to languages as non-dominant helps us to avoid referring to languages as ‘minority’ when they may in fact be spoken by large numbers of people, or ‘minoritized’, which does not fully describe the power relations in effect. We also use non-dominant rather than ‘ethnic’, which is used inaccurately across Southeast Asia as if only non-dominant people have an ethnicity. The term *dominant language (DL)*, by contrast, refers to a language that has official status and high prestige and is spoken by dominant group members (Benson & Kosonen, 2012). Although some scholars refer to dominant languages

as ‘international’, that descriptor obscures embedded power relations – particularly its historical application to European languages with colonial legacies, while seldom to languages such as Standard Arabic, Mandarin Chinese or Russian. To make these power relations explicit, we prefer the term *internationally dominant*.

The concept of *multilingual education*, or *MLE*, has gained more use in policy and practice debates over the past few decades. Within the Asia and the Pacific region, first language- or L1-based MLE is commonly referred to as MTB-MLE, an acronym for mother tongue based multilingual education (Kosonen & Benson, 2013). This concept underscores the pedagogical significance of learners’ first or home languages – recognizing that an individual may possess multiple such languages. Building on Skutnabb-Kangas’s (2000) seminal definition of *first language*,¹ we define an *L1* as a language that that one (a) has learnt first; (b) identifies with; (c) knows best; and/or (d) uses most. Some years ago, we added (e) speaks and understands competently enough to learn academic content at the appropriate age level (Benson & Kosonen, 2012). We acknowledge the inherent paradox in using L1 to represent what may be a repertoire of several languages, particularly in many contexts in the multilingual Global South; however, this term remains valuable for advocating MLE programs that leverage literacy and learning in at least one language in which the learner is strongest.

Both *L1-based MLE* and *MTB-MLE* have become umbrella terms encompassing any educational practice that commences instruction in learners’ home languages or in languages familiar to them. The principal advantage of such an umbrella concept is its capacity to unite researchers and practitioners worldwide under the premise of employing two or more languages in education, at least one of which is spoken and understood well by learners. However, the umbrella term also risks being applied to programs that do not incorporate the theoretically and empirically grounded elements believed essential for fostering learners’ linguistic and academic development. In some instances, the term is extended to initiatives that deploy regional or national languages that are not present in young learners’ repertoires – for example, teaching Kiswahili to non-Kiswahili speakers in Kenya – thus misrepresenting both the ethos and the requisite conditions for effective MLE.

We argue that a *high-quality MLE program* should follow these principles: (1) the deliberate and systematic engagement of learners’ strongest languages for literacy and content learning; and (2) the explicit instruction of one or more additional languages, with the goal of nurturing multilingual competence in speaking, reading, and writing (García, 2009). The sequencing and integration of languages within an MLE curriculum must be carefully designed to reflect contextual variables such as linguistic proximity – namely, orthographic, lexical and grammatical similarities – and the targeted levels of proficiency.

Although the practice of MLE programs may vary widely in form, they all have the underlying principle of affirming and building upon the linguistic repertoires that learners bring to educational settings, while simultaneously promoting literacy across two or more languages. Subsequent chapters in this volume illustrate a rich array of MLE practices in diverse sociolinguistic contexts.

Results of a Meta-Study on the Contributors to this Volume

Among the authors and editors who contributed to this volume, five are language and education specialists who are members of non-dominant language communities that include Warlpiri in Australia, Kazakh in Kazakhstan, Jinghpaw and Mon in Myanmar and Subanen in the Philippines. The other 17 are scholar allies of those communities, including four nationals (from Argentina, Australia, the Philippines and Thailand) and 13 internationals (representing Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, Sweden and the United States). In an effort to explore contributors' experiences and motivations more deeply, Benson conducted a meta-level study involving individual or combined co-author interviews using a remote communication platform.² Our contributors were asked two main questions: one, how they became interested in language issues in education; and two, how they would position themselves as actors in the framework, whether acting from above, below, the side or somewhere else.

All of the authors from non-dominant language groups (NDL) shared how they had experienced education and – despite the challenges – had become champions for their communities. They described early or late experiences of discrimination by non-community members and/or the education system; for example, one 'felt like an alien' upon moving from home and school life in the L1 to university in the capital city in a dominant language. Another said, 'My interest comes from my own experience...because I am one of the victims of this system'. Many felt very lucky to have gotten a formal education; one author from an Indigenous background benefited from a family precedent set when the oldest sister asked to stay in school instead of being married. Many also found their way to this point by teaching and working on the linguistic development of their own L1s; as one author put it, teaching an L1 writing course for teachers was 'where I found [my language]'.

Many of the national (nat'l) and international (int'l) scholar allies described moments of discovery and often early exposure to multilingual experiences. One became interested in language issues through teaching foreign and heritage language learners, while another was stimulated by hearing a parent speak an L2 in public. One discovered a heritage language through grandparents and found ways to self-teach. Another regretted not having learned a heritage language

from parents: ‘I had this moment where I realized, wow, I’m [NDL], but I don’t feel connected to my own language’. Many were exposed to multiple languages; for example, another whose family did not teach the heritage language was taught three other (foreign) languages as a child. Two individuals who had experienced multiple home-school mismatches with ‘no accommodation’ had found their own strategies and motivations for successful language learning. Finally, a few of these contributors discovered ‘language nerd’ skills and interests as they developed their multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Regarding how the contributors position themselves in the above-below-side framework, there were interesting trends, as shown in Figure I.1.

The most salient finding here was that most of the contributors identify themselves as side actors, including all of the members of non-dominant language communities, all of the national scholar allies and all but three of the international scholar allies. Most were clear about the actions they undertake from the side, which are consistent with the way we framed their different roles (Kosonen & Benson, 2021):

- (NDL) ‘I’m trying to... advocate and provide some technical expertise’.
- (Nat’l) ‘I’ve got a very different positionality and skill set from my colleagues... who have invested a lot in [teaching] me [the L1 and culture]’.
- (Int’l) ‘I mean, we made some things happen... Most of it was advocacy... [and] we were the links to money’.

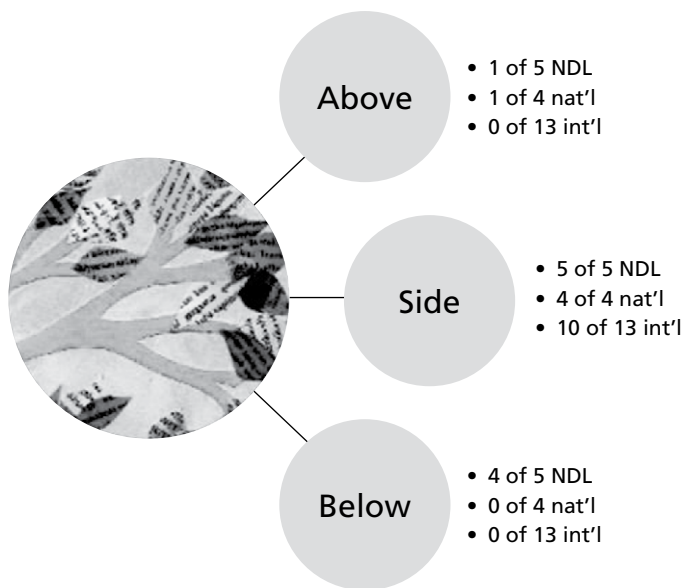


Figure I.1 Contributor positionality according to the framework

However, it was also clear from their responses that non-dominant community members see their roles as multiple. One described working at the side as teacher educator and at the grassroots level (below) as a member of the Indigenous community. As two others pointed out:

- ¬ (NDL) ‘Very low, middle and very high but not top; I wear different hats to accomplish different things’.
- ¬ (NDL) ‘Below: I feel it’s part of my life. Side: As an academic. I have a double identity’.

One national author also claimed multiple roles: ‘You cannot do effective above and beside work on MLE without a sense of kinship with the grassroots’.

Interestingly, some international authors resisted labeling themselves as side actors, or were uncomfortable with that positionality. One pointed out that not all side actors are the same; as an international actor coming from outside the formal education sector, the level of responsibility is different: ‘We are not duty-bearers’.

- ¬ (Int’l) ‘I was very much trying not to be [side]; I just wanted to help. What’s the most supportive stance that I can take’.
- ¬ (Int’l) ‘Not side [colonial]. I did feel I had a responsibility to be a voice for MLE’.
- ¬ (Int’l) ‘Even in my small capacity, I can be an ally... and a voice of change. I don’t necessarily fit a mold’.

Not surprisingly considering the aims of this edited volume, all of the contributors expressed their commitment to teaching, learning and using non-dominant languages in education. The way they express this commitment depends on their positionality:

- ¬ (NDL) ‘We are those who maintain the L1... As a speaker, it’s emotional’.
- ¬ (NDL) ‘Policies change [but] our brains are still not changing. We’re still trying to achieve... the same goal the whole time’.
- ¬ (Nat’l) ‘All this data collection from the side was informing that committee’.
- ¬ (Int’l) ‘The project would never have... happened if I hadn’t spoken [NDL] well’.
- ¬ (Int’l) ‘Researchers like me are playing a role from the side, letting the top and bottom levels know that there are people outside who are interested in their situation’.

In sum, this meta-study provided insights not only into the individual contributors to the volume but also into how they think about their

positionality. As one non-dominant language speaker suggested, it seems that actors working from below have more access to side actors than to those from above:

As a member of the Indigenous community, I strive that our collective voices will be heard by the side... and hopefully, when our voices are heard, we can actually make change.

Side actors appear to work in complementary ways to support actors and actions from below. If they are national-level ‘duty-bearers’, they do this in their institutional capacity as education officials, NGO members or academics, and may contribute to sustainability. If they are international actors, their roles may be less consistent but responsive to needs:

So, the side allows the ability to... once the task is accomplished, it is on to the grassroots or the national government. I see myself as just being the support that is needed at that time.

This meta-analysis demonstrated that multilingualism and meta-linguistic awareness are the norms for actors in language-in-education policy change. There is evidence that actors function at multiple levels, ‘jumping’ between and ‘sliding’ across levels (per Brown, 2021) as well as working at multiple levels simultaneously. Contributors’ comments provided insight into the emotional and identity-based commitments sustained by the actors from below, as well as the role of side actors as allies close to the grassroots and serving to link non-dominant language communities with actors from other levels.

Organization of the Volume

This volume has a total of 14 chapters in addition to this introduction. Chapters 2 through 13 cover situations from countries and contexts on four continents: Asia and Oceania, Africa and the Americas, respectively. Chapter 14 concludes the volume with a discussion of what these case studies contribute to our understandings of how policy change is enacted, by whom, when and how. In this section we briefly summarize the contents of each chapter and highlight some of the salient contributions they make to our exploration of language-in-education policy change using the above-side-below framework.

In Chapter 1, we build on our original framework as presented in Kosonen and Benson (2021), which served as the foundation for the national and sub-national case studies explored by the chapter authors. We include minor refinements and updates, which have been informed primarily by new insights gleaned from discussions at Comparative and

International Education Society conferences as well as from the current chapter authors. We also provide some advice on timeline development and add actors and actions at the different levels of analysis.

In Chapter 2, Jessica Ball and Mariam Smith analyze Cambodia's Multilingual Education National Action Plan (2014–2018), which promotes early-exit bilingual education for Indigenous children in five provinces. Using an actor-focused approach, the authors categorize and analyze the roles of various actors at community, middle and national levels, as well as from the side. They point out potentially interesting differences between side actors who are duty-bearers, such as education ministry actors, and side actors who have more of an advocacy role in supporting MLE. Ball and Smith highlight how change depends not only on the language policy itself, but also on the networks and motivations of specific individuals and groups. Interestingly, they turn the levels upside down by giving civil society and Indigenous actors a more prominent role in their analysis, making a significant contribution to how researchers could all be thinking. They argue that sustained support for Indigenous actors is essential for equitable, effective multilingual education.

Mirinda Burarungrot and Kirk Person's Chapter 3 traces evolving Thai attitudes toward ethnolinguistic diversity as a backdrop to understanding policy developments in multilingual education over the past two decades in Thailand. Focusing on individual 'MLE champions', the authors explore how certain actors went beyond their institutional roles to drive language-in-education policy change. The chapter's granular approach reveals the critical influence of these key actors in navigating political and institutional constraints. The chapter underlines the importance of collaboration between state and non-state stakeholders to support the use of non-dominant languages in education.

Chapter 4 by Melody Ann Ross and Kerry Taylor-Leech describes developments in Timor-Leste. Their chapter analyzes how colonial legacies and ongoing development challenges have shaped contentious debates over language and language-in-education policy in Timor-Leste. This case highlights how actors from the side and below were those who opened discursive space for the eventual emergence of the Multilingual Education Program. The authors argue that these actors have exerted major influence on policy trajectories. Though there is evidence of the interdependence of the key actors, the authors suggest that they may lack the interconnectedness needed for long-term sustainability and impact of multilingual education.

Chapter 5 by Molly Kay, Non Sorn and Sam Marip (all aliases to protect the authors from retaliation) explores the role of Ethnic Basic Education Providers (EBEPs) in advancing multilingual education across Myanmar, focusing on the Mon and Kachin communities. Applying Kosonen and Benson's analytical framework, the authors argue that

EBEPs have played the role of the below, top and side actors, depending on the situation, thus shaping both local education and national policy landscapes. The chapter also demonstrates how EBEPs collaborate with national and international NGOs while navigating complex political contexts. The chapter assesses their achievements and challenges, offering insights into the future direction of education in non-dominant languages in Myanmar.

Chapter 6 by Maria Mercedes Arzadon and Fernigil Colicol focuses on the critical role of teacher agency in implementing and shaping multilingual education policies in the Philippines. The authors place teachers firmly in the category of actors from below. They argue that teachers adapt official written policies to fit local contexts, and they may challenge rigid top-down directives through strategic engagement. Their effectiveness is shaped and may be constrained by their experiences, social status and available resources. However, many engage constructively with policy reforms, particularly in enabling environments like safe, collaborative school spaces. The chapter calls for greater inclusion of actors from below – especially teachers and school heads – in policymaking to ensure more context-sensitive, inclusive and effective multilingual education policies.

Franklin A. Eneh's Chapter 7 on Tamazight language education in Morocco takes the discussion from Asia to the African continent. His chapter examines Morocco's Framework Law 51.17. This law stipulates instruction in both Modern Standard Arabic and Tamazight, and the author analyzes its effect on policy change through the lens of 'Model 1: Change from above' from the framework. Eneh analyzes a set of in-depth interviews with primary teachers that reveal skepticism about the process of change, pointing to implementation gaps and insufficient teacher involvement in curriculum development and training. Resonating with the Philippines case in Chapter 6, Eneh focuses on teachers as actors from below who view the law as well intentioned but disconnected from classroom realities. Interestingly, Eneh shows how the policy change trajectory could be changed to a more effective model with increased teacher input as well as enablement and engagement of actors from below.

In Chapter 8, Erina Iwasaki explores how Senegal's current national bilingual education policy emerged through a mix of historical grassroots advocacy and the work of passionate side actors identifying themselves as MLE 'militants' who support the use of African national languages in education. She applies the above-side-below framework alongside other approaches to policy analysis, showing how persistent activism and advocacy have played a key role in language-in-education policy change in Senegal. These self-identified militants have challenged dominant narratives and built support for a bilingual approach using African languages alongside French. The Senegal case demonstrates

how sustained pressure from below and the side can over time reshape national language policy, directing it away from a monolingual dominant language focus.

Gabit Zhumatay's Chapter 9 turns the discussion to Central Asia and top-down policy change. The chapter shows how Kazakhstan's language-in-education policy, due to the legacy of the Soviet era, has historically been dominated by top-down control. However, actors from below and from the side were able to briefly influence policy change in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These efforts helped revitalize the Kazakh language in urban areas previously dominated by Russian. Nonetheless, state-driven trilingual language education policies since the mid-2000s have re-centered Russian and English, marginalizing Kazakh once again. The chapter critiques the enduring dominance of actors and actions from above and questions the long-term viability of Kazakh in the face of such policies. Zhumatay argues that nowadays the dominant languages are receiving more attention not only from above, but also from the side and below.

In Chapter 10, Stephen A. Bahry examines language-in-education policy change supporting endangered languages in northwest China, focusing on a 'change from the side' analysis using the Kosonen and Benson framework. The chapter shows how, in a context where civil society institutions are weak or absent, local government officials and agencies have acted like NGOs would act in other countries to support non-dominant languages. Bahry analyzes how top-down state policy, bottom-up community interest and institutional side-level actors have jointly contributed to the increased use of the Yughur language. He emphasizes that the side actors have been crucial in facilitating micro-level changes, even within a tightly controlled top-down political system. Bahry concludes that if the role of the side actors is strengthened, culturally supportive policies and national integration goals can coexist.

Chapter 11 by Emma Browne and Barbara Martin Napanangka explores how, despite an inconsistent and ambivalent top-down policy context, Warlpiri communities in Northern Territory, Australia, have remained strongly committed to teaching their own language alongside English in government schools. This chapter is creatively written to give each author a voice, alternating between Browne's scholar perspective and highlighting Napanangka's voice as a linguistic community member, teacher and advocate. The authors use above-side-below framework to highlight the important role that side actors play in working with grassroots actors from below to initiate and maintain language-in-education policy change towards using Warlpiri in primary education. The chapter shows that the interaction between actors from below and side levels is dynamic and cooperative, helping communities to push back against unfavorable policies, adapt when needed and actively promote non-dominant languages in education.

In Chapter 12, María Pía Maití explores progress in implementing intercultural bilingual education (EIB) in Mapudungun for Mapuche communities in Chubut, the province with the highest proportion of Indigenous people in Argentina. Using Kosonen and Benson's framework, she shows how side actors can take on different roles with varying levels of influence in implementing a national language-in-education policy that has already been enacted. In Chubut, the combined efforts of actors from below and local side actors – working together to engage with the Ministry of Education and to hold higher-level authorities accountable – have been essential to making EIB sustainable and effective. These coordinated actions are made possible by the flexible boundaries between actor categories (the 'jumping' and 'sliding' described by Brown, 2021), which allow for cooperation across levels. This bridging of gaps between grassroots and government actors has fueled legal action and helped move EIB forward in the schools of Chubut.

Nicholas Limerick's Chapter 13 explores the challenges and possibilities of teaching Kichwa, an Indigenous language in Ecuador. He examines how official language-in-education policies promote the standardized version of Kichwa, which often conflicts with the diverse language varieties that the speakers use. Limerick describes a participatory action research project undertaken with local educators to develop a heteroglossic textbook that includes heritage varieties, local registers and non-standard forms of Kichwa. This action from the side and from below responds to teachers' concerns about the rigid, monologic language ideologies promoted by above-level actors as part of the national bilingual education system. In this analysis, Limerick argues that the framework's categories of policy actors – top, side and below – are difficult to separate in Ecuador, as individuals often move between roles and influence policy from multiple positions (cf. Brown, 2021).

Finally, Chapter 14 is written by Kara Brown, our discussant, who draws on insights from the fields of anthropology, political science and comparative education to examine how the case studies presented in Chapters 2 through 13 engage with the above-side-below framework. She finds that they answer questions not only of 'where' and 'who' in unpacking their policy stories, but also with 'when' and 'how'. Brown posits that temporal-related inquiries are needed since MLE developments, as with other policies and politics, are processes involving legacies of the past, immediate challenges of the present and hopes for the future. Brown weaves each case study into a consideration of three temporal dimensions of language policy change – directional, agentive and spatial – which facilitate our ability to locate these policies over, in and through time. She offers reflections on research methodology inspired by the contributions, highlighting the challenges and the opportunities posed by their analyses. She concludes by outlining several

directions for future research that emerge from the insights gathered throughout the volume.

Notes

- (1) We consider this term to include first languages, home languages, mother tongues or other languages that learners use for communication in the home and immediate environment.
- (2) Interviews were recorded, transcripts were cleaned and key points and quotes were organized on an excel sheet to find key themes. Highlights were presented in our panel at the CIES conference in Chicago on 25 March 2025.

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1 Towards the Inclusion of Non-Dominant Languages in Education: Analyzing Trajectories of Policy Change, Key Actors and Agency

Kimmo Kosonen and Carol Benson

Setting the Stage: Towards Increased Use of Non-Dominant Languages in Education

In multilingual countries, decisions about the language(s) used for literacy and instruction in early education are crucial to ensuring both access and quality. Over the past 30 to 40 years, growing efforts have highlighted the potential of integrating learners' own languages into education systems, even as these systems often continue to privilege dominant national and international languages. Research has supported greater inclusion of non-dominant languages¹ in at least three ways: first, by articulating the theoretical foundations of bi- and multilingual education (MLE); second, by demonstrating improved literacy and learning outcomes in MLE compared to non-MLE programs; and third, by documenting successful implementation strategies across diverse contexts. In parallel, the field of language policy and planning (LPP) has examined whether and how languages and their use can be deliberately planned. Some scholars of LPP see education as an important component for language policy change.

The focus of this volume is to explore language-in-education policy change in a range of multilingual contexts where the use of non-dominant languages (NDLs) in education has been developed and increased. The analysis of each context is based on an analytical framework that we developed earlier (Kosonen & Benson, 2021). The framework is based on an analysis of three levels of actors and actions – above, below and

side – and an examination of the trajectories of change over time. In this chapter we further develop the framework based on lessons learned from chapter contributors as well as continued discussions with colleagues.

As an esteemed scholar of educational language policy and planning once pointed out, '[t]he major goal of policy research is to examine the historical basis of policies and to make explicit the mechanisms by which policy decisions serve or undermine particular political and economic interests' (Tollefson, 1991: 32). This set our empirical focus on the nation state, which is consistent with work that we and our colleagues have been doing to support multilingual approaches in formal education in a range of low-income countries. Meanwhile, this overarching focus on official or formal actors has, according to Cabral and Martin-Jones (2021: 3–4), 'meant that language policy processes at work on other scales were not given the same scrutiny'. Our framework was designed to address this important concern by calling attention to actions and agency at the grassroots and the side and how they interact with formal policymaking.

We hope that a useful contribution of this framework is thus to enable the comparative analysis of country-level or sub-national case studies (particularly in federal political systems) at all levels of actors, providing insights into the types of actions and trajectories of change that have produced sustainable policy development towards expanded use of learners' own languages in education. In each context, the framework allows us to examine which policy changes have come about, in what sequence and with the support of which agents. Using the framework to investigate policy in a range of low- and middle-income contexts, we have been able to establish its predictive value in determining trajectories that are more likely to lead to sustainable change.

The big-picture issues addressed by language policy change are many: the importance of decolonizing educational systems previously based on single dominant languages; the need for inclusion of all learners whether they enter school speaking those dominant languages; the push for universal access and improved quality of basic education; and the calls for providing foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. There is now greater recognition that learners' home languages play a key pedagogical role in offering quality education, but at the same time there is political ambivalence about how great a role they should be given, and at what level of investment. Meanwhile, political decisions continue to be made with little regard for what research shows about the important role of the home language (L1) in building reading, writing and thinking skills that transfer to additional languages in appropriately designed bi- or multilingual programs (e.g. Cummins, 2021; García & Kleifgen, 2018; Iwasaki & Benson, 2024).

Political decisions regarding public needs – or perceived public attitudes – have long been a focus of study. Some researchers still find the 'top-down' vs. 'bottom-up' distinction useful in language policy studies;

for instance, Goodman and Karabassova (2018) explore shifts in power dynamics in post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Ukraine, where state language policies are intended to balance Kazakh and Ukrainian, respectively, with Russian. However, the top-bottom binary has been challenged (e.g. Spolsky, 2009, 2018), prompting broader frameworks that include macro-, micro- and meso-levels (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Terms such as ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ can vary in meaning – micro, for example, may refer to individuals, families, classrooms or communities (Spolsky, 2018). Since not all LPP theory and research focuses on education, its terms and models are not always compatible with the needs of language-in-education policy researchers in the multilingual Global South or even in minoritized language contexts in middle- and high-income countries. However, the ‘meso’ level has long resonated with our thinking.

Based on our own experiences as actors providing technical assistance in low-income multilingual countries, we developed our analytical framework (Kosonen & Benson, 2021) to include a ‘side’ level of actors that contribute to policy change. Dutcher’s (2004) report on expanding educational opportunities for learners in linguistically diverse societies confirmed our thinking, as she proposed a third ‘side’ dimension of policy involvement. Zhao and Baldauf (2012) identify categories of individuals with expertise or influence (e.g. linguists, advisors, scholars, journalists) that fall outside the top–bottom binary and correspond with our conceptualization of side actors. Wiley and García (2016) introduce the notion of *de facto* planners – individuals with ‘disproportionate’ influence on policy interpretation and enactment – whose role parallels that of side actors in terms of positive influence. We conceptualize the side as actors who exercise their agency between the top and bottom levels of policymaking. In our view, the side includes people such as technical advisors and consultants, linguists and other academics, along with local and locally working international NGOs. In many contexts, these side actors serve as intermediaries between government agents who formulate top-down official policy and local actors who implement policy. We have found that individual agency at each level has often been key to policy transformation. An examination of the actors and actions involved in language-in-education policymaking reveals several mechanisms of change from above, from below and from the side. These allow us to theorize about which mechanisms, at which levels and in what sequence have the most potential for sustainability.

The Actors Influencing Change from Above, from Below and from the Side

To be able to identify the level or levels at which a language-in-education policy change is initiated, implemented or otherwise acted upon, it is essential to map the actors involved. The first step we took

in developing the original framework (Kosonen & Benson, 2021) was to define what we meant by actors from above, actors from below and actors from the side. In this section we review and expand on our definitions, then explore the degree of agency that individual and institutional actors may have at different levels, probing how much and what kinds of power they may wield in steering the change process forward. We conclude with some lessons learned about actor levels by applying the framework to real cases.

Defining the three levels of actors and actions

Actors from above include central government bodies, typically Ministries of Education, legislatures, presidential offices or ruling parties. *Actions from above* take the form of issuing formal policies, establishing national curricula, developing strategic plans, passing constitutional amendments and producing education-related legislation on behalf of non-dominant languages. Key individual actors from above hold positions with authority, giving them opportunities to initiate, carry out or follow through with language-in-education policies. At the same time, they often feel constrained by those who put them there, including constituents in the case of elected officials or higher authorities whose wishes they must carry out.

Of the three levels, the actors and actions from above are perhaps the easiest to identify because they involve the official or formal aspects of policymaking. Clear statements about the role of learners' home languages in education are often aspired to by actors working at other levels, so achievement of written policy is celebrated and recognized as a salient moment on a timeline. Unfortunately, evidence (and history) shows that written policy is not a guarantee of positive change unless a combination of elements is in place (see e.g. Bahry, Chapter 10, this volume). At least some of those elements need to come from below and from the side, as our analysis of different change trajectories will reveal below.

Actors from below are civil society groups such as local NGOs, ethnolinguistic associations, parent–teacher organizations, women's groups, religious bodies, literacy groups or cultural councils. These actors often share the community's non-dominant language and cultural heritage and focus their efforts on local schools or community-level education programs. *Actions from below* include organizing grassroots campaigns to support community members, advocating for Indigenous linguistic or land rights or conducting nonformal education programs. Key individual actors from below are respected leaders who advocate for the rights of their ethnolinguistic communities. Many start by working with or becoming linguists to develop writing systems, dictionaries, stories and pedagogical vocabulary in their own languages. Others work with or become teachers, local curriculum developers and textbook

authors and illustrators. At some point in their involvement, these actors become arguably the strongest advocates for L1-based multilingual education.

In developing our 2021 framework, we noted that the actors and actions from below were perhaps the least researched or least documented, at least in the published literature. In her review of the literature on MLE policy and practice in West Africa, Lazdowski (2015: 111) comments that gray literature is ‘overrepresented within [I] ndigenous scholarship’ due to political and infrastructural challenges, lack of financial or academic support and ‘linguistic isolation’ resulting from research journals requiring manuscripts in English or French. She concludes that there is a need for more ethnographic and participatory action research that highlights the attitudes and roles of stakeholders from what we call the ‘below’ level. We support that call, and in the meantime support efforts to co-publish with Indigenous scholars. In this volume, Chapters 5 (Jinghpaw and Mon in Myanmar), 6 (NDLs in the Philippines) and 11 (Warlpiri in Australia) represent collaboration between outside researchers and authors from NDL communities, the latter having self-identified as both side and below actors based on their current positions and continued group membership.

In our 2021 analyses, we neglected to consider the critical role of teachers as change agents from below. We are grateful to Arzadon and Colicol (Chapter 6, this volume: 127–128) for pointing out that teachers exercise agency by ‘seeking ways to understand how MLE and languages work, collaborating with stakeholders, engaging in advocacy, developing L1-appropriate materials and maintaining a positive attitude’. Eneh also sees teachers as exercising their agency from below in his analysis of primary teachers’ perspectives on Tamazight language-in-education policy in Morocco (Chapter 7, this volume).

We are also grateful to Ball and Smith (Chapter 2, this volume) for critiquing how our depiction of policy change puts community members – ‘including children, who are the intended beneficiaries of national policy, legislation, and the education system’ – at the bottom of the hierarchy:

Ideally, this schema would be turned on its head, positioning communities at the top and those elected or appointed to serve them at the bottom... We aspire towards a world in which leaders see themselves at the bottom of a social system, in service positions supporting the beings above them – in the community and the surrounding ecosystem. (Ball & Smith, this volume: 41)

We find their social justice perspective important, even if the LPP perspective of ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ on which we built the framework depicts actual power relations in an unequal world. We hope that shining

a research spotlight on the previously neglected level of actors working from below is one way to valorize the actors and actions they undertake to bring NDLs into education.

Actors from the side are those who provide the technical expertise and resources needed to put into practice the use of NDLs in education, whether at their own initiative, in response to a top-down policy decision or in collaboration with actors from above or below. They often serve to facilitate connections between the actors at the above and below levels, potentially improving communication and agreement across levels. In our experience, direct contact between above-level policymakers and below-level community groups is rare without side actors who can bridge the gaps. Nationally, side actors include, but are not limited to, academics, linguists, teacher trainers, school inspectors and other sub-national education officials, as well as local NGOs. Internationally, they include technical consultants, INGOs, UN agencies and donors. *Actions from the side* can take many forms such as designing and piloting MLE programs, coordinating linguistic development, supporting teacher training and placement, designing curriculum, producing learning materials and building institutional capacity. Side actors often conduct monitoring and evaluation activities and publish research on MLE implementation. They analyze key results such as learning outcomes to demonstrate how MLE improves educational quality and influence policy development.

In their analysis of the Cambodian context, Ball and Smith (Chapter 2, this volume) find the Kosonen and Benson (2021) definition of side actors overly inclusive because it includes actors from within and outside the formal education system. In their typology, side actors are individuals or groups who are not duty-bearers and thus not accountable for policy outcomes or costs, including foreign and local consultants, linguists, employers and INGOs offering technical or financial support for specific, time-limited tasks. In the context of China, Bahry (Chapter 10, this volume) also distinguishes between side actors, where ‘near side’ includes actors who advocate for local perspectives on language policy and practice from local positions like those of NGOs in other countries, while ‘far side’ refers to academic actors from other parts of China or from abroad.

Key actors and agency in context

What can be said about the mechanisms through which language-in-education policies have come about in different multilingual contexts? In this volume, we use the above-side-below framework to more thoroughly explore *key actors* or *agents of change* and their *agency*.

In our earlier work we used Smith’s (2015) definition of agency as the capacity and power of organizations and individuals to act in the world.

We think there is much more to say about both individuals and groups, not only those who promote change from the side, but also and perhaps more importantly those who engage in change from below.

In general, agency in language policy and planning (LPP) has emerged as a critical concept in understanding educational choices (e.g. Bouchard & Glasgow, 2018; Chua, 2018). Increasingly, agency is understood as multidimensional, extending beyond macro-level, top-down interventions to also include meso- and micro-level actors (Ali & Hamid, 2018). In this view, the effectiveness of language policy depends significantly on the capacity of actors at all levels to engage with and influence policy development processes. Understanding how agency is distributed and enacted across these spaces helps illuminate the mechanisms through which policy, including language-in-education policy, change occurs. As Glasgow and Bouchard (2019) note, agency in LPP unfolds across multiple levels, reinforcing the importance of examining how actors at various levels contribute to multilingual and other language-in-education policy change.

However, in examining the use of non-dominant languages in education in the Global South and in minoritized language communities in developed countries (see e.g. Chapters 11 and 12 on Australia and Argentina, this volume), the research literature has some missing pieces in terms of exploring agency at the grassroots and side levels in such contexts/situations. Some recent work highlights the importance of micro-level agency, especially among speakers of NDLs involved in multilingual education (e.g. Chimbutane, 2018; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014). In this volume, we build on their understandings by examining how various actors – including both individuals and organizations – exercise agency in shaping and implementing language-in-education policies.

Conceptualizations of agency in LPP remain fluid, with definitions varying across contexts (Glasgow & Bouchard, 2019). This variation makes sense as, according to Ahearn (2021: 278), ‘agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act’, meaning that cultural norms and attitudes underlie social actions. Meanwhile, these norms and attitudes need to be seen as operating within larger ideological and sociolinguistic contexts of language-in-education policy change – what Kosonen (2008) describes as language hierarchies shaped by globalization, regionalization and nationalism. *Globalization* has manifested itself in many parts of the world as pressure to learn and use of English as well as internationally dominant languages such as French, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. *Regionalization* has meant the increasing need to learn the dominant languages spoken by neighboring countries as well as languages of wider communication (LWCs). Regionally dominant languages such as Kiswahili, Mandarin Chinese and Russian and Standard Arabic, like internationally dominant

languages, often marginalize non-dominant language speakers by excluding them from educational and occupational opportunities. *Nationalism* in the form of monolingualism compounds this, as many multilingual states recognize a single official and/or national language, usually associated with a dominant ethnolinguistic group or the former colonial power, for official uses including education. *Localization* – the recognition, perception and promotion of non-dominant languages within their own communities – may emerge as a response to the pressures of dominant languages; however, aspirations for assimilation into the dominant society are also common, often paradoxically among the same communities.

How do stakeholders' attitudes related to language hierarchies play out? Paradoxically, language-in-education policy choices may offer symbolic recognition to Indigenous and other non-dominant languages while dominant languages still prevail in areas like teacher training and classroom practices. An over-emphasis on global, regional and even national languages leads to a monolingual *habitus*, where parents, teachers, education officials and policymakers share the unquestioned view that only one dominant language is important (Benson, 2014). This may lead stakeholders to ignore non-dominant languages completely in the classroom, demanding dominant language-only instruction or to adopt an 'early-exit' approach to multilingual education that rushes to 'transition' learners to exclusive use of the dominant language before they have developed a solid foundation of L1 skills. Altogether, the failure to challenge existing language hierarchies creates educational and economic advantages for dominant groups, even those in numerical minorities, while excluding large numbers of speakers of NDLs from receiving a basic formal education. The result is growing inequality and cultural erosion, with pressures for assimilation to dominant language and culture threatening both linguistic diversity and national identity (Tsui & Tollefson, 2004).

Ortner (2006) describes two kinds of agency that are helpful in this discussion. The first is related to domination or resistance to domination, where actions are defined relative to the dominant group and, in this case, the language with which it dominates. This type of agency is *reactive*, and could be seen as decolonial in nature, promoting the deconstruction of colonial practices in the name of social justice. This consciousness is increasingly found among Indigenous advocates of bilingual intercultural education in the Americas (e.g. López-Gopar *et al.*, 2021). A growing body of research supports the call for 'a new paradigm of language education policy that connects language activism with other movements that seek to address societal inequities' (Flores & Chaparro, 2018: 365). The second type of agency identified by Ortner (2006) focuses on culturally constituted aspects of life that give people meaning and purpose, where actions could be seen as authentically

initiated by and for their communities. In considering the examples we have of this kind of agency, we see that once there are opportunities for below-level actors to be involved in implementing L1-based multilingual education, community initiatives abound and support easily grows beyond pedagogical reasoning.

Some additional lessons learned about defining actor levels

We have already mentioned some of the rich contributions on actor levels at the beginning of this section. One is the need to recognize teachers as language-in-education policy actors from below; another is the social justice argument that the power hierarchy implied by above and below policymaking acts should be reversed in researchers' minds to prioritize members of non-dominant ethnolinguistic communities, especially the children who should be served by actors at the other levels. The following are a few additional lessons we have learned through applications of the framework to real country cases.

The lines can be blurry between levels, particularly between below and side actors. Brown's (2021) analogy of individuals 'jumping' between positions at different levels or 'sliding' between positions within a level helps to explain why their actions may not be easy to label. It may also happen that their responsibilities or their identities overlap. As noted in our discussion of Model 3 cases, actors from the side and below often work together – some in a highly integrated manner. There may even be close ties between side and above actors, at least in a small country like Timor-Leste (Model 4) where the circle of people working in government, education and NGOs is small and close-knit (see Ross & Taylor-Leech, Chapter 4, this volume). Maiti's research on Mupudungun in Argentina (Chapter 12, this volume: 266) finds that 'below and side actors' coordinated and diversified actions have narrowed the gaps between below and above levels and advanced the implementation' of bilingual intercultural education in the province of Chubut.

Actors can be identified differently in different settings. Depending on the degree to which actors are perceived to have power in certain domains, they may be seen as acting from below or from the side, for example. The case of Myanmar (Chapter 5, this volume) and its autonomous regions provides an interesting example, where actors who would be side or below from a national perspective are actually making decisions from above in their own communities' education systems. The case of Ecuador (Chapter 13, this volume) challenges any generalization that Indigenous people are limited to acting from below, as they may have agency at all three levels. Among the chapter authors for this volume, our meta-analysis (Benson & Kosonen, this volume) found that not everyone self-identifies as an above, below or side actor; for example, at least two international authors kept themselves outside these

categories, even while expressing solidarity and support as side actors would do, out of respect for the hard work of local actors.

Actors from all levels have agency not only as individuals but also as groups. Above and side actors are easily associated with groups; in most of the cases in this volume, the former are typically associated with official government structures, while the latter represent well organized collectives like education departments, NGOs or international agencies. This means that individuals are often acting not for themselves but as part of an organizational agenda, though they can certainly exert their own agency in pro- or anti-NDL ways. Regarding grassroots actors, who are sometimes considered to have less power or voice, some of our contributors indicate that they may also be acting as a collective, which helps strengthen their voices. For example, Warlpiri communities in Australia (Chapter 11, this volume: 244) ‘have organized effectively through a mining trust, the WETT, to resource the inclusion of the non-dominant language in their schools, which has maintained momentum to some extent’. Similar types of Indigenous organizations center around land rights, rubber and logging in Cambodia and Myanmar, providing platforms for NDL advocacy. Even individuals can be mobilized for small-scale collective action if they feel part of a social movement, as argued by O’Rourke and Dayán-Fernández (2024) in the case of Gallego in Galicia, Spain. They point out that the success of a social movement depends on the capacity of actors to draw on symbolic as well as material resources, meaning that they can be motivated by an event or a list of injustices going beyond language. This may explain why the 1981 teachers’ strike for better work conditions in Senegal, as described by Iwasaki (Chapter 8, this volume), pushed back against French hegemony and led to a call for inclusion of national (Senegalese) languages in education—laying the groundwork for current MLE policy.

The Four Theoretical Models of the Framework

To develop the framework, we formulated four different models of change based on actual cases of language-in-education policy development with which we were familiar. Each model starts with where the change appears to originate, where it is taken up and the direction it appears to be headed. Each model traces a certain process or trajectory that could potentially lead to the increased use of non-dominant languages in education, as shown in Figure 1.1.

Since 2021, we have added characterizations of the models and developed their descriptions. We identify one model each for top-down (Model 1) and bottom-up (Model 2) processes, presuming that the initiative is taken by actors at the above or below level and that secondary action is taken by side actors on its way to the grassroots or formal policy level, respectively. We also identify two models where the

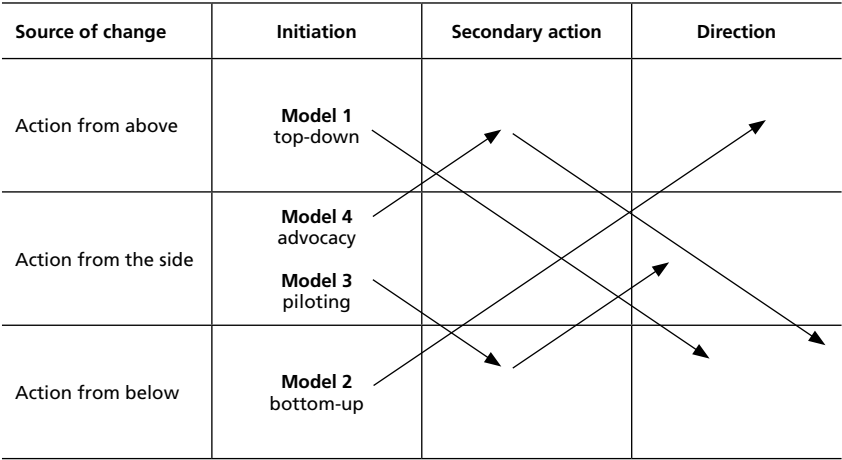


Figure 1.1 Four models of change trajectories. Adapted from Kosonen and Benson (2021: 36)

initiative is taken by side actors, with secondary action taken from below (Model 3, characterized by advocacy for policymaking) or from above (Model 4, characterized by piloting of bi-/multilingual education) on its way to the remaining level.

This section discusses each model in turn, beginning with a hypothetical description of actors and activities at each phase that is designed to facilitate application of the framework to real-life situations. For the purposes of this discussion, we rely on the assumption that the initial action comes from one of the three levels as opposed to a combination of them, which is also theoretically possible. Using these models requires a timeline of events² to guide analysis of the change process, and that timeline will reveal both synchronous and asynchronous activities, hinting at cross-level influence. Following each hypothetical description, we draw from the chapters in this volume and our experiences to illustrate the model.

Model 1: Top-down language-in-education policy change

Our hypothetical description of Model 1 is found in Table 1.1. If the change is initiated by actors from above, followed by side actors who get involved in implementation, a possible future direction is for grassroots actors from below to join forces for sustainable change toward using non-dominant languages in education.

Model 1 represents change from above, which LPP research has historically defined as macro-level language planning. It is clearly initiated at the governmental level with the aim of managing language

Table 1.1 Model 1 – Top-down: Change from above to the side and below

Initial phase:	Intermediate phases:	Possible future direction:
• Government passes written policy supporting NDLs in education. • Policy may be rhetoric without a realistic implementation plan. • If policy is imposed from above on schools, NDL communities themselves may challenge it.	• Side actors see the need to put policy into practice or engage to address challenges. • Side support demonstrates feasibility/effectiveness of MLE (this may take time). • Side facilitates involvement of actors from below.	• If all three levels are activated and integrated, sustainable change is possible. • If actions are still mainly from above, or if policy is not matched with resources, momentum may be lost at the other levels resulting in little or no change in practice.

Source: Adapted from Kosonen and Benson (2021: 37).

use through legislation, including constitutional articles, laws and decrees, in addition to official education policies. In essence, it is imposed on the whole country or on particular regions or types of people in that country. Such change is likely to be justified on ideological grounds; for example, in the past, dominant languages were often imposed on the citizenry of newly independent countries for the purpose of nation building and in the name of national unity. In one-party states, the prevailing political ideology may be a major justification for the language policy.

Top-down policies often fail to result in meaningful change in the use of non-dominant languages, revealing a gap between official written policy support and actual practice. Spolsky (2009) argues that the ideologies behind official pro-community language policy and observable practice in society and education do not always match. In countries such as China and Vietnam, official documents strongly support NDLs as languages in education, yet single dominant languages, Mandarin Chinese and Vietnamese, respectively, continue to be used as mediums of instruction, even in ethnolinguistically diverse regions. This gap can be explained by conflicting decisions from government actors, local variation in interpretation, and limited accountability mechanisms. The influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology in China and Vietnam also explains some of the top-down support for non-dominant languages on paper (Bahry, this volume).

Bahry's description of the case of Yughur in Sunan County, China (Chapter 10, this volume) illustrates that even in an authoritarian top-down context where civil society is constrained or absent, local officials and autonomous regional agencies can act as crucial intermediaries – representing the secondary phase of 'change from the side' – to reach local actors. Kazakhstan presents a related, yet distinct, case, as it historically followed a top-down model. As Zhumatay (Chapter 9, this volume) explains, however, there was a notable period in the 1980s and 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union when democratization

allowed actors from the side and below to promote the use of Kazakh in urban schools previously dominated by Russian. This shift reflected a broader societal push for cultural and linguistic revitalization. Nonetheless, since the mid-2000s, the state has promoted a trilingual education policy that emphasizes Russian and English alongside Kazakh. This top-down approach has ironically weakened Kazakh's position, as not only actors from above, but also from the side and below, have increasingly shifted their focus toward the more economically and globally advantageous languages.

These Model 1 cases support the argument that policy change from above is probably not enough to produce sustained transformation in language use. Without involvement from the non-dominant language communities at the below level, legislation and declarations from above tend to remain symbolic, and the side level may not have enough support. Spolsky (2018) argues that successful language planning requires responsiveness to actual language attitudes and practices on the ground. Written policies must be reinforced by mechanisms that allow local (below and side) actors to adapt and implement them meaningfully. When these mechanisms are weak or absent, even the strongest written policies risk remaining little more than lip service. Just before South Africa passed its 1994 policy designating 11 official languages, language policy scholar and advocate Neville Alexander (1992: 91) noted that 'top-down approaches to language planning more often than not end in failure since they unavoidably ignore the real language attitudes of the people and remain unaware of the creative impulses emanating from popular projects that are themselves responses to felt needs'. This suggests that actors from below and from the side should not be marginalized, because they wield more power in language-in-education policymaking than actors from above might presume.

From the discussion of Model 1: Top-down policy change, we can draw several key conclusions. First, while the presence of official policies or laws supporting non-dominant languages in education is important, it does not ensure actual implementation or long-term impact. Second, if such policies are rooted in political ideologies that are not widely shared, understood, or disseminated among NDL communities, they are unlikely to result in meaningful and sustainable change. If agency remains concentrated among top-level government actors, even if they themselves have non-dominant ethnolinguistic backgrounds as in Ecuador (see Limerick, Chapter 13, this volume), those who could act from the side and below may be excluded or even actively marginalized. In authoritarian contexts, local NGOs may be restricted or non-existent, and any quasi-independent actors tightly controlled by the state. On the other hand, when top-down policy change is accompanied by clear plans and resources to engage actors at all levels, including communities and local institutions, the chances of

success improve significantly, increasing the likelihood of reaching and benefiting the intended NDL populations.

Model 2: Bottom-up language-in-education policy change

Our hypothetical description of Model 2 is found in Table 1.2. If the change is initiated by grassroots actors from below, followed by side actors who get involved in implementation, a possible future direction is for actors from above to enact policy that supports lasting change.

Model 2 represents change from below, which LPP research has historically defined as micro-level language planning. Actions are initiated at the grassroots level, most often led by civil society organizations like women’s groups or local NDL communities. These actions typically emerge in specific districts or municipalities and may not initially focus on education; over time, groups engaged in activities like community development, land rights advocacy, literacy or missionary work begin to recognize the value of using their own languages for learning. Early efforts to introduce NDLs into education are usually small-scale, involving nonformal education like early childhood education, vocational education or adult literacy, and they often operate without the support – or even awareness – of higher-level authorities. The exception would be community leaders, who may be actively involved.

Community-run Mandarin Chinese-medium schools in Cambodia and Thailand provide an example of Model 2 activities, in this case by heritage language communities which have sought accreditation from their respective national education systems. Like heritage language programs in immigrant communities of the Global North, they operate independently but aim for official recognition, which might eventually lead to national language-in-education policies.

Myanmar is a more robust national case of Model 2. Due to decades of internal conflict and limited state educational services for many non-dominant language communities, local actors like civil society groups,

Table 1.2 Model 2 – Bottom-up: Change from below to the side and above

Initial phase:	Intermediate phases:	Possible future direction:
• NDL communities initiate activities using NDLs in education. • After some time, they join with side partners for technical and/or financial support. • Written policies may or may not exist, but the use of NDLs is not prohibited.	• Below-side actor alliances form, expanding implementational activities, and improving the quality of practice. • Actors from below and side engage actors from above to pass more enabling policies and find more resources.	• NDL communities still play a major role in implementation. • Government may support MLE via decentralized implementation. • The use of NDLs in education may slowly be institutionalized and ‘nationalized’.

Source: Adapted from Kosonen and Benson (2021: 37).

community organizations, churches and temples have taken the lead in creating education systems using NDLs. Beginning with early childhood and non-formal education, some extending into primary and secondary schooling. As discussed by Kay *et al.* (Chapter 5, this volume), well-organized local education providers in the Mon and Kachin regions of Myanmar have developed their own systems parallel to the national ones (of which there are two). Largely disconnected from state and international support, these grassroots initiatives have cultivated significant agency in NDL communities. Although they could be considered actors from below in the national context, Kay *et al.* find they are actors from the side above in their autonomous regions.

These examples of Model 2: Bottom-up highlight how grassroots organizations can develop a degree of agency in promoting non-dominant languages in education and other domains. However, it often takes years, even decades, for these efforts to gain recognition from other actors, especially those working from above who might enact policy. Over time, individuals from below may acquire formal education and experience, allowing them to bridge levels of influence, doing what Brown (2021) calls ‘sliding’ within a level (taking on different, often more responsible roles) or ‘jumping’ levels (moving to the side and above). In Myanmar, for instance, young people from NDL communities who studied abroad have returned with advanced degrees and are now serving as consultants or administrators in education in their own regions and languages. These cases show that the spark may come from below, but it may not lead to a wider policy change process unless also the side and above actors are eventually engaged.

Model 3: Side-below-above piloting for language-in-education policy change

Our hypothetical description of Model 3 is found in Table 1.3. The change is initiated by side actors in the form of piloting or experimentation of L1-based bi-/multilingual education, demonstrating its potential to improve learning outcomes and raise the status of the NDL. This encourages community actors from below to participate actively, creating a demand that could lead to written policy and expansion of the program countrywide.

In Model 3 side-level actors begin to collaborate with NDL communities, i.e. actors from below, before any possible above-level policy is developed. As mentioned above, we expanded on Dutcher’s (2004) notion of the side, which was originally confined to international agencies, donors, and NGOs, to encompass a broader spectrum of national and international actors whose work bridges top-down and bottom-up processes in moving language-in-education policy change forward.

Table 1.3 Model 3 – Piloting: Change from the side with below to above

Initial phase:	Intermediate phases:	Possible future direction:
• Side actors initiate small-scale pilot activities using NDLs. • Early on, they partner with NDL communities for linguistic and community support. • Written policies may or may not exist, but the use of NDLs is not prohibited.	• Side actors continue piloting MLE for some time. • As activities expand, new NDL communities join. • Pressure from the side and demand from below leads actors from above to adopt supportive policies and allocate more resources.	• Side actors continue as major implementers. • Actors from the side and below may become integrated. • Actors from above may eventually accept more leading roles in bringing NDLs into education. • Existing policies may be strengthened.

Source: Adapted from Kosonen and Benson (2021: 38).

In this volume, the cases of Cambodia (Ball & Smith, Chapter 2), Thailand (Burarungrot & Person, Chapter 3, this volume) and the Philippines (Arzadon & Colicol, Chapter 6, this volume) exemplify Model 3. In all three countries, side actors partnered with NDL communities to launch multilingual education initiatives long before national governmental policymaking caught up. Since at least the 1970s (and much earlier in the Philippines), advocacy groups, academics and NGOs have collaborated informally with NDL communities, often without the need for official permits or formal recognition. These partnerships between side and grassroots actors often began with nonformal education, developing early childhood and literacy programs in NDLs, creating orthographies and producing teaching materials. All these activities laid the groundwork for eventual inclusion of NDLs in the formal system of education, a process which has taken over three decades.

Based on these and other cases like Senegal (Iwasaki, Chapter 8, this volume), whose long history of NGO-supported MLE piloting has finally resulted in national policy in recent years, we have found that of the four models, *Model 3 is the most likely to result in sustainable policymaking* to include NDLs in education. It appears that effective piloting of MLE creates opportunities for side actors like linguists and education specialists to develop strong collaborations with NDL speakers like local civil servants, community organizations, local linguists and teachers. Other side actors like NGOs can mobilize technical and financial resources. Together, side and below actors become vocal advocates who appear to be able to shape more inclusive policy environments; in Senegal, such actors including teachers and school inspectors are such strong advocates that they self-identify as ‘militants’ for bilingual programs (Iwasaki, this volume: 169). The solidarity and perseverance of these side and below actors may help programs to weather ups and downs when new political leaders – often people who are unfamiliar with MLE or even with the linguistic

diversity in their countries – assume power. This has in fact happened in the Philippines, as Arzadon and Colicol (Chapter 6, this volume) discuss, where recently a national policy for L1-based MLE was severely weakened by an incoming government. Side and grassroots champions will be critical to sustaining, documenting, and advancing NDL inclusion in education until above-level actors come back around. Similarly, as the provincial language-in-education policy has swung back and forth in Northern Territory, Australia (Chapter 11, this volume), Warlpiri community members and allies have stayed strong because they know what they want. According to Martin Napanangka at the end of chapter:

Yapa [Warlpiri people] have been bringing our languages into the classroom for decades, filling classrooms with young and old Warlpiri educators. Our hard work, our efforts must be recognised and supported so we can carry on teaching in our language, our way. We will keep doing this for our children and their children to come. (this volume: 245)

One limitation that is common to Model 3 countries is that the pilot programs do not always adopt strong approaches to L1-based MLE. In fact, the three Asian cases mentioned above piloted only early-exit transitional bilingual education, which phases the L1 out of the curriculum after only a few years, thus limiting the degree to which interlinguistic transfer between L1 and L2 could result in literacy and learning benefits (Cummins, 2021; Heugh, 2011). Another limitation is that pilot programs may be conducted in selected language communities, possibly leading (as in the cases of Cambodia and Thailand) to policies that only allow certain NDLs to be used in education.

On the positive side, there is ample evidence that piloting contributes to NDL linguistic development and to pedagogical methods and materials. These activities in turn increase the status of these languages, bolster pride among speakers, demonstrate that NDLs can be used for literacy and learning across the curriculum, and generally help empower previously marginalized communities. In the Philippines prior to the recent policy setback, dozens of NDLs were officially recognized as media of instruction in lower primary nationwide. In Thailand, a pilot project initiated by a university department, in collaboration with teacher training institutes, local and international NGOs, and the Ministry of Education, has expanded MLE offerings across multiple regions. In Cambodia, side-level piloting led to gradual handover of MLE activities to the Ministry of Education, which has delegated implementation to provincial officers in five provinces with large Indigenous populations. It appears that Model 3: Piloting is the most likely to engage all three levels of policy change, but that this takes time.

Model 4: Side-above-below advocacy for language-in-education policy change

Our hypothetical description of Model 4 is found in Table 1.4. If the change is initiated in the form of advocacy by side actors, convincing actors working from above that MLE would improve learning results and that policy should be developed, community actors from below may be convinced that policy change is worthwhile.

Like Model 3, the change process in Model 4 is initiated from the side, involving advocacy and consequently some piloting of NDL use in education. In Model 4, side-level actors are powerful advocates for change, lobbying for policy decisions from above before most actors from below become engaged. In this way it is similar to Model 1: Top-down because the side and above actors are closely aligned. There are a few possible reasons for this: side actors may have close ties with policymakers, side and above actors may be allies or members of NDL groups, and/or side actors may ‘jump’ to the above level at key moments in the trajectory.

One of the few examples of Model 4 that we can identify is Timor-Leste, a small but highly multilingual country where all the above reasons appear to apply. Ross and Taylor-Leech (Chapter 4, this volume) describe how side-level actors – including local and foreign civil society groups, linguists, education researchers, consultants and a few UN agencies – advocated for MLE. They eventually collaborated with actors from above to start a pilot project. This advocacy, led in great part by a key high-level figure affiliated with the government along with a UN agency, and a national NGO, led to the development of MLE policy before actual implementation. The proximity of the side and above actors may be explained by the small size of the country and its relatively recent struggle with Indonesia ending in independence in 2002. However, it also makes above-level actors vulnerable to pressure from a former colonizer, Portugal, such that Timorese governments have tended to prioritize Portuguese and Standard Tetun-Dili as official languages.

Table 1.4 Model 4 – Advocacy: Change from the side to above, and then to below

Initial phase:	Intermediate phases:	Possible future direction:
• Side actors advocate for MLE with policymakers based on access/quality arguments. • Written policies may support only dominant languages in education. • Side actors initiate small-scale pilot activities using NDLs.	• Side actors continue piloting MLE for some time. • Advocacy continues focusing on policymakers, gradually gaining support. • Actors from the side may move to above roles. • Effectiveness eventually convinces more grassroots actors to become engaged.	• Side actors continue as major implementers. • Actors from the side and above may become integrated. • New NDL communities may be included based on government framework/guidelines. • Existing policies may be strengthened.

Source: Adapted from Kosonen and Benson (2021: 38).

Recently, a pilot project in multilingual education began under the National Commission to UNESCO, with support from Timorese and international partners. Despite evidence of improved outcomes through L1-based instruction (Ross & Taylor-Leech, this volume; Taylor-Leech, 2017; Walter, 2016), the project has lacked full ownership from important actors from above. Meanwhile, it seems that grassroots actors have been engaged, so it is possible that this case will revert to more of a Model 3, where change will eventually reach policymakers once again.

Notes on Applying the Framework to Analyze Language-in-Education Policy Change

As shown in the previous section, the four models of language-in-education policy change represent four distinct trajectories of policy change that can be applied to diverse country cases to characterize movement towards the increased use of non-dominant languages in education. In this section we discuss further aspects noted in applying the framework to policy analysis, beginning with the challenges to change when activities focused at a single level, proceeding to the trajectories of change that offer the best chance of sustainability, and concluding with some lessons learned about applying the framework to analyze real cases.

Imbalances and interaction between levels of the framework

Almost all the cases discussed in this volume indicate moments in their policy timelines when policy change stalls at a certain level. We believe that this stagnation reflects a failure, intentional or not, by actors at one level to engage with those at other levels. There may be bottlenecks and roadblocks; individual agency can unfortunately work against as well as for the use of NDLs in education. Table 1.5 outlines the challenges likely to arise when change efforts operate only or mainly at one level.

The cases in this volume support our 2021 hypothesis that effective policy change requires multi-level engagement, probably from all three levels, over a significant period of time. This raises at least two critical questions: One, do actors at different levels seek to collaborate? And two, can they devise strategies to do so? The most pronounced disconnect in many contexts lies between above- and below-level actors. For example, national policy may be formulated for NDL communities without their participation in decision-making or implementation, as seen in Model 1 countries like China (Bahry, Chapter 10, this volume) and Kazakhstan (Zhumatay, Chapter 9, this volume). Conversely, grassroots initiatives like those in Myanmar may deliberately exclude the central government (Kay *et al.*, Chapter 5, this volume), which has oppressed NDL communities for a long time. In the Kachin and Mon regions they describe, such non-collaboration is less detrimental because robust local and regional education stakeholders run their

Table 1.5 Challenges to change activities focused at one level

Level of change	Challenges
Above only or mainly	• Lack of NDL community ownership; communities may reject policies they see as discriminatory or as barriers to learning dominant languages. • Policies seen as transient political gestures; school-based actors may exercise their agency not to implement them. • Insufficient technical and financial support; implementation is hampered.
Side only or mainly	• Minimal government backing; initiatives are left reliant on uncertain or piecemeal external funding and confined to regional efforts. • Programs perceived as academic or foreign, even anti-government; wider participation is discouraged. • School efforts focused on small pilots; these may collapse when support like external funding ends and no formal policies result.
Below only or mainly	• Lack of formal policy; activities are restricted to local spaces and can only continue if they are politically non-threatening. • Scarce technical support: grassroots actors will be isolated from exposure to internationally effective practices. • Limited financial resources; programs are forced to rely on volunteers whose availability and resources may be constrained by needing to earn a living.

Source: Adapted from Kosonen and Benson (2021: 47).

own education systems; however, in smaller or weaker ethnolinguistic communities – and in contexts other than Myanmar – non-involvement of the national education authorities could dilute or even eliminate locally initiated activities.

Side-level actors supply vital technical and financial resources to the change process that are indispensable if MLE in non-dominant languages is to be implemented sustainably. Many of the cases analyzed in this volume indicate that actors from the side also frequently serve as intermediaries, facilitating connections between above- and below-level stakeholders and safeguarding NDL community interests. The case studies of policy change in Cambodia (Ball & Smith, Chapter 2, this volume), the Philippines (Arzadon & Colicol, Chapter 6, this volume), Thailand (Burarungrot & Person, Chapter 3, this volume) and Timor-Leste (Ross & Taylor-Leech, Chapter 4, this volume) demonstrate that side actors can develop effective engagement strategies that have the potential to lead to long-term sustainable practice in MLE. Identifying key actors and exploring their methods and motivations in greater depth could yield valuable insights for future analyses. These dynamics – actors' willingness to engage across levels and their capacity to strategize such engagement – merit further exploration.

What is needed for sustainable policy change?

Our analysis suggests that for any of the change trajectories to result in sustainable change, the NDL communities themselves must be involved. This makes sense for several reasons. A sustainable and

beneficial policy needs to meet community needs and expectations. In most cases it will be the NDL speakers themselves who implement educational initiatives as teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum and materials developers and language advisors. They can be supported by allies from dominant groups, but these allies often lack the cultural and linguistic background needed for direct implementation of policy.

Examples like China (see Bahry, Chapter 10, this volume), where actors from above have the authority to define non-dominant groups and determine their educational opportunities, follow the top-down trajectory characterized as Model 1 that is unlikely to lead to lasting change. On the other hand, when change is initiated from below, our analysis shows it is crucial to involve actors from other levels early in the process, especially those from the side. Interestingly, it seems to be at the below level where actors can maintain the linguistic and pedagogical tools and motivation needed to use NDLs in education, even if they must wait out periods of NDL policy rejection by actors from above.

Our experience suggests that if actors at any one of the three levels never become involved in the policy change process, it will be extremely difficult – if not impossible – for language-in-education policy to reach all relevant stakeholders or to be sustained over time. Put another way, Browne and Martin Napanangka (Chapter 11, this volume: 244) wonder ‘whether true policy change can occur without the alignment of aspirations (or rationales) from above, below and the side’. This may be the reason that *policy change towards increased use of NDLs in education is most likely to be effective and sustainable if it comes as ‘change from all directions’*. It seems clear that actors from all three levels – above, below and the side – must play roles, that there must be interaction between actor levels, and that involvement of actors from below and from the side may be needed for many years. In discussing the chapter contributions, Brown (Chapter 14, this volume: 289) comments that the framework allows us to unpack complex policy stories with a consideration not only of the ‘where’ and ‘who’ but also the ‘when’ and ‘how’, which means engaging with the temporal aspects of change. Locating actors and policy-related actions or events on a timeline is one useful way to visualize the process.

Additional lessons learned about using the framework

We conclude with some brief comments about applying this framework to the analysis of language policy change cases.

Sub-national analyses reveal interesting things about local organizing and about federal systems with some level of decentralization. Some authors in this volume (see Chapters 5, 10, 11 and 12 on Myanmar, China, Australia and Argentina, respectively) have adapted the framework to focus not on national-level policy change but rather on smaller

administrative units such as provinces. Maití, for example, had surveyed each province in Argentina for compliance with a national education law calling for bilingual intercultural education (Chapter 12: 252) and decided to focus on Chubut when she found that ‘in 2020 some Mapuche-Tehuelche organizations took Ministry of Education authorities to court for non-compliance’ in that province. When analyzing Ethiopia’s policy change trajectory, Benson (2021) makes the point that federal systems with semi-autonomous regions may have more success in implementing L1-based programs, especially if the administrative units correspond to certain non-dominant language communities. Another reason to focus the analysis on a sub-national area is illustrated by the case of Cambodia (Ball & Smith, Chapter 2, this volume), where the actual written policy applies only to the five highland provinces with large Indigenous populations. A new question to ask above-level policymakers in Cambodia is whether this policy supporting use of learners’ own languages in education is applicable to Indigenous or immigrant language speakers in other parts of the country.

Researchers need to determine when their timelines will start based on understanding of the context. The timelines developed by contributors to this volume vary greatly in how far back in history they go. While it may seem arbitrary, we believe that those familiar with the country context are best placed to determine when the salient events or policy-related activities occurred and which actors were involved. In the field of international development, the concept of using the home language in formal education to address quality and equity issues goes back to the 1970s for experimentation, but to the 1950s for policy statements like UNESCO (1953) making the point that it is axiomatic to use a language children understand for their schooling. Many formerly colonized countries considered the respective roles of local and colonial languages at independence in the 1960s and 1970s. These could be logical time periods to begin looking for policy-related statements, events or activities, but in many parts of the world some type of language planning started much earlier – and in some, much later. Choosing when to begin the discussion was the choice of each contributor to this volume, but most brought their cases up to the time of publication. Many contributors used visual representations of timelines or even tables to great effect, and many grouped years into periods, some with names characterizing those periods. Quite a few found creative ways to describe in those visuals what actors at different levels were doing, most notably those with shapes and arrows like Chapter 11 (Browne & Martin Napanangka, Warlpiri in Northern Territory, Australia) and Chapter 12 (Maití, Mapudungun in Chubut, Argentina).

Timelines can be constructed around seminal points. In our applications of the framework in a range of settings, we have found it useful to pinpoint seminal points in the change process – those specific moments when a major policy document is signed, a landmark

initiative is launched or any other turning point occurs. Each of these moments may mark a clear shift in the direction of policy from what came before. Consequently, any study of a long-term policy change process could divide its timeline at these seminal points, gathering and analyzing data separately for each resulting interval. We realize that this unintentionally sidelines what side and below actors were doing, since their policy-related activities may be less documented than those from above in historical accounts. Iwasaki addressed this issue in her study of policy in Senegal (Chapter 8, this volume) by constructing her key informant interviews around the timeline she had created, asking them for corrections and additions and to describe what they were doing at seminal moments in history. Similarly, Eneh (Chapter 7, this volume) and Bahry (Chapter 10, this volume) interviewed teachers in Morocco and China, respectively, to reconstruct what was happening in classrooms at certain points on their policy timelines, including the present. Strategies like these could be used to further research that documents change, particularly from actors whose agency has not previously been recognized or included in language-in-education policy analysis.

One limitation in our analysis is that we have treated each level as if everyone shares the same goal of increasing the use of NDLs in education. As the side-level encompasses the widest diversity of actors, they may represent a range of motivations. This is certainly an area that requires further research. We suggest that future studies map out these different interests and motivations – as well as the language ideologies behind them – to better understand how policy messages are crafted so that they resonate across levels to solidify the change trajectory.

Final Observations and Conclusion

The idea that ‘change from all directions’ is necessary for sustainable language-in-education policy is common sense, and we acknowledge that it is no theoretical breakthrough. However, the above-below-side framework allows us to demonstrate with evidence from real cases that agency at all three levels offers the best chance for sustainable progress in bringing NDLs into educational systems. This may well be an indication of what Browne and Martin Napanangka (Chapter 11, this volume) suggest – that effective policy change happens when actors’ understandings of the policy at all levels are aligned or have somehow been harmonized. Where one of the levels stands alone, or where one of the levels is missing, change usually stalls. Being able to distinguish the level at which change is initiated, where actors from other levels get involved, and where key individual and institutional actors drive (or nudge) the process forward can offer valuable insight into how the process of policy change works in practice. Having clarity on these issues may help stakeholders working at different levels to support change processes more effectively.

With the analyses and discussions in this volume, we and our contributing colleagues add several new dimensions to the original framework (Kosonen & Benson, 2021) and, we hope, to the existing academic discourse. We show in this volume that language-in-education policy change does not always occur bottom-up or top-down, and that certain key actors may hold the key to engaging with different levels and moving the change agenda forward. We show the need to examine change over time, identify the seminal points in the change process, and recognize how certain trajectories may require more time than others. We also shine a much-needed spotlight on below- and side-level actors and demonstrate the need to include them to gain a complete picture of language-in-education policy change trajectories and processes.

We have also pointed to where we believe future research is justified – such as analyzing the scope of motivations at all levels and discovering how key actors and other change agents cross levels – so that the framework can be developed and improved. With applications to a wider range of countries and sub-national contexts, it is likely that new models of change will be suggested, going beyond the four models we have delineated thus far. Revised and renewed versions of the framework may provide us with an even more helpful descriptive and predictive tool. Our hope is that this framework will facilitate understanding of the elements of effective language-in-education policy change, perhaps suggesting means for accelerating or optimizing the process so that learners' own non-dominant languages can be fully recognized, utilized and developed in the education systems meant to serve them.

Notes

- (1) A non-dominant language is a language or language variety spoken in a given state that is not considered prominent in terms of number, prestige, or official use by the government and/or the education system (Kosonen, 2010).
- (2) Chapter contributors were asked to include timelines of the policy change processes for their cases. We did not ask for any standard format because we wanted to see different ways to approach the task. In the end, some did not use timelines, but all addressed change over time in some way.

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2 An Actor-Focused Approach to a Theory of Change Supporting Multilingual Education in Cambodia

Jessica Ball and Mariam Smith

Abstract

ឯកោ: អ្នកអ្នក ញ៉ែនៃមើសនាវទិដ្ឋនាវងើយតាញីសនតុមនតីលែ: តែសនាវភាគិលំតា ត្រោមប្រើទ្រោន ។ ហេននតីមើសនាវអីតែសនទ្រាប់ព្រាមនាមតាប្រើទ្រោន អី លែ: អិនទើយនតុមនតីវ: ញីស្ននតុមនតីព្រាមអីខេតអីទើយទិដ្ឋនាវងើយមពោល រានិយដេ: នទ្រែលមាសាវងើយប្រើទ្រាតាព្រាមនាមនោកនតើមលាប់នាវនតុម នតីរាឈិនៃ ។ នាវអុចនត្រិងមើសនាវអីលែ: តែសនទ្រាប់ តែមាអុចអិនផ្ទងកិន ឆែមពោលរានិយដេ: លើមាអីក់តានាវលាប់នតុមនតីរាឈិន ។ ហេនទិដ្ឋមើសនតីល នាវដៃ Kosonen និង Benson តែមាអុចតីតម្លិស មោលាសអីតើយ្យងាន់តានាវ អីលែ: តែសនទ្រាប់មហេមាសាវនតុមនតី ។ មូនយ្យទូហេអង មោលាសជេង មពោលអីមោហិ: អោសតើយ្យងាន់ នតើមមើសតាត្រាមបិន នហិមាទូប្រើទ្រា ។ ហេនអុចតែសមូនយ្យតា: មើស ‘ទូទិដ្ឋ’ ជេងមូនយ្យអីតាត្រោម មោលាសជេង មូនយ្យអីមើសទីនតុកជានការនតុមនតីរាឈិន ។ ហេនមមើសនហេលមើស នាវអីមូនយ្យអងមាដៃអីអ្នកអីជានការតែមាតែសនាវភាគិលំតានាវទិដ្ឋនាវងើយ តានតុកនតុមនតីតាប្រើកាមពូច្យ នទ្រែលមាមើសមូនយ្យ រាឆែ នទ្រែលមា នាវជានការនទ្រែល អ្នកតមាត្រឹមកើល តែមាតែសងាន់តានាវនតុមនតីអិនមា តែសនាវអ្នែមាផ្ទងកិនឆែអីងើយមោហិ: អោសតើមមានមាមូ ។ (*Abstract in Bunong [cmo], a language of Cambodia, translated by Kroy Lonh and Mariam Smith.*)

This chapter analyzes change in language-in-education in the context of Cambodia. We draw on findings from our evaluation of the country’s first five-year Multilingual Education National Action Plan, which institutionalized the use of Indigenous languages in an early

exit bilingual approach to increase inclusion of Indigenous children in education in five provinces. Adapting Kosonen and Benson's analytic framework, our actor-focused analysis describes actions to implement the new language plan undertaken by a typology of actors at community, mid-level and national levels as well as from the side, distinguishing actors within and outside the formal education sector. Actor-focused planning and evaluation identifies actors whose actions account for the extent to which planned change in language-in-education has occurred. It identifies people, networks and collaborations that must be supported to achieve desired outcomes and reinforces actors' motivation for coordinated action towards equitable access to meaningful education for children in non-dominant language communities.

Introduction

This chapter describes supportive policy change, national planning and implementation of multilingual education (MLE) in the Kingdom of Cambodia over the past three decades with a view to identifying the categories of actors involved and the roles that each have played in the change process. Theories of change depicting educational development processes typically do not include actors or their interactions, which we see as a serious shortcoming (Ball & Smith, 2020). Ultimately, change or the lack of change is in the hands of the people. In any change process, people (or 'actors') must be committed to creating new or more nuanced policy and enabling legislation and to implementing program plans through strategies, activities and ongoing formative assessments. Kosonen and Benson (2021) have proposed an analytic framework for understanding how change that promotes MLE is facilitated or hindered by actors from above, from below or from the side. Their actor-focused approach holds promise for analyzing and improving planning, interactions among actors, accountability and meaningful theory of change.

Both from ideological and empirical perspectives, we propose modifications to Kosonen and Benson's framework to encompass findings about change processed in Cambodia and perhaps elsewhere. As social justice-oriented scholar-practitioners, we eschew a reinscription of a hierarchical social world with powerful decision makers at the top and community members – including children, who are the intended beneficiaries of national policy, legislation and the education system – at the bottom or below, acknowledging nonetheless that this is (to us) an upside-down construction of society is commonplace. Ideally, this schema would be turned on its head, positioning communities at the top and those elected or appointed to serve them at the bottom. In some cultural communities, figures depicted at the bottom represent those who are responsible for holding up the human and more-than-human

beings in the community ecology. We aspire towards a world in which leaders see themselves at the bottom of a social system, in service positions supporting the beings above them – in the community and the surrounding ecosystem. We encourage readers to reflect on how the labels we give to different categories of actors can reproduce a problematic, upside-down construction of the social world.

In our adaptation of Kosonen and Benson's framework, we consider change processes involving MLE in Cambodia with reference to the actions of *national, mid-level, community and side actors*. Note that we use the term *actor* to refer to one or more individuals in a similar role or organization. In our experience, there is often a single person who acts over a sustained period as an effective champion of change in an organizational system or subsystem. Recognizing the role of key actors and the support they need to sustain their motivation and impact over time can be a useful analytic focus. In this chapter, however, we provide a more general overview of change in Cambodia that illustrates our adapted analytic framework without identifying contributions by specific individuals. Our framework also distinguishes between *actors who are formally attached to the education sector* in a country (such as teachers and national and sub-national education officers) and *actors who are outside the education sector* (such as NGOs). We appreciate the distinctive category of actors 'from the side' introduced by Kosonen and Benson, but find the category overly broad, with many kinds of actors from widely varying social locations involved over widely varying time periods. In our typology, we reserve the term 'side actors' for individuals or groups who are *outside* the formal education system, meaning that they are not typically duty-bearers because they are outside the system of accountability for outcomes or costs of a language policy or implementation plan. In our typology, side actors may include foreign consultants, as we the authors have been, with specific technical expertise, as well as in-country actors who provide discrete, short-term technical expertise, such as linguists, internal consultants, employers and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that provide technical and/or financial support to accomplish a specific task over a set period of time.

Benefits of MLE

Proponents of MLE in Cambodia, most importantly members of CARE Cambodia and several local NGOs, have long recognized MLE as an approach that can attract, retain and support literacy among Indigenous families with non-dominant home languages. Research on language acquisition shows that, in general, children's first language is the most effective language of learning (Ball, 2011; Benson, 2002; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012; Malone, 2016). MLE allows teachers to use children's first language in preschool or primary school, and to continue

Table 2.1 Indigenous languages chosen for MLE

Language	EGIDS level		Speakers nationally
Bunong	5	Developing	35,000
Tampuan	6a	Vigorous	31,000
Kreung	6b	Threatened	20,700
Brao	5	Developing	9030
Kavet	6b	Threatened	6220
Jarai	5	Developing	20,800

Source: Eberhard *et al.* (2024).

using their first language while also learning a dominant language. As is the case in Cambodia, a locally relevant, culturally based curriculum that is aimed at development of the same or similar skills as the national curriculum as well as locally relevant knowledge and skills is often what makes MLE attractive and meaningful to parents and children. With this approach, children can become both multilingual and multiliterate (Ball & Smith, 2023; Hinton *et al.*, 2018; Lo Bianco, 2016).

The Cambodian context

Approximately 1.2% of people in Cambodia are Indigenous (United Nations, 2017), belonging to an estimated 17 ethnic groups (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). The remaining population (roughly 96%) is mostly Khmer people. Indigenous people are concentrated in the five northeastern provinces, many in remote villages that are cut off from larger population centers during the rainy season due to poor roads. Indigenous cultures and languages are distinct from the dominant Khmer, and only some Indigenous people have basic proficiency in Khmer. Partially due to the Khmer language of instruction, inclusion of Indigenous children in education has remained a challenge.

Table 2.1 lists the five languages originally approved by the national government for MLE along with a sixth, Jarai, which was recently added. We include their speaker populations as of 2009 (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024) alongside their degree of endangerment according to the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) (Lewis & Simons, 2010).

An Actor-Focused Overview of the Development of MLE in Cambodia

Beginning in the 1990s, explorations of non-formal education in Indigenous languages were initiated by local NGOs that variously worked to support Indigenous families and livelihoods. These community-level actors included International Cooperation Cambodia

(ICC) and Non-Timber Forest Products. They offered community-based, non-formal bilingual and biliteracy classes intended for adults but often attended by Indigenous children seeking literacy education in a language they could understand. To develop orthographies and teaching and learning resources, NGOs collaborated with Indigenous language speakers in communities and with linguists embedded in Indigenous communities as part of church missions or SIL International. Some of these grassroots initiatives eventually received government non-formal education funding, which supports programming typically intended for adults outside of school. Also beginning in the 1990s, the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Royal Academy of Phnom Penh and the Institute of Applied Linguistics in Phnom Penh began working with ICC to develop orthographies for some of Cambodia's Indigenous languages.

In 2002, CARE International Cambodia (henceforth referred to as CARE) began a series of pilot MLE projects, notably the Highland Community Education Program (Noorlander & Churk, 2008). Funded by AusAID, it focused on girls' enrolment and Indigenous teachers' capacity to deliver child-friendly MLE in two highland provinces, Mondulakiri and Ratanakiri. CARE involved Indigenous community members in supporting MLE through what came to be known as school support committees. CARE fostered the cooperation of Provincial Office of Education (POE) officials (mid-level actors) by involving them in meetings and workshops and providing MLE training and study visits. CARE also nurtured close ties with the national-level Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (henceforth MoEYS) for decision making and with UNICEF to expand funding and support. Funding for expansion of MLE came from US and Australian donors and from a pooled fund from USAID, EU, SIDA and UNICEF. It should be noted that a stable and substantive source of funding is critical to developing and sustaining MLE, and this kind of supportive action should be encompassed within a model of instrumental actors: a designation of funding sources as 'side actors' seems insufficient.¹

In 2003, ICC collaborated with CARE to gain MoEYS approval of orthographies for five Indigenous languages: Krung, Tampuan, Bunong, Kavet and Brao. MoEYS agreed to develop teaching and learning materials in these Indigenous languages, using Khmer script, for primary grades 1 to 3. The partners worked with Cambodian educators to create a unique MLE curriculum and supplementary resources aimed at the development of commensurate skills and general knowledge as the national curriculum but using Indigenous language and culturally based content and activities.

In 2007, UNICEF partnered with CARE to provide financial and technical support for MLE pilot projects. Between 2007 and 2009, MLE was expanded to two more provinces: Kratie and Stung Treng. Starting in 2008, CARE initiated the Bending Bamboo project, which

expanded the number of MLE classrooms and introduced MLE into preschools (CARE Cambodia, 2016). CARE provided MLE preschool teacher training and concurrently worked with national education decision makers, advocating for policy and legislation that would enable institutionalization of MLE in the formal education system.

In 2010, MoEYS produced Bilingual Education Guidelines in a sub-decree allowing the use of five Indigenous languages in government primary schools. In 2011, the province of Mondulkiri opened its first MLE primary school classrooms in communities with at least 50% Bunong-speaking children.

During this period of innovation and advocacy, CARE strengthened subnational (mid-level) capacity for MLE, working with provincial officers of education to raise awareness about MLE among district officers of education, school cluster leaders, commune councils and village leaders (Benson, 2011). These mid-level actors gathered population and enrolment information needed for provincial officers of education to decide which communities most needed MLE (Benson & Wong, 2017). Province-level decision making accorded with a national movement towards decentralization. In schools with MLE classrooms, school support committees raised awareness among parents about MLE. A significant milestone of government commitment to MLE was a MoEYS decree (Prakas No. 48) in 2013 that lifted restrictions in the 2007 Education Law and allowed Indigenous languages to be used in education (Benson & Wong, 2017). In 2014, the government authorized the first five-year national action plan to expand Indigenous children's access to MLE in formal education in all five northeastern provinces. Positive evaluation of its implementation in 2019 supported a second five-year plan. Table 2.2 shows a timeline of milestones in policy support for MLE.

In addition to CARE, mid-level actors situated outside of the formal education sector performed critical roles in the progression of MLE. UNICEF was (and remains) closely aligned with national-level actors, supporting policy development and institutionalization of MLE while CARE provides technical support at all levels. Several local NGOs, including ICC, Non-Timber Forest Products, Northeast Community Education and Development and Youth with A Mission, have provided adult literacy and non-formal education in Indigenous languages and developed curricula, supplementary resources and training in specific languages. Support for MLE preschools and improvement of MLE school facilities was provided by PLAN International, Kruesar Thmei, We World and United World Schools.

The first Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) was developed in 2014 by MoEYS based on a platform of relevant legislation, conventions, declarations, and policies including and going beyond those identified in Table 2.2. The MENAP was developed in collaboration with UNICEF and CARE and in consultation with other

Table 2.2 Milestones in national policy support for MLE

Year	Milestone
2007	MoEYS-established Education Law decreed Khmer as the main language of instruction, but educational authorities could issue sub-decrees where Indigenous languages were spoken. This was the official path for decentralizing MLE decision making.
2010	Bilingual Education Guidelines signed by MoEYS (Government of Cambodia, 2010) to guide implementation of bilingual education for Indigenous children in the five highland provinces.
2013	Prakas (a sub-decree amending a prior decree or law) on identification of languages for learners who are Indigenous people (Government of Cambodia, 2013). This released Indigenous people from the 2007 Education Law stipulating Khmer as the language of instruction.
2014–2018	MoEYS-endorsed Education Strategic Plan (Government of Cambodia, 2014) called for special attention to the most disadvantaged areas and groups of children (p. 13) and emphasizing early childhood education. MLE was mentioned to ‘strengthen and expand bilingual community preschools for ethnic minorities’ (p. 18).
2014–2018	Multilingual Education National Action Plan (MENAP) aimed to provide MLE for Indigenous children with the goal of increasing their access to effective education. The plan provided a basis for MoEYS to plan and dedicate a budget for MLE, securing the place of MLE in primary education for the medium term. It reinforced the right of children with a non-dominant first language to high-quality basic education ‘including the use of their mother tongue (L1) in the initial stages of education’ (Government of Cambodia, 2014).
2019–2024	Multilingual Education Action Plan (MEAP) aimed to improve MLE quality and expand the reach to Jarai communities (Government of Cambodia, 2019). With a new emphasis beyond educational outcomes to lifelong learning and preservation of Indigenous cultures and languages, the plan included collaboration with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to revise curriculum and improve MLE educators’ Indigenous language and teaching capacity. It designated the Regional Training Centre in Stung Treng as a center for strengthening MLE capacity and quality. ²
2024	The Minister of MoEYS approved the Jarai language for MLE use and the Regional Training Centre in Stung Treng for Indigenous teacher training.

language-in-education stakeholders in Cambodia. Consultation did not extend to community-level actors like Indigenous peoples’ organizations, community-based language groups, community members or NGOs that had long been providing non-formal education and resource development in Indigenous languages. This significant oversight was addressed by the more recent five-year plan (MEAP).

The MENAP launched in 2015 with participation from provincial and district offices of education (POEs/DOEs) in four of the five northeast provinces. At this time, CARE began to transition responsibility for MLE to the MoEYS, which formed a new ‘Special Education’ department to implement the plan.³

Both the MENAP and the MEAP aimed to enhance inclusion of children who have been underserved by mainstream education as a parallel initiative alongside comprehensive national plans for education reform and development. A sixth Indigenous language, Jarai, was included in the MEAP, thus expanding MLE to the province of Preah Vihear. Many Indigenous languages remain to be considered; approximately 22 languages are spoken in Cambodia, including other

Indigenous languages (e.g. Kaco', Kraol, Stieng, Kuay) and Cham, which some contend should be considered Indigenous to Cambodia.⁴

The MENAP and MEAP included MLE in preschools and the first three years of primary school. Both plans call for an early-exit model transitional whereby the Indigenous language is used exclusively in preschool and for a diminishing amount of classroom time in grade 1 (80%), grade 2 (60%) and grade 3 (30%). Children are expected to transition to Khmer instruction using the national curriculum in grade 4. The intention is to attract children to school by using a language they and their parents understand and a culturally based curriculum that is meaningful to them. Cambodian educators refer to this as a *bridge* from Indigenous life to Khmer mainstream society.

Following recommendations from our formative evaluation of the MENAP (Ball & Smith, 2019), the MEAP aimed to (1) strengthen the sustainability of MLE teacher training by developing a pre-service program at a regional teacher training college; (2) link MLE preschools to MLE primary schools (harmonized implementation); (3) promote more Indigenous community participation and incorporate non-formal education initiatives by NGOs; (4) support the development of MLE resource centers; and (5) revise MLE curricula. The MEAP called for increased MLE classrooms and teachers, mainly by adding Jarai communities. The plan also called for employment of 12 Indigenous officials at national or subnational levels and establishment of an MLE working group to monitor MLE implementation. While these initiatives have been hindered by lack of investment, a significant achievement is the establishment of a specialized training course for Indigenous teacher trainees at the teacher training center in Stung Treng. While there is an acknowledged need for MLE technical expertise and knowledge of Indigenous languages, the Special Education Department is working on revising the MLE curriculum.

Evaluation of the Multilingual National Action Plan 2014–2018

In 2019, we were commissioned by UNICEF, acting on behalf of MoEYS, to conduct an independent evaluation of how well the MENAP had been implemented, including its quality, relevance, efficiency, impacts and costs. We were supported by a nine-member Indigenous team with proficiency in English, Khmer and the Indigenous languages included in MLE, whom we recruited from the four participating provinces.

Evaluation participants included 696 Cambodians (317 women and girls), 40 percent of whom were children, representing a range of actors implicated in the MENAP. At the national level, they included team leaders and members of relevant MoEYS departments. Also at the national level, according to our typology, participants included members of CARE, UNICEF and PLAN International who had directly supported the MENAP. Mid-level participants included provincial and

district education officers and regional teacher training college directors, as well as members of local NGOs such as International Cooperation Cambodia and the Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association. At the community level, we included parents and other primary caregivers, school support committee members, commune leaders, village leaders, school cluster leaders, MLE and non-MLE teachers in primary schools and preschools and children enrolled in MLE. Actors on the side included members of the Royal University of Phnom Penh who had contributed to development of Indigenous language orthographies.

Data were collected in the four highland provinces of Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, Stung Treng and Kratie. There was no participation from the fifth province, Preah Vihear, where the provincial education office appeared reluctant to begin; the main Indigenous languages there are Kuy, which has awaited MoEYS approval for many years, and Jarai, which recently gained approval. The team visited 24 MLE primary schools in 14 provincial districts, 11 MLE preschools in eight districts and four non-MLE primary schools for comparison.

Outcome harvesting was an important evaluation method for this evaluation (Wilson-Grau, 2018), as it is ideally suited to documenting tangible changes regarding the MLE evaluation criteria and the actors involved in generating those changes at national, middle and community levels. In our view, change can only be understood by examining who has done what to effect what outcomes, ideally from the perspectives of all involved stakeholders. Most outcome harvesting was achieved through group discussions among individuals within one actor category (e.g. everyone on a school support committee in a particular village). Children enrolled in MLE engaged in collective visual mapping of change they had experienced while in MLE and their understanding of why changes had occurred. A total of 84 outcome harvesting group discussions were held, most often involving the use of whiteboards and sticky notes to record group members' observations of changes (or not) and their understandings of what or who contributed to those outcomes. The generated visual records of perceived outcomes served as a focal point for group members to reflect and debate among themselves about the extent to which there was agreement about outcomes and why changes had or had not occurred. Indigenous language speakers on our team assisted in creating these visual records and generating transcripts of discussions. After the outcome harvesting workshops with separate categories of actors, six multi-stakeholder outcome harvesting 'discovery' workshops were held, described subsequently.

In addition to outcome harvesting procedures, the evaluation involved key informant interviews, surveys asking participants to rate aspects of the MENAP implementation and direct observation of school and classroom conditions and teaching and learning materials. We gathered enrolment data for Indigenous children before and during the four years of the MENAP, numbers of MLE teachers trained, costs of training

and of supporting MLE classrooms, numbers of monitoring visits to schools, numbers of Indigenous community members on school support committees and estimates by village leaders and commune councils of numbers of Indigenous children not enrolled in school. We were directed by UNICEF not to assess learning by comparing children in MLE vs. non-MLE classrooms because this was seen as premature. Secondary data included a review of more than 100 in-country planning and policy documents (national actors), reports by CARE Cambodia (mid-level actor) and formative evaluation reports by independent education specialists (side actors). Our mixed-methods, iterative inductive approach allowed for triangulation of data from multiple data sources.

Quantitative data analysis revealed that expansion of MLE primary classrooms produced increased enrolments, attendance, engagement and grade-level promotions of Indigenous children. In 2018, MLE was delivered in 80 primary schools by 192 teachers (36.5% women) to a total of 4617 children (52.5% girls). Qualitative data analysis identified recurring themes regarding outcomes, who did what to produce those outcomes, perceived barriers, enabling factors and generally how different actors understood their own roles regarding MLE.

Finally, we piloted an innovation we called *multi-stakeholder discovery workshops* that combined further data collection with participatory data analysis in each of the four participating provinces. Representatives of the various actor groups were brought together in person to see what each group of actors had identified as behaviors that promoted or detracted from effective implementation, and which actor groups had done what. It was not possible to include the children in these larger workshops because of costs and risks of rugged transportation from remote villages. At the end of the evaluation, a discovery workshop was held in Phnom Penh with representatives of actor groups from each province to review and debate our findings up to that point and to identify those they agreed and disagreed with. Consensus on what had happened and why was not the goal, but rather we sought a differentiated account of how the MENAP was experienced and accounted for by participants in diverse roles as duty-bearers, rights holders or technical consultants or with overlapping roles.

Evaluation Findings with Reference to Kosonen and Benson's Analytic Framework

For the present purpose, we have organized our findings with reference to our adaptation of Kosonen and Benson's analytic framework. We briefly highlight our findings about what levels of actors engaged in what kinds of actions to promote or hinder effective implementation of the MENAP. We also reflect on findings that relate to the likelihood of sustained progress in providing MLE to children with non-dominant home languages in Cambodia. Findings across all evaluation criteria can be found in a

granular report by Ball and Smith (2019). Many themes derived from our analysis of qualitative data across participant groups (Ball & Smith, 2021) spoke to the ten essential components of good practice in implementing MLE identified by Malone (2016) for UNESCO. Discussion specifically about our findings regarding the construction of MLE curriculum in Cambodia and elsewhere is provided by Ball and Smith (2023).

Among *national-level actors*, we found that essential support came from the government through enabling policy and legislation established in 2013, as shown in Table 2.2 above. The government sustained a strong partnership with UNICEF, which often acted on behalf of MoEYS and was a strong advocate of equitable access to quality education for all children. National actors also sustained strong relationships with members of CARE Cambodia, which was seen by all adult participants in our evaluation as the primary implementing partner for the MENAP. However, because the government did not allocate financial resources to implement the MENAP, *mid-level* education officers found it challenging to increase the cadre of trained MLE teachers. *Mid-level actors* in the education sector and community participants frequently identified lack of sufficient financial and technical resources as factors negatively affecting the quality of MLE. Quality improvement became a goal of the subsequent five-year plan (MEAP).

The MENAP stated that the government would take over from CARE as the primary implementer of MLE, including increasing demand and enrolment of Indigenous children and MLE teaching capacity among existing and new MLE teachers. This transition was sought by CARE, which had been the *primary implementing actor* for MLE for over a decade, in collaboration with other actors at the middle and community levels. However, the handover plan did not identify collaboration between national actors and CARE about how the transition would be managed, and consequential gaps in communication and coordination were uncovered in our evaluation. There were *no actors explicitly associated* with this transition or with any of the activities needed to sustain the considerable subnational effort to manage and expand MLE. The plan also did not identify actors to whom CARE and other development partners would transfer responsibility for the roles they had played in needs assessment, curriculum renewal, learning assessment, teacher training, systems strengthening, evaluation and advocacy, often with the assistance of side actors. As noted, in 2017 MoEYS had unexpectedly established a new Special Education department to oversee implementation of the MENAP; however, that department had not absorbed capacity developed by CARE as had the Primary Education and Early Childhood Education departments. The new department acknowledged its limited grasp of MLE and lack of financial and technical capacity, but it resulted in a delayed transition of responsibility from CARE to MoEYS and ultimately very limited functionality.

Many *sub-national* educators at both the middle and community levels reported being acutely aware of a sudden gap in support for their roles when the government assumed responsibility for implementing the MENAP. Many asked us if MLE would end now that the government had taken over and there was sparse evidence of actors providing in-service training, training of new teachers, curriculum review, monitoring or mentoring. Many MLE teachers feared that the government authorization of the MLE curriculum had ended, and some reported that they were now teaching children both the MLE curriculum and the national curriculum 'to be on the safe side'. When MoEYS took over from CARE, there were no further increases in MLE enrolments and a drop in enrolments in one of the four provinces. From our viewpoint, these are some tangible effects of having an *actorless* theory of change. Social change is typically generated by people. When plans specify actions (e.g. strategies, activities) but never get to the stage of identifying the actors who will undertake them (most often organizations or organizational units such as departments, committees and working groups), there may be no financial or technical investment in ensuring that actors have or develop the means to implement specific parts of the plan. As well, there may be no body of actors that perceives themselves as accountable for whether or how well tasks and desired outcomes are achieved (Ball & Smith, 2020).

Several *national-level* actor participants expressed mixed messages regarding language ideology and ambivalence about MLE, with many viewing MLE as a temporary solution to the exclusion of Indigenous children from formal education until more Indigenous children were learning Khmer before starting school. This view poses a long-term threat to the sustainability of MLE, despite renewed planning for MLE for a second five-year term (i.e. the MEAP). Pointing to the perceived lack of vocal and visible reassurance by national spokespersons, many community-level participants expressed doubt about whether the MLE curriculum was authorized or that Indigenous languages were valued by the national government. This uncertainty was voiced most audibly by MLE teachers, many of whom reported fear that they might be punished for exclusively using the MLE curriculum.

Among *mid-level actors*, participants identified CARE International Cambodia as the most prominent actor leading up to and during implementation of the MENAP. There was wide agreement that actions by CARE at every level accounted for increased access to MLE. For example, participants identified that, at the *community level*, CARE effectively engaged with Indigenous children, parents, teachers, commune councils and leaders in Indigenous communities and district-level school cluster leaders. CARE generated awareness and demand for MLE and consulted with community members about the community-specific cultural content that should be included in a unique curriculum for MLE. CARE collaborated with ICC to generate community interest in forming parent-led school support committees.

At the *middle level*, CARE collaborated with subnational decision makers in the education sector and the provincial teacher training college, building knowledge and capacity for MLE through demonstration projects and generating momentum and demand for national-level support to institutionalize MLE. Also at the *middle level*, several other INGOs and NGOs acted to strengthen demand and capacity. CARE effectively engaged national decision makers in the MoEYS to raise awareness of the potential of MLE and to advocate successfully for enabling policy and legislative changes that provided the foundation for the first national plan for MLE (i.e. the MENAP). Further, CARE and NGOs supporting MLE and language rights engaged various side actors to support the development of essential components of MLE.

On the side, we found in-country linguist actors who had contributed to the development of orthographies for the Indigenous languages included in MLE. Foreign consultants advised the government and/or CARE on approaches to MLE, collaborated with CARE on MLE demonstration projects including formative assessments of Indigenous children's learning, engaged in MLE curriculum review and construction of MLE teacher training modules, and helped to develop the MENAP and evaluate its implementation.

Networking within and across levels

Mid-level actors close to communities, including school directors and district officers of education, conveyed to us their detailed knowledge of Indigenous communities, school facilities, MLE teachers and school support committees. Prior to the MENAP, CARE partnered with the national institutions noted above and with the provincial teacher training colleges, as well as with side actors including external consultants and investigators. Beyond these partnerships, however, we found scant evidence of networking, collaborating, knowledge and resource exchange or more formal partnerships between levels or between actors inside and outside the formal education sector. Our outcome harvesting discovery workshops were received as rare opportunities for actors from various stakeholder groups to come together in person and share their experiences of MLE implementation, including their successful innovations and outstanding needs. Some mid-level actors noted that in-service training courses were also opportunities for teachers to learn from one another but were too infrequent due to lack of financial resources, technical expertise and Indigenous language capacity within district and provincial education offices. Nonetheless, given the high frequency with which evaluation participants at all levels identified actions by CARE to describe and explain change in MLE, we can assume that there was a great deal of outreach and collaboration on the part of CARE, as well as by ICC and at least two of the four senior provincial

education officers. As Kosonen and Benson (2021: 48) note, ‘if actors at any one of the three levels are never activated, it will be difficult if not impossible for the language-in-education change process to reach all relevant stakeholders or to be sustained over time’.

What are the relationship-building and networking efforts that influential actors engage in to promote multi-level action towards adoption and expansion of MLE? What objectives or key strategies of a language plan require or are best undertaken through joint action, and by which actors at what levels? These are useful questions for future analyses of language reform. Our evaluation in Cambodia was constrained by directives received from UNICEF, which has a standard set of criteria and expected methodological protocols. Notwithstanding, our actor-focused approach to evaluation, which aimed specifically at examining the behaviors, interactions, and impacts of actors across the ecology of MLE language-in-education planning and implementation, can yield valuable insights about effective and ineffective approaches to system-wide change and sustainability.

Actors’ roles in the success and sustainability of MLE in Cambodia

Despite its pitfalls, MLE in Cambodia has been gaining strength, and Indigenous children and families have increased access to meaningful education in lower primary school. What accounts for successful MLE expansion in Cambodia to date? Our evaluation findings suggest that the answer lies in (1) the significant commitment in Indigenous communities to take actions that will preserve, develop and transit their cultures and languages, which has increased demand for MLE; and (2) the long-term commitment and growing knowledge about MLE among mid-level and community actors, especially MLE teachers, CARE, NGOs and provincial and district-level education officers. Side actors have also played valuable, short-term, and sometimes recurring roles contributing to specific essential components for MLE (see Malone, 2016). The government’s willingness to scale up MLE in 2014 built on a strong foundation of substantial investments by CARE, UNICEF, other development partners and local NGOs. With the help of *actors in communities* and *side actors*, these *mid-level actors* had created Indigenous language orthographies, a culturally informed curriculum and supplementary resources, teaching capacity, community awareness and opportunities for subnational education authorities to learn about MLE and the actions they could take to expand access to it. These actions led incrementally to active participation in starting to build the essential components for delivery of MLE by provincial, district and school cluster leaders with the goal of realizing the rights of Indigenous families to access education in a language they could understand.

At the same time, while MLE has been expanding, our evaluation uncovered concerns from many stakeholders about quality and sustainability. Improvements in quality require at least three foundational elements that were in short supply during implementation of the MENAP, namely: (1) financial and technical resources to strengthen and stabilize teacher capacity and continuous MLE curriculum renewal; (2) visible and vocal promotion of MLE by national leaders; and (3) active efforts to involve non-dominant language groups and cultural knowledge holders. We discuss this conclusion in detail elsewhere (Ball & Smith, 2021).

Analysis with reference to Kosonen and Benson’s analytic framework

Figure 2.1 shows our actor-focused model of the ecology of MLE built from our findings about the development of MLE in Cambodia and implementation of the MENAP. It reinforces an analytic framework with the same four models of change identified by Kosonen

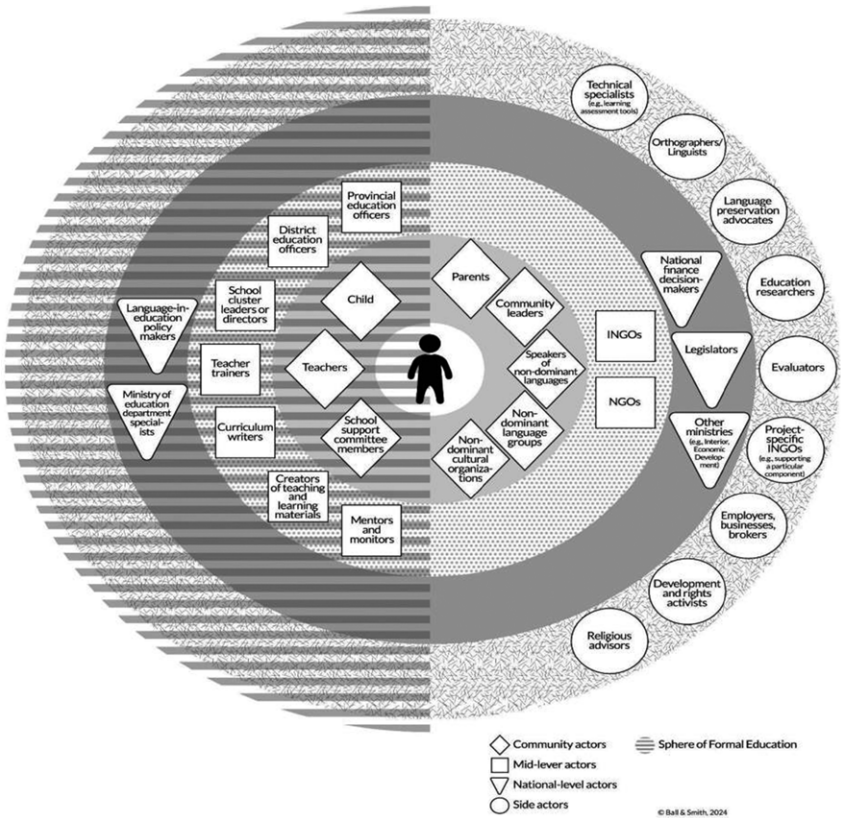


Figure 2.1 Ecology of actors and spheres of influence in MLE implementation

and Benson, which we rename for clarity and ideological reasons, as explained above. Our model further distinguishes these levels of actors by whether they are engaged as actors within the government education system with (often legal, often measurable) accountability for outcomes, or as actors outside the government education system with little or no institutional accountability for outcomes. The child is shown in the center as both an intended beneficiary and an actor engaged with actors in the spheres closest to them (e.g. parents, teachers). Actors within the education sector are shown in the left hemisphere (cross-hatched) and actors not formally attached to the education sector are shown in the right hemisphere. Four spheres of influence show those closest to the child in the center (community level), mid-level actors, national actors and side actors in rings moving further out from direct interactions with the child.

We find that Kosonen and Benson’s (2021) approach to understanding change with reference to the *direction* of action by key actors is congruent with an actor-focused theory of change. Like the four models they describe, including top-down, bottom-up and two initiated from the side, our adapted analytic framework can be used to describe the trajectory of impactful actions by each category of actors. Figure 2.2 shows that local NGOs and subnational actors in the education sector engaged with communities. For example, ICC or other local NGOs working at the community level delivered non-formal Indigenous language and literacy classes for adults. District education officers and school cluster leaders took stock of the demand for MLE by parents and children and of the resource needs of MLE teachers through discussions with school support committees and community councils. However, these actors lacked the agency, capacity, time and physical proximity to influence national actors or encourage their accountability for equity in educational opportunity. Subsequent joint lobbying action by these NGOs and CARE led to government approval of the orthographies needed for MLE to be implemented in government schools in the northeastern provinces, paving the way for CARE to work with MoEYS to develop the MLE curriculum.

Figure 2.3 shows a mid-level set of actors engaged with national, community and side actors concurrently in a holistic approach to

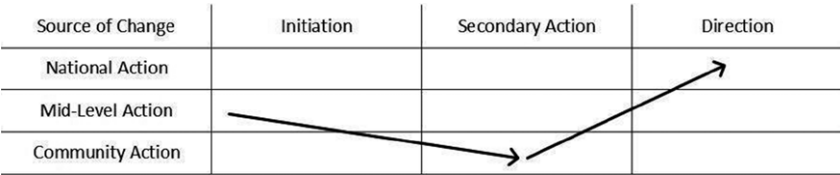


Figure 2.2 Trajectory of mid-level actions directed towards communities and later towards national action

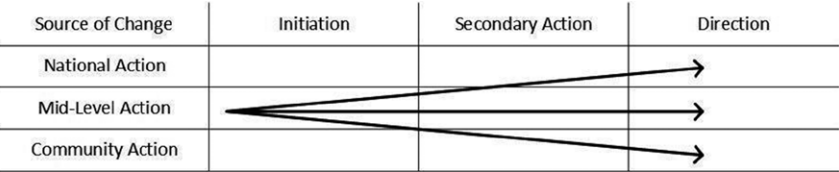


Figure 2.3 Trajectory of mid-level actions directed towards change at all levels

systems change to prepare the country for state-supported MLE and expansion with increasing capacity over time. The figure particularly captures the pivotal role of CARE in the development of MLE and implementation of the MENAP, which cannot be captured by the four models of change observed by Kosonen and Benson (2021). Due to the status of CARE in relation to MoEYS and its significant financial contributions to MLE implementation, CARE had much more agency to advocate effectively for national policy reforms and planning for formal adoption of MLE. Over the past two decades, other mid-level actors within and outside the government education system have engaged in impactful actions as well, most often collaborating with CARE to supply financial and technical support. This is consistent with Kosonen and Benson’s (2021) illustration of Model 3: Piloting, whereby change in policy and practice supportive of MLE in some countries is ‘taking place at all levels, led by actors from all directions, simultaneously, in a complementary manner’ (2021: 45).

The fact that the MENAP identified no actors and the government allocated no funding for its implementation was problematic, but can be seen as having a silver lining: With the broader national objective of decentralization, expansion of MLE was left largely in the hands of subnational education-sector actors who were empowered to make decisions that were fitting for the communities they served and the resources they could muster. While many sub-national education sector actors expressed frustration with the lack of national leadership and substantive support and concern about the transfer of MLE from CARE to MoEYS, they nevertheless built significant sub-national capacity and took tremendous pride in the achievements of MLE teachers and students. Further, lack of government investment in MLE combined with increased decentralization enabled a greater role for INGOs like CARE and others to manage MLE based on their intimate knowledge of parents, children and teachers in non-dominant language communities.

Action-focused theory of change

When we evaluated implementation of the MENAP, we found that the plan did not explicate a theory of change, but rested on vague assumptions, with strategies and activities not attached to any specific

actors or collaborations. Scaling up MLE beyond pilot projects requires consensus among key actors (ideally from all levels within the formal education system and the non-dominant language community) on a theory of change not only linking goals, objectives, strategies, activities, and outputs, as is typically found in theories of change, but also identifying actors, their interrelationships and their responsibilities associated with each major step to implement the plan well.

As we have described, the MENAP in Cambodia did not link actors to specific strategies or outcomes for which they would be held accountable. The plan also entirely omitted Indigenous people as key actors, and ongoing consultation with and engagement of Indigenous peoples' organizations and Indigenous language groups were not mentioned, even though increased demand for MLE by Indigenous parents was one of the four objectives. In short, the plan expressed a positive aspiration to expand MLE but omitted the people and relationships needed to implement it. As shown in our actor-focused ecology of implementing a plan for non-dominant languages in education in Figure 2.1, MLE requires multiple interconnected activities and joint actions among actors at every level. This includes senior government officials, finance officers, educators, development partners, technical specialists, members of the non-dominant language community and those whom the initiative is intended to benefit – children and parents. An actor-focused theory of change may provide impetus for considering how excluded or oppressed participants in an education system can play meaningful roles in relevant, context-fitting, community-paced and community-based social change. An actor-focused theory of change can also hold governments and institutions accountable for implementation of government-approved language policy and plans (Ball & Smith, 2020). When a plan does not link specific actors to strategies, activities, and outputs, it is possible that nothing will happen because no one (or no organization) sees themselves identified in the plan. The planned transition of MLE from CARE to MoEYS is an example of the reverberating negative impacts of an actorless theory of change.

Conclusion

The analytic framework proposed by Kosonen and Benson promotes thinking about policy change in terms of categories of actors and how their actions impact actors and relationships at other levels over time within a social system. We have discussed our adaptation of the framework with reference to multilingual education in Cambodia, based on our analysis of implementation processes gleaned from our evaluation of the first five-year plan to institutionalize MLE within the formal education system. These actor-focused analytic frameworks can generate insights about why positive change, barriers and bottlenecks have occurred, where to focus efforts to improve implementation and

sustainability and the actors who are likely to support or hinder positive change. Ideally, we envision an actor-focused theory of change that links objectives, strategies, actions and outcomes with specific actors (individuals or groups) accountable for implementation in the near, middle and long term and under potentially changing circumstances. It seems axiomatic that plans do not produce change; rather, people produce change. Yet, people are rarely identified in organizational theories of change, which are most often unidirectional (top-down) and institution-driven. Once an overall vision and set of goals and objectives have been determined, who will do what in order to achieve which outcomes should be the key question in language planning, with consultation from all actors identified or wishing to be identified in the plan. Regular revisiting of the plan by actors identified in it and others who emerge as potential contributors can help to reconfirm or renew goals and objectives and reassess barriers, bottlenecks and enabling factors influencing actors' progress towards achievement of outcomes for which they are accountable. Collaboration among actors at all levels will strengthen functional networks of advocacy and action for change, facilitate reciprocal learning and sustain motivation to actions that promote equitable access to meaningful education for children in non-dominant language communities.

Notes

- (1) Funders play a significant role in enabling or suppressing MLE; in fact, current expansion of MLE has been endorsed at all levels but sufficient funding has not been forthcoming.
- (2) The Minister of Education, Youth and Sport signed an official letter on 8 July 2024 launching the Multilingual Education Teacher Training Program.
- (3) The term in this context refers to targeted programs, not rather than to programs for children with disabilities.
- (4) Lack of vocal, visible support and advocacy for MLE by national actors in Cambodia may have been motivated in part to avoid fomenting demand from much larger populations of non-dominant language speakers (e.g. Lao, Cham, Hakka) who may want their children to gain access to education in their home language.

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3 - Why the Top Needs the Side: The Interplay of State and Non-State Actors in Bringing in (and Keeping) NDLs in Thailand's Classrooms

Mirinda Burarungrot and Kirk R. Person

Abstract

ชื่อปาณญ์ ดูวอ บูโละฮ์ ตาฮัง, นือการูอ ไทย ดีกือนาลี ดี กาวาแซ อาเซียน บือกือนอแอ ตืองา อุซอฮอ บอเวาะ มาโสะ บาฮาซอ เตาะ อุตามอ (NDL) เกอ ตาแล ซือกอเลาะฮ์ อนุบาล แด ซือกอเลาะฮ์ ประถม ตืองา จารู มืองายี เปอบกั๊ย บาฮาซอ/พหุภาษา ตืองา คุนอ อาซะฮ์ บาฮาซอ นอมอ ซาตู/บาฮาซอ อีบุ. บือกือนอแอ ฮา นิง, บูโละฮ์ ‘ยูปอ ตาแล ตูเลฮ์แซ บทควม, กายีแย เกะฮ์ แด รางวัล ดาริปาดอ ยูเนสโก.

อุซอฮอ อุโตะ ตาซา เปองายีแย เฮาะ ซือก็อง บาฮาซอ เตาะ อุตามอ (NDL) เตาะ บูโละฮ์ บือยายอ กาตุ ตะเตาะ ซอกอแง ยัง ภาวะ ดาริปาดอ แปะเฮาะ ลูวา (อะฮ์ลี อากาแถมิ, เอ็นจีโอ, บังซอ บังซอ บือซาตู/PBB) แด ซอกอแง ดารี แปะเฮาะ บอเวาะฮ์ (เปอดูโตะ กาปง ยัง คุนอ บาฮาซอ อีบุ). จารู เนาะ บือกือเราะ ตาซา บาฮาซอ ตาแล ปือองายีแย ดี นือการูอ ไทย ‘จารู อุมงญอ ซาโม ตืองา โมเคิล เฮาะ Kosonen and Benson (2021).

อุโตะ เนาะ ‘ยือละฮ์ เปอการูอ ดี อาตะฮ์, บับ/บท นิง เนาะ กือมูกอ/น้าเสนอ ตืองา คุนอแก จารู ออานาลีซึซ มืองโกะ ภาะระฮ์ มาซอ แด กือรูกอ ‘ดี อาตะฮ์- ดี ซึซ- ดี บอเวาะฮ์’ Kosonen and Benson (2021), ตืองา ‘กือรูกอ ‘จารู ฮา ซอกอแง ดาริปาดอ บือลาถู (actor) แด ออแกนี้ซา ซึ เฮาะ ‘กือนอแอ ปาดอ ซือตียะ บือแรกะ. (Abstract in Patani Malay [mfa], a language of Thailand, translated by Uniansasmita Samoh.)

During the past two decades, Thailand has acquired a regional reputation for integrating non-dominant languages (NDLs) into pre-primary and primary classrooms through first-language-based multilingual education. Evidence of this can be found in journal articles, case studies and UNESCO award citations. The drive for NDL-supportive education

policies would not have been possible without strong initiatives over time from the side (academics, NGOs, UN agencies) and below (ethnolinguistic minority communities). The trajectory of language-in-education policymaking in Thailand thus corresponds generally to Kosonen and Benson's (2021) Model 3: Piloting. To explain these developments, this chapter utilizes a timeline viewed through the lens of Kosonen and Benson's 'above-side-below' framework, highlighting the contributions of specific actors and organizations from various levels.

Introduction

During the past two decades, Thailand has acquired a regional reputation for integrating non-dominant languages (NDLs) into pre-primary and primary classrooms through first-language-based multilingual education. Evidence of this can be found in journal articles, case studies, and UNESCO award citations.

The first policy-level moves in this direction took place not in the Ministry of Education (MOE), but in the National Security Council (NSC) around 2004–2005 during a period of intense separatist violence in Thailand's culturally and linguistically Malay Deep South. Unsure of how to respond to calls for bilingual education in the local Patani Malay language, the NSC and MOE turned to side actors experienced in community-based language development programs. These included Mahidol University's Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia (RILCA), the Thailand Research Fund (TRF), SIL International (SIL), UNESCO and UNICEF's regional offices and (somewhat later) a Thai NGO known as the Foundation for Applied Linguistics (FAL).

Pilot projects developed and sustained by these side actors contributed to the Royal Institute of Thailand's National Language Policy drafting process and influenced MOE policy statements that are supportive of 'local languages' (Person & Burarungrot, 2025). The trajectory of language-in-education policymaking in Thailand thus corresponds generally to Kosonen and Benson's (2021) piloting approach.

Why another publication on Thailand?

Numerous publications have traced the development of Thailand's National Language Policy, from the formation of the Royal Institute of Thailand's Committee to Draft the National Language Policy (NLP) in 2006 through approval by two Prime Ministers in 2011 and 2013 respectively (Kosonen & Person, 2014, 2021; Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). The case of Patani Malay in Thailand was cited in Kosonen and Benson (2021) as an example of the piloting model of language policy change, where the side has been the driving force.

This might lead some readers to ask, ‘What remains to be said about Thailand’s innovative yet under-implemented policies?’

First, this chapter presents a timeline to explain how social, political and economic developments influenced actors at all levels, creating favorable conditions for language-in-education discussions to occur.

Second, this chapter shows how it is difficult (and somewhat misleading) to discuss language-in-education policy changes in strictly institutional terms. While Thai government agencies have been involved in these developments, they rarely initiated them. Rather, we have seen a consistent pattern of ‘champions’ – individuals embedded within institutions and organizations – who have used their influence to drive change. Following Dekker (2021), we will name individuals whose unique backgrounds and relational networks enabled them to be MLE champions. We believe that this approach will inspire language activists elsewhere.

Finally, this chapter provides an update on the current MLE situation in Thailand, including the Cabinet Resolution on the National Language Action Plan (2021) and concurrent policy and implementation developments.

Country context

The *Ethnologue* lists 73 languages for Thailand (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). Standard Thai, based on Central Thai as spoken in Bangkok, is the official language of government, the media and education. Regional variations belonging, like Central Thai, to the Tai language family and spoken by millions of people include Northern Thai, Northeastern Thai and Southern Thai. The number of speakers of Non-Tai related languages varies widely: Sgaw Karen, Patani Malay and Northern Khmer are spoken by hundreds of thousands of people and languages such as Akha, Hmong Dao, Lahu and Pwo Karen by tens of thousands, while languages like Chong and Bisu are spoken by a few hundred. Fifteen languages including Chong, Bisu and Urak Lawoi are considered critically endangered (Premsrirat, 2018). Chinese languages such as Hakka and Teochew are spoken in urban enclaves. Signed languages include Ban Khor, Chiangmai and Thai Sign. Thailand has recently attracted large numbers of migrant laborers (and their families) from neighboring countries, speaking national languages such as Burmese, Lao and Khmer as well as many NDLs including Shan, Mon, Blang and Khmu. While speaker populations are difficult to determine, an estimated 5–15% of Thai residents speak a non-Tai language in the home (National Statistical Office and UNICEF, 2016, 2020).

Timeline of Actor Influence from Above, Below and the Side

This chapter is structured around a timeline of economic and political developments that influenced societal attitudes toward NDLs, highlighting the influence of actors from various levels, as shown in Figure 3.1.

ACTORS FROM ABOVE	1939–1987: Security and Identity • 1940: State mandates emphasize “Thainess,” assimilation • 1947: Patani Malay “Requests” for linguistic and cultural autonomy denied • Private Chinese schools closed or curtailed • Resisting Communist expansion, internal dissent • Royal Projects focus attention on rural development, connect actors across all levels • MOE unwilling to consider NDL inclusion in schools
	1988–2003: Tycoons and Tourists • Market liberalization results in rapid economic growth • Tourism industry validates foreign visitors’ fascination with ethnic minority clothing and customs • 1997: MOE allows schools to dedicate up to 30% of curriculum to “local wisdom” • 2002: “Hilltribe problem” considered “solved” • Promotion of HM the King’s Sufficiency Economy Theory
	2004–2017: Pilots and Policies • 2005–06: MOE, National Security Council policies support “bilingual education” in the South • 2006: Om Koi MLE cancelled • 2006: Royal Institute National Language Policy (NLP) Drafting Committee authorized by PM Thaksin • 2010: NLP approved by PM Abhisit • 2013: NLP approved by PM Yingluck, implementation committee delayed • 2010: Cabinet Resolution on the Karen Livelihood
	2018 to present: Reconfiguration • 2018: Government’s Equitable Education Fund established • 2018: MOE “Sandbox” Innovation Zone Project • 2017–2020: MOE policies • 2021: Cabinet Resolution on the NLP Action Plan
ACTORS FROM THE SIDE	1939–1987: Security and Identity • UN agencies in Bangkok • Christian missionaries (North), Islamic leaders (South), and some academics and language teachers
	1988–2003: Tycoons and Tourists • Rapid increase in international and domestic NGOs in the North • Socially-engaged Thai and foreign scholars • 1990: UN Education for All Movement • 2003: Om Koi MLE pilot • 2003: First MLE Conference
	2004–2017: Pilots and Policies • 2007: Patani Malay–Thai MLE by Mahidol University (South) • Multiple MLE projects by FAL, Pestalozzi (North) • 2013: EU support for MLE courses at Yala Rajabhat University
	2018 to present: Reconfiguration • MLE Training at 3 universities • 4 MLE Models in 100+ schools by FAL and local education authorities (North) • MLE + Intercultural Education by Pestalozzi Mahidol (South) • 2024: Thailand MLE Working Group Formed (UNICEF, Mahidol, Pestalozzi, FAL, EEF, SIL)
ACTORS FROM BELOW	1939–1987: Security and Identity • Most Thais live in poverty with limited social mobility • Church-based L1 literacy (North); Traditional Islamic education (South) in Classical Malay, Arabic
	1988–2003: Tycoons and Tourists • Labor migration to urban areas • Revived use of regional Tai languages • Northern “Hilltribes” economically exploited • IMPECT formed by 10 ethnic groups
	2004–2017: Pilots and Policies • 2017: Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand formed
	2018 to present: Reconfiguration • North: Bi/Multilingual Education School Directors Club

Figure 3.1 Timeline of language-in-education policy developments in Thailand

Security and identity (1939–1987)

Through shrewd diplomacy, Siam remained independent as neighboring countries fell prey to colonialism. The year 1932 witnessed a *coup d'état* which ended the absolute monarchy, introduced democracy and issued Siam's first constitution (Wyatt, 2003). In 1939, the country's name was officially changed to Thailand, reflecting a folk etymology linking the word 'Thai' to 'free man' or 'human being' – a decision contemporary Indigenous activists see as 'othering' persons of non-Tai ethnicity (Reynolds, 2002). The development of a strong Thai national identity was a security priority.

Actors from above

The first half of this period was dominated by Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram,¹ who served as Prime Minister from 1938 to 1944 and 1948 to 1957. Phibunsongkram's nationalist agenda prioritized a strong national identity of 'Thainess'. Thainess was defined in terms of 12 cultural 'mandates', which remain influential today.

Mandate 9 (1940) addressed the Thai language and, to the best of our knowledge, represents the only legal document, including the 17 Thai constitutions promulgated since 1932, to formally come close to declaring what most assume, that Thai is official language of the nation:

- (1) Thai people must extol, honor and respect the Thai language, and must feel honored to speak it.
- (2) Thai people must consider it the duty of a good citizen to study the national language, and must at least be able to read and write; Thai people must also consider it their important duty to assist and support citizens who do not speak Thai or cannot read Thai to learn it.
- (3) Thai people must not consider place of birth, residence or regional accent as a marker of division. Everyone must hold it to be true that all born as Thai people have the same Thai blood and speak the same Thai language. Place of birth or accent makes no difference. (Thai Cultural Mandates, 2023).

Perceived ethno-linguistic threats to national unity stemmed from four sources:

- *Chinese immigrants* in urban areas. Successful migrant communities built temples, clan halls and schools – symbols of their 'otherness' and growing commercial power. By 1933, some 271 Chinese private schools were in operation (Phinaitrup, 1988). Mao's revolution fueled suspicion of Chinese migrants. New policies resulted in the closing of many Chinese schools and limits on the number of hours students could study Chinese.

- *Patani Malay Muslims in the South.* Historically, Pattani² had been a sultanate with deep cultural and commercial connections throughout the Islamic world. Pattani became a tributary state of Siam in the 17th century, a status solidified in by the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 (Pitsuwan, 1985). The Patani Malay response to Pibunsongkram's assimilationist policies was encapsulated in the 'Seven Requests' presented by Haji Sulong to the government in 1947. Two related to language: that Malay and Thai be used together as the languages of government, and that the first seven years of education be delivered in the Malay language. All seven requests were denied (Pitsuwan, 1985).
- *Sino-Tibetan (and other) minority groups in the North.* While some, such as the Karen, had lived on the periphery of Siamese territory for centuries, others crossed over porous frontier borders during the mid-20th century. In 1959, the government created the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee under the Interior Ministry – the first time that the later controversial Thai term *chao khao* and its English equivalent 'hill tribes' was used in government discourse (Morton & Baird, 2019).
- *Speakers of non-standard regional Tai languages.* Although closely related to Standard Thai, Phibunsongkram regarded these regional varieties as an obstacle to national unity.

Phibunsongkram's view of linguistic diversity as a threat was upheld by subsequent Prime Ministers – most of whom had military backgrounds. In the 1960s to 1980s a strong national identity was seen as crucial to Thailand not becoming the next 'domino' of communist conquest (Reynolds, 2002; Wyatt, 2003).

Nonetheless, the actions of actors from above were not always forceful. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great repeatedly drew attention to the educational, economic and medical needs of people in remote areas. He is credited with initiating some 4800 development projects, addressing a wide range of socioeconomic issues (Assumption University of Thailand, n.d.). His Majesty displayed sensitivity to ethnic minority groups, learning some Patani Malay and reminding the nation that *chao khao chao rao* 'the hill tribe people are our people' – fellow Thais (Bangkok Post, 2016).

Actors from the side

The post-war years saw the return of Western missionaries who had previously played side-actor roles in the education and health sectors. Political developments in China and Burma resulted in missionaries with experience working with Sino-Tibetan groups moving to Thailand. Some engaged in Bible translation and community-based literacy programs. These generally utilized the Roman-based scripts

used by those groups in neighboring countries (Kosonen & Person, 2014; Premsrirat & Person, 2018).

Nonetheless, some worried that Roman-based scripts risked rejection by the Thai government. In the 1960s and early 1970s, missionary linguists developed Thai-based orthographies to be used alongside or instead of the Roman-based scripts. William Smalley's *Phonemes and Orthography: Language Planning in Ten Minority Languages of Thailand* declared:

Certainly education in Thai is the most important for Thailand's minority peoples, but what is the best way to bring this education about? We would like to see the Thai policy in language planning turn firmly to the fostering of bilingualism and planned bilingual education. The child learns to read and write his own language, preferably using a Thai-based script with Thai letters insofar as the sounds of his language match Thai, making adaptations where they do not. (1976: 19)

Similar sentiments were expressed by American consultants working on USAID's massive 'Hill Areas Development Project' in the 1970s and 1980s and at a linguistic forum held at Bangkok's Thammasat University in 1986 (Kadir, 1989; Premsrirat & Person, 2018).

The post-war years also saw the entrance of multiple United Nations agencies into Thailand. Many established regional headquarters in Bangkok. Notable examples include UNESCO Bangkok, which prior to 2023 oversaw activities in 46 Asian-Pacific nations, while UNICEF's East Asia and Pacific Regional Office supervised 13.

One especially significant action from above during this period was the Interior Ministry's 1964 founding of the Chiang Mai University Tribal Research Institute. TRI became a hub for Thai and international scholars, as well as development actors addressing a multitude of socioeconomic issues (Buadaeng, 2006; Morton & Baird, 2019). Nonetheless, language did not figure prominently into TRI's research agenda.

Actors from below

It is difficult to find examples of activities by actors from below during this period. Aside from Chinese foundations providing health and social support for urban beneficiaries, there were few organizations that would be considered NGOs or CSOs by today's standards. Buddhist temples played a role in the education of young men, with some in the North continuing to teach the ancient Lanna script.

Meanwhile, in the South, traditional Muslim institutions – the village-based *Tadika* for younger children and the *Pondok* schools for teens and young adults – continued to provide religious education in Classical Malay written in the Arabic-based Jawi script (Samoh, 2016; UNICEF, 2018). It is difficult to assess how widespread Jawi literacy

actually was, or is (Premsrirat *et al.*, 2009). Nonetheless, the Jawi script became an important symbol of Patani Malay identity – a function it continues to serve to the present (Samoh, 2016). Southern Islamic educational institutions can thus be seen as key actors from below.

Tycoons and tourists: The millennial transition (1988–2003)

This period was a time of great social, economic and political transformation. These changes contributed to an atmosphere where policy discussions and MLE implementation would become possible.

Actors from above

Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhaven's (1988–1991) market liberalization policies brought rapid changes to Thai society. Economists heralded the emergence of a middle class as the economy expanded by roughly 10% annually, driven by exports, foreign investment and tourism (Sankaewthong, 2002).

We contend that tourism contributed to changing attitudes on the part of the government and Thai society toward ethnic diversity. With their unique clothing and cultures, the 'hill tribe' peoples fascinated foreign tourists. And while the prime beneficiaries of tourist dollars were ethnic Thai businesspeople, a social consensus emerged that some aspects of minority cultures held economic and social value (Kosonen & Person, 2014; Premsrirat & Person, 2018).

The elimination of the communist threat in the early 1980s gave more latitude to expressions of Chinese identity, as fluency in Chinese languages was recognized as an economic resource. Urban Chinese parents whose own study of their heritage language had been limited by legislation enrolled their children in Chinese tutorial schools and international exchange programs.

This greater openness to ethno-linguistic diversity can be seen in the child-centric National Education Act of 1999, which allowed schools to allocate up to 30% of school hours to 'local curriculum' (Ampa & Thaithae, n.d.; Kosonen & Person, 2014). Praprasong (2009) contends that perhaps half a dozen NDLS were thus used in schools, although actual implementation was sporadic. NDL classes often relied on local elders with limited knowledge of pedagogy and strong opinions on correct pronunciation, grammar and spelling (Person, 2009b).

This period also saw a rapid increase in the number of schools being built in remote areas, reflecting Thailand's commitment to UNESCO's Education For All Movement (Michel, 2010). The expectation was that access to the standard Thai curriculum would result in equal opportunities for all, including children from ethnic minority communities.

Actors from the side

The late 1980s and early 90s saw exponential growth in the numbers of international and domestic NGOs working in northern Thailand (Chiang Mai University, 2011; Kosonen & Person, 2014). Drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, land rights, citizenship, cultural preservation and education were among the issues addressed.

Academic interest in NDLs likewise grew. In 1981, the Mahidol University linguistics department became the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development. In the North, Payap University and SIL International jointly established an NDL research-focused graduate program in linguistics (1989) and an applied linguistics training program for community members (1991) (Person, 2009a).

While missionary linguists of the post-war period had focused on community-level literacy activities, this transitional period saw academics cooperating with other actors to introduce NDLs into government schools. In 1993, the Chiang Mai Rotary Club partnered with Payap University in a 2-year mother tongue transitional literacy project for Sgaw Karen kindergarten students (Person, 2009a). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that a ‘hill tribe’ NDL was permitted to be used as a language of instruction in a Thai government school. In 1999, linguists from Mahidol University and education specialists from SIL established a language revitalization program that saw the Chong language being taught in the primary grades of a few government schools in southeastern Thailand (Malone, 2001; Premsrirat, n.d.).

In 2002, the Thai government suddenly dissolved the Chiang Mai University Tribal Research Institute (TRI). This stemmed from the government’s belief that the ‘hill tribe problem’ had been ‘solved’ through government, royal and international interventions (Buadaeng, 2006). Many TRI staff moved to other university or government positions, where they continued their research and advocacy efforts.

This period also witnessed a growing United Nations interest in educational inequities. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) brought 1500 delegates from 150 countries together in Jomtien, Thailand (UNESCO, 1990). While the ensuing *World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action* barely mentioned language, it did provide an ideological framework that MLE proponents utilized to argue that NDL-speaking children were educationally disadvantaged.

The EFA Movement brought about closer cooperation between the Thai government and side actors such as UNESCO and UNICEF. In 2001, Dr Suchin Petcharugsa from the Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (OFNEC) attended a UNESCO literacy workshop in Raipur, India (Premsrirat & Person, 2018). There he heard SIL International’s Kimmo Kosonen describe how mother tongue-based

learning could impact literacy among NDL-speaking children – a problem that Suchin frequently encountered in his work in remote areas of northern Thailand. Suchin orchestrated a cooperative project between OFNEC, SIL International and UNESCO to launch MLE in the Pwo Karen language in four community learning centers in the Om Koi District of Chiang Mai Province. A Thai-based orthography and literacy materials were developed in consultation with linguists, MOE officials, community members and teachers – who began using the materials in the classroom in late 2003 (Person & Siltragool, 2007).

Another significant side-actor development during this period was the Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education in Minority Communities in Asia, convened in 2003 through the initiative of Mahidol University, SIL, UNESCO and UNICEF. A total of 300 participants from 30 countries attended, presenting on various NDL-related issues (UNICEF, 2018). SIL's Dr Susan Malone presented a list of key components needed to grow strong MLE programs which became a roadmap for the MLE movement in Thailand and elsewhere. The enthusiastic response to the conference led to key persons, including Sheldon Shaeffer (UNESCO Bangkok), Cliff Meyers (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office), Kimmo Kosonen (SIL International) and Suwilai Premasirat (Mahidol University), forming the UNESCO Language Issues Advisory Group in 2004. In 2008, this group morphed into the Asia Pacific Multilingual Education Working Group (Bang, 2013; UNICEF, 2018). The 2003 conference launched a series of MLE conferences that, in seven iterations over the next 20 years, would significantly influence the language-in-education dialogue in Thailand and beyond.

Actors from below

In 1993, 10 ethnic groups established the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT) (Morton & Baird, 2019). In addition to carrying out development projects, IMPECT served as an advocacy voice to the Thai government. While IMPECT staff deeply value their languages, the organization has largely focused on land rights, environmental protection and citizenship issues (S. Suriyamonton, personal communication 18 January 2022).

Pilots and policies (2004–2017)

We have chosen 2004 to mark the beginning of a new era in the language-in-education dialogue in Thailand. This stems from the reaction from above to a grassroots insurgency in the Patani Malay-speaking Deep South and the subsequent efforts of side actors to initiate MLE pilot projects which eventually influenced policy.

Actors from above

On 4 January 2004, Southern insurgents raided an army camp, carrying off weapons and ammunition. The next day, billionaire businessman turned populist Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra declared martial law in the three southernmost provinces. The year 2004 witnessed over 1000 violent incidents and 400 deaths (Timeline of Events Related to the South Thailand Insurgency, 2024).

In March 2005, Thaksin tapped former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun to chair the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) to bring peace to the South (McCargo, 2006). The NRC's final report called for 'bilingual education' utilizing the Thai and Malay languages (National Reconciliation Commission, 2006). Also in 2006, the National Security Council (NSC) issued a policy statement that likewise called for bilingual education as a tool for the peaceful resolution of the Southern crisis (UNICEF, 2018).

In August 2005, Chaturon Chaisang became Minister of Education. On his first day in office, Chaturon met with Patani Malay leaders and announced his goal of improving education for ethnic minority children nationwide. Soon, the MOE had officially approved the use of Patani Malay alongside Thai in government schools but offered no guidelines on how to implement this 'bilingual teaching' (UNICEF, 2018). Meanwhile, the Om Koi Pwo Karen MLE project was gaining public attention through media reports. Chaturon visited the project twice – declaring it a 'miracle' that should be expanded to another 200 villages and multiple ethnic languages (Person & Siltragool, 2007). The *coup d'état* of 19 September 2006 ended this plan.

The Royal Institute of Thailand³ is a high-level Thai language standards body along the lines of the French Academy. In terms of the Kosonen-Benson Framework, the Royal Institute is a hybrid actor; it reports directly to the Office of the Prime Minister and thus represents power 'from above' but functions as a side-actor academic organization. In May 2006, Royal Institute Fellow Dr Udom Warotamasikkhadit attended the First World Congress on the Power of Language. There he dined with SIL MLE specialists Dr Kimmo Kosonen, Dr Susan Malone and Dr Dennis Malone (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). Language policy was the main topic of discussion, mirroring conversations that Dr Udom had periodically had with Australian linguist Dr David Bradley since at least 1996 (D. Bradley, personal communication, 24 January 2024). Dr Udom declared that if a new country like Timor-Leste had a national language policy, Thailand ought to have one also.

Dr Udom promptly organized two video teleconferences hosted by the US Embassy with language policy scholars Dr Bernard Spolsky and Dr James Tollefson (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011). One of us (Person) was present at both meetings, under the naïve impression that a Thai national language policy would be drafted and approved

within days. Since the Royal Institute reported directly to the Office of the Prime Minister, official permission had to be requested first. Prime Minister Thaksin signed the appropriate order shortly before the bloodless *coup d'état* of 19 September 2006 removed him from power.

The Committee to Draft the National Language Policy (NLP), chaired by Dr Udom with Dr Suwilai Premsrirat of Mahidol University as vice-chair, met regularly from 2006–2010. Most committee members were scholars; representatives of the education, defense and culture ministries were invited but rarely attended.

Inspired by Australia's National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco, 1987), the Committee was divided into six sub-committees:

- (1) Thai for Thai Students and Thai Nationals.
- (2) Regional Languages (including ethnic minority languages).
- (3) Languages of Commerce, Neighboring Languages and Working Languages.
- (4) Teaching Thai to Migrants Seeking Employment in Thailand.
- (5) Language Needs of the Visually and Hearing Impaired.
- (6) Translation, Interpretation and Localization Standards.

The Committee organized multiple language-related academic conferences and public forums nationwide. Over 1000 people attended, including Indigenous leaders, professional translators, disabled persons and educators (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011).

The Committee benefited from Dr Suwilai's concurrent work on the Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme in the South and the Foundation for Applied Linguistics' MLE work in the North (both described below). The positive outcomes of these pilots convinced *most* Committee members of the benefits of using NDLs as languages of instruction.

One of the few non-academics to contribute to the NLP was Ms Jiraporn Bunnag, Deputy Secretary-General of the National Security Council. Jiraporn translated the scholarly sounding early drafts into the language of policymakers.

By 2006, actors from above were wondering what 'bilingual education' meant in the South. The answer came from a member of the NRC-Mahidol University peace studies professor Dr Gothom Araya. He was aware of his Mahidol colleague Dr Suwilai's work on endangered language revitalization and asked for her help. Dr Suwilai turned to Susan and Dennis Malone of SIL, then serving as adjunct professors at Mahidol while advising nascent MLE projects across Asia.

After discussions involving UNICEF, the Thailand Research Fund, the Ministry of Education, the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia of Mahidol University and SIL International, the Patani Malay-Thai Multilingual Education Programme (PMT-MLE) was launched in 2007.

PMT-MLE was unique for a few reasons. It was the first MLE pilot project that we know of implemented in a conflict zone where education personnel were frequent targets (180 were killed from 2004–2016) (UNICEF, 2018). It also represented the first time that the Thai government approved use of an NDL as a main language of instruction for primary school students. Further, it was initiated by linguists, rather than educational specialists.

Through PMT-MLE, Suwilai emerged as the predominant MLE champion in Thailand. As an emeritus professor at Thailand's highest-ranked research university, she garnered respect from actors from above. Simultaneously, her over 30 years of documenting NDLs had taught her much about interacting with grassroots people. Her connections paved the way for the NLP to be presented to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who signed it on 7 February 2010. His successor, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, followed suit on 23 March 2012 (Kosonen & Person, 2014).

Still, the legal status of the NLP was unclear. Submitting the NLP to the Prime Minister made sense, since the Royal Institute reports directly to that office. Nonetheless, other government agencies were not consulted, and the policy never appeared in the *Royal Gazette* – the legal publication of record. This could have been left to the implementation committees ordered by both premiers; nonetheless those committees never met, due to the ongoing political turmoil resulting in the 2014 *coup d'état*. The frequent turnover of ministers of education (there were 22 between 2000 and 2019) was likewise unhelpful (O'Conner & Nguyen, 2019).

Actors from the side

PMT-MLE was guided by an advisory committee drawn from above, the side and below. These included Dr Udom of the Royal Institute, Ms Jiraporn of the National Security Council, Dr Rangsun Wiboonupattum of UNICEF, Dr Gothom of Mahidol University and prominent Patani Malay figures including retired educational supervisor and Islamic leader Mr Jehusen Jeh-ubong, linguistics professor-turned-politician Senator Worrawit Baru, 'Outstanding Teacher of the Nation' Waeyusoh Sama-alee and retired education inspector Ms Hasanah Che'ubong. The Thailand Research Fund, Ministry of Education and other government agencies were also represented.

Yala Rajabhat University (YRU) was hired to evaluate PMT-MLE student outcomes. The initial assessments were positive; first- and second-graders in PMT-MLE schools outperformed their peers in the comparison schools in all subjects – especially the Thai language (UNICEF, 2018). YRU Education Dean Dr Kesaree Ladlia became convinced that PMT-MLE was the solution they had long been looking for in the Deep South. YRU thus moved from being an evaluator to a project partner. In 2013, the European Union provided funding to develop MLE courses for YRU students, making YRU the first university in Asia to institutionalize MLE training (Person & Burarungrot, 2025).

The policy opening created by the Southern Thailand situation made space for MLE to be implemented in Thailand's North. The MLE champion of the North was Ms Wanna Tienmee, director of the Foundation for Applied Linguistics (FAL). From 2008 onward, FAL partnered with the Switzerland-based Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF) to initiate MLE pilot projects in multiple ethnic minority languages.

PMT- MLE and FAL's programs received positive attention from the media. Thai PBS aired several documentaries focused on MLE. News outlets covered the visits of Thai and international dignitaries to the projects, while also interviewing parents and teachers. The media thus played a side-actor role.⁴

Actors from below

While the pilots mentioned above were initiated from the side and approved from above, actors from below were key to MLE's acceptance. In the South and North, parents became MLE advocates, speaking to the media and urging other parents to support MLE expansion.

In many cases teachers became MLE champions. Perhaps the foremost example was Mrs Tuanyoh Nisani, a retired teacher and member of the PMT-MLE implementation team. She lamented that, in her 30 years of teaching, she had been forbidden to use her L1 in class, and was thrilled by how much better the MLE students were learning.

In the North, Mr Sakol Intawong, director of Rak Paen Din School, likewise became an MLE champion, speaking to MOE officials and even HRH Princess Sirindhorn about the benefits of MLE. His case was bolstered by numbers: on the national literacy tests administered to all Thai students in grades 1–6, his school of 100% ethnic Hmong students posted higher cumulative scores than many nearby schools serving 100% ethnic Thai students (Pestalozzi, 2019).

The year 2007 saw the formation of the Network of Indigenous Peoples of Thailand (NIPT). Its leadership joined some of the Royal Institute's NLP forums. NIPT worked with the Ministry of Culture to advance the 3 August 2010 Cabinet Resolution on Recovering the Karen Livelihood in Thailand (Morton & Baird, 2019). The resolution dealt mostly with land rights and traditional agriculture but included provisions for Karen culture to be included in local schools and for the MOE to recruit more Karen teachers. This never happened.

Reconfiguration (2018 to the present)

We consider the 'pilot and policies' phase to have ended in 2017 – the year that the second cohort of original PMT-MLE students completed sixth grade. In both the South and the North, knowledge of MLE had increased among actors from all levels.

In this final section, we highlight two recent government innovations and several supportive policy statements. These emerged through the continued strong involvement of side actors.

Actors from above

In 2018, amid debates on the future of small schools and with input from UNICEF, the Thai government created the Equitable Education Fund (EEF). EEF collaborated with the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and Nobel Prize laureate James Heckman to analyze educational disparities and suggest solutions. EEF's Homegrown Teacher Project (HTP) provided scholarships, mentoring and stipends for hundreds of young people from remote areas with the promise of teaching positions in their home areas after university graduation (Person, 2021; Person & Burarungrot, 2025). Many HTP beneficiaries in the North and South speak NDLS, and FAL has provided MLE training in HTP workshops since 2023.

Also in 2018, the MOE announced the 'Sandbox' innovation zone initiative. 'Sandbox' schools are theoretically free to develop their own solutions to local challenges. The project was rolled out in 267 schools in 8 provinces – all of which had significant ethnic minority or migrant populations (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2018). YRU helped draw up 'Sandbox' plans for the South. In the North, FAL and the Bi/Multilingual Education Club drew up MLE expansion plans in cooperation with local officials. This resulted in some 100 schools in Chiang Mai Province implementing one of four models of MLE (Person & Burarungrot, 2025).

MOE policies now mention NDLS more frequently than in the past. The National Education Plan (2017–2036) calls for 'special areas that are teaching and learning by integrating the curriculum in accordance with local languages, cultures, and local society' and encourages 'people in all ages in special areas to read and write Thai and local languages....' (Office of the Education Council, 2017). The *Policy and Focus of the Ministry of Education, Fiscal Year 2020* calls for primary schools to use 'local languages (mother tongues) for communication' (MOE, 2019). Other policies encourage the preservation of languages spoken in 'highland areas, remote beaches and islands' (Person 2021; Person & Burarungrot, 2025). Nonetheless, the MOE has yet to allocate specific budget or assign administrative responsibility for MLE.

In 2019, UNICEF's Dr Rangsun Wiboonupattum convinced the Royal Institute to develop a National Language Policy Action Plan. No members of the original NLP committee were included in this process. The Plan was twice submitted to the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) for input.

NESDC's endorsement led to Cabinet approval on 29 June 2021. The Plan states:

At the heart of the National Language Policy is the idea that learning development can be accomplished by promoting the study and use of the mother tongue as a strong foundation, linked to the study and use of the Thai language.... (Secretariat of the Cabinet, 2021)

Thus, the Plan aims to 'promote the use of local languages(s) in education alongside the Thai language'. One indicator of successful implementation will be an 'increase in the percentage of educational institutions using a local language alongside the Thai language as a medium of instruction' (Secretariat of the Cabinet, 2021).

The Plan was welcomed by actors on all levels. Nonetheless, the Plan does not address a number of practical issues that would be needed to develop and expand MLE. And while the plan assigns implementation responsibility to at least seven government ministries, none have taken any action to date.

Actors from the side

UNICEF Thailand has continued to be a strong advocate for MLE. Part of UNICEF's argument lies with findings from the Mixed Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), conducted every three years in Thailand and many other countries. The 2016 MICS found that 35% of youth aged 7–14 who did not speak Thai in the home were illiterate, while the 2019 and 2022 MICS Eagle Analysis found home language to be the foremost predictor of whether a Thai child has basic literacy and numeracy skills – of greater statistical significance than household wealth, geographic location or any other factor studied (National Statistical Office and UNICEF, 2016; Person & Burarungrot, 2025).

The Foundation for Applied Linguistics in Thailand has dramatically increased the number of schools implementing some form of MLE in the north. This is due to support from overseas partners PCF, Good Neighbors and Child's Dream, as well as some budget from and extensive cooperation with local education authorities in Chiang Mai Province through the MOE's 'Sandbox' program and UNICEF-connected schools in Mae Hong Song Province.

FAL currently supports four 'models' of MLE in over 100 schools (see Table 3.1). 'Full' MLE programs are those in which there is an L1 component from Kindergarten 1 to Grade 3 (5 years total) with Thai as a Second Language (TSL).⁵ The 'Partial' model (#2) uses the L1 for two years of Kindergarten plus TSL, while model #3 involves oral only L1 plus TSL (also found in models 1-3). Model #4 does not contain an L1 component, utilizing only TSL, and is seen as being appropriate for

Table 3.1 Distribution of FAL's MLE models among schools in northern Thailand (2023)

Model	MOE	UNICEF	Languages
1. (K1-P3) 'Full' MTB-MLE + TSL	26		Hmong, Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen, Yellow Lahu, Black Lahu
2. (K1-2) 'Partial' MBT-MLE +TSL	5		Sgaw Karen
3. (K1) Oral MT only + TSL	10	15	Sgaw Karen
4. TSL	37	10	Multiple
	78	25	103 schools, 5+ languages

classrooms where children speak multiple L1s and/or where there are no NDL-speaking staff.

Universities have also contributed to MLE programs; for example, Yala Rajabhat University has offered MLE training to undergraduate students and certified teachers since 2013. During the COVID-19 pandemic, YRU offered free housing to any education student who enrolled in an after-hours MLE course – and over 600 did! An online MLE course is under development (Person & Burarungrot, 2025). At this point, the number of young teachers in the South with knowledge of MLE exceeds the number of schools implementing MLE.

Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, situated in Thailand's northernmost province, attracts a large number of ethnic minority students. An undergraduate MLE course was taught for the first time in 2022, with guest lecturers from YRU and Mahidol. CRRU students have access to teaching materials developed by FAL for several NDLs spoken in the area.

Beginning in 2019, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University cooperated with FAL and PCF to develop online MLE and TSL teacher training. To date, thirteen massive open online courses (MOOCs) have been created. As of early 2024, 1560 people had enrolled in at least one course, most being university students or current teachers/teacher assistants in MLE schools (O. Jariyapotngam, personal communication 1 February 2024).

Actors from below

Actors from below are now playing a more significant role through the Bilingual/Multilingual Education Club, which is comprised of primary school directors from the North. The club's annual meetings are joined by side actors including FAL, SIL, UNICEF and local academics, as well as MOE representatives and retired educators. The club has lobbied local education officials to provide administrative and budget support to MLE.

In 2012, the NIPT rebranded itself as the Council of Ethnic and Indigenous Peoples of Thailand (CEIPT). As of 2023, 42 ethnic groups are represented (Wachpanich, 2023). The CEIPT joined other actors from below and the side to submit the 'Draft act on protecting the rights

and promoting the way of life of ethnic groups and indigenous peoples' to the Thai Parliament in late 2024. The draft calls for indigenous communities to have more voice in local education discussions but does not explicitly call for MLE.

Discussion

The title of this chapter contains the premise of our argument: that actors from above often depend on actors from the side to develop, implement and maintain effective language-in-education policies and practices. This is definitely the case in Thailand. From the post-war period onward, people speaking languages other than Thai were seen as a security threat in need of 'Thai-ization'. As market reforms transformed the country in the late 1980s, ethnic diversity was seen as a resource – at least by the tourism industry. Influenced by UNESCO's Education for All movement in the late 1990s, the Ministry of Education became more open to incorporating local culture into the classroom. Still, the Thai government had no interest in integrating NDLs into the formal education system.

The upswing in violence in Thailand's Patani Malay-speaking Deep South in 2004 changed everything. In 2005–2006, the Ministry of Education, the National Security Council and the National Reconciliation Commission all called for 'bilingual education' to foster peace-building and improve academic performance among Patani Malay-speaking children. Yet none of these government bodies were clear on what 'bilingual education' would actually mean in NDL settings.

This created an opening for side actors. These included Mahidol University, the Foundation for Applied Linguistics, SIL International, UNESCO and UNICEF. A few individuals emerged as MLE champions. With their technical knowledge, practical experience and social capital, these individuals built bridges between state actors, side actors and grassroots people to implement MLE pilot programs.

These pilots informed policy. This was most clear in the work of the Royal Institute of Thailand's Committee to Draft the National Language Policy (2006–2013). The fact that two Prime Ministers from opposing parties approved the NLP (in 2010 and 2012, respectively) encouraged MLE implementers – who could point to their signatures to legitimize MLE.

Similarly, MOE officials frequently visited pilot projects and were aware of the academic gains posted by children in MLE programs. And while the MOE has yet to designate a department to coordinate MLE efforts or allocate budget specifically for MLE, recent policy statements affirm the idea of children in 'highland areas, remote beaches, and islands' learning their 'mother languages'.

Still, the need for advocacy continued. Specialists from the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF recommended that the newly founded

Equitable Education Fund address the language gap. Nonetheless, MLE would not have been included in EEF's agenda if side actors including UNICEF, Mahidol University, FAL, and SIL had not pressed the issue. As noted above, three of the universities partnering with EEF to train future rural teachers offer MLE coursework.

The Royal Institute's National Language Policy would have gathered dust were it not for UNICEF's 2019 efforts to revive it. The 2021 Cabinet Resolution on the National Language Policy Action Plan was the result. Unfortunately, the government agencies responsible for implementing the Action Plan have since been silent. Still, actors from the side and below find the Action Plan useful for MLE advocacy.

The historical trajectory of language-in-education policy development in Thailand thus conforms to Model 3: Piloting of Kosonen and Benson's (2021) framework. The Thai case also supports Kosonen and Benson's point that language-in-education policy change is a long-term process, requiring patience and persistence on the part of multiple actors at all three levels of intervention.

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This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Dr Suuvilai Premsrirat, Dr Udom Warotamasikkkhadit and Mrs Jiraporn Bunnag, all key actors in language policy change in Thailand.

Notes

- (1) In accordance with the preference of Thai scholars, Thai persons in this chapter will be introduced with their first and surnames, cited by surname, and referenced by first name. The only exception in this chapter is Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkram, who will be referenced by his very well-known surname.
- (2) Pattani (double t) refers both to the ancient sultanate and the modern province, while Patani (single t) refers to the language and ethnicity of the people.
- (3) The Royal Institute's name was officially changed to the Royal Society in 2015. In this chapter, the names appropriate to the dates are used.
- (4) Both Mahidol University and FAL kept files on media coverage which were presented to donor agencies as evidence of impact.
- (5) While this would be considered an early-exit model by MLE specialists, FAL's experience in the North (like Mahidol's in the Deep South) is that it is extremely difficult to maintain an L1 component across all subject areas beyond grade three, due in large part to a lack of teachers fluent in the L1.

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4 The Revolving Door of Agentive Spaces for Change: Analyzing Trajectories of Change in Timor-Leste's Multilingual Education Program

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Abstract

ONU no organizasaun internasionál sira seluk defende beibeik katak edukasaun lian oioin promove justisa sosial no inklusaun. Iha evidénsia peskiza ne'ebé forte atu apoia argumentu ida-ne'e, maibé dala barak la apár ho ideia sira ne'ebé populár liu kona-ba hari'i nasaun no unidade nasional. Kapítulu ida-ne'e diskute Timor-Leste nu'udar ambiente oioin ida iha Súl Globál iha-ne'ebé diskursu sira-ne'e kompete. Ami aplika enkuadramentu Kosonen no Benson nian hodi analiza atór nasional no internasionál sira 'husi leten, kraik, no sorin' iha programa edukasaun oioin. Ami diskute konteistu implementasaun programa sira inklui dezvoltamentu política linguística Governu Timór nian no Ministériu Edukasaun nian, evolusaun Revista Literasia Lafaek nian, impulsu hosi Projetu Lian Fataluku internasionál, no intervensaun sira hosi institutu análise política lokal, La'o Hamutuk. Ami avalia forsa hosi enkuadramentu leten-kraik-sorin kona-ba mudansa política lian nian no konklui katak ida-ne'e subliña influénsia hosi atór sira-ne'e iha mudansa política lian-ih-manorin iha maneira sira ne'ebé maka seidauk hetan apresiasaun kompletu antes. (*Abstract in Official Standard Tetun[tdt],¹ a language of Timor-Leste, translated by Felix Maia*).

The UN and other international organizations consistently argue that multilingual education promotes social justice and inclusion. Strong research evidence exists to support this claim, but it often conflicts with popular ideas about nation building and national unity. This chapter discusses Timor-Leste as one multilingual Southern setting where these discourses compete. We apply Kosonen and Benson's framework by analyzing national and international actors 'from above, below, and the side' in a multilingual language education program implemented in Timor-Leste since 2013. We discuss the context of its implementation, focusing on the language policy development role of the Timorese Government and Ministry of Education, the evolution of *Lafaek* Literacy Magazine, the impetus of the international Fataluku Language Project, and the interventions of local policy analysis institute, *La'o Hamutuk*. We assess the strength of the above-below-side framework of language policy change and conclude that it highlights the influence of these actors on language-in-education policy change in ways that have not been fully appreciated before.

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) and other international educational agencies consistently argue that multilingual education promotes effective teaching and learning, as well as social justice and inclusion. However, when it comes to the choice of instructional languages, these claims frequently come into conflict with ideologies about nation building and national unity (for a detailed discussion, see Tupas, 2023). This chapter takes Timor-Leste as one multilingual Southern setting where these discourses compete. Achieving its formal independence in 2002, this young nation is creating, negotiating, and enacting language and other social policies in the global and digital age. In this century, it is rare to witness the political maturation of a new nation state, and in this regard, Timor-Leste is something of a policy laboratory for analysts.

Our chapter explores the explanatory power of Kosonen and Benson's (2021) 'above-below-side' framework of policy change. We use this framework to view a multilingual language-in-education program known in Tetun at its inception as *Edukasaun Multilingue Bazia Lian-Inan* (Multilingual Education in Mother Tongues). The program was later renamed *Edukasaun Multilingue* (Multilingual Education). In this chapter, for the sake of clarity, we will refer to both iterations as the MLE Program.

Under the auspices of the UNESCO National Education Commission (NatCom) in Dili, the MLE Program was launched in 2013 in three regional municipalities with large homogenous endogenous speech communities; Manatuto (Galolen), Lautém (Fataluku), and

Oecusse-Ambeno (Baikenu). Commencing at pre-primary level, the Program was extended from Grades 1 through 6 by 2018. In 2019, it was embedded within the Ministry of Education under the Department of Policy, Planning, and Inclusion (Pereira & Sword-Gusmão, 2024) with the support of a single donor and sheltered under a multi-sector bilateral aid program.² While its future initially looked positive, the ideological hostilities of successive education Ministers and the Covid-19 interruptions to all schooling caused the MLE Program to languish.

When we commenced writing this chapter, the MLE Program's future looked uncertain and – as long-standing participant observers – we felt it important to take stock of its strengths and vulnerabilities, both for posterity, and in hope for the future of multilingual education in Timor-Leste. Within a short space of time, however, the MLE Program's prospects have changed. With the election of a new coalition government in May 2023, the political and educational climate shifted again in favor of multilingual education. The new government committed to supporting and expanding the MLE Program, in addition to applying for funding support from the Global Partnership for Education (Pereira & Sword-Gusmão, 2024: 8). According to these authors (2024: 7), parent and educator demand for multilingual education has increased since 2020. The story of the MLE Program and its changing fortunes highlights the role of different policy actors and may contain lessons that could benefit similar projects in low- and middle-income countries of the Global South.³

The Language Situation

The presence and symbolic power of exogenous languages in Timor-Leste is a legacy of its colonial experiences. The country was colonized by Portugal from 1702 to 1974. Portugal's latter-day 'civilizing mission' elevated an assimilated Portuguese-speaking social elite with strong loyalties to the language. Portuguese today holds high status across the Timorese political spectrum as a former colonial language, a symbol of cultural difference, and the embodiment of resistance to the Indonesian occupation of the country in 1975, which violently interrupted preparations for decolonization and independence.

The Indonesian invasion and subsequent 24-year annexation of Timor-Leste saw the introduction of Indonesian as the official language and medium of instruction. Two generations of East Timorese were thus educated in the Indonesian language. With the forceful suppression of dissent (including the use of Portuguese), Tetun acquired symbolic value in the face of heavy repression, human rights abuses, and cultural domination. In 1998, a popular consultation invited the East Timorese to accept or reject autonomy within Indonesia. Extreme violence followed the majority vote for independence and led to a UN-coordinated

peacekeeping intervention. This intervention brought English into the ecology (primarily as a working language) and it has grown rapidly since then, mainly in urban centers.

Of the endogenous languages, Tetun is the most widely spoken. It has three varieties: Tetun-Prasa⁴ or Tetun-Dili, a pre-colonial contact variety, now widespread as a result of forcible population dispersal by the Indonesians; Tetun Terik, also known as Classical Tetun, used today mainly for traditional and religious functions; and Tetun-Belu, spoken on both sides of the border with West Timor. While Tetun-Prasa has spread exponentially, it is by no means spoken everywhere, and for most people, it is a second language (Taylor-Leech, 2021). In its standardized written form, Tetun-Prasa is known as Official Tetun.

The 2010 census lists five endogenous Papuan language varieties and 24 Austronesian varieties (Census Highlights, 2011). These ethnolects have high vitality, despite the growth of Tetun as the national *lingua franca* and the primary language of literacy. For example, in the three designated municipalities⁵ for the MLE Program, Lautém is strongly Fataluku-speaking (37,799 speakers), Manatuto has a large Galolen-speaking population (13,066 speakers), and Oécusse-Ambeno is predominantly Baikenu-speaking (62,201 speakers) (Census Highlights, 2011: 6).

In recognition of this rich ecology, the Timorese Constitution contains the following remarkably inclusive language provisions, which have formed the foundation of all post-independence language policy development to date:

- Co-Official Languages: Portuguese and Tetun (Article 13, Sec. 1).
- National Languages: Official Tetun and the endogenous languages (Article 13, Sec. 2).
- Working Languages: Indonesian and English (Article 159).
- (Constituent Assembly, 2002)

Importantly, the provision designating the endogenous languages as National Languages means that the State has a constitutional mandate to ‘value and develop’ them.

In everyday language use, we discern a typical postcolonial situation, in which a minority of people are proficient in the official languages. According to the 2015 census, 30.8% of people were literate (i.e. spoke, read and wrote) in Portuguese, 36.6% in Indonesian and 15.6% in English. In contrast, 62.5% were literate in Tetun-Prasa (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2017: 46).

Successive governments’ commitment to Portuguese as the principal language of instruction has remained steadfast but, despite heavy investment by international donors, efforts to improve Portuguese teaching and learning and provide equal access to quality education have been beset with significant problems. Past histories and present-day

entanglements have intensified the debate over the choice and status of languages of schooling.

Data Gathering, Researcher Positioning, and Analytical Frameworks

In addition to literature and policy document research, this chapter draws on our own participant observations, fieldnotes, audio recordings, photographs, extended conversations, and in-depth interviews with key informants. We regard ourselves as informed outsiders, as our regular research trips to the country between 2001 and 2023 have afforded opportunities to maintain relationships, return to research sites, and observe how language policy processes have developed over time. Both authors accompanied the MLE Program team in 2014–2015 (author 1) and 2014 and 2016 (author 2), visiting Program schools and attending team meetings and training sessions.

Two analytical frameworks inform our analysis of actors and change agents in this chapter, and we outline them below.

The above-below-side framework

The study of language policy has traditionally understood policymaking as an authoritative, top-down process taking place at the macro-sociopolitical level (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). However, it is increasingly common for grassroots actors to advocate for changes in federal-level systems, as in the institutionalization of non-dominant languages in State schools (e.g. Chua & Baldauf, 2011; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014). The recognition of side actors in the above-below-side framework conceptualized by Kosonen and Benson (2021) introduced a new directionality of change by highlighting the role of actors who influence policy change from various points between the state and the grassroots, working at the meso-sociopolitical level, according to Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) scheme. These actors include bodies like international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), aid agencies, research groups or thinktanks, and individual creatives, academics, and technical specialists. In their framework, Kosonen and Benson include the significant role of individual actors in influencing policy change. Their term aligns with Zhou and Baldauf's (2012) tripartite classification of individuals involved in language policy development as persons with power, expertise, or influence. In the context of Timor-Leste, we will discuss two such individual actors and their roles as change agents.

Brown's (2021: 96–97) use of the Kosonen and Benson framework in the context of Vorõ language in Estonia highlights the richness of this analytical approach. She shows that organizations on the side operate interdependently with actors above and below, especially in terms of funding, implementation, and policy development more broadly. Brown

also demonstrates the interconnectedness of actors in the socialization of languages in education (i.e. the promotion of social awareness of the roles, goals, and futures of programs). In addition, Brown (2021: 82) highlights the importance of recognizing the permeability of above-below-side categories. As she argues, actors are neither static nor frozen in a particular policy moment but organic, complex, and can move through and across levels over time.

A sociolinguistics of the South

Our chapter also responds to calls for a new turn in sociological epistemologies, that of ‘a sociolinguistics of the South’ (Heugh *et al.*, 2021). In this approach, the Northern gaze is critiqued for perceiving features of the South⁶ as merely indicative of their suitability for interrogation by the North. The term ‘South’ itself exemplifies the pervasiveness of this tendency, in that it positions imagined and arbitrary communities in opposition to one another under the guise of epistemology. It can be further understood as portrayals of development in the South (as evaluated by the already-developed North), the perceived disorder of the South (as opposed to the supposed homogeneity of the North), or the degree of relational awareness(es) of the South (as schematized by the North).

Traditional (Northern) systems of organizing knowledge are not sufficient to engage with scenarios in the South. The reality is that language policy analysis in any context requires respectful treatment of historical connections, memories, hierarchies, and authenticities. In this way, Kosonen and Benson’s framework shifts the focus from a top-bottom, hierarchical view of linear policy directionality to one that is dynamic, context-dependent, accumulative, and reactive to different timescales. This view represents policy as emergent and organic, as well as interdependent and interconnected (as in Brown 2021, above).

Policy Change Trajectories

In this part of the chapter, we explore above-below-side directionality in language policy change in Timor-Leste, looking at the cases of four actors that have provided impetus for change. We further discuss the role of two side actors who were personally influential in galvanizing these changes.

The first actor, illustrating above-to-below policy change, is the Government of Timor-Leste and the policy which provided legal justification for the MLE Program. We also discuss the role of an important individual side actor in this process. The second actor, illustrating below-to-above policy change, is *Lafaek* magazine, an example of successful grassroots language activism which also illustrates the

permeable nature of category trajectories. The third actor, illustrating side-to-below policy change, is the Fataluku Language Project, in which non-local actors with strong community ties supported grassroots-level language development programs, which were ultimately integrated into the MLE Program. The fourth actor, illustrating side-to-above policy change, is the policy institute *La'o Hamutuk*, demonstrating the ways in which the State responded to pressures from the side in policymaking processes.

Change from above: Legislative policy change and an influential side actor

The Government of Timor-Leste first codified the legitimacy of the Co-Official and National Languages in the schooling system in the Education Framework Law of 2004. Poor student performance, teachers' low competence in Portuguese, unsuitable curricula and pedagogy, low attendance and high dropout were only some of the problems that beset the Ministry of Education (MoE)⁷ in the early years of independence and fueled controversy about the medium of instruction.

On the wider domestic front, unresolved political and social tensions culminated in serious social unrest in 2006–2007 (continuing sporadically into 2008), which shook the nation and its leaders to the core. In its wake, fresh measures were taken to restructure the education system and guarantee universal access to basic education. The 2008 Basic Education Act endorsed a reformed National 'Base Curriculum', and established Tetun and Portuguese as teaching languages throughout education.

This legislation marked a critical juncture in language-in-education policymaking, evident in the subsequent initiatives and documents that introduced new discourses about the use of the National Languages in schooling. From 2002, MoE planning documents prioritized both Tetun and Portuguese as teaching languages, but messaging was inconsistent regarding the suitability of Tetun as a classroom language (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008). Dissatisfied with this ambiguity, teachers wanted clear instructions, appropriate materials, and orthographic training for the teaching of (and in) the National Languages (MoE, 2008: 36–38). In response, the MoE organized two language-in-education conferences in 2008 and 2010 in collaboration with its partners. Two international expert missions were also invited to advise the MoE on how to operationalize the constitutional provisions for language in the school system. Out of these two missions, the multilingual education policy and implementation plan emerged.

In addition, two national planning documents delineated the educational road map for 2011–2030: The Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan, which states that the National Languages can be used as languages of teaching and learning in the first years of schooling in order 'to improve access to education and build a solid foundation

for future literacy and numeracy in both Portuguese and Tetun' (TLSDP, 2011: 18); and the National Education Strategic Plan, which acknowledges that 'children who do not speak the official language(s) at home can be disadvantaged by their use in schools' (NESP, 2011: 132). The NESP also contained provisions for a feasibility study on 'the use of mother tongues in education to improve child enrolment, reduce drop-out rates and improve overall educational outcomes' (2011: 13).

The creation of discursive space for National Languages in these plans paved the way for the creation and legal justification of a multilingual education program. It was taken forward by one significant side actor, Dr Kirsty Sword-Gusmão, a person with influence and then-First Lady of Timor-Leste. Able to influence both political leaders and public opinion, she was instrumental in the conceptualization and implementation of the MLE Program. Her championing drove the development of a support network of NGOs and donors. However, it also mobilized certain political opposition, as we discuss below.

In a policy environment favoring the reintroduction of Portuguese, the MLE Program was controversial and gave rise to sometimes rancorous public debate (Cabral, 2013; Taylor-Leech, 2013, 2021). Most controversy centered on the differences in language sequences in the two programs, which both ultimately converge on Portuguese. The Base Curriculum introduces Portuguese as a language of instruction (LOI) alongside Tetun earlier than the MLE Program, which first builds a strong base in a designated National Language and Tetun before then introducing Portuguese (in a late-immersion model). In the Base Curriculum, Tetun is used as the LOI until the end of Grade 3, from whence Portuguese is the primary LOI. In the MLE Program, the pre-primary year uses the designated National Language as LOI and teaches it and Tetun as subject languages; Grade 1 introduces Portuguese as a subject; in Grades 2–3, the designated National Language and Tetun are both LOIs and subject languages and Portuguese continues as a subject language; in Grade 4, Portuguese and Tetun are the primary LOIs (NEC, 2010: Appendix C). In both progressions, students should have the same level of proficiency in Tetun and Portuguese by the end of Grade 3, but public and politicians' understandings of this design are hazy and have been clouded by language ideologies and political agendas, a point we will return to later.

Change from below: *Lafaek* magazine

Lafaek (Crocodile) magazine exemplifies below-to-above policy directionality. First published by Care International in 2000, *Lafaek* began as a small-scale project to encourage and support literacy and numeracy in the home using Tetun, with some Portuguese. *Lafaek* proved to be hugely popular, and its distribution expanded rapidly (Heywood, 2005: 14–15).

Care distributed *Lafaek* to even the remotest schools, using a system of ponies and motorbikes (Vanwell, 2010: 2) until the MoE took over distribution in 2010. Recognizing the potential for curriculum support, the MoE partnered with Care to develop four magazines: *Lafaek Ki'ik* (Little Crocodile) for Grades 1–2; *Lafaek Prima* (Cousin Crocodile) for Grades 3–4; *Lafaek* (Crocodile) for Grades 5–9; and *Lafaek ba Manorin* (Crocodile for Teachers). Since 2011, *Lafaek ba Komunitade* (Crocodile for the Community) has also been published. As a grassroots literacy initiative, the magazine has been extraordinarily successful. As a 2010 evaluation notes, ‘*Lafaek* has earned the type of branding and recognition that marketing firms dream of’ (Vanwell, 2010: 4).

Although it was criticized in the early years for its limited use of Portuguese and inconsistent Tetun spelling (Heywood, 2005), *Lafaek* has since won praise for its alignment with Official Tetun and the National Base Curriculum, and for its value as a teaching resource (Vanwell, 2010). Today its content is bilingual and has expanded to critical thinking, healthy lifestyles, everyday science, and sustainable development practices. The magazine features strong female characters and innovative local entrepreneurs and products (Vanwell, 2010: 1) and was the most widely used teaching resource during the Covid-19 school closures (Care International, 2021).

A Care International baseline report on the MLE Program stated that ‘most teachers adopted the unofficial (“clandestine”) practice of communicating with early primary pupils in their mother tongue’ and ‘welcomed the EMBLI [MLE] approach’ because it ‘legitimated and built on their experience and practices’ (Care International, 2012: 2). Sadly, a formal relationship between the MLE Program and *Lafaek* never eventuated, but its support undoubtedly contributed to early donor enthusiasm and visibility for the Program. *Lafaek* has modeled what bilingual literacy looks like, and we suggest that it has helped dissipate some social concern about the use of non-dominant languages as vehicles of learning.

Change from the side to below: The Fataluku Language Project

The Fataluku Language Project exemplifies side-to-below policy directionality, in which locally connected actors with expertise and influence helped create a central repository and quasi-official institute for developing Fataluku language resources. Fataluku was ultimately selected for the MLE Program because of this systematic on-the-ground organization.

Unlike the Austronesian languages (including Tetun), which are dominant across Timor Island and around Dili, Fataluku is one of only a few Papuan languages and is traditionally spoken in Lautém, which is the easternmost municipality in the country. This physical and linguistic

distance contributed to relatively low rates of Tetun literacy in the early years of independence. At that time, Tetun was regarded by some Fataluku speakers as occupying the lowest indexical order, with their own language at the top and Indonesian and Portuguese somewhere in the middle. The close historical relationship between Tetun and Portuguese was even viewed with derision by some community members, who questioned the legitimacy of ‘a language that didn’t even have its own word for “window”’ (van Engelenhoven, personal communication). Constitutional recognition of National Languages opened up space for Fataluku language practitioners, researchers, and advocates to explore creating a Fataluku literary tradition.

The Fataluku Language Project ran from 2005 to 2009 under the auspices of Timor-Leste’s new *Instituto Nacional de Linguística* (INL), co-sponsored by Leiden University and the Bible Society. It was spearheaded by a side actor, an academic with expertise, Dr. Aone van Engelenhoven, who had a personal connection to the language community. In his recollection and in other Project media, two problems immediately arose regarding the creation of a Fataluku orthography. In codifying ‘Official Tetun’, the INL developed an orthography which was variably received by the wider public, who at this time were still mostly literate in Indonesian. The INL intended that all National Languages would use this orthography, a stricture which created friction for the Fataluku community, who were already disinclined to adjust their linguistic practice to align with Tetun. The second orthographic challenge involved the realization of a regionally specific phoneme (Grama *et al.*, 2023; van Engelenhoven & Huber, 2020). In consultations, Fataluku community representatives expressed concern that preferring one graphic representation over another would effectively silence regional variation in Fataluku, delegitimizing speakers’ connection to their homelands.

Nevertheless, with the support of the Fataluku Language Project, community members produced many valuable outputs, including dictionaries and texts. By the Project’s end in 2009, it had created a ‘home’ for Fataluku language development, both in the literal sense by establishing an education office, and in the metaphorical sense by raising the status of Fataluku in Timorese social consciousness. This elevated status became evident in 2011, when a former member was contacted by Sword-Gusmão, who had heard about the Project’s traditional stories, bible passages, and liturgies. At that time, Sword-Gusmão was gathering information on which national language groups already had literary resources and stood to benefit most from the proposal of an early-grades mother-tongue program to facilitate literacy in the official languages. Because of the work of the Fataluku Language Project, its role in providing speakers with formal linguistic and pedagogical training, and because Lautém is home to some of the most remote

and under-resourced school environments, the Fataluku language was prioritized for the MLE Program.

While the MLE Program did not commence until 2013, community consultations began as early as 2009 with the first of the two language-in-education missions mentioned earlier. The celebratory launch of the Fataluku Language Council in 2013 was combined with a series of advocacy events and orthography and materials development workshops facilitated by the MLE Program team. These workshops demonstrated community-authored literacy materials and the Toolbox program, which the MLE team hoped to use to compile extensive reference dictionaries with textual examples in the MLE Program's three designated languages. Thus, the hopes that existing structures could be utilized to support the streamlined inclusion of Fataluku in the MLE Program were realized.

At the conclusion of the Fataluku Language Project, the side actors who had initiated it returned these resources to the community, who continued their own language development work in the next generation's Council, effectively implementing language policy on the ground and providing a model for the MLE Program. This trajectory of policy change demonstrates the mobility of side actors and the importance of viewing them within their historical and developmental context.

Change from the side to above: *La'o Hamutuk*

Our final side actor is the Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis, known in Tetun as *La'o Hamutuk* (Walking Together). *La'o Hamutuk* is an independent local NGO established in Timor-Leste in 2000 by international human rights activists and local campaigners who had also been involved in the country's struggle for independence (Robie, 2015). It functions as a development communication organization dedicated to redistributing government information to the public in multilingual and accessible modalities, and as a critical-analytical respondent to elected leaders and decision-makers. Formed with the goal of monitoring, analyzing, and reporting on issues relating to rights, development, and democratic processes, its reportage of national government and international institutional activities has become so well regarded that many foreign embassies in the country rely on it for their own analyses (Robie, 2015: 4). Yet, like other organizations in this chapter, it is not well-represented in academic literature. This lack of visibility – in a decolonial view, its erasure – is due to the sometimes-controversial nature of its publications, and its dedication to absolute equity and transparency.

La'o Hamutuk has long agitated for increased funding to the education sector, and for more rights- and evidence-based approaches to curriculum development. It often advocates for multilingual education and has shown consistent support for curriculum reform. Its analyses

note that federal government funding for education has declined since 2014, with the notable exception of the Portuguese-medium (CAFÉ)⁸ schools, for which funding increased in 2018. These schools are ostensibly public but have been found to disproportionately serve affluent families, as well as employing mostly non-Timorese staff.⁹

La'ó Hamutuk is also the most reliable source of information about political entanglements in language policy. In a textbook example of the critical role of side actors – or persons with expertise – the NGO exposed serious irregularity in the (attempted) revision of two decree laws in 2018, which would have had major implications for both the Base Curriculum and the MLE Program. We discuss these events in further detail in the section that follows; suffice it to note here that *La'ó Hamutuk's* involvement – not just in highlighting this irregularity and unconstitutionality, but in circulating petitions and making dogged requests for the actual legal texts – played a key role in their later defeat. In this way, *La'ó Hamutuk* exemplifies an appeal from an organization on the side directly to the top (but with the support of other side and below actors) which results in a secondary change from above.

Situating the MLE Program within this Confluence of Discourses

In this section we show how competing discourses played out – and doubtless will continue to play out – in the space of the MLE Program. We do so by centering its lived experience as seen through the eyes of some key actors and experts involved in its introduction.

Successes: Sustaining creative energy from the side

In contrast to the first decade of stop-gap measures, MoE educational reform now recognizes and supports skills development in both teachers and learners. The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011–2030 lists teaching quality and social inclusion as two of its six priority areas (NESP, 2011: 87). In this regard, the potential of the MLE Program to contribute to the sector is significant. Here, we present some aspects of the Program that have been shown to be dynamic and effective.

While the use of teaching assistants is not new, the MLE Program introduced a system of pairing classroom teachers with community language assistants fluent in the language of the school community. These dyads receive ongoing support on-site and in periodic group trainings resulting in improved teaching strategies, shared classroom management, and more confident, agentic educators. Consistent consultative, on-site lesson planning and implementation support also means class time is managed more effectively.

We see a clear link between this improved pedagogy and student learning outcomes. In 2014, a midline strategic evaluation team – of

which author 2 was a member – noted that not only were children learning well, but they were also enjoying the school experience (Caffery *et al.*, 2014: 23). The results of a 2016 Endline Assessment (Walter, 2016: 6–7) showed that children who enrolled in a state school after attending an MLE pre-primary class learned to read earlier than their peers.

The MLE Program also benefits team members themselves, as leadership, teamwork, advocacy, consultative feedback, and networking skills are honed within daily operations. Other valuable skill sharing includes administrative and data management cross-training, opportunities to build academic qualifications, and practical familiarity with all stages of the policy life cycle. Program team members have been able to leverage these experiences in their own continuing education journeys with great success.

Vulnerabilities: Political maneuvering from above

We also observed significant vulnerabilities resulting from the MLE Program's initial adjunct status under NatCom. The early withdrawal of two schools was a major setback and foreshadowed more challenges to come. We conclude that, for one school, proximity to a Tetundominant urban area weakened families' perceived need for schooling in the national language. Another contributing factor in both withdrawals was that orientations from both NatCom and local MoE offices divided teachers' loyalties and left them unsure which to follow. It must also be acknowledged that the launch of the National Base Curriculum reform undoubtedly played a part in both schools' withdrawal.

Like many small development projects, reliance on external donor funding also imparted considerable vulnerability to the MLE program. REPETE 13¹⁰ was a network of local and global organizations that initially supported the MLE Program. Support from REPETE 13 lacked sustainability, since NGOs themselves cannot always rely on steady funding flows, and by 2016, support had dwindled to a point where the network was no longer active.

Vulnerability was also exposed early in the life of the MLE Program, when teacher training and materials development were still the focus of daily agendas. In 2015, two decree laws were proposed which would strengthen and clarify the legality of using National Languages in education. These laws benefited both the MLE Program and the National Base Curriculum development, which was also progressing. Subsequent parliamentary debates were heated and polarized along party lines, with detractors drawing upon earlier laws to support their claims that the MLE Program was unconstitutional, and supporters pointing to ambiguities in those same laws as underlying the nation's unsatisfactory education outcomes. Representatives from the MoE Base Curriculum reform team and the MLE Program were called before

Parliament to explain their respective programs and demonstrate their effectiveness. Satisfied, Parliament approved Decree Laws 3 and 4 of 2015, thus approving the new National Base Curriculum and giving legal force to the use of National Languages.

In 2014 and 2015, author 1 interviewed stakeholders and actors from various networks and asked them to recall and explain these parliamentary debates, after the dust had metaphorically settled. The interviews underlined the uncertain future of the MLE Program and the politicization of language-in-education. For example, an analyst for an anti-corruption watchdog group noted that the debates went beyond the National Languages to question the legitimacy of the Co-Official Languages themselves:

The thing is that [some members of parliament] view it from the political perspective. So, they politicize it, so the matter of the discussion is not on the educational matters, [...] but more on politics. The issue becomes more, 'oh then you hate Portuguese', or 'oh you are promoting the mother tongues, that means that you don't acknowledge Portuguese as your language.' J1, recorded in 2015. (Ross, 2016, item MR1-097)

Another episode illustrates the extent of political maneuvering around the language(s) of instruction. In 2018, the day before Parliament dissolved, its then-president allowed a proposal to revise Decree Laws 3 and 4. The success of this alteration would have effectively outlawed any non-Portuguese-medium instruction, threatening not just the MLE Program, but also the National Base Curriculum. Despite its undemocratic and clandestine provenance, the alterations were published as Decree Laws in their own right in the *Jornal da República* as legitimate legal revisions a few weeks later (Timor-Leste, 2018a, 2018b). This was in direct violation of a constitutional provision which allows a Parliament thirty days to debate and approve or reject all decree laws before their promulgation (Article 98). When a new Parliament was convened six months later, those members who did not walk out overwhelmingly passed a 'parliamentary resolution for the termination of validity' for the illegitimately promulgated amendments (Timor-Leste, 2018c, 2018d). This was the first time parliamentarians had invoked Article 98, and the whole episode indicates the strength of feeling actors on both sides ascribe to controlling the language of instruction.

Challenges: The power of neoliberal discourses from below

The influential political party Fretilin¹¹ regards multilingual education as an impediment to the re-establishment of the Official Languages and national unity (Sword-Gusmão, 2015: 114). Leach (2016)

notes the irony of this stance, as Fretilin's early literacy campaigns explicitly used local languages (not Tetun) to teach Tetun literacy (not Portuguese). The party's popular support throughout the independence struggle is often associated with its anti-colonial stance.

Fretilin's eschewal of the National Languages in favor of the Co-Official Languages indicates a shift in party language ideologies from the 1970s anti-colonial perception of literacy as *national* liberty to the modern neoliberal perception of literacy as *individual* liberty. That the Portuguese-educated 1975 generation has not been able to realize the dream of a Tetun-literate nation has undoubtedly soured their perceptions of the utility of National Languages and solidified the position of the colonial language as necessary for advancement. A director at UNESCO described these ideologies as born out of individual privilege and colored by a kind of survivor's bias:

Our politicians in the parliament, their arguments, their interpretation about education in Timor-Leste is only based on their background, based on their experience. They said, 'if, in the past we did not have a good education system, then we wouldn't be here today'. That was their argument. L1, recorded in 2015. (Ross, 2016, item MR1-060)

Another manifestation of neoliberalism in Timor-Leste is overt economic stratification by language competencies. The justification for the MLE Program centered on the argument that by improving literacy and numeracy, multilingual education then strengthens society by promoting health, wellbeing, good citizenship, stability, and social cohesion (NEC, 2010). These values do not lend themselves to explicit utility within a capitalist system. Socioemotional discourses are incompatible with the neoliberal turn in education, which relegates language and linguistic competence to personal attributes acquired in the pursuit of individual wealth. Timorese learners have experienced this linguistic stratification for centuries, and some understand current language policies and rights-oriented programs like the MLE Program as simply perpetuating this stratification:

It sounds good, it's supported by evidence, 'we need to have mother tongues', etcetera. With UNESCO, that started in [the] nineteen-fifties. But in Timor, the situation is like in India, where you have English-vernacular divide there, and here we have Tetun-, or Portuguese-, or English-[divide] and if you don't have any money to send your kids to [English or Portuguese schools], then just go to public school. If you are MPs, politicians, minister of education, etcetera, you could send your kid to the International School [...]. Once they finish you can send them to Australia [...]. So neoliberal language policy and planning takes place also in Timor. J2, recorded in 2015. (Ross, 2016, item MR1-057)

Desiderata: From interdependence to interconnectedness

Echoing Brown (2021), using the above-below-side model, we see evidence in Timor-Leste of the interdependence of actors, but not of the interconnectedness that would support program sustainability. Politically motivated opposition, often working hand in hand with development partners' language agendas, creates a sense of crisis and threatens the sustainability of language policy decisions. As a Timorese academic in education and public policy put it in an interview:

This kind of battle – or, I should say, play with time – in relation to language policy will always take place because, those in parliament, they don't understand language policy and planning. They may understand the implication of it but, well, when they talk about language policy and planning [it's] especially in relation to what language should be used in school. [But] they don't know, because these people send their kids to International Schools, where they learn English. J2, recorded in 2015. (Ross, 2016, item MR1-057)

For example, in 2023, the Fretilin-appointed Minister of Education again announced plans to establish Portuguese as the sole LOI. The plan was forestalled by Fretilin's election defeat but, if followed through, would have derailed both the National Base Curriculum and the MLE Program yet again.

Summary and Closing Remarks

In this chapter, we have outlined past colonial experiences which have shaped contemporary language policy processes in Timor-Leste, and we have shown how actors on the side and below changed the climate and created discursive space for the emergence of the MLE Program. In Figure 4.1, we have attempted to sketch a basic timeline of policy actions and events.

Extracting a narrative from the sum of all this activity is impossible without a temporal view that makes agents visible. The above-below-side framework of policy change trajectories makes actors and their impacts visible in ways that move beyond a view of policy development as a top-down, one-way process that is impermeable and occurring at a single moment in time. We also suggest that this framework disrupts received notions of centrality and peripherality and addresses the call from Heugh *et al.* (2021) to advance decolonial practices in (re)conceptualizing a sociolinguistics of the South.

The confluence – and conflict – of discourses comes to the fore when we look at the role of influential actors using Kosonen and Benson's (2021) framework. The Timorese Government initially set out above-to-below policy in the 2002 Constitution, with the MoE responsible for its implementation. Side actors became change agents when the

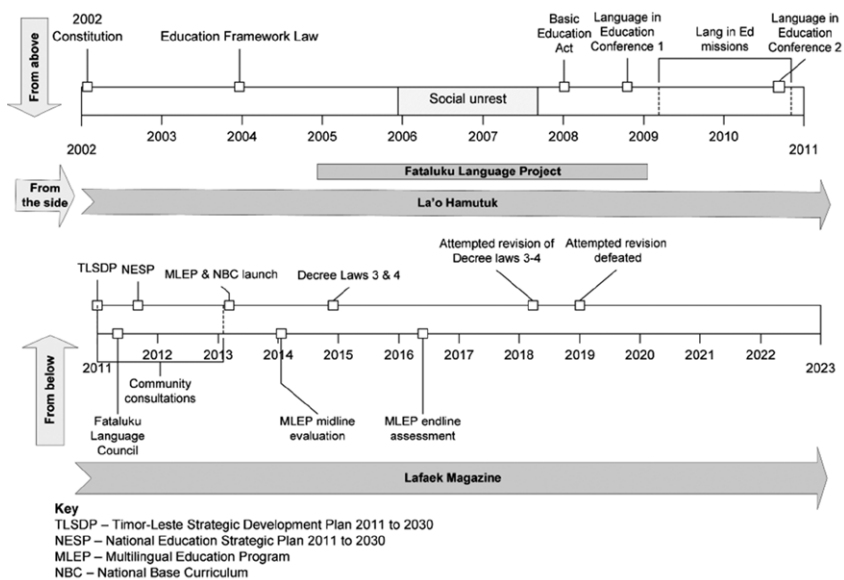


Figure 4.1 A timeline of policy actions and events, showing an application of the above-side-below framework of policy change directionality

National Languages were introduced as legitimate languages of learning and teaching in national education planning documents. A change-from-below trajectory was instantiated in *Lafaek* magazine's evolution from a grassroots language initiative to a nationally valued bilingual literacy and curriculum resource. The side-to-below trajectory of the Fataluku Language Project showed the interdependence of actors at many levels in the MLE Program's nascent phase. Finally, thanks to the tenacious transparency demands of side-to-above actor *La'o Hamutuk*, unconstitutional efforts to revise the Basic Education Act spectacularly backfired. The use of National Languages in basic education now has legal force in terms which will be difficult for any future government to overturn.

Overall, language-in-education policy in Timor-Leste has been instituted from above by people with power, but change has been mobilized by organizational and individual side and grassroots actors with power, influence, and expertise. This assessment aligns most closely with Model 4 (side and above to below) in Kosonen and Benson's policy change framework (2021: 45). Explanatory power lies in making visible the role of hitherto unexplored language policy actors and their underestimated influence on policy trajectories. Using the framework as an analytical lens reveals that there have been opportunities for dialogue, cooperation, and exchange between actors that have not materialized. There has been little appreciation of the creative energy and potential

emanating from grassroots projects and the ways they have enabled language policy to move forward (see also Alexander, 1992).

In Timor-Leste, these actors were engaged with language and education issues well before the start of the MLE Program. They and others who follow may yet achieve wider support for multilingual education, making it less politicized and more acceptable to the governments of the day. To this end, greater dialogue between language policy actors at all levels could represent a more productive and consensus-oriented approach to language policy development.

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Notes

- (1) Throughout this chapter, we use the term ‘Tetun’ to refer to this language. See Section 4.2 on varieties and nomenclature.
- (2) The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or DFAT, under its current ten-year Partnership for Human Development (PHD).
- (3) An admittedly problematic term which we discuss in Section 4.3.2.
- (4) Town-Tetun.
- (5) Timor-Leste is divided into 13 administrative areas called municipalities.
- (6) Here we use ‘the South’ to refer not only to low- and middle-income nations but to also spaces and people who have suffered from the consequences of capitalism and colonialism (Mahler, 2017; Santos, 2016).
- (7) The Ministry of Education has undergone several name changes as its portfolio has changed. In this chapter, we refer to it as the Ministry of Education or MoE.
- (8) *Centros de Aprendizagem e Formação Escolar* (School Learning and Teacher Training Centers).
- (9) In 2018, *La’o Hamutuk* revealed that MoE budgetary allocation to the CAFÉ schools amounted to three times the allocation per child in Government schools (<https://www.laohamutuk.org/educ/CAFE/18CafeTeEn.htm>).
- (10) *Rede Promosaun Edukasaun Multilingue ba Timor-Leste* (Network for the Promotion of Multilingual Education for Timor-Leste).
- (11) Fretilin (English: Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) was originally an influential pro-independence group and the diplomatic arm of the resistance.

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5 The Dual Role of Ethnic Basic Education Providers as Above and Below Actors in the Quest for Multilingual Education in Myanmar

Molly Kay, Non Sorn and Sam Marip

Abstract

ဟိုတ်နွှဲဝင်အတိတ်ကို၊ ပရေင်ချင်ကွာန်ကို၊ ပရေင်ရန်ဂစာန် ဂကောံရေင်တျင် ပရေင်ပညာကောန်ချင်အရေင်ဂမ္တိုင် (ပ-ည-ဒု-ရ) မပါလုပ်မံင် ပွဲလိဟ်ကောန်ဂကူ မနွံ ၁၀၀ ပြင်တအ်ကိုတဲ ပွဲမသိုဟ်ပိာ်ကရေက် လွှေင်ဒဒ် မူဝါဒအရေင်ဘာသာ စကာပွဲပရေင်ပညာကွဲနီချင်ဗွာ ဂ် တွဟ်ခြာနွံချင်တွဟ်သအာင်ရ။ သိုအဆင်ကွဲနီချင်မဂး ဘာတန်အလိုသီ စတန်သမိုင် စကာ လိက်ဗွာ မဗ္ဗုတ်လဝ် အရေင်ဘာသာကွဲနီချင်တဲ စိုပ်တန်သျှင်မဂး ပြင်သ့အာ လိက်အင်္ဂလိက်ရ။ ဣဏအံဝံ သွောတ်ပရေင်ပညာကောံအရေင်သအာင်လဇု ညးမကောံဂးရ။ ပွဲဘာတန်အလိုသီ ဗတောန် လိက်ကောန်ချင်အရေင် မွဲဘာသာ ပွဲကလေင်ဒ်ကျင်ပုန်ဂ် ဟုံလအ်ဏီရ။ ဘာသာလုတ် သေ့သွဟ်မံင်အိုတ်တအ်ဂ် ဗတောန်မံင် နကိုဘာသာဗွာဖိုဟ်ရ။

ကောန်ဌာ်ကောန်ချင်အရေင်တအ် ညံင်ပွဲဝံ အခေါင်ကတ်လုတ်ပညာ နွဲသွောတ်ပရေင်ပညာ ဒုင်သမိုင် အရေင်ပထမ (အရေင်ဘာသာမိ) ဗတောန်အရေင်ဘာသာမိ (နဘာသာအင်္ဂလိက် L1-based multilingual education) ဂ် ဟိုတ်နွဲမူဝါဒ ကောံ လွှေင်ကမ္မောန် ပ-ည-ဒု-ရ တအ် ဟေင်ရ။ စကာ သဘ်ဓရ် ကိုပ်သိုပ်ဇေဝ် ကောံ ဗေဝ်သန် (၂၀၂၁) တအ်တဲ သိုဟ်လဝ် ညးချီဒရာင် သိုဟ်ပရေင်ချီဒရာင် မဆက်စပ်ကို ပရေင်ပညာမန် ကောံ ပရေင်ပညာကောန်ဂကူကချေင်တအ်ရ။ ပွဲလိက်စံင်ပွဲ ပ-ည-ဒု-ရ မန် ကောံ ပ-ည-ဒု-ရ ကချေင် ဗိုပြင်သ်လို ချီဒရာင်ကျင် နဒဒ် ညးချီဒရာင် နွဲဘွတ် ဂစာန်ပလေဝ်ကျင်လဝ် သွောတ်ပရေင်ပညာ အလုံကွဲနီချင်ဂ်သွးဟုံက နဒဒ် ညးချီဒရာင် နွဲဘွတ်လုတု၊ ဘုံဒကဲ နနဲလိုကောန်နီတိုက်ကျင် ကိစ္စပရေင်ပညာဂ် စင်ခြင်သီကွဲလဝ်ရ။

တဲပုန် ပရေင်ဆက်စော့ အကြာ ပ-ည-ချ-ရ ကောံ ဂကောံမဟာမိတ်
မနွံပျဲချင်မူးချင် နာနာတအံင်လေဝ် သီကီပျီနီထွေးလဝ်ကိုရ။ ပရေင်အံင်ဇူး ကောံ
တင်ကောံဆော ပရေင်ပညာမနီ၊ သိုပရေင်ပညာကချေင်ဂို ဗွဲမသဲလး ဆက်စပ်မင်ကို
လွှေင်ကမောန်အနာဂတ် ဂကောံရေင်တူင် ပရေင်ပညာ ကောန်ချင်အရေင်ဂမိုင်
(ပ-ည-ချ-ရ) တအံ သိုအဆင်ဒေသ၊ သိုအဆင်ကိစ္စနီချင်ကိုရေင် နူကိုလိက်စင်ဏအံ
သိုဂိုဝ်သမ္ဘိဏာရအံ။ (*Abstract in Mon [mnw], a language of Myanmar,*
translated by Non Sorn)

Madung ka-up ai Myen ga hta n ga, kaga ga hpan 100 jan hte mahkri shawn nga ai Myen mungdan a labau, mung masa lam byin-yan hte amyu bawhpan mahta hpaji hpung ni a majaw Myen mungdan a hpaji masa lam hte seng ai ga hpan lam masan galai shai lam gaw masam maram sawk gawn na matu myit lawm hpa lawnglam rai nga ai. Myen Asuya jawng ni gaw mungdan madang hku nna lawu tsang hta Myen ga hpe madung mahta nna lahta tsang de English ga hpe grau jailang ai *hpang hkrat pru ai ga hpan lahkawng jailang sharin lamang (late-exit bilingual program)* hpe jailang ma ai. Kaga amyu baw hpan ni a ga ni hpe laksan sharin ginhpan langai hku nna sha sharin hpang ai mung nau n na shi ai re. Dai amyu baw hpan ni a ga hpan ni hpe jawng gawk kata na sharin lang ga hpan (languages of Instruction) hku n jai lang ma ai. Asuya n re ai amyu bawhpan mahta hpaji hpung ni gaw *Ginra Ga (Kanu Ga) Mahta Ga Hpan Hkum Hpaji Masa* (L1-based MLE policy) hpe ningshawng dat shakut shaja let mungdan kata jawngma hking kaba hpe shalat shapan ya nga ma ai. Ndai laika hta e Kosonen hte Benson (2021) a *lahta, makau, hte lawu na galai shai lam hting-rim (framework of change from above, below, and side)* hpe jailang nna Mon hte Wunpawng bawhpan mahta hpaji wuhpung ni a shakut shaja lam ni hpe mahkri shawn tang madun da ga ai. Ndai bawhpan mahta hpaji wuhpung ni gaw mungdan madang hta ga hpan hkum hpaji masa hpe lawu de na lahta de lung ai *lawu-lahta masa (bottom-up)* hku nna shakut nga nna, ginra madang hta gaw lahta kaw na lawu de matsun ai *lahta-lawu masa (top-down)*, hte makau kaw na shanglawm galaw ai (side actors) lailen hku nna shakut nga ai hpe maram lu ga ai. Shanhte a lawu, lahta, hte makau na hkrang shala shakut shaja ai lam hte, ginra madang, mungsang madang asuya n re ai wuhpung ni hte lata gindun shakut shaja ai lam ni hpe masam maram dinglik yu nna, Mon hte Wunpawng ni a hpaji masa lam mayak ni hte awngdang ai lawnglam ni, hte shanhte a ginra madang, mungdan madang matut galaw sa wa na magam lawnglam ni hpe myit sawn masam maram tang madun dat ga ai. (*Abstract in Jinghpaw [kac]*,¹ *a language of Myanmar, translated by Sam Marip*)

The analysis of language-in-education policy change in Myanmar is unique due to the history and politics of the country and the actions of ethnic basic education providers (EBEPs) associated with some of the over 100 languages spoken in the country. On the national level, government schools follow a late-exit bilingual program beginning in Burmese,

the dominant national language, and transitioning to English. Some government schools have begun to teach a few non-dominant languages (NDLs) as a subject, but none are used as official languages of instruction. Non-governmental EBEPs have been at the forefront of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) policy and implementation, supporting thousands of students across the country. This chapter applies the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework of policy to the actors and actions of EBEPs in the Mon and Kachin ethnolinguistic communities. The chapter analyzes the extent to which these EBEPs have acted as below (bottom-up) implementers of MTB-MLE nationally, as above (top-down) and as side actors locally. The chapter examines the EBEPs' actions as the below, top and side actors as well as discusses how they interact with local and international non-governmental partners. The chapter concludes by discussing the successes and challenges encountered in Mon and Kachin education and conceptualizes the future of EBEPs' work locally and nationally.

Introduction

In Myanmar, many hold an aspiration of federalism for government and education policy and practice (Kipgen, 2018; Ko *et al.*, 2024; South, 2021). Yet, as of this writing, federalism is still only an ideal for this country with over a hundred ethnic groups and their over one hundred languages.² Moreover, since the February 2021 *coup d'état*, the ruling government has sought to consolidate power in both governance and education (Myat *et al.*, 2023; Salem-Gervais *et al.*, 2024). Education has become a key topic of both pro- and anti-military supporters, further segregating the system based on which side communities take (Choo & Aye, 2022).

Education in Myanmar was segregated even before the coup, with government schools limiting first language-based education for non-Burmese students with minimal implemented formal education support. Burmese, also known as *Bamar sagar* or *Myanmar sagar*, is the dominant language of the country, spoken by an estimated 58% as a home language, and by an additional 17% as a L2 (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). The country and education system underwent a period of 'Burmanization' starting in 1962, in which government school students from all ethnic groups were taught only in Burmese and learned Burmese-centered history (Cameron, 2020; Ma Ma Sein, 1978; Salem-Gervais & Metro, 2012; Suante, 2022). Although some ethnic groups like the Karen created their own education systems after the end of colonialism in 1947 (KECD, 2025), Burmanization, among other reasons related to the absence of government schools and the right to self-determination of ethnic groups, led to the wider emergence of parallel education systems in the 1970s as ethnic resistance organizations (EROs)

created their own schools and education organizations (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016; Lall, 2020; Lall & South, 2013). These ERO-led education organizations later became known as ethnic³ basic education providers (EBEPs) and serve several hundred thousand students across the country (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016; South *et al.*, 2024; KECD, 2025).

This chapter reviews the state of multilingual education (MLE), or as preferred by actors in Myanmar, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)⁴ in northern and southeastern Myanmar. It analyzes the historical role of two of the longest-running EBEPs in Myanmar's history – the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) and the Kachin Education Department (KED) – and their mother tongue-based education programs implemented since the 1970s and across decades. These EBEPs serve relatively large ethnolinguistic groups. Of Myanmar's population of 55 million (UNFPA, 2025), slightly over one million are Mon, representing about two percent of the country's total population (Jenny, 2001) in southern and southeastern Myanmar.⁵ The Kachin, prominent in northern Myanmar, consist of seven linguistic groups: Jinghpaw, Lachid, Lhavo, Lisu, Nung, Rawang and Zaiwa (Kurabe, 2021).⁶ Jinghpaw, with 900,000 L1 speakers (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024), currently serves as a lingua franca and is the language used in multilingual education. We examine these actors according to the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework and exemplify how they are 'from below' (bottom-up) actors on a national level, as well as 'from above' (top-down) actors in the local situations of Mon and Kachin education. As we look at their relationship to other education providers and communities in their respective geographical areas of service, we complicate the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework and illuminate that one's role in education may be a matter of perspective. By understanding the diverging roles of Mon and Kachin education agencies, as well as the successes and challenges faced in Mon and Kachin education, this paper conceptualizes the future of their work both locally and nationally and provides a glimpse of how local actors from below and side can institute change beyond their own ethnolinguistic communities.

Multilingual education in the government education system

As with many other contexts, the Myanmar Ministry of Education (MoE) plays a top-down role in the development and implementation of multilingual education. To say that first language-based education does not exist in Myanmar would be to overlook the oppressive role it has taken in government schools with the use of Burmese as the main language of instruction, favoring Bamar people. The curriculum adds English as the L2, but does not completely phase out Burmese as the main language of instruction (Salem-Gervais & Raynaud, 2020; Thein

Lwin, 2002), although that may certainly be the goal. However, for a variety of reasons, including the lack of pedagogy promoting cross-linguistic transfer and teachers' low proficiency in English, Burmese remains prominent throughout the school system.

This is the only form of mother tongue-based multilingual education in government schools: a bilingual Burmese-to-English late-exit model 'attempt'. There is minimal inclusion of other ethnic languages as languages of instruction, at least, officially implemented. The national Local Curriculum Development program provides opportunities for some ethnic language communities to learn their mother tongue in an additional, language-focused class as co-created with Literature and Culture Committees (LCCs) (Salem-Gervais & Raynaud, 2020). For decades, teachers in ethnic states and more rural areas have informally translated lessons into students' more comfortable languages (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016). This was legalized recently under the Basic Education Law (2019) and National Education Law (2014, amended 2015), the latter of which, prior to its most recent revision in 2022, stipulated that ethnic languages could be used alongside Burmese as languages of instruction 'if there is a need' (2014, Article 43b). These laws have been significant for ethnic language-based MLE since there has been no specific constitutional amendment for the inclusion of ethnic languages in education since the former Constitution (1974, Article 152b), whose provisions were removed in 2008.

Many of Myanmar's laws support the development of ethnic languages, literature, and culture (Basic Education Law, 2019; Child Rights Law, 2019; Constitution, 2008; National Education Law, 2014, amended 2015), and the MoE supports this development (Basic Education Law, 2019, Article 14; Child Rights Law, 2019, 47e; National Education Law, 2014, Article 42b). However, it was not until the design of a Local Curriculum Development program stemming from the National Education Strategic Plan 2016–2021 that ethnic languages were officially included in the government curriculum. This was a novel program in Myanmar, with communities across the country welcoming its use of ethnic languages in government schools (Salem-Gervais & Raynaud, 2020).

In 2020, there was hope for more ethnic-inclusive MTB-MLE policy and EBEP support on a national scale. When the second National Education Strategic Plan was under development for 2021–2030, studies were funded to support MTB-MLE. One of these studies detailed a 5-year implementation plan for how Local Curriculum Development could evolve into an additive MTB-MLE for ethnic languages, as well as identifying key pathways for EBEPs and the national MoE to collaborate for national MTB-MLE accreditation while respecting EBEPs' decades of programs. Both EBEP-centered components were well received by the former MoE in December 2020, and discussions on policy and implementation were planned to resume in early 2021. However,

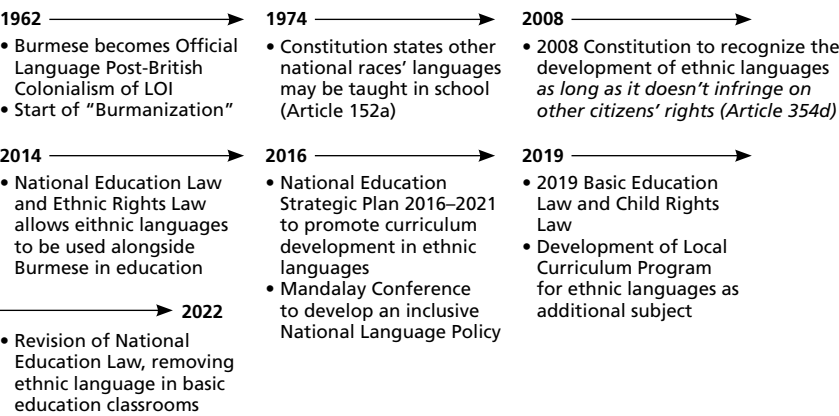


Figure 5.1 A timeline of national education policy developments in Myanmar

discussions were disrupted due to the February 2021 coup and have not been revisited since. A timeline of the history of national multilingual education policy decisions, which would all be characterized as coming from the ‘above’ level, is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Since 2021, two major government bodies have been implementing formal education nationally: (1) the military government, which controls the MoE and government schools, and (2) the National Unity Government (NUG), which has online schools and physical locations such as in liberated areas in Chin, Sagaing and the Myanmar–Thai border. Both currently use a similar curriculum, and thus, the same Burmese–English transitional model. Neither of the MoEs has recognized tangible, implementable provisions for ethnic-centered MTB-MLE in the national curriculum. While the military MoE has been stripping policy provisions relating to ethnic languages in schools (Salem-Gervais *et al.*, 2023), NUG MoE has entertained the idea of a federal education policy such as an Education Equivalency Framework (EEF) and reached out to EBEPs and their EROs in 2022 for their perspectives on what such an inclusive education policy would look like. Since the beginning of 2023, NUG has sought to develop their own national curriculum, though little has been publicized in their policies about incorporating ethnic languages as languages of instruction (Salem-Gervais *et al.*, 2024). For example, in the Statement of Basic Education Competency Standards for the Interim Period (December 2022, Version 2), English and Burmese are both included as dedicated subjects to prioritize communication skills (p. 2), but the instructional use of ethnic languages is not clearly mentioned.

The implementation of NUG’s top-down power is limited: while NUG developed accreditation guidelines for non-governmental schools to become recognized (Salem-Gervais *et al.*, 2024), there are few non-NUG-led

education bodies across the country that follow NUG policies and programs fully. Only NUG-funded and led schools, such as those in liberated areas of Sagaing and the Myanmar–Thai border, are required to fully comply with their policies; however, the extent of their compliance is unknown due to limited public monitoring data. Thus, it may be possible to consider NUG as functioning in part as a side actor rather than solely a top-down actor under the Kosonen and Benson framework. This framing would position them similarly to international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) or other international organizations (IOs) like United Nations’ organizations in other contexts, whose education policies are seen as strong recommendations but not necessarily enforceable.

The shift in NUG’s role from top-down actor to side actor between its establishment in 2021 and now is most noticeable regarding their relationship with EBEPs. At the beginning of the coup in 2021, there was more collaboration between NUG and the larger EBEPs, with multiple high-level policy discussions carried out between key policymakers for federalized education. However, as time passed, these collaborative talks diminished, and many EBEPs, including two of the largest EBEPs in Mon and Kachin, began strengthening their own curricula and higher education institutions in late 2022. These educational developments, such as the new Kachin curriculum and Mon National College, will be further detailed in the following sections. Among many other reasons, including NUG’s limited implementation for ethnic languages as LOI at schools, NUG’s side position may explain why non-governmental bodies such as EBEPs do not fully adhere to NUG’s policies and instead continue forward with their own EBEP-curriculum and MTB-MLE policies.

Ethnic Basic Education Providers and their role in multilingual education

On a national scale, EBEPs appear to represent the will of their ethnic communities rather than the will of the national government. Their bottom-up programs create a necessary space for ethnic languages to be taught as main languages of instruction, as they are *de facto* the largest education provider of formal school in many conflict-affected areas. EBEPs can be found in almost every state and region, with the oldest EBEPs in Kachin, Karen, and Mon States serving hundreds of thousands of students in a language they understand (Johnston, 2016; Jolliffe & Mears, 2016). Other ethnic groups, including the Karenni, Kayan, and Shan also have EBEPs that teach MTB-MLE curriculum using their ethnic communities’ L1s (Dekker *et al.*, 2018, as mentioned in Lall, 2020; Jolliffe & Mears, 2016).

EBEP curricula vary depending on the organization, with some using their own curricula and others using a modified EBEP-MoE curriculum. However, a commonality across EBEPs is that they implement a

trilingual MLE program: ethnic L1 (ethnic regional language), Burmese (official language, however a contentious language of instruction since 2021), and English (international language). In these programs, the L1 chosen for instruction is often the regional language of the state, with Kachin EBEPs using Jinghpaw, Mon EBEPs using Mon, and Karen EBEPs using S'gaw Karen. Many of the larger EBEPs have students using other L1s, and not all ethnic languages are currently represented at school. Smaller, community-based or church-based EBEPs tend to teach in the non-dominant L1 found in their community rather than the regional language, though implementation varies.

EBEPs and their MTB-MLE programs are unique to their specific states and community contexts. This chapter will look at two contexts, Mon and Kachin, and illuminate the practices and policies of MTB-MLE while identifying their varied roles in each context. The final section will pull together our analysis using the Kosonen and Benson framework.

The Mon Education Movement

The present-day Mon education movement can be seen as a continuation of efforts initiated by Mon-speaking Sangghas (Buddhist monks) before and during British rule with consistent community support. The movement also involved politico-religious actors like the All Ramonnya⁷ Mon Association, one of whose members was assigned to be the head of Mon education in 1946 to support Mon literacy teaching at government-aided schools (Kaowao Newsgroup, 2023). By the time then-Burma gained independence in 1948, the teaching of Mon literacy and its use as a temporary medium of instruction was allowed, even though national education policy was promoting Burmese as a primary language of instruction in all grades of schooling (Ma Ma Sein, 1978). There were times when Mon language was taught as a subject up to Grade 7 at 120 state-subsidized schools.

Along with independence came the outbreak of a civil war, intensified by the 1962 military coup. Fighting made life extremely difficult in Mon areas, and schooling became almost impossible in many rural and remote villages. The coup caused the centralization of state education, combined with assimilationist language-in-education policy that promoted the Burmese language and culture as a 'unifier' for the diverse groups in Myanmar. In this context of intense armed conflicts and assimilationism, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) operated a Mon National School system, later placed under the oversight of a steering committee the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC). As further established below, MNEC and its parent organization NMSP acted as an actor from above to bring the Mon language into education, often in response to far-above actions imposed by state power holders. The timeline in Figure 5.2 shows the evolution of MNEC and Mon

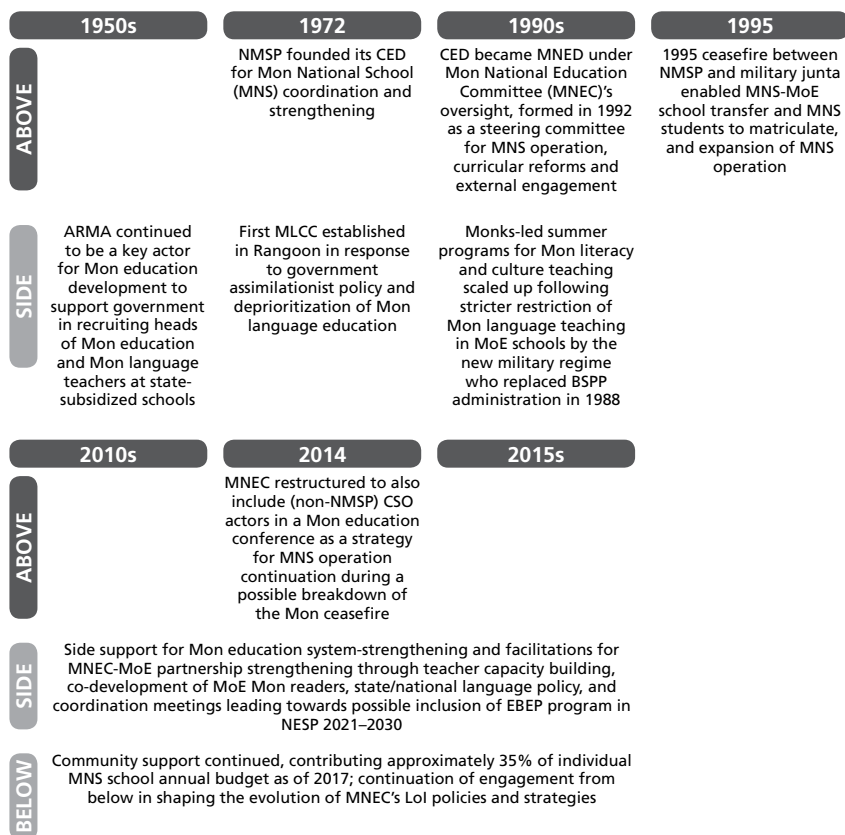


Figure 5.2 A timeline of Mon multilingual education

schooling along with positioning the Mon community as below actors, mobilized and supported through actions from the side – near and far.

Change from above responding to change from ‘far above’

Although education was not their priority or expertise at the outset, some leaders of NMSP took the position of above actors. NMSP's involvement in education responded to two interconnected aspects of the wider political landscape of post-independence Myanmar. First, heightened fighting had resulted in massive displacements, declines in investment in and access to education, and prevalent economic hardships leaving most conflict-affected Mon communities in need of educational support. Second, under the one-party rule of U Ne Win's Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) beginning in 1962, separate funding for leadership of Mon education ceased; many Mon language teachers were assigned to teach Burmese, and those who had qualifications lower than seventh grade were asked to retire.

NMSP thus founded its Central Education Department (CED) in 1972, based in its key controlled territories (MNEC, 2022). CED was tasked both to support existing Mon National Schools (MNSs) established by the communities and to set up new MNSs in areas where there was no formal schooling. Township/district teacher associations were formed to collaborate with NMSP education officers. Following the 1988 uprising and yet another military coup, about 1,300 Mon youths came to NMSP-controlled areas to join the resistance (Smith *et al.*, 2020). The participation, leadership, and contributions of some of these young people strengthened the operations of CED, which in 1992 became the Mon National Education Department (MNED) under the supervision of the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC).

The MNEC was formed to develop policies related to Mon education, steer the operations of MNED, and lead external engagements with a range of education stakeholders including international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and other EBEPs in the region. There was no standard curriculum nor were there textbooks used consistently across all MNSs until MNEC initiated a formalization process in 1993. MNEC textbooks were developed in close alignment with the central MoE curriculum except for the subject of history, to avoid confusion between the Mon narrative and that of the 'state'.

The 1990s were characterized by stronger political coalitions formed across the Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs) and targeted response from the junta resulting in widespread human rights violations during which tens of thousands of Mon civilians fled their homes and became involuntarily refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs). In June 1995 a ceasefire was reached, and the bilateral truce included education-specific agreements to allow MNS secondary students to sit the national matriculation exams and to make school transfer between the two systems possible. While the Mon curriculum was used at the primary level, MoE textbooks were used for most subjects at the middle and high school levels. This arrangement facilitated the promotion of MTB-MLE in Mon, Burmese, and English and the possibility for Mon students to move into the MoE's state education system.

In 1995 it was also agreed that Mon would be taught as a subject outside regular teaching hours at MoE schools hosted in Mon communities. This indicates that NMSP/MNEC advocacy went beyond MNSs to include all Mon students. Where there were informal arrangements with local MoE schools, MNEC provided financial and technical assistance in hiring teachers to teach Mon language, literacy, and history lessons on top of the MoE curriculum. For example, there are reports of MNEC recruiting about 150 teachers to teach Mon language and history at 95 MoE schools (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016). The 1995 ceasefire agreement, according to Lall and South (2013), facilitated growth of the MNEC system and allowed it to broaden its operations into areas that were previously unreachable.

Unfortunately, the 1995 ceasefire did not resolve conflicts, nor did it eliminate human rights violations against Mon people (Smith *et al.*, 2020). Following breakdown of the agreement in 2010, side actors were brought in to ensure continuation of the MNS operations, as described more in the next section.

The truce was resumed in 2012 with NMSP signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2018 with the then semi-civilian government of Myanmar. During this time, education became a priority in the national reform agenda with the launching of a Comprehensive Education Sector Review in late 2012, enactment of the National Education Law (NEL) in 2014, and its amendments in 2015 leading to the rollout of the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (NESP). While there was little action from above in favor of more serious recognition of the EBEPs, under the NEL each ethnic language could be formally taught as a subject and used as a ‘classroom language’ along with Burmese at MoE schools via a local curriculum arrangement. MNEC contributed to the development of materials and teacher training, facilitated mostly from the side. This transition period also saw MNEC expanding its interaction and engagement with national above actors through participation in MoE trainings and coordination meetings (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016), and the drafting of state-level language policy and principles for development of national language policy through UNICEF’s language education social cohesion initiative (Lo Bianco, 2016). As partnership between MNEC and MoE was further formalized through the planning of programs to be integrated into the next NESP for 2021–2030 academic years, the political landscape in Myanmar underwent a major shift in 2021 onwards.

Change from the side

Being the key bearers of knowledge and expertise in Mon language and culture, Mon Sangghas (monks) have been consistent side advocates for education in and through Mon since pre-colonial times, as mentioned above. Under the British era, the monks joined forces with Mon intellectuals to establish the first of its kind Mon civil society organization (CSO) the All Ramonnya Mon Association (ARMA) to mobilize the communities for Mon education. ARMA assisted government officials in deploying the heads of Mon education and in recruiting teachers to teach Mon at state-subsidized schools up to the 1950s (MNEC, 2022). The strong commitment of the Sangghas to the Mon national education movement evolved into the formation of Mon Literature⁸ and Culture Committees (MLCCs). MLCCs were first established in 1972 for the Rangoon (now Yangon) area, then capital of Myanmar, by a similar joint effort which included university/college students and faculty (Burma News International, 2022). Following the military takeover in 1988 with the increasingly strict restrictions placed

upon Mon language teaching in MoE schools, Mon Summer Literacy and Buddhist Culture (MSLBC) trainings (Lall & South, 2013) were conducted under the monks' leadership.⁹

It is noteworthy that these efforts were all part of the same Mon national/community education movement, which often operated in a covert manner in the context of long-standing civil war and the state-sponsored project of assimilation. What brought side actors such as the Sangghas and MLCCs closer to MNEC was the abrupt termination of the 1995 truce in 2010, when swift action was required to detach MNSs located in state-controlled areas, placing them under temporary administration of the MLCC until the ceasefire resumed in 2012. Given the fragility of any ceasefire deals and peace processes in Myanmar, Mon education leaders kept the option open for MNS's possible delink with the Mon armed resistance. At a 2014 Mon education conference, the MNEC steering committee was restructured to include religious, CSO, and private actors. This multi-sector cooperation also enabled the establishment of Mon National College in 2022, building upon MNEC's higher education program that has operated since 2000.

The evolution of Mon education was shaped by yet another force from the side – national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies. The target of early side actors was to educate the children and community members in refugee camps, relocation sites and other conflict-affected areas in Mon regions. International technical support in addressing language-in-education issues came with an education conference convened in 2002, which explored the teaching and use of languages in the EBEP curriculum (Thein Lwin, 2002). The shifting political dynamics in Myanmar during the 2010s enabled side actors to become increasingly involved with EBEPs including MNEC. For example, based on its previous work in supporting the Mon education system, World Education's Project for Local Empowerment (PLE) provided both financial and technical assistance to MNEC in a range of domains from institutional development to advocacy for wider recognition of Mon Education. When the PLE project concluded in 2017, new INGO partnerships were formed to implement a capacity development program to provide staff professional development for MTB-MLE systems strengthening.

Unfortunately, the continued lack of official acknowledgement from the national Myanmar government above (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016) means that EBEPs such as MNEC are effectively barred from stable and sustainable sources of public funding. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the most recent coup of 2021, heightened political and economic crises have aggravated the preexisting challenges around MNS sustainability, warranting long-term and flexible international funding in addition to bottom-up contributions from the community at home and abroad.

Change from below

It is well established that the Mon communities and parents have been very supportive of Mon education.¹⁰ Communities on average provided 35% of the funding needed to operate MNSs including the salaries of the teachers. In recent years Mon people from all walks of life within Myanmar and abroad have shown their solidarity by becoming members of the Mon Education Support Group, which was established in 2019 by MNEC as a fundraising initiative (Human Rights Foundation of Monland, 2020).¹¹

Although community feedback and concerns are not always adequately represented in the education reform and development agendas put forward from above and the side (Lall & South, 2018), once activated they can lead to effective breakthroughs in local conflict resolution. One example is a case study presented by World Education Thailand (2017) on how a MNEC community survey resulted in the participation of MNS teachers in co-managing and marking state middle school completion tests with their MoE counterparts to ensure the continuity of high school entry for MNS students through nationally recognized exams. Nonetheless, ongoing grassroots-level awareness raising is essential to ensure more comprehensive and sustainable MTB-MLE planning and implementation in Mon regions. While the teaching of and through Mon at MNSs has enjoyed strong community support (Lall & South, 2018; Jolliffe & Mears, 2016), misconceptions about the early introduction of additional languages (i.e. Burmese as L2 and English as L3) likely accelerating language acquisition persist, often resulting in unrealistic fluency expectations for young learners in these languages.

Actors Influencing Language in Education in Kachin Regions

In this section, critical actors that influence language-in-education affairs in the Kachin context are explored. Some actors play more than one role as they can be both actors from the top and from the side, or actors from the side and from the bottom at the same time, while others consistently play one critical role as actors from the side. Figure 5.3 illustrates the timeline of actions that can be identified in the Kachin context. Please note that the national historical events described in the Mon case study apply here as well.

Language and political landscape of Kachin regions

Throughout the different rules of the Bamar-centric government since independence from Britain in 1948, the Burmese language has been the main medium of education, government, trade, and business (South & Lall, 2016). Bamar-centric domination, which was framed

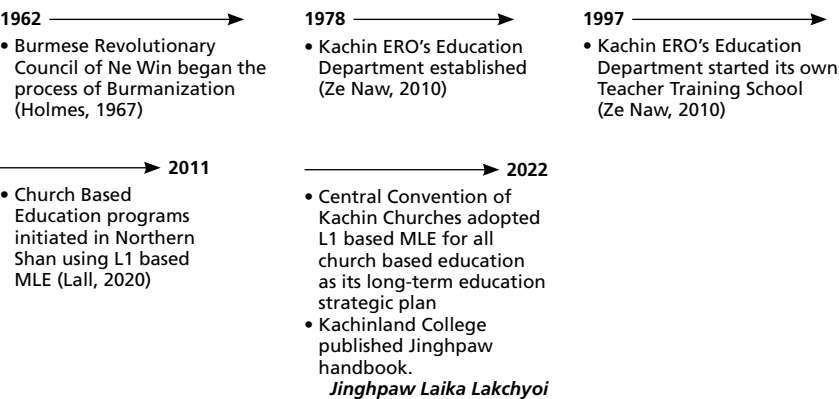


Figure 5.3 A timeline of Kachin multilingual education

as Burmanization (Holmes, 1967; Houtman, 1999; Mang, 2023), had a great impact on the Kachin regions, especially in education where the main medium of instruction was Burmese even though almost no one used it. The content of the curriculum was solely constructed on Burmese culture, religion, and narratives. Burmanization challenged all young Kachin students in terms of learning outcomes and educational engagement to the point where large numbers of students dropped out.

In response, the struggle for Kachin education moved forward on several fronts beginning in 1978. Among them were education movements led by the Education Department under the primary Ethnic Revolution Organization (ERO) in the Kachin region and Church Based/Community Based Education (CBE) programs. The Education Department of the Kachin ERO was established in 1978 to provide education services to the school-age children in their territories and reformed in 1992 as a more institutionalized education department of the revolutionary government (Ze Naw, 2020). This Kachin department started its own Teacher Training School in 1997 as the department became a more essential education provider after the ceasefire agreement of 1994. When the civil war resumed in 2011, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) flooded to Kachin areas (Lall, 2020). Around the same time, the Kachin churches initiated CBE programs to provide contextualized, higher quality education, as people were deeply discontented with the state education system, which was viewed as ineffective and damaged with rote learning practices and Bamar-centric curriculum (Lall, 2020).

These initiatives emerged to provide contextualized education programs using a more localized language policy through an MTB-MLE approach. These actors attempted to provide basic education in the

language used by most Kachin students, Jinghpaw, with relevant local content. However, as noted above, the ethnic Kachin community consists of seven different linguistic groups, so the question of which language(s) should be used as the main medium of instruction has become socially and politically critical.

Current actors from above, below, and the side

The dual role of KED, the Kachin ERO Education Department

Since 1978, the Kachin ERO education department (KED) could be regarded as one of the main actors from above in the Kachin regions, especially where they practice their own governance system. Their new education initiatives are designed to be relevant to their sociopolitical context in which language is one of the most important factors alongside learning content and concepts. As previously noted, Jinghpaw was chosen for use as the L1 due to its status as lingua franca among the seven languages of the Kachin, but also due to its linguistic readiness (level of development) and accessibility. Jinghpaw has already been used as an official language in most significant institutions, such as Baptist churches and Kachin leadership organizations. In the past, Jinghpaw was taught as an additional language subject at the primary level and as a social studies subject at the secondary level, while most subjects were from the Myanmar government curriculum using Burmese textbooks (Ze Naw, 2020). However, under the new language and education initiative in Kachin state, Jinghpaw is used as L1 in the learning process to construct student learning and knowledge production in the language they are most familiar with. By deviating from the former Burmese-based curriculum, KED plays the role of actor from above in the Kachin regions. KED can be perceived as an actor with a dual role, since in the context of Myanmar it can be regarded as a critical actor from the side, due to its multifaceted contribution to the development of language-in-education policy and practice. Especially in this case where the Myanmar government has failed in its responsibility to provide contextualized education, KED plays a critical side role in developing educational initiatives that provide access to education to thousands of students in the Kachin region. KED also influences the perspectives of other actors and stakeholders to consider language-in-education policy not only an educational matter but also a critical aspect of nation-building (Sumlut, 2024).

The dual role of the churches

The church and community-based education movement has also played a critical role in language-in-education policy efforts in the Kachin regions. Interestingly, this movement also plays a dual role, this time acting from the side and from below. The Central Convention

of Baptist churches, which acts as a governing body for hundreds of churches in the Kachin regions, acts from the side by enforcing Jinghpaw as lingua franca. Meanwhile, the churches and their members could be seen as actors from below who use Jinghpaw as the main language of ministry and services.

In fact, it was the churches and community members who started the movement of MTB-MLE in Northern Shan in 2011. These church-based education programs were pioneers in advocating for and practicing multilingual education using Jinghpaw as L1 in the Kachin context (Ze Naw, 2020). They developed their own primary education curriculum based on Jinghpaw as L1 (Lall, 2020; Ze Naw, 2020). In 2022, the Educational Department of the Central Convention of Kachin Churches also decided to adopt MTB-MLE as one of the main educational approaches for churches across the Kachin regions as part of their long-term church-based education strategic plan.

Other actors from the side: Kachin NGOs and International NGOs

In addition to the Baptist churches and their church schools, there are local communities, local educational institutions, some Kachin non-governmental organizations and international non-government organizations that play the role of actors from the side. The local educational institutions and NGOs in the Kachin regions play a vital role in supporting MTB-MLE in church and community schools as they provide technical and financial support. These actors from the side work together as an education initiative collective to provide teacher capacity development, school support, teaching and learning materials development, curriculum review and development, research, and advocacy (Lall, 2020). Moreover, international NGOs provide funding and technical support to Kachin NGOs so they can support the development and implementation of multilingual education in the Kachin regions. The contributions and support of the local and international NGOs as actors from the side help to increase the momentum of the transformation of schools into Jinghpaw-based multilingual education.

Other actors from the side: Higher education institutions

Parallel to the language-in-education initiatives of the basic education sector by non-state or community-based organizations, higher education institutions in the Kachin regions also act from the side to promote Jinghpaw as lingua franca and medium of instruction. There are about nine such higher educational institutions in Kachin regions offering tertiary level academic education for post-secondary students. All these institutions employ Jinghpaw language as their main medium of instruction, while a few of them incorporate English alongside Jinghpaw in a bilingual approach. Unfortunately, academic

materials, research reports, and articles written in Jinghpaw are so rare that they are not yet sufficient to conduct academic programs; most rely on materials written in English. This means that students must adapt by translanguaging. Using Jinghpaw for most of the communications in the classroom while reading the learning materials and writing their academic assignments papers in English has become normal practice in these higher education institutions.

Fortunately, Kachinland College has published its own Jinghpaw Handbook, *Jinghpaw Laika Lakchyo*, to fill the linguistic needs for higher educational academic settings while contributing to preserving the language. New Jinghpaw words have been developed for present-day terms and vocabulary (Palawng & Marip, 2022). The publishing of this handbook demonstrates the agency of scholars to in turn facilitate the agency of teachers to conduct effective academic teaching and learning activities using Jinghpaw. Moreover, there are a few higher education institutions such as Kachin Theological Seminary and Naushawng Development Institute that focus on producing academic research papers, articles, and research reports in Jinghpaw. These higher education institutions intend for the published articles and research reports to be used by scholars, teachers and students for their higher educational studies and research. This requires serious commitment, as such publications require technical expertise and adequate funding. Nevertheless, all these efforts – employing Jinghpaw as the main medium of instruction in higher education courses, publishing a Jinghpaw handbook, and publishing academic articles and research reports in Jinghpaw – demonstrate the impact these side actors have on the development process of Kachin.

Kachin education: Concluding thoughts

In the case of the Kachin regions, some critical actors are playing a dual role while others are consistently playing one role that contributes to implementing Jinghpaw as L1 in MTB-MLE and/or as lingua franca in the Kachin regions. KED acts as an actor from above by making decisions about Jinghpaw as L1 in their new education initiatives for the schools and students in the regions where they govern. At the same time, KED can be seen as acting from the side as it provides educational services to the public in the areas where the national Myanmar government is failing to provide services. The churches, the community-based schools, local and international NGOs, and non-state higher education institutions are all acting from the side to support Kachin initiatives technically and financially. The church communities can be perceived as actors from below, as they are the key implementers and beneficiaries of Jinghpaw-based MLE. The actors influencing language-in-education affairs in the context of Kachin regions come from above,

from below and from the side to develop education that is relevant to Kachin region's linguistic and cultural context.

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering Kosonen and Benson's model, the role of ethnic basic education providers (EBEPs) is not singular. The Kachin case proposes that a network of Kachin education providers plays a significant role in MTB-MLE promotion and development from above, from below, and from the side in their own region. Similarly, the Mon case shows how ethnic basic education partners in Myanmar can, and often do, operate from all directions to support MTB-MLE in the regional context.

On a national level, EBEPs serve as both side and below actors of multilingual education, providing mother tongue-based education services to their communities where the national government(s) do not. Both MNEC and KED are education departments founded and led by their own people. They seek to address the needs of their ethnolinguistic communities resulting from decades of oppression. EBEPs have historically used the ethnic languages as the medium of instruction for their students, with MNEC and KED addressing the gap to provide quality education through more inclusive programming. The strong grassroots support for ethnic-led education and awareness of MTB-MLE lends strength to the EBEPs and explains how they have continued to be successful implementers of education in their own languages for decades. In Kachin, the support for grassroots MTB-MLE is so powerful that new MTB-MLE schools emerge yearly led by community efforts and partnerships across Kachin and Northern Shan states. Similarly in Mon, the financial and capacity support from communities has been consistent, even throughout the upheavals of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup, with new education programs for basic and higher education on the horizon.

These grassroots efforts and successes have strengthened a network for MTB-MLE champions and technical experts in EBEPs to serve as side actors. Many individuals from both large and small EBEPs have collaborated with international organizations to promote MTB-MLE within their own organizations and at the government level in Myanmar and neighboring countries. As the Mon case showed, EBEPs working as 'from above' and 'from the side' actors allow them to identify both political and practical needs for MTB-MLE, even though the scarcity of sustainable recognition and funding makes implementation difficult. Smaller EBEPs as seen in Kachin and Northern Shan often act as side actors for the larger, ethnic resistance organization (ERO)-led EBEPs like the KED. These smaller EBEPs can implement MTB-MLE more efficiently than larger organizations since their implementation areas are smaller, allowing them to build long-term capacity development more

effectively without the barriers of national ERO policies that the larger EBEPs have to contend with.

Thus, EROs and their EBEPs also implement MTB-MLE as above actors at the regional level, or as postulated in the Mon study, they are actors from 'above' regionally and 'under the above' of the national government. With Myanmar governance having multiple actors and layers due to the positionality of a national government and additional ethnic-led governments, it can be argued that the Mon and Kachin's 'above under the above' role may have shifted towards a true 'above' actor as of the last few years. In the past, the desire of EBEPs to align with the MoE curriculum was centered on the matriculation, recognition, and validation of student learning outcomes. Over the last few years, both Mon and Kachin education groups have sought out international accreditation, even developing networks between ethnic service providers for their own, ethnic-centered accreditation. Furthermore, the national MoE, even before the State Administration Council (SAC) formed after 2021, could never truly compel the EBEPs to align with the national curriculum in ERO territories. The National Unity Government (NUG) may have slightly more influence in ERO territories than the SAC perhaps in part due to their proposed federalist model, which could allow for more regional autonomy. However, while EBEPs have individually engaged in projects to align with each other, and NUG is more likely to hold discussions with the EROs under their framework for inclusive federalism, there is no binding agreement nor is there a body to enforce implementation. In contrast, the laws that the EROs have for their education departments hold direct power over the future of ethnic education, and it has been clearer now since 2021 that their decisions need not align with any national MoE. This is evident with KED's development of the new Kachin education curriculum, with its own curricular standards designed to align with international practices for all subjects, not just Jinghpaw as a separate subject. For the Mon, the strengthening of the Mon National College and continued shift towards Mon-developed curriculum also reflects the agentive power from above that they hold.

The oscillating roles of the EBEPs as above, side, or below actors are most visible in their negotiations with the MoE(s) and the attempted enforcement of national policies. While negotiating for transfer agreements between the MoE and MNEC during the bilateral truce in the 1990s, the MoE held the 'above' position, yet the concession to allow for Mon language-based education was incorporated into the curriculum. When the MoEs have more recently consulted EBEPs for both the development of the Federal Democracy Charter and the National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030, it was the MoE(s), not the EBEPs, who considered concessions to change their curriculum and laws. While the ability of the EBEPs to influence national policy may have begun as a traditional grassroots campaign, their choice to walk away from

discussions with the MoE does not preclude them from continuing to develop their own education program and governance. Their undeniable effect on shaping politics through their presence (or removal) can be seen in the development of the United Nationalities Federal Council and their influence in the 2016 Constitution draft, which included a provision for the development of schools outside the state sector (Article 32, as mentioned in Bulmer, 2022). This oscillation between acting from below and acting from above can be credited in some way to the nature of ERO-territories, which are non-governmental and somewhat self-sustaining, and to their relationship to the national government.

The context of prolonged conflict and desire for self-determination has also catalyzed this unique positioning of EBEPs and their EROs for supporting and strengthening MTB-MLE. The Mon community's natural progression of support for MTB-MLE illuminates how teaching and learning in ethnic languages builds the educational and workforce capacity of the next generation. By promoting multilingualism rather than a single ethnic language, there is an implied value in peacebuilding through the development of skills to communicate with people from different cultures and backgrounds. However, MTB-MLE programming can also be considered to strengthen ethnic nationalist goals to promote certain dominant ethnic languages. Such can be considered with the Kachin model, in which Jinghpaw – the dominant Kachin language – is the chosen language of instruction in MTB-MLE programs over the other languages. Fortunately, there have been shifts in policy over the last four years, with Kachin leaders incorporating the development of other Kachin languages for MTB-MLE curriculum in their strategic plans and new curriculum policy frameworks – although the practical development of curriculum materials and teacher training has not yet been implemented.

Application of the Kosonen and Benson framework to language-in-education policy in Myanmar elucidates the complexities, particularly for contexts in which self-determined federalist models of education have naturally emerged. If Myanmar were to become fully Federalist, it is possible that the ERO-led EBEPs would be solidified as the key above-level actors under the national government: the 'above under the above'. Yet, the Kachin and Mon models indicate that no matter the future, there will always be local actors from below and from the side to push for more changes in education policy, language access, and curriculum design. However, even in ERO-controlled education, non-dominant languages still need more technical, financial, and political support to thrive in education.

Understanding the history and complex positions of these actors illuminates the pathways to strengthen quality education and access to it through MTB-MLE. Due to the emergence of two national MoEs, side actor advocacy by INGOs, technical advisors for MTB-MLE, and inclusive ethnic language policies must engage both governmental

entities, NUG and SAC. Both EBEP and community members must be involved in the advocacy, prioritizing both their invaluable input and their physical safety. Successful advocacy will create a foundation for the national support and expansion of inclusive education beyond conflict. This is a long-term strategy, and the most politically minded.

To address immediate concerns of access to education in a language that students are more comfortable in, there must be continued, long-term financial and technical support to EBEPs. Like the advocacy directed at NUG and SAC, the EROs and their EBEPs will also need targeted side actor advocacy and support to sustain and expand MTB-MLE beyond using only dominant ethnic languages as learners' first languages. Supporting the development of EBEP-to-EBEP networks may allow for communities to share knowledge and advance contextualized methods for implementing MTB-MLE. While there have been concerns about donors and international organizations building relationships with EBEPs due to their connections with EROs, EBEPs are at the forefront as implementers and advocates for MTB-MLE, with hundreds of schools across the country supporting hundreds of thousands of students. They will need to procure more funding for their MLE programs, as well as technical support for enhancing their curriculum and teacher training for their long-term sustainability and continuous capacity development.

Expanding the advocacy of actors from above, as well as donor and technical networks, is paramount for quality education to be developed through accessible and sustainable MTB-MLE. As EBEPs continue to bolster their communities through MTB-MLE practices, the future of Myanmar is being built on multilingualism.

Notes

- (1) Jinghpaw is the preferred spelling for the [kac] language in Myanmar. Internationally, 'Jingpho' is used more widely, e.g. in *Ethnologue* (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024).
- (2) All autochthonous languages other than Burmese/Bamar sagar (the dominant language) are generally referenced as 'ethnic languages' in Myanmar's official policy and practice. While we recognize that all ethnolinguistic groups have ethnicity, we will use 'ethnic' to refer to languages spoken by non-Bamar ethnic groups and will name the specific languages being referenced.
- (3) 'Ethnic' in this case refers to people from non-dominant groups who run their own school systems using their own languages.
- (4) Unlike others in this volume, this chapter uses 'mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)' because it is a generic term in Myanmar for all programs using more than one language for teaching and learning.
- (5) There are also a considerable number of Mon people in neighboring Thailand and a diaspora across different continents (Jenny, 2001).
- (6) The language names here follow the common Kachin practice in Myanmar. *Ethnologue* (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024) names these languages as follows: Anong [nun], Jingpho [kac], Lacid [lsi], Lhao Vo [mhx], Lisu [lis], Rawang [raw] and Zaiwa[atb]. Nung in the narrative refers to the 'Anong' [nun] language in Northern Myanmar and other languages of the region.

- (7) *Ramonnya* is an alternative and more ancient term for ‘Mon’ now used to refer more to the land and its people than to the language.
- (8) ‘Literature’ includes the notions of language and literacy.
- (9) To improve coordination and collaborations among these programs, All Mon Region Association of Mon Literature and Buddhist Culture Education was later formed in 1998.
- (10) Jolliffe and Mears (2016) observed that this has been quite prevalent across many EBEP contexts.
- (11) As of August 2022, 2,657 individuals had registered for membership; the target is to recruit 100,000 regular donors to the Mon education sustainability fund, and as of 2024, the group had collectively received approximately 70 million kyat (35,000 USD) (Mon Education Support Group, personal communication 2024).

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6 Teacher Agency and Synergistic Actions Among the Top-Side-Bottom Actors in the Philippines

Maria Mercedes Arzadon and Fernigil Colicol

Abstract

Pegukit dig saptir kini dineg sekeg neg memintulu` dig pegulaula neg pemetad dig pemintulu` pebian dig lain lain kitelu`ay dig benua Pilipinas, pelayu` dig daan misunaan nungag launan pemetad sumpat bu` miglapus bunu guluan. Diin dapit gembaba`, penengaw sungag memintulu` pebianan adun dunig megamiten bu` embaalen diin dapiten. Launan pektu`un dinga pemetad ma` nunga kitelu`ay di pemintulu`an dinga getaw di guluan, gilidan bu` di gembaba` ndi` maita`. Pebian dig itnugrapik pektu`un, maita` dig saptir kini sa` andunig pigulaula bu` binaal nu ngag memintulu` dig pekpetulu` nailan lain lain kitelu`ay bu` indun su kitelu`ay ta mekegabang di pigulaula, pegigebangay bu` pektalu`, pegbaal melengas pebianan adun megamit di guskilan bu` pekpedayun kepianan dik pemetad. Pekpaita` kepianan pebian dingag getaw tu guluan, gilidan bu` dapit dialem adun empedayun bu` metubus su nga pembaal baalen dig MLE. (*Abstract in Central Subanen [cyb], a language of the Philippines, translated by Wenifreda L. Colicol-Catig.*)

This chapter examines teacher agency in the policy enactment of L1-based Multilingual Education (MLE) in the Philippines, challenging the conventional view of policy implementation as linear and straightforward. As actors from below, teachers creatively navigate their roles as strategic agents, enacting policies based on available resources and maneuvering space. While most studies on MLE policy change focus on actors from above (top-level policymakers) and the side (intermediary influencers), the critical contributions of actors from below are often overlooked. Through ethnographic case studies, this chapter highlights how teachers exercise agency by seeking ways to understand how

MLE and languages work, collaborating with stakeholders, engaging in advocacy, developing L1-appropriate materials and maintaining a positive attitude. It emphasizes that strategic collaboration among actors from above, the side and below is essential for ensuring the sustainability and success of MLE initiatives.

Introduction

The Philippines stands out as one of the first Asian countries to issue policies that institutionalized what has been known as Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (henceforth MLE), which incorporates non-dominant and Indigenous languages into its education system. The landmark 2009 MLE policy was hailed as the most ambitious first language (L1)-based education in Asia (Metila *et al.*, 2016). Edicio de la Torre, a prominent leader of lifelong education, reflected on the policy's passage in an educational policy networking forum, describing it as a remarkable success story driven by its dedicated proponents. The program's development resulted from collaborative efforts from a diverse coalition of academics, NGO leaders and members of writers' groups, who came together to champion the cause of multilingual education. In her application of the Kosonen and Benson language-in-education policy change framework, Dekker (2021) described how the side actors in the Philippines supported the bottom (non-dominant language communities) and top actors (legislators and the basic education department) and engaged in 'persistent advocacy' in various media to facilitate policy change. However, she warned that, while actors from below may be less influential on policy creation, they 'impact policy implementation in profound ways that determine whether a policy remains or is removed' (2021: 110). Sure enough, 15 years after the MLE policy was passed, some policymakers proposed to remove or at least limit the national implementation of MLE due to implementation challenges at the school level.

Implementing MLE in the Philippines is complex and politically fraught, given the country's multilingual landscape of more than 180 languages (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024) and its history of colonial education systems privileging foreign languages. While the 1987 Constitution prescribed Filipino and English as primary languages of instruction and regional languages as auxiliary, these provisions only gained traction with the 2009 MLE policy. Efforts to operationalize MLE included teacher training, material development, language mapping and funding. Notably, the higher education sector only integrated MLE into the teacher education curriculum in 2017, long after its introduction in basic education (Arzadon, 2023). A process evaluation of the MLE by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) found that though

the MLE theory, as represented in the policy document, is sound, the roll out of the program and its implementation in more than 40,000 schools was weak (Monje *et al.*, 2019).

Kosonen and Benson (2021) clarify that what it takes for MLE to be sustainable over time requires multi-level interaction among the actors from the above, side and below. They define agency as the ‘capacity and power of organizations and individuals to act in the world’ (2021: 32) and discuss how agency is exercised uniquely by different actors on each level. Expanding on the role of key actors and advocates in the same volume, Brown (2021) demonstrates how actors in Estonia ‘category jump’ between levels or ‘slide’ from organization to organization to catalyze change.

The role of actors at the grassroots seems to hold the key to MLE sustainability: We find that successful and sustainable change requires interaction between all three levels – and over an extended period – where community participation is a key factor, not a secondary consideration. We conclude by assessing the types of change processes that are most likely to contribute to sustainable policy change and implementation of the policy (Kosonen & Benson, 2021: 26).

Curiously, Kosonen and Benson (2021) do not explicitly include the teacher in the listing of the three sets of actors. The invisibility of teachers seems to suggest that teachers do not have significant ‘actorship’ to affect change and are seen as receivers and implementers of policies and programs initiated by top and side actors. However, in narrating the Philippine case in the same volume, Dekker (2021) clearly includes the teachers among the key actors at the grassroots level, along with the school heads, parents and other people in the community.

This chapter describes how teachers in the Philippines practice their agency as they navigate individually and collectively through the complexities of implementing MLE. We depart from perceiving policy implementation as smooth and straightforward to the one that is contested, negotiated, appropriated, enacted or even subverted. Specifically, this chapter aims to answer the following research questions:

- (1) How do teachers as actors from below enact their professional agency in implementing MLE?
- (2) How does the influence of actors from all sides manifest in the shared task of enacting the MLE policy?

MLE Policymaking and Actor Synergy

Before MLE institutionalization in the Philippines, notable initiatives were undertaken by various actors from different levels. This section describes what was done, referencing the timeline in Figure 6.1.

Policy actions for MLE were initiated by Filipino revolutionaries in 1898 when they sought to replace Spanish as the medium of instruction.

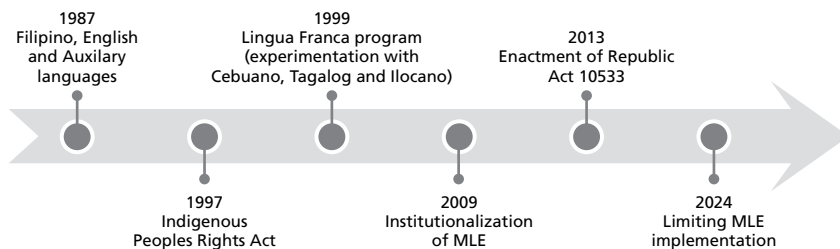


Figure 6.1 Timeline of MLE events in the Philippines from 1987

In the recent past, actions from above that contributed a great deal to promoting MLE were spearheaded by Secretary Andrew Gonzalez and Secretary Edilberto de Jesus, both at the Department of Education (DepEd).¹ From 1999 to 2001, through the lingua franca (LF) program, the former oversaw experimentation with Cebuano, Tagalog and Ilocano as languages of instruction (DECS Memo 144 s.1999). Compared to the bilingual education policy's Filipino and English, these languages were regarded as more familiar to students. Results showed active classroom engagement and higher achievement scores. Secretary de Jesus, who later became the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) director, lauded the multilingual education program upon seeing how the learners in Lubuagan, Kalinga, were engaged despite speaking a different language (Dekker, 2021).

Later, DepEd Secretary Lapus, with the urgings from high-level DepEd officials like Vilma Labrador, Yolanda Quijano and Paraluman Giron, issued DepEd Order No. 74 of 2009, which institutionalized MLE fully from kindergarten until at least Grade 3. By 2013, Republic Act 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), also known as the K-12 Law, containing MLE provisions, was enacted through the initiative of Congressman Magtanggol Gunigundo. When the law was signed, President Benigno S. Aquino said, 'We should become trilingual as a country. Learn English well and connect to the world. Learn Filipino well and connect to our country. Retain your dialect and connect to your heritage' (Education for All, 2015).

Educators and linguists from the side level have participated significantly in the MLE advocacies, policy, and program planning, working with actors at the top and below. By engaging local communities 'to understand and document the grammar and phonological structures of Philippine languages for local language and literacy teaching', they have enabled actors from below – the principals, teachers and community members – to learn about and value their language (Dekker, 2021: 110). However, based on an analysis by Igcailinos (2016), synergy among the top and side actors in MLE governance in the Philippines seemed weak and problematic. Some key actors were either uninvolved or seemed to subvert

the synergistic relationship, especially the agency of actors from the grassroots. For example, the MLE policy (RA 10533) states that materials should be made locally and contextualized, localized, and indigenized. Yet, the implementing rules and regulations of the same policy insert clauses like ‘when appropriate’ and ‘in accordance with national policies and standards’, which constrain the agency of the bottom actors. In the same vein, the Philippine Language Commission, whose mandate is ‘to undertake, coordinate and promote researches [sic] for the development, propagation, and preservation of Filipino and other Philippine languages’ (RA 7104 Sec 4:1), made a simplistic prescription of standardizing all orthographies based on the orthography of Filipino, a language that is supposedly in the process of evolving (RA 7104 Sec 1). The Commission’s supposed duty is to ‘midwife’ and help the community develop their own orthography.

Teacher Agency in the Philippine Context

The notion of ‘teacher agency’ was conceived in response to the de-professionalization of teachers by highly top-down and prescriptive curricula and accountability measures. This perspective seeks to position teachers as not mere implementers but also stakeholders in education reforms, and therefore, their professional voices and judgments matter (Priestley *et al.*, 2015). In the Philippine context, teachers have low social and occupational status, shaped in part by colonialism and authoritarian rule, and maintained in policy discourse, social perceptions of their limited cultural capital. Filipino teachers have been perceived as lacking voice and being deferential, but in a safe space like exclusive online communities, teachers can offer insightful and critical analyses of education reform (Arzadon, 2017).

Regarding the language-in-education policy in the Philippines, it was perceived that the action from below, which we would define as MLE initiatives of principals, teachers and parents, to be the weakest due to the highly hierarchical and top-down nature of the DepEd (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). Parba (2018) also pointed out that societal ideology favoring English over local languages caused some teachers to resist change. Such ideology views English as the language of modern intellectual and successful people, while others who speak local or regional languages are often perceived as the opposite. Furthermore, many teachers believe that the first language interferes with learning English, hindering the full and effective MLE implementation in the classroom. In addition to all these social, historical and ideological constraints are the logistical challenges teachers face in policy work. The MLE policies spelled out the logistical needs for teachers’ training, materials development, language mapping and advocacy building.

Dekker (2021) assessed the success of the top and side actors by foregrounding their capacity to produce the MLE policy document. On the other hand, teachers and other actors at the bottom will be deemed successful if they can implement the policy text and produce the promised results in their classrooms. It must be noted that DepEd Order 16 s.2012 identified the desired end of MLE: (1) language development in one's first and additional languages; (2) Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS); (3) mastery in each of the learning areas; and (4) pride over one's heritage, language and culture.

The role of teachers in relation to MLE requires a different view of policy. According to Ball (1993: 14), *policy as text* refers to the written document, whereas *policy as discourse* governs 'what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where, and with what authority'. Discourse sets the standards and accomplishes tasks. Levinson *et al.* (2009) similarly view policy implementation as a social practice where actors appropriate policy based on their interests, motivations, and 'figured worlds' (2009: 779). Ball *et al.* (2012) wrote that policies are fulfilled through a process of policy enactment. The process involves the complex ways policies are perceived, interpreted and translated into recontextualized practices at the school level. Policy enactment necessitates teachers' creative agency, fostering new identities and practices (Ball *et al.*, 2012). Priestley *et al.* (2015) critique the traditional view of agency as a capacity inherent to individuals, noting that this narrow conception often fails to drive educational change. For human agency to be effective, ecological conditions – such as enabling environments over time – must support action.

Drawing on Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) framework, teacher agency is conceptualized through three dimensions: iterational, projective and practical-evaluative. The iterational dimension reflects teachers' personal and professional histories, shaping their present engagements. The projective dimension captures their goals and aspirations, both short and long term. Finally, the practical-evaluative dimension involves teachers' actions influenced by cultural, structural and material resources within specific contexts. These dimensions, taken together, explain how teachers navigate their roles and practices, balancing contextual affordances and constraints with their educational objectives (Priestley *et al.*, 2012). By considering timing and context dialogically, teacher agency contributes to broader social and contextual transformations over time.

The following are four case studies that describe the forms of teacher agency in four locations: (1) schools in an Indigenous community in Benguet Province in the Northern Philippines, (2) multigrade schools in a remote island in Bohol Province, (3) schools in Iloilo City (Bohol and Iloilo are in the Visayas, the middle part of the country) and (4) a university-based laboratory school in Tawi-Tawi Province, the

southernmost part of the Philippines. We analyze three dissertations using the preceding theories and literature (Arzadon, 2021; Bonior, 2020; Colicol, 2024) and one journal article (Amparo, 2020, 2022). The authors of this chapter are researchers in the Benguet and Tawi-Tawi areas. For reflexivity purposes, we acknowledge that we, as teacher educators, are part of the academe. We consider ourselves primarily as side actors within the language-in-education policy framework. Notably, Arzadon occasionally stepped into a top actor role, serving as a resource person in formulating some MLE policies and programs. Colicol is a member of the Indigenous group (Subanen) in Southern Philippines. Arzadon belongs to a less dominant language group, Ilokano, and she participated in the advocacy for MLE.

Teachers as storybook makers in an Indigenous community in Benguet

Arzadon (2021) explores how the MLE policy was enacted by teachers in Buguias, Benguet, in the northern part of the Philippines. MLE pilot schools in the area that were actively involved in the storybook (known as big book) making projects were chosen as the research locale of an ethnographic investigation mainly framed on policy enactment. The author utilizes Ball *et al.*'s (2012) policy enactment framework, which is the complex way policies are perceived, interpreted and translated into recontextualized practices at the school level. As policy is implemented on the ground, it is nuanced by contextual factors, which render the policy in question different meanings by different actors across contexts.

Creating big books (enlarged picture books) became a major undertaking in each school community since the MLE policy directed schools to produce low-cost instructional materials with a special priority on beginning reading and children's literature. As much as possible, these materials are 'original, reflecting local people, events, realities; appropriate to the language, age, and culture of the learners' (Department of Education, 2009: 2). Big books are used in the literature-based reading program of the MLE framework.

The researcher used ethnography to respond to queries on teachers' different ways of policy enactment, their different roles in big book making and the constraining and enabling factors in creating big books for children's literacy in the early grades. She did field observations in five elementary schools in Benguet, interviewed teachers and stakeholders at different levels on various occasions and examined more than 60 big books she found in the community. In her inventory, the teachers, over eight years, produced about 300 unique storybook titles, most of which are in the Kankanaey indigenous language and a few in Filipino and English. The prescribed language of instruction in the area is Ilokano,

considered as prestige language used by those who became the first teachers in the province. Research participants narrated their frustrating and shameful experiences as Indigenous children because the language (English) used in school was alien to them. The teachers practiced their agency by using Kankanaey, the L1 spoken by children and adults in the area. The task of representing their language into printed texts of the L1 big books they had to create for the MLE piloting stage compelled them to study the structures of their spoken language. The knowledge of the mechanics of big book making and implementing the MLE was provided by side actors from the academe who organized a MLE conference that school principal, Herminia Osting, attended. Principal Osting, in turn, trained and guided the teachers in creating and utilizing materials to teach reading.

The side actors also provided technical assistance in creating the orthography for the languages in the province. However, different sets of language experts intervened, and each came from diverging positions on how to represent their L1 (concerning spelling and diacritic marks), prompting the writers to revise the big books many times. Ultimately, the teachers decided to make a stand and choose which version to take.

The study found that big book making in Buguias followed a localized book supply chain that generated the big books for the MLE program. Foremost, the policy was enacted by the teachers' contextualization practices that led to the creation of stories about the place, cultural values and environmental concerns. It was also translated into a reading instruction known as ANIDUT that details the sequence of letters to be taught based on the sound frequency count of the language. This approach utilizes a primer, a set of big books, and different strategies to make reading more meaningful and fun. They related that, in the past, when a teacher posed a question, the pupils would go back to the book to search for the right word to answer the question. But now that lessons and stories are told in their L1, the pupils would respond spontaneously and even offer their interpretations and opinions.

Teachers, school heads, students, supervisors, illustrators, digital printing shop operators, language experts and the big book itself fulfill the roles of policy actors from below. As policy entrepreneurs and enthusiasts, teachers developed expertise as teacher-writers, teacher-ethnographers and MLE literacy leaders. They were motivated to provide a child-friendly learning experience, fulfill the expectations of an MLE pilot school, become counted in a collective effort of big book making, and earn merits for career advancement. The big book itself as a policy actant heightens the visibility and symbolic value of the MLE policy.

The contextual factors provide the enabling and disabling conditions for agency and policy enactments. The enabling external factors include (a) spaces for creativity provided by the piloting stage, (b) training and mentoring relationships, (c) teacher material and psychic rewards,

(d) access to digital technologies and (e) the cultural storytelling practices. On the other hand, some external factors constraining teachers' effective MLE implementation through big book making were the following: (a) stringent quality assurance processes, (b) lack of funding support, (c) lack of recognition as authors, (d) adversarial relationships between school heads who reject MLE and teachers who make big books, (e) impoverished view of literacy instruction which minimizes the value of children's literature and (f) the economistic and hierarchical view of languages.

Literacy instruction in multigrade schools in remote islands of Bohol: A model of mediations and appropriations

In this second case study, we consider Bonior's (2020) study on literacy instruction programs based on DepEd's MLE policy. Her work is highly relevant since it uses teacher agency and policy appropriation as theoretical frameworks to foreground teachers' role in the literacy instruction program of multigrade schools situated on a remote island in Bohol, Philippines. Mainly qualitative, the inquiry asked questions regarding (a) the mediations that impact the appropriations of the MLE literacy instruction program, (b) the multigrade teachers' appropriations of the literacy instruction program while negotiating with the mediations and (c) the consequences of the appropriations in relation to the literacy instruction program goals.

This study was participated mainly by six teachers from three different schools of the same district: the Agian Elementary School and Bakilid Elementary School are located at Islang Dako, and the Islang Gamay Primary School is at Islang Gamay on a different island. Other stakeholders, such as a DepEd Supervisor, the Division Multigrade coordinator, the District Multigrade coordinator and the school heads of the participating schools, were also engaged through interviews and focus group discussions as they have constantly interacted with the teachers. It must be noted that side actors were constantly present to support the teachers at the research site. The partnership between the school communities, considered as actors from below, and side actors was created through a foreign-funded short-term project, which the author called LIP (not its real name), which stands for Literacy Instruction Program for MLE. The project involving two major language groups included (1) teacher training on effective literacy instruction, (2) the provision of curriculum-based Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) and quality supplementary reading materials and (3) further capacitating school administrators and DepEd officials 'to provide strong management support system-wide' (Education Development Center, 2018: 1). The teachers found the support from the side actors (associated with the academe) was more credible because they were 'literacy experts'. They

were more prepared for teacher training (compared to local supervisors who were just reading the PowerPoint presentations). Some teachers attended 12 training events in a span of three years.

Ethnographic results revealed that appropriations of the MLE literacy instruction program are mediated by personal, programmatic, learner-related, institutional, social and spatial-geographical conditions. The study revealed that the teachers became strategic by re-interpreting the LIP program to ensure that the goal of improving reading instruction in L1, Filipino and English was met. The strategic appropriations of the MLE literacy instruction program come in six different forms: (a) hybridizing (combining aspects of the literacy instruction package with existing pedagogical practices); (b) finessing (making purposeful decisions to attend to some options while ignoring others); (c) bricolaging (spontaneous and creative actions based on available tools and materials to produce unique solutions); (d) *jama-jama* (a local term referring to making do with available resources); (e) restructuring the class program; and (f) temporarily suspending program implementation (to wait until there are adequate materials) (Bonior, 2020).

Bonior's study also found that the teachers' agentic commitment to making the MLE program work was fueled by their deep sense of accountability to a higher being for every child placed under their care, their perception that they are essential partners and their positive training experiences. In addition, they were compelled by a sense of gratitude to be chosen to showcase the program, a perception that the program is aligned with their literacy advocacies, and the promise of enhanced economic, social and cultural capital.

The consequences of teachers' appropriation of the policy on literacy instruction consistent with program goals were:

(1) improved literacy instruction process, (2) improved access to quality reading materials, (3) strengthened professional networks and collaboration among teachers through such mechanisms as Learning Action Cells, (4) teachers' improved confidence in their ability to contextualize lessons resulting in the strategic use of the MTB-MLE literacy instructional materials, and (5) improved reading performance of students in Filipino as suggested in their OVRT scores. (Bonior, 2020: viii)

On the other hand, unintended consequences facilitated and constrained the achievement of program goals. For example, a key scaffold (e.g. 'go-to teacher') aided the implementation in enacting the literacy program. Ill-informed modification of instructional material protocol and additional workload for materials preparation hampered the achievement of program goals. Bonior concluded that the teachers' appropriation of the MLE literacy instruction program demonstrates their achievement of agency. Furthermore, agency and mediation are constitutive, which means that while teacher agency appropriates the

policy, teacher agency is shaped by a web of mediations and access to capital (e.g. economic, social, cultural and symbolic).

Creating spaces for teacher agency in Iloilo City

Amparo (2022) examined teacher agency in MLE implementation in Iloilo City, where Kinaray-a and Hiligaynon are the major languages. She argued that the multilingual education program encountered many challenges and that one alternative means to inform policymaking appropriately is to consider the ‘spaces where teachers mediate the policy’ (2022: 330). Such spaces for maneuver (Priestley *et al.*, 2012) will offer affordances to (re)construct language policies of a local context to make agency available and foster equitable education. In this context, agency is understood as the individuals’ ability to (re)configure their context, not only being influenced by it. In particular, the study is concerned with the emergence of teacher agency through the mediation of key factors like one’s understanding of MLE vision and goals, knowledge of one’s capacity and available resources to meet the program’s requirements. Thus, looking into the meso-level wherein teachers enact practice is imperative. Providing teachers spaces to exercise agency enables them as co-constructors of policy and change agents of society.

Data sets for the study were gathered through focus group discussions involving 30 teachers: 9 from Grade 1, 11 from Grade 2 and 10 from Grade 3. Data analysis revealed different problems affecting the teachers’ agency, such as (1) lack of resources or materials, (2) lack of training and (3) unaligned teachers’ manuals and learners’ materials. It must be noted that no side actors were involved in the areas of MLE implementation. The training that the teachers received from the regional DepEd office was focused more on the new K-12 curriculum, and only a small portion was dedicated to MLE. Concepts were not explained enough, and no follow-up training was provided. Another constraint was the lack of instructional materials. The writers of the L1 learning materials chose archaic terms that do not correspond to their everyday language. The teachers spoke the L1 but were unfamiliar with its written conventions, particularly the spelling.

In light of the various constraints, Amparo (2020) wrote that the teachers exercised agency by (1) taking the initiative to find information on their own; (2) keeping a positive attitude, which means being open to the current changes and taking a creative and resourceful stance; (3) designing and making their instructional materials, primarily when the ones provided by DepEd did not correspond to their context; (4) finding people who can give help like other teachers, language experts and the older L1 speakers in the community; and (5) explaining to the parents the nature of MLE and its merits. Parents’ negative attitudes towards MLE were a major constraint, prompting teachers to do advocacy work during enrollment and parent assemblies.

Teachers practiced their agency by not using ready-made learning materials which they deemed inappropriate for their students' language context. The choice of language for math provided another example of such deviation from the policy. Some teachers preferred English over L1 in Grade 3 to prepare students for Grade 4, when the medium of instruction abruptly shifted to English:

In math, my test is in English, and my medium of instruction is in English, and if students find it difficult to understand, I will translate it in Hiligaynon. I really said that my medium of instruction is English because Grade 4 teachers are always complaining that students who exit from the MTB-MLE program find it difficult to speak and understand English. Problem solving is already in English in Grade 4 and not in the Mother Tongue. (Amparo, 2022: 331)

Based on the MLE policy, pupils are taught using the L1 from Grades 1 to 3. English is used as a medium of instruction beginning in Grade 4, representing an early-exit transition away from the L1 as the language of instruction in school. The abrupt shift to English in Grade 4 put pressure on teachers to prepare their students, prompting them to shift to English as early as Grade 3. The abruptness of the use of English (and the lack of guidance for transition) compromises L1 instruction and learning even more.

Amparo (2020) wrote that the display of teacher agency, especially through their positive attitude, creativity and resourcefulness, is one of the main strengths of the MLE program in the region. Their resistance to the MLE policy, as expressed through their frank narratives about the complexities and shortcomings in the delivery of materials and training, is an agentive practice. It suggests there is a misalignment with language policy goals, and they make their own choices to serve what they feel is in the best interest of learners regardless of the policy. Indeed, top-down policy mainly influences language policy implementation. However, how the policy intention is served lies in the hands of the teachers. Amparo (2022) recommended that since teachers are capable agents in their local contexts (as cited in other studies), they should be given opportunities to be active members in planning and designing the curriculum.

Teacher agency, linguistic diversity and everyday multiculturalism in Tawi-Tawi

The research work of Colicol (2024) in Tawi-Tawi Province, located at the southernmost tip of the Philippines, is the focus of this final case study. The area is in a high-poverty and high-conflict area of Mindanao. It is also multilingual and multicultural. Using an ethnographic approach, Colicol examines teacher agency among teachers in a laboratory school of the College of Education, Mindanao State University at Tawi-Tawi.

Since the MLE policy was issued in 2013, the laboratory school has introduced a subject called ‘Mother Tongue’, which uses Tausug, the dominant language spoken in Bongao Municipality. However, the language of instruction in other subject areas is either Filipino (Values Education and Social Studies) or English (Math and Science). This program departs from the MLE policy, stating that the ‘mother tongue’ will be used as the medium of instruction in all subject areas from kindergarten until Grade 3. This modification is possible because it is a charter school, not a public school directly managed by DepEd, but it also happened because of a lack of orientation and teacher training from the Department of Education. Right after the COVID-19 pandemic when students returned to their classes, the school used the period for the Mother Tongue subject for a remedial reading class. Nevertheless, despite lacking support and resources, teachers practiced their agency by becoming familiar with the MLE program from online information. Knowledge gained from online sources enabled the teachers to use languages more strategically to promote learning and create a safer place for learning.

A specific case for analyzing teacher agency at this multicultural laboratory school in Bongao is Teacher Ann (pseudonym). She is a multilingual teacher who employs a multilingual approach since she found it effective in their setting. Although English, Filipino and Tausug are the only authorized languages, Teacher Ann used the Sinama language because everyone in the school was a Sinama speaker. She reasoned that the Sama, especially Badjao children, are among the marginalized groups in the area and are often subjected to discrimination:

Talking about discrimination, I personally did not experience any as a child, but other Sama children were constantly afraid to use their mother tongue so that they were not noticed and identified. The Sama students in school experienced discrimination from the Tausug students.

Teacher Ann linked the L1 with one’s (ethnic) identity (Bishop & Kelley, 2013). Moreover, as she suggested, language may be used to maintain one’s identity. However, based on her experiences, not using a minority language is a way of maintaining safety from discrimination. As a professional teacher, Teacher Ann is challenging inequality in the classroom. She attempted to provide learners with equal opportunity to learn by using Sinama even if it is an unauthorized medium of instruction.

At the same time, Teacher Ann’s agency is guided by her projective orientation. She wants to be a good teacher and help promote cultural heritage and diversity: ‘I hope to contribute to promoting a greater understanding of our culture and appreciation of its significance so that there will be no bullying and criticism’.

Teachers at Ann’s school recognize the advantages of the MLE policy. Some feel that the policy provided them with confidence, a sense of

freedom and flexibility in language use to enable children to understand the lesson. However, applying MLE as defined by the policy is not possible due to various factors. The Tausug writers who wrote the Mother Tongue Teacher's Guide used difficult and unfamiliar terms that might be comprehensible only to older speakers or those living in other Tausug-speaking areas like Sulu. Because of unstable internet connectivity, teachers could not download L1 learning materials available online, especially the ones found in the DepEd portal. There was also a lack of training and other forms of program support. Finally, the strong pro-English attitude held by parents and students posed obstacles to implementing the program.

This case study found that sociocultural issues also affect MTB-MLE implementation and the practice of teacher agency. The L1 relates to identity affirmation, cultural preservation, intercultural understanding, respect and tolerance for diversity. Its associated issues are language use restrictions, language hierarchy, loss of intercultural connection, devaluing cultural heritage, stereotyping and discrimination.

Analysis and Implications of the Case Studies

Unlike many other developing countries, all teachers in government schools in the Philippines are well educated and undergo a stringent recruitment process. The minimum requirement for hiring is a bachelor's degree, passing the licensure exam and having previous teaching experience. It must be noted, too, that since MLE became a national policy, DepEd provided training, orthographies, primers and various learning materials. The teacher hiring policy for early grades includes an applicant's capacity to teach in L1. All teachers went through MLE orientation as part of the rollout of the K-12. Follow-up training and workshops were provided by DepEd at various levels, including through school-based Learning Action Cells (Areola, 2020). However, the studies show that many new teachers, especially the ones in remote areas, have not received enough training.

Despite these challenges to MLE policy implementation, this study reveals that the teachers in four locations achieved different levels of agency in MLE, resulting in a differentiated quality of program implementation. This study found that teachers are agentic as they appraise their personal and professional history (iterational) and goals and aspirations (projective). Their personal history includes childhood experiences of discrimination and frustration with the English medium of instruction. They aspire that their learners will experience a safer and more pleasant environment, be able to learn to read more quickly and participate actively in class discussions. Their appraisal was also directed at available social, cultural and material resources, including enabling/disabling contextual factors. From such a view, they respond and act to the imperatives of the policy (practical–evaluative).

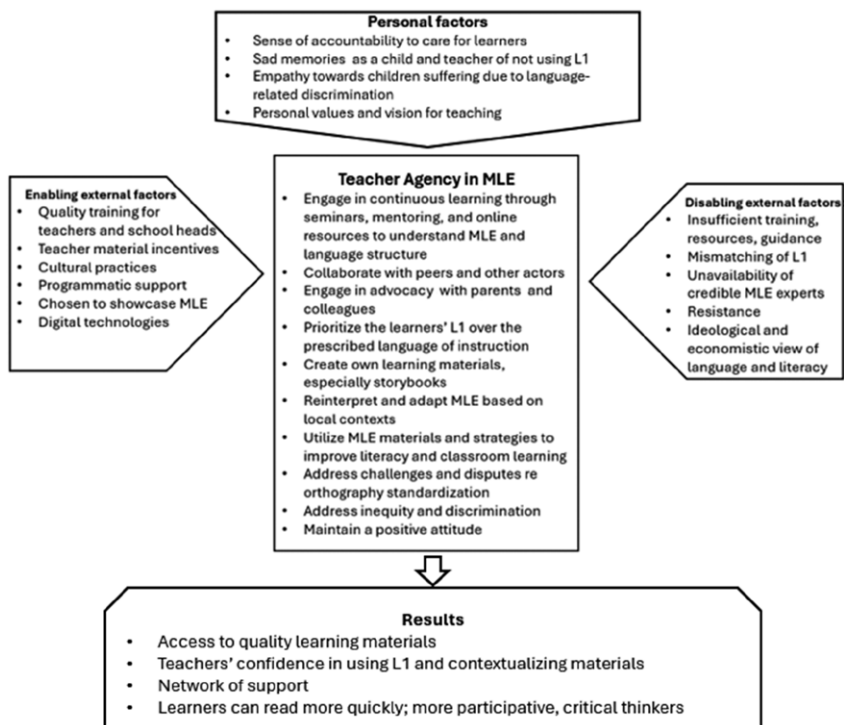


Figure 6.2 Application of an ecological view of teacher agency in MLE

Figure 6.2 is our conceptual framework, applying Priestley *et al.*'s (2015) ecological view of teacher agency. The framework shows the aggregate personal and enabling/disabling factors that shape the achievement of teacher agency and their consequences or results. Personal factors (iterational and projective dimensions) refer to their sense of accountability towards a higher being who assigns pupils under their care. It also includes sad memories of English-dominated classes they attended as pupils or led as teachers. They also feel empathetic towards learners from minority ethnic groups who suffer discrimination, and they find the MLE program aligns with their teaching philosophy and values. Key enabling external factors include the training and mentoring opportunities provided by side actors and educational leaders, material and emotional incentives (merit points, awards and recognition), local cultural practices that promote collaboration and storytelling, programmatic support, being identified as an MLE exemplar and the availability of print-on-demand digital technologies in the village. Conversely, the disabling factors encompass insufficient training, learning resources and institutional support, mismatches between learners' L1 and the prescribed language in MLE materials, resistance from parents and other stakeholders, and the

zero-sum perception that MLE threatens English as the language of power and opportunity.

From the analysis of four case studies, it is evident that teachers achieve agency in MLE through the dynamic interplay of these enabling and disabling factors. Teachers engage in continuous learning, combining formal avenues such as seminar workshops with informal peer-based and online learning. They collaborate with their peers and grassroots actors such as storytellers, illustrators and printers to create contextualized educational materials. They also advocate for MLE to gain support from parents and other colleagues. When the prescribed language found in materials does not correspond to their learners' L1, teachers take the initiative to develop their own resources, contextualizing content to align with local languages and cultures. In doing so, they often deepen their understanding of language structures and navigate complex orthography debates. These experiences lead teachers to reflect critically on language issues, recognizing that beyond policies and programs, MLE is fundamentally tied to questions of social justice and equity in the classroom and their identity and capacity as professional teachers. The positive consequences of teacher agency include greater access to quality learning materials, confidence in using the L1 in contextualizing materials and participation in a network of support with actors from the side. At the classroom level, teachers find that, through MLE, learners can read more quickly, participate more actively in classroom discussions and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. There are also negative consequences, such as being overworked when creating materials and learning new teaching strategies.

The presence of side actors was felt to varying degrees – as providers of initial training and technical assistance in Benguet and programmatic support and more intensive training and supervision for Bohol. They are markedly absent in Iloilo and Tawi-Tawi, relatively isolated schools (Bonior, 2020; Colicol, 2024). The university that managed the Tawi-Tawi school began to activate its side-actor role only much later through the initiatives of one of the authors (Colicol).

In the last quarter of 2024, the Philippine Congress enacted Republic Act 12027, titled *Discontinuing the Use of the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction*. This legislation effectively halted the widespread implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MLE), restricting its application to monolingual classes with adequate learning resources and trained teachers. The authors perceive the reason for such action as political (since MLE was advocated by certain political personalities not favored by the present administration). MLE is also blamed for the low scores in previous international tests like TIMSS, PISA and SEA-PLM (which ironically used English as the language of assessment). Lately, UNICEF announced that due to language mismatch in the past SEA-PLM, they will start using Tagalog or Filipino as an

additional language of assessment starting in 2025 (Ibanez, 2024). This policy shift marks a significant regression with far-reaching intended and unintended consequences. During the writing of this chapter, the Department of Education (DepEd) is still in the process of drafting the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR). At the same time, some MLE advocates from various levels are preparing to file a legal case to question the constitutionality of the new policy.

Conclusion and Implications

The case studies in this chapter uncover the complexity of L1-based MLE in the Philippines, showing its varied dimensions (e.g. literacy, political and sociocultural dimensions) and the ways of addressing contextual factors. Foremost, the studies unveil the salience of teacher agency at the 'below' level of the language-in-education policy framework. These studies address the lack of studies on how agency is played out in the Global South (Kosonen & Benson, 2021). Contrary to the conventional top-down view of policy, teachers demonstrated their share in the MLE policy work. They appropriated and enacted the MLE policy in ways they perceived to be practical and educationally sound amid the constraints. Policy enactment at the below level is an ongoing process, unlike at the side level, which may wane once a supportive written policy is issued. Teachers, as described in the case studies, exercised considerable agency – some innovated and contextualized materials, while others resisted, ignored or fabricated compliance. The new law that discontinues the broad implementation of MLE recognizes the potential of teacher agency and resistance. Thus, it includes a warning that violators will be subjected to administrative sanctions (RA 12027 Sec. 4).

Education quality depends mainly on teachers, which is why their enactments must be recognized and not taken for granted. It is noteworthy that teachers have attempted to maintain a positive attitude and fulfill the policy despite the many challenges. Engaging them in educational processes through the change from below approach is a worthy goal. Making time to listen to teachers voicing their concerns and learning from their actual practices should be practiced by the side-and above-level actors. If policymakers seek out information this way, education could become truly grounded and meaningful.

This study also calls for the attention of side actors (which include the authors) to pursue strategic actions in sustaining MLE policy gains and to expand their network of actors from various levels within and outside the education sector. The side actors named by Dekker (2021) are found in the capital region and can meet top-level policymakers when needed. There are also side actors in some provinces in the regions, particularly in the Ilocos, Bicol and the Visayas, but not in all 17 regions and 82 provinces. Over the years, as MLE expanded nationwide, graduate

students, instructors and researchers from colleges and universities have contributed to this effort, conducting studies and initiating localized reforms, such as Colicol's work in Tawi-Tawi. International NGOs have also played a role in funding programs and recruiting language and literacy experts who further strengthened the advocacy.

Some regard the passing of the law that limits the reach of MLE as signaling the end of MLE in the Philippines. However, others see it as an opportunity to pause, regroup, and identify new spaces for maneuvering. The Philippine MLE experience underscores a deeper truth about the sociocultural world. As Hornberger (2008) aptly observed, while schools are essential catalysts for social transformation, they are perpetually shaped by the unpredictable forces of policy, politics and power. True and meaningful change cannot rely solely on schools. Instead, it requires sustained, collective action from both school and non-school actors to reshape how we perceive our languages and heritage and redefine the very purpose of educating our children.

Note

- (1) This government agency functions like the Ministry of Education (MoE) in most countries.

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This chapter applies the Kosonen and Benson (2021) policy change framework to examine Morocco's current language policy and planning trajectory regarding Tamazight. Tamazight is the codification of three Amazigh language varieties – Tarifit, Tachelhit and Central Atlas Tamazight – for educational purposes. Over the past two decades, the status of Tamazight in education has increased via affirming royal decrees and legislation. The most recent is Framework Law 51.17 of 2019, which stipulates that all students must master both Modern Standard Arabic and Tamazight in addition to two foreign languages to obtain a secondary baccalaureate. For this analysis I share findings from virtual semi-structured interviews conducted with six in-service Moroccan primary school teachers who voice their perspectives on the potential impact of FL 51.17 on the future of languages in the national education system. Participants' responses provide evidence that language-in-education policy change in Morocco could currently be characterized as Model 1 – Change from above, but they are pessimistic about whether this will improve the state of Tamazight instruction. They identify major implementational challenges, both structural and attitudinal. Participants cite the need for teacher input in the designing of textbooks, curriculum and teacher training, suggesting that there is little space for agency from below and from the side to support the change process. At the end of the chapter, a process is suggested based on input from the study along with international research findings to enable and engage actors from below.

Introduction

The Kingdom of Morocco is a multilingual state home to 15 established languages. The three principal languages include Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Moroccan Arabic also known as Darija and Tamazight, a codified version of three dominant Amazigh language varieties¹ in Morocco – Tachelhit, Tarifit and Central Atlas Tamazight (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). Under Article 5 of the Moroccan Constitution, MSA and Tamazight are used throughout the country as primary languages of instruction, and they are granted equal status as official languages (Constitute Project, 2011). First language or L1-speakers of Amazigh account for 26.7%² of the linguistic landscape (El Kirat & Boussagui, 2017). Historically, Amazigh has been referred to as Berber, but this term stems from the Greek word for 'barbarian' and is seen as derogatory by Amazigh speakers (Ennaji, 2005; Sadiqi, 2011). Amazigh is widely considered to be the appropriate term to refer to the language and its speakers. Despite its prevalence and official status in Morocco, Amazigh languages are non-dominant languages due to their subordinate status relative to French, Arabic and even Darija.

While not an official language, Darija is the most dominant colloquial variety of Arabic spoken in Morocco, and it is a language of wider communication for most Moroccans (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024).

The linguistic context is further characterized by the presence of French and Spanish, which are former colonial languages, and English. French remains the dominant institutional language used throughout the country as a *lingua franca*, particularly in formal domains such as government and administration, media and education. In contrast, Spanish is not as pronounced and has fewer speakers that are primarily scattered across the north coast (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). Following global trends, English is increasingly recognized as a language associated with strong linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), presenting more opportunity for socioeconomic advancement, and hence in recent years there has been an increase in the establishment of private institutions offering English language instruction (Zouhir, 2014).

Historical Background

Language-in-education policy in Morocco has experienced several major reforms over the last century. I provide a historical overview of language-in-education planning in Morocco in Table 7.1, describing both the levels of actors involved in each period (Kosonen & Benson, 2021), as well as the orientations in language planning used over time (Ruiz, 1984). In the following sections, I highlight certain periods that demonstrate Morocco's progression from a Language-as-Problem to its current Language-as-Right orientation.

French colonial rule and Arabization

In 1912, under French colonial rule, French was instituted as the primary language of instruction in schools. After reaching independence in 1956, Morocco saw the birth of 'Arabization', a social movement by which governmental authorities sought to reclaim Arab identity via the officialization of MSA across the public sphere. Through Arabization the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training³ (MOE) implemented a series of policies that gradually replaced French with MSA as the language of instruction (LOI) in primary and secondary schools (Alalou, 2018). By 1990, primary through secondary education had been completely Arabized (Moustaoui, 2018), meaning that MSA became the dominant LOI. The push for MSA in formal education was to the detriment of other languages such as Darija and Amazigh.

Amazigh Cultural Movement and Decade of Education

The encroachment of Arabization sparked the Amazigh Cultural Movement (ACM) of the 1980s, a cross-border ethnolinguistic and political movement originating in Algeria that inspired mass protests among Amazigh communities, particularly in the shared Kabyle region of Algeria and Morocco. Initially, ACM activists were focused on

Table 7.1 Overview of language policy and planning in Morocco since 1912

Period	Actor(s)	Event(s)	Outcome(s)	Orientation
French Colonization 1912–1956	French Colonial Authorities ABOVE	French imposed as LOI Arabic taught as subject	- Onset of monolingual ideologies/attitudes - French considered language of modernity	Language-as-Problem
Arabization Policies 1962–2015 -	Ministry of Education-Royal Commission for Education Reform ABOVE	Prioritized Classical Arabic & MSA as the LOI French-Arabic bilingual system used until the 1970s	- Revitalization of MSA - Triglossia among Classical/Standard/Darija - Language conflict & marginalization of other languages	
Birth of Amazigh movement April 1980	Amazigh Activists SIDE & BELOW	Pressure put on above actors by Amazigh activists	The Amazigh struggle received international attention	
Publicized arrests of Amazigh Protesters 1994	King Hassan II ABOVE	Publicly recognizes Amazigh	Appeases Amazigh Activists.	
Decade of Education 1999–2009	King Mohammed VI ABOVE	Formerly recognized Amazigh language	Endorsed the establishment of IRCAM	Language-as-Right
Arab Spring 2011	Ministry of Education (MOE) ABOVE	Adoption of 1999 National Charter for Education & Training	Called for adoption of a transparent language-in-education policy	
	L'institut Royal De La Culture Amazighe (IRCAM) SIDE & ABOVE	Incorporates Amazigh into education system Reinforces Amazigh culture in Moroccan Identity	- Tamazight standardization - Introduction of Tifinagh writing script - Tamazight is officially taught in 317 primary schools	
Strategic Vision for Education Reform 2015–2030	King Mohammed VI, MOE, IRCAM, Amazigh activists ABOVE, SIDE & BELOW	Moroccan Constitution experiences major revisions in response to the Arab Spring	- MSA & Tamazight are declared as official languages under Article 5. - Calls for the development and inclusion of Tamazight into Moroccan schools	Language-as-Right
	MOE National Commission, Moroccan House of Representatives, IRCAM ABOVE, SIDE & BELOW	Drafted Framework Law 51.17 in 2018, passed in July 2019	- Under Article 31 all students are expected to gain proficiency in both official languages - MSA replaced w/French or English as the LOI for STEM courses - IRCAM commissioned to produce requisite Tamazight learning resources	
	World Bank, MOE, AREFs SIDE & ABOVE, SIDE & BELOW		- Moroccan Education Support Program - Support to decentralize educational operations - Improved teachers' trainings - Universalization of preprimary education	

critiquing Arabization as eradicating Amazigh language and culture, although over time the bases of their demands included broader economic and political grievances, i.e. recognition or inclusion of Amazigh in the Constitution (El Aissati, 2005). At the height of the movement, pressure put on the regime by Amazigh activists eventually caused a change in political perspective. In 1994, King Hassan II publicly announced his intention to include Amazigh languages in education (El Kirat & Boussagui, 2017; Sadiqi, 2011). This recognition by the King himself, for a time, contributed to the increased visibility of the Amazigh language as well as taking up the cause of Amazigh activism.

Later, under the rule of King Mohammed VI, the years 1999–2009 became known as the *Decade of Education* after ratification of the 1999 National Charter for Education and Training (NCET). Article 110 of NCET called for Morocco to adopt a transparent language policy in education that sought to improve and reinforce instruction in MSA and diversify the languages used for instruction of STEM courses (Bziker, 2018). This article also included instructions directing the AREFs⁴ to include Amazigh as an educational language; however, this was mainly as a way to facilitate the learning of MSA (Alalou, 2018; Buckner, 2006).

Tamazight language-as-right era

In 2003 Tamazight, the codification of three Amazigh language varieties – Tarifit, Tachelhit and Central Atlas Tamazight – became introduced by IRCAM⁵ as a subject of study across primary schools in Amazigh-speaking regions (Zouhir, 2014). After Tamazight received the status of an official language in 2011, it became used in education, however, the range of implementation has differed greatly (Buckner, 2006). Researchers continually note a host of challenges contributing to a serious gap between Tamazight language policy and educational practice, including but not limited to: (1) lack of teacher recruitment, (2) poor teacher training, (3) contention over the orthography used in teaching Tamazight, (4) language conflict and differing language attitudes in society (Buckner, 2006; Ennaji, 2005; Errihani, 2007; Sadiqi, 2011; Soulaïmani, 2016; Zouhir, 2014).

Since 2015 the Moroccan government has been engaged in the thorough reconstruction of the education system via the 2015–2030 Strategic Vision for Education Reform (SVER) launched by the MOE (Oxford Business Group, 2020). SVER has been sponsored by international actors such as the World Bank and focuses on improving overall education quality and teacher capacity in the classroom (World Bank, 2019). USAID and UNICEF have also contributed through initiatives promoting early literacy development and protections for educational access to children of vulnerable populations (UNICEF, 2020; USAID, 2020).

In this context, in 2019 the Moroccan House of Representatives passed Framework Law *Loi-cadre 51.17*, essentially the legal blueprint

for SVER. Article 31 of this law stipulates that all students must master both MSA and Tamazight in addition to two foreign languages to obtain a secondary baccalaureate (BORM, 2020). Article 31 of the law includes several mandates specific to languages in education including the following principle: ‘- *la maîtrise, par l'apprenant, des deux langues officielles et des langues étrangères, notamment dans les spécialités scientifiques et techniques, dans le respect des principes d'équité et d'égalité des chances*’ [Mastery by the learner of both official languages and foreign languages, especially in scientific and technical specialties, in accordance with principles of equity and equal opportunity] (BORM, 2020: 1975; my translation). The learner here refers to all Moroccan primary and secondary students. Other sections of Article 31 go on to note equal adoption of MSA and Tamazight as languages in education, as well as the required mastery of both languages to be conferred the secondary school baccalaureate. Private international schools are not exempt from this ruling and, like public schools, must also make strides to ensure all students acquire functional aptitude in MSA and Tamazight. As declared by law, the state must work to implement these measures within six years of its passing or by 2025 approximately.

Mandating the acquisition of Tamazight in secondary-level education throughout Morocco *prima facie* seems like an unprecedented move in the right direction. However, given previously noted failures with top-down implementation – from the national level to the school level – in primary education, there are underlying inconsistencies between policy and practice that must be interrogated. The social, cultural and political factors which appear to have hindered the success of Tamazight in primary education must be further explored, acknowledged and addressed.

The current study observes how FL 51.17 compares to previous education reforms meant to increase the inclusion of Tamazight in education, based on the perspectives of primary school teachers with experience teaching Tamazight in the classroom. I pose the following focal question: What are Moroccan teacher perspectives concerning the *potential impact* of Framework Law 51.17 on the implementation and inclusion of Tamazight in Moroccan schools?

Including Actors from Below: The Importance of Teacher Perspectives

The opinions and views of teachers must be considered to effectively evaluate the efficiency, accessibility, and equity of this era in language-in-education planning in Morocco. In using the language policy and planning (LPP) onion metaphor, Ricento and Hornberger (1996) describe classroom practitioners as being core of LPP and essential to the implementation of language policy. The outer layers of the onion,

or above-level actors, primarily serve to articulate legislation at the national level and are practically limited beyond the promulgation of policy. In contrast, both teachers and school officials are deeply ingrained in the process, so they should be considered actors from below. They profoundly understand the realities of their students and are the best informants regarding LPP implementation challenges as they are often frontline representatives – or ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky, 1969) – of language policy and determine how policy is executed based on training received and resources available. Teachers are the embodied ‘catalysts for policymaking’ (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996: 418), and therefore the best advocates to stimulate positive directional change in the LPP process. Potential impact, interpreted future trajectories of language policy in education, is therefore best derived from the empirical knowledge of school-level practitioners.

How teacher perspectives were gathered

All six participants in this small-scale study were Morocco-based primary school teachers working in school settings where Tamazight is offered as a language subject. Only current in-service teachers were included in this study, and they were recruited via snowball sampling. Each participant had direct experience teaching Tamazight in the classroom. The sample consisted of four male and two female teachers. The average age of participants was 33 and their ages ranged from 27 to 42. In terms of years of teaching experience, the average was 5.8 years and ranged from 4 to 8 years. Five participants identified as ethnic Amazigh and one as Arab. All reported an Amazigh language as their L1. Participants were educated in Moroccan public schools and the LOIs throughout their schooling years include Arabic,⁶ Darija, French, English and Amazigh collectively. Five participants reported using Tamazight or an Amazigh language variety during their pre-service teacher training. The sample represents six of the 12 Moroccan AREFs: Casablanca-Settat, Fès-Meknès, Marrakech-Safi, Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima and Dakhla-Oued Ed-Dahab. Participants worked in cities located in metropolitan urban areas or sub-metropolitan urban areas.

Virtual interviews were conducted by Moroccan research assistants in the interviewee’s preferred language. Four interviews occurred in Darija, one in French and one in Tachelhit – a variety of Amazigh spoken in the southwest of Morocco. I developed an 18-item list of interview questions which was translated into MSA and organized according to the following sections: (1) Teaching experience, (2) Knowledge of Framework Law 51.17 and its implementation, (3) Language attitudes in education, (4) Recommendation/suggestions. Responses were translated by the research assistants for my analysis.

Challenges of implementing FL 51.17

All teacher participants reported perceiving negative outcomes in response to FL 51.17 based on the continued implementational challenges that remain overlooked by the MOE and IRCAM. This is not to say that all participants have had negative teaching experiences but rather that they perceive FL 51.17 as incapable of producing positive outcomes for Tamazight in education due to challenges in how it is implemented, as shown in Table 7.2. Participants generally do feel positive regard for laws that promote the Tamazight language-in-education; however, they do not believe FL 51.17 itself will ultimately improve the current situation and therefore they envision the law as having little to no potential impact. I construed potential impact from expressed hardships faced throughout participants' teaching careers as well as their reports of the challenges faced by their peers, which are reflected in the interview excerpts shared in the following sections.

In Table 7.2, I summarize challenges expressed into two categories: structural and attitudinal. Structural challenges represented by items #1 to #10 are issues related to school-level prioritization, course scheduling, access to teaching resources, recruitment of teachers, teacher training, and so on. Respondents attribute these structural challenges to the fault of the actors from above and in some cases actors from the side, who are responsible for managing the generalization of Tamazight across Moroccan schools. The attitudinal challenges represented by items #11 to #15 are related to issues of linguistic *habitus*, which is defined as the unquestioned beliefs held by individuals or groups regarding the importance of languages in society (Bourdieu, 1991). As reported by participants, actors across all levels, such as regional AREF inspectors, school directors, and parents, devalue Tamazight in education. The

Table 7.2 Summary of challenges for Tamazight teachers across Morocco

Structural	Attitudinal
1. Tamazight is not generalized or offered at all schools	11. Tamazight teachers do not have their own classrooms and are forced to move from room to room throughout the week
2. Tamazight is not offered across all primary grades (1–6)	12. Teachers are compelled to teach French or Arabic
3. Teacher shortage/Insufficient # of teachers, including fewer teachers in urban areas	13. Scheduling of Tamazight classes are least prioritized compared to other subjects
4. Poor quality textbooks and curriculum	14. Unsupportive or uniformed school directors
5. No teacher input on textbook and curriculum design	15. Unsupportive parents from both Amazigh and non-Amazigh backgrounds
6. Lack of access to textbooks	
7. No standard examination of Tamazight language proficiency -	
8. Unqualified or untrained AREF inspectors	
9. No in-service trainings	
10. No learning track or curriculum for heritage learners of Tamazight (those who speak an Amazigh language variety at home)	

combination of continued structural and attitudinal challenges causes participants to view the goals of FL 51.17, such as Article 31, both as contradictory and as lacking the potential to affect systemic change.

Structural challenges

Concerning structural challenges, the most obvious reported by respondents is that Tamazight is not yet offered across all Moroccan schools, including private schools, and likewise, it is not offered across all primary grade levels as obligated by previous laws. In response to how many schools currently offer Tamazight, one participant shared the following:

I can't give a specific number though I will raise Rabat City as an example. We have 62 schools in total and only 6 schools teach Amazigh and the other 58 schools do not provide Amazigh classes. This example is applicable to the whole country. The percentage [of schools offering Tamazight] is very small...Also, we don't have many schools that teach Amazigh until the sixth grade of primary school. The school I teach at will say that I teach until the fourth grade though in reality I have never taught a fourth-grade class. The statistics that the Ministry [of Education] shares are also wrong.

This teacher described the lack of representation in the number of schools offering Tamazight in Rabat as analogous to the current circumstances nationally and further reports feelings of distrust towards the MOE and schools that would claim otherwise. According to another participant, there are about 1000 to 1200 Tamazight instructors, and they get placed at roughly 3% of Moroccan schools, meaning that only 3% of schools currently offer Tamazight, with most of them concentrated in the rural areas. Northern cities such as Fes, Meknes and Taza – known for being areas with larger Amazigh-speaking populations – have the highest number of schools where Tamazight is offered due to a greater number of teachers. Still, at the primary level, rural schools are faring no better than urban schools in terms of actual number of classes offered per grade level. Whether rural or urban, participants report the shortage of Tamazight teachers as one of the greatest failures of teaching at the primary level. Tamazight is generally taught only up to grades 3 or 4 across most schools due to the lack of available instructors.

Students may end up missing an entire year of Tamazight instruction due to the inconsistency in course offerings each academic year because of the teacher shortage. Participants expressed that their students do not have continuity in their learning, which causes a major disruption in the acquisition process. Participants also reported that on average there is only one Tamazight instructor per school who teaches eight classes per week for a total of 24 teaching hours. At the primary level, students

receive an average of 3 instructional hours per week. Furthermore, at some Moroccan schools, not only are there students who do not receive any Tamazight instruction, the ones who do learn Tamazight receive fewer hours of instruction than MSA and French. For example, on average, Moroccan students study MSA for 10 hours per week and study French anywhere between 6 and 8 hours, and in some schools up to 10 hours per week. The combined impacts of the teacher shortage and few instructional hours are perceived to demotivate learners. As put by one teacher,

All the effort we make with students becomes meaningless because there is no continuity of teaching the language. The students keep asking if they will study the language in the following years. This reduces our capacity to make efforts and [also reduces] the students' motivation to learn the language because they know that in the following years, they will not study it.

Another important matter to clarify is that Tamazight is taught as a language subject as opposed to an LOI or a medium to learn academic content. As indicated in the data, the clear reason for this is, whether in rural or urban settings, most classes have a mix of student Tamazight proficiencies, i.e. L1/heritage and non-L1/heritage speakers. In the latter case, participants say while some students in their classes do not speak an Amazigh language as their L1, Amazigh is still accessible in their home via a parent or grandparent, making it a heritage language for them. Because the current national curriculum is reportedly designed for all learners regardless of linguistic background, participants who teach in rural areas express a need for additional teaching resources specifically designed for L1/heritage learners. One participant who teaches in the Marrakech-Safi region explained that of the 300 students they teach, nearly 70% are L1 Amazigh speakers, yet the current curriculum does not include considerations for L1 learners. Teachers express a desire for an L1/heritage learner track to possibly mitigate the struggles that come with teaching mixed proficiency levels in the same classroom. Consideration for school location and context when designing curriculum are points that participants say teachers would like to see addressed by the IRCAM and the MOE in the future.

Another adjacent challenge reported is the absence of teacher input on the development of the Tamazight curriculum. This has led to curricular decisions solely led by actors from above and from the side which often pose unrealistic expectations on teachers and learners. According to participants, throughout the years it has unfortunately been common for regional or national officials to solicit feedback from Tamazight teachers and then proceed in the production of teaching resources that do not reflect their advice. In another example, a participant described being invited to a meeting called by AREF officials

to gather input on teaching curriculum from Tamazight teachers; however, upon arrival, attendees were presented with a pre-finalized version of the curriculum and were given no opportunity for discourse.

During the interviews, participants were asked whether they were aware of any national or regional Tamazight proficiency examinations and if there would be standardized assessments developed under FL. 51.17. They conveyed that because the current curriculum is not amenable or able to be adapted to different classroom contexts, there is great variability in terms of teaching style and classroom instruction. In turn, although there are regular exams held at the school level, participants currently view the possibility of any national or regional assessments as impractical. As of now, the weaknesses of the curriculum coupled with the inability to learn Tamazight across all years of primary school is said to contribute to the implausibility of setting national learning standards for Tamazight.

Teachers' suggestions on textbook content have also been disregarded. Participants described how the Tamazight language is also being 'marginalized' in the textbooks. Some textbooks include content not appropriate for certain grade levels or not suitable for all users. As one participant shared:

Some textbooks need to be reviewed. There is an association in my region that does checks for mistakes. However, the recent 3rd grade textbook contained very long and hard to read texts...Non-native speakers, for example, cannot memorize long texts as part of oral expression exercises...[Some] textbooks have images of public spaces where the Tifnagh script is not displayed or where there is little representation of Amazigh people. There aren't specific themes to focus on either.

Not only is textbook content difficult to follow for some students, but it sometimes does also not represent Amazigh culture well, and it may not include sufficient use of the Tifnagh script. This statement was also supported by another participant who claimed that after nearly 20 years of offering Tamazight in Moroccan schools, the quality of Tamazight textbooks is still not on par with that of French or Arabic textbooks. Throughout the years, Tamazight textbooks have contained more than several errors and, aesthetically, have come across to teachers as being hastily produced.

Finally, participants complained about not having in-service training throughout the year, or in cases where training did occur, trainers were completely unfamiliar with the Tamazight language and how to teach it. One participant who has been teaching since 2019 noted that not once has an AREF inspector come to their school to deliver teacher training. All participants stated that the absence of continuous in-service training is due to the lack of trainers specialized in Tamazight language

education. As there is little to no training being organized at the regional level, Tamazight teachers lucky enough to be placed in schools with other Tamazight teachers must come to rely on each other for mentorship and assistance. Otherwise, teachers on their own are likely to continue to pull from teaching strategies they learned during pre-service training.

Attitudinal challenges

Negative linguistic attitudes toward Tamazight in education are manifested in several ways. First, Tamazight teachers do not have their own classrooms, unlike their peers teaching MSA and French. They are often not provided with a designated teaching space at their school. One participant described themselves as a *'mobile teacher'*, since they must transport all of their course supplies, including technology, from room to room throughout the week. While many teachers would like to give their students an immersive Amazigh learning environment by decorating their classrooms with cultural artifacts, it is difficult to do so when they do not have a fixed classroom space, as explained by a participant:

We also have the problem of classrooms. Tamazight teachers do not have their own fixed classrooms which makes us uncomfortable psychologically. This is a clear message to students that we are not essential and that we are inferior compared to teachers of French and Arabic, for example. We feel humiliated, we're always ranked at the bottom.

This feeling of humiliation gets extended to the practice of course scheduling as well. Participants said that Tamazight teachers are always given the lowest priority during course scheduling. School directors or head teachers notoriously request Tamazight teachers to work hours that are not suitable for them. Teachers may be told to plan their lessons during times when students are available, meaning after all the other subjects have been scheduled. At some schools, Tamazight classes are scheduled at times that conflict with other subjects such as French and Arabic.

Tamazight teachers may also be compelled to teach French or Arabic or act as substitutes for those classes when other instructors fall ill. One participant claimed they have been asked to *'fill in the gap'* for other subjects as well if there happens to be a need. Even teachers who have no proper training in subjects other than Tamazight are directed by their schools to teach other courses, sometimes even at the expense of their own regular class times. The situation is continually enabled by school directors or administrative officials who remain ideologically unsupportive of Tamazight instruction at their school. One participant commented that most school directors know nothing about Tamazight and regard the language as lacking any social value.

The attitudes of school administrators reportedly cause further challenges. At some schools, Tamazight teachers cannot upload student evaluation comments in Tifinagh because the current software does not recognize the script. Although it would be beneficial for teachers – especially those in rural settings where parents of students are most likely to be Amazigh speakers as well – to be able to type and share out notes in Tifinagh, the script is not always compatible with school software. Another observation reported by participants is how students consistently give Tamazight teachers lower marks on teacher evaluations, while Arabic and French teachers are often given higher marks by their students in comparison. Some attributed this behavior because of a school climate where administrators remain uninformed or unconcerned with improving the quality of Tamazight instruction.

The broader social context in which the participants are located also plays a role in how Tamazight is perceived at the school level. Participants mentioned that they have encountered both supportive and unsupportive parents of both Amazigh and non-Amazigh ethnic backgrounds. While there was mention of supportive parents who genuinely want their children to learn Tamazight, and there are students who are excited to learn as well, there was also an acknowledgment of parental opposition. Some parents openly express their disinterest in having their children learn Tamazight because they do not think of it as a valuable language. The teaching of Tamazight is thus complicated by some parents who deny their children the opportunity to learn in the first place or who instill a lack of enthusiasm.

Potential impact of Framework Law 51.17

Due to the confluence of the structural and attitudinal challenges reported above, many of which continue to persist since the first introduction of Tamazight into schools in 2003, participants have greeted FL 51.17 with skepticism and doubt its potential to redress past issues or improve the implementation of Tamazight. When participants were asked whether it is possible for the provision stated in FL 51.17 to resolve these challenges, all professed doubt over the policy having the actual capacity to yield its desired outcomes. Participants describe the law as good on paper or aspirational and complain that the state has done nothing to improve the generalization of Tamazight at the primary level. According to one participant, the state stipulating the national instruction of Tamazight at the secondary level – as stated in FL 51.17 – is contradictory and a gross disregard for the immediate issues teachers face at the primary level.

To reiterate, participants are not in disagreement with the intent of the law nor the clauses under Article 31, which seek to promote the Tamazight language. However, they understand the law as a

continuation of legal policies filled with good intentions yet without commensurate action. Their overall sentiments are aptly summarized in the following statement given by one participant:

Regarding Framework Law 51.17, I cannot speak of this law without bringing up the other laws. When we are talking about this law, it is only a law among a series of laws that started since the national charter which gave us hope for inclusion of the Amazigh language in schools. After that came the emergency plan, the strategic vision, and now the framework law that concerns the educational system and training... Regarding laws, they remain ink on paper. I do not underestimate them, but I believe that if there is no intention to apply them, we will end up with a collection of laws without change.

Participants mainly perceive FL 51.17 as another political accessory designed with good intentions yet, just like similar previously passed laws, it is not likely to lead to the anticipated systemic change declared. The current implementational challenges shared by participants in this study support many of the findings from similar studies (Buckner, 2006; Errihani, 2006; Sadiqi, 2011).

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study have demonstrated the extent of the gap between Tamazight language-in-education policy in education from above and current implementation and practice at the school level as change from below. My findings are consistent with the literature and other studies that have characterized LPP in education efforts for Tamazight as more of a politically ideological venture rather than an intentional practice-based pedagogical one. Nearly 20 years have passed since the soft introduction of Tamazight into the Moroccan school system, and yet many fundamental implementational challenges have not been resolved. Tamazight teachers are struggling due to structural challenges generated by an LPP system of actors whose activities are not in accordance with a language-as-resource orientation (Ruiz, 1984). These actors are trying to exercise their agency under a model of change that is initiated by actors from above, according to the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework, where there has been little to no regard for teachers' input. It is evident from the data that teachers are advocating for increased involvement and broader inclusion in the LPP system for the sake of their students. Until this occurs, they will perceive FL 51.17, and possibly future policies, as lacking the potential to create positive outcomes for Tamazight in education.

Tamazight teachers are generally unsatisfied with how Tamazight language-in-education policy has been and is being implemented. The participants in this study described their teaching experience negatively

and based on these experiences they foresee the continuation of negative outcomes for Tamazight in education despite the passing of FL 51.17. Tamazight teachers are committed to their work; however, they are troubled by several structural and attitudinal challenges that hinder the success of Tamazight language inclusion in the Moroccan education system. Therefore, teachers seek to have greater input and oversight in the development of resources and processes which directly influence the overall quality of classroom instruction. This refers to a bottom-up or change-from-below process by which actors from above would gradually distribute more authority over the implementation of Tamazight to teachers.

Tamazight LPP in education in Morocco requires fewer centralized policies and a more visible commitment to supporting schools via technical support. The findings of this study suggest that there is an immediate need for structural interventions from side-level actors, which may in turn lead to more positive attitudinal perceptions regarding Tamazight in society. There is also a need for deliberate coordination among teachers, IRCAM and other responsible entities around improving the quality of teaching resources and increasing student access to textbooks. This would call for the inclusion of Tamazight via scaffolding into the education system, meaning that a gradual process could be undertaken that facilitates broader inclusion of actors at the side and below levels to address fundamental challenges before the passing of any new legislation. For example, to achieve Tamazight generalization across all Moroccan schools at the primary level, planners and implementers should first tend to the ongoing issues at schools with existing Tamazight language programs that have thus far been overlooked. From this starting point, the focus onwards should be on transferring successful models and practices to one school at a time through sponsored training, workshops or conferences. Once the major policy issues are resolved there could be more opportunities for discourse around opting to include Tamazight as an additional LOI at the primary level rather than just a language subject.

Inspired by the policy change directional models (Kosonen & Benson, 2021), which describe language-in-education policies as passing through initial and secondary actions, I propose a series of activities that would improve the current Model 1 identified for Morocco – change from above – by increasing the involvement of below and side actors. Figure 7.1 charts a possible further trajectory for implementation of Tamazight education in Morocco.

In the initial phase the MOE could engage the below-level by taking teachers' observations into consideration via a national survey on the state of Tamazight in education. This survey should use a mixed-methods approach, using instruments to gather quantitative and qualitative data on accessibility and quality of resources, teaching approaches, teacher support, student learning outcomes and the

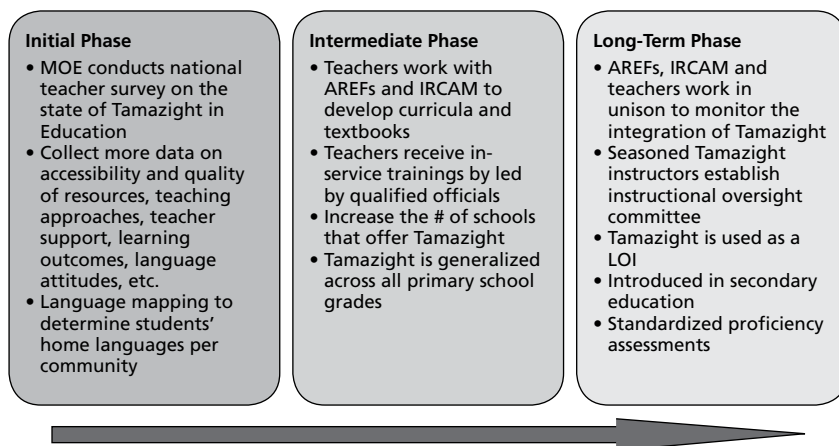


Figure 7.1 Proposed directional model – Model 1, top-down, with increased involvement of below and side actors

influence of pervasive societal linguistic attitudes. It could also apply use of focus groups and interviews to elicit localized feedback from a diverse representative sample of Tamazight teachers.

This survey would reference existing LPP in education evaluation tools, frameworks, or protocols. Benson (2016) suggests a four-part protocol for evaluating educational language issues by addressing the ‘approach/methodology, teacher languages and skills, learner assessment and program management and evaluation’ (2016: 18). To further engage actors from below, current Tamazight teacher approaches and instruments to assess language acquisition should be consistently evaluated and monitored to better address the host of issues already identified in this study and to ensure adequate progress toward the goals of Framework Law 51.17. De Galbert (2021) proposes a five-dimensional analytical framework for interpreting language-in-education policies and their implementation in multilingual contexts. The five dimensions within this framework include: ‘(i) the sociolinguistic context and community support; (ii) orthographies; (iii) curriculum and materials; (iv) teacher recruitment, training, and deployment; and (v) assessment and examination’ (2021: 279). According to De Galbert, the sociolinguistic context takes precedence in this analysis, while the additional factors offer different vantage points from which the vitality of language-in-education policy can be assessed. In the Moroccan context, stakeholders should adopt aspects of this framework, to develop survey instruments that would capture a comprehensive overview of Tamazight language implementation and classroom instruction.

Language mapping should also occur prior to the national survey. Language mapping involves looking at the geographical distribution

of languages or language varieties in every locality (Gibson, 2021). Participants in my study reported teaching mixed classes with heritage and non-heritage learners. Language mapping results could potentially be used to better inform curriculum design to allow for the development of more localized approaches that account for the different Amazigh varieties along with instructional differences between L1/heritage vs. non-L1/heritage learners.

Moving from initial to the intermediate phases, the role of international actors from the side supporting language and literacy development related objectives under the Strategic Vision for Education Reform should be interrogated. When it comes to language use in education, most recent projects between international side actors and the MOE promote the development of MSA literacy in primary education and not Tamazight, such as Reading for Success (USAID, 2020). For this new model to work, international actors from the side would need to work directly with actors from below and domestic side actors as much as they do with the MOE. International side actors could serve as technical assistants, helping Tamazight teachers, AREFs, and IRCAM in curriculum and textbook design. These parties could potentially assist with the development of in-service training and share teaching strategies which have worked in other countries. International side actors such as USAID should support the financing of book production to increase both quality and access to Tamazight textbooks.

During the intermediate phase, side- and above-level actors would act on recommendations by local actors through participatory monitoring and evaluation processes. Key deficiencies reported by teachers would be addressed according to the context, with change occurring in all directions, while still being administered by teachers and school-level practitioners. The results could be synergistic, leading to the fulfillment of at least the basic provisions designated by law such as generalization of Tamazight across all Moroccan schools and opportunity to Tamazight study across all primary grade levels.

In the long term, Morocco still has the potential to develop stronger institutions for NDLs like Tamazight, if societal language attitudes can be influenced so that stakeholders appreciate the linguistic capital of NDL languages and their speakers (Bourdieu, 1991). Buckner (2006: 432) calls for us to ‘recognize the unique potential of Tamazight language education for rural Imazighen, in which development of a decentralized, culturally sensitive educational program could contribute greatly to the development of the nation as a whole’. Language-in-education planning initiatives that create opportunities to uplift impoverished or disenfranchised ethnolinguistic communities could generate socioeconomic advances across other domains. Research on the economics of language purports that language skills have an

actual impact on economic productivity (Grin, 2008). In addition to calling for teacher recruitment, participants also expressed a desire for more positions to be created like Tamazight translators in Moroccan courts and in the media. Creating a labor market inclusive of Amazigh languages could dramatically impact Tamazight implementation and acquisition planning in a positive way. Beyond just the introduction of Tamazight in secondary education as stated in FL 51.17, emphasis in the labor market could facilitate development of standardized proficiency tests for both educational and professional use.

Future research on the use of Tamazight in the Moroccan education system could include a larger sample of Tamazight teachers, and possibly a more representative one in terms of gender, work experience, regional location, and ethnolinguistic background. Researchers may want to include a more diverse representation of responsible stakeholders across levels, while keeping focus on teacher experiences and their perceptions as frontline implementers of LPP in education. Moving forward, more studies need to observe Tamazight language implementation under FL 51.17, and more broadly, under the strategic goals of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision for Education Reform.

Notes

- (1) The term ‘variety/varieties’ is used here rather than ‘dialects’. Linguistically speaking, dialect is also correct, but in many social uses has a pejorative connotation indicating lower social power and prestige (Kosonen & Benson, 2013), while variety is less controversial.
- (2) This figure is questionable since the corresponding question stated on the census referred to how often respondents spoke an Amazigh variety in daily life as opposed to whether they speak it as an L1 specifically.
- (3) This is the government body that oversees all areas related to the provision of public and private education. I abbreviate it as MOE in this paper, standing for Ministry of Education.
- (4) Les Academies Regionales de l’Éducation et de la Formation or Regional Academies of Education (AREF). There are 12 regional education authorities: one for each administrative region in Morocco.
- (5) L’Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe.
- (6) Respondents did not distinguish between MSA or Darija.

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8 The Role of *Militants* in Advocating for a National Bilingual Education Policy in Senegal

Erina Iwasaki

Abstract

E hitaande 2021, Ministeer Janđe Ngenndi Senegaal yéttii laawol politik ngenndi janđe demdidiire, bi’eteengol *Modèle Harmonisé d’Enseignement Bilingue au Sénégal* (MOHEBS), e farayse: maanaa Ñemmbirde Nanondiraande wonande Janđe Demdidiire e Senegaal. Ndeen doon ruttorde laamu, lelni ko wonde ko tuggi koo e hitaande janđe 2023-2024, eleweeße janđe lekkolaaji hakindiinde ndee, maa 6e mbađtu janngirde demde ngenndiije (afriknaaje) dee, kam e farayse. Oon doon politik keso, ko mbo casol manngol, teeñti noon e nder wonorde heewdemdiire nde nganndu-daa ndee ko farayse woni heen demngal laamu janngirteengal e lekkolaaji fof, ngal woni kadi demngal jananal wonande ko 6uri koo heewde e eleweeße e jannginoobe 6ee kala. Ko woni koo Senegaal, ko dum fartanñe mawdo ngam yéewtindaade, e gite 7jaas, baylagol politik demngal jannginirteengal, kam e yimbe jeyaaße 6ee e ngool doon baylagol. Caggal nde min yétti jabbal silo ngal *Kosonen and Benson* (2012) kolliri ngal, fawaade e baylagol demde jannginirteede, ngal doo damal toddii ko miijnude laawol politik Senegaal to batte demde jannginirteede, kam e feññinde noon darnde timmunde nde golliyankooße ngenndi, wi’eteefe «harbiyankooße» demde ngenndiije 6ee e nder yu6bo janđe, ndarii heen ndee. Been Doon harbiyankooße keewi wonde ko demdiyankooße, porofesooreefe iniwersitee, jannginoobe, yimbe jeyaaße e fannuuji jaaynugol e winndiyankooße, kam e Pelle de Ngonaa Laamuyankooje (ONGeeji). Naamnondire bađaade dee, kam e silo politikaaji janđe ngoo, fof kollirii wonde baylagol politik ngol saabii ngol ko tiidnaare been doon harbiyankooße timmunde : kambe, 6e njannii demde mu’en ngenndiije, 6e kaadaani doon tan; 6e ceeraani kadi e habaneede, ko aldaa e yahtirde caggal, ngam demde Afrik njabanee wonde demde laamu janngirteede,

nii no demngal farayse jaggiraa. Widto ngoo, ongo beti kadi jumtugol e teenjugol to batte facciro, jaɓɓal silo ngal *Kosonen and Benson* (2021) ngal, e nder wonorde baylagol politik demde oo e nder fannu jaɗde lekkolaaji. (*Abstract in Pulaar [ful], the second language of Senegal, translated and revised by Fary Silate Kâ, Mamadou Amadou Ly, and Alioune Ibrahima Kébé*).

En 2021, le Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Sénégal a adopté une politique nationale d'éducation bilingue, désignée sous le nom de Modèle Harmonisé de l'Éducation Bilingue au Sénégal (MOHEBS). Ce document officiel stipule qu'à partir de l'année scolaire 2023-2024, les élèves de l'enseignement élémentaire formel bénéficieront d'un enseignement dispensé dans les langues nationales (africaines) ainsi qu'en français. Cette nouvelle politique représente un enjeu majeur, particulièrement dans un contexte multilingue où le français est la langue officielle d'enseignement dans le système éducatif formel et une langue étrangère pour une grande majorité d'élèves et d'enseignants. Le cas du Sénégal est une occasion opportune d'observer en temps réel le changement de politique en matière de langue d'enseignement et les acteurs impliqués dans ce changement. En adoptant le cadre analytique proposé par Kosonen et Benson (2021) concernant le changement de politique en matière de langues d'enseignement, ce chapitre se propose de conceptualiser la trajectoire de la politique du Sénégal en matière de langues d'enseignement et de mettre en lumière le rôle déterminant des acteurs nationaux qui se qualifient souvent de 'militants' des langues nationales au sein du système éducatif. Ces militants sont souvent des linguistes, des professeurs d'université, des enseignants, des membres des secteurs médiatique et littéraire, ainsi que des ONGs. Les entretiens menés et l'analyse des politiques éducatives démontrent que le changement de politique a été favorisé par les efforts soutenus de ces militants, qui ont non seulement appris leurs propres langues nationales, mais ont également plaidé de manière constante pour que les langues africaines soient reconnues comme langues d'enseignement officielles, au même titre que le français. L'étude évalue également la pertinence et la validité interprétative du cadre analytique de Kosonen et Benson (2021) dans le contexte du changement de politique linguistique dans le domaine de l'enseignement formel.

In 2021, Senegal's Ministry of Education adopted a national bilingual education policy called the Modèle Harmonisé de l'Éducation Bilingue au Sénégal (MOHEBS). This official policy paper states that, from the 2023–2024 school year, students in formal elementary school will be taught in national (African) languages and French. This new policy is no small feat, especially in a multilingual country where French has been the official language of instruction in formal education and a foreign language to a large majority of students and teachers. Senegal's case is a timely opportunity to witness in real time the language-in-education policy change and the actors involved in this change. Utilizing Kosonen

and Benson's (2021) analytical framework for language-in-education policy change, this chapter conceptualizes Senegal's language-in-education policy trajectory and highlights the role of Senegalese side actors who often call themselves 'militants' of national languages in education and are linguists, university professors, teachers, media and literary actors and NGOs. Interviews and historical analysis found the policy change was made possible in Senegal thanks to these militants' constant and consistent advocacy throughout time to render African languages official languages of instruction alongside French. The study also discusses the Kosonen and Benson's (2021) framework's interpretive validity in analyzing language-in-education policy change.

Introduction

Senegal is a multilingual country, home to 39 living languages (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). However, like many countries with a colonial past, Senegal has a single official language according to its Constitution: French, the language instituted during French colonization. This language, to this day, remains the language of instruction when only an estimated 3.2% of the entire adult population use French as their first language (L1) and only 28.97% use French as their second language (L2) (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). This means that, in the best-case scenario, 67.83% of adult Senegalese are not proficient in the official language used for their education. Such discrepancy between learners' languages and the language of instruction has severe consequences on Senegalese learners' academic success. While other factors than the language of instruction may influence these statistics, according to Senegal's Ministry of National Education (MEN), even after 12 years of schooling, only 44.65% of enrolled students across the country were able to pass the high stakes *baccalauréat* examination (high school graduation examination) in 2021, which is also only conducted in French (*Baccalauréat au Sénégal*, 2021). Several studies and reports in similar contexts have cited possible correlation between the high dropout rates or lack of academic success and the issue of the language of instruction (Brock-Utne, 1997, 2001; Brock-Utne & Lexow, 1997; Heugh, 1999). For Senegal, it was also found that certain ethnolinguistic communities experience tensions between their own forms of knowledge and languages and the ones disseminated and inculcated at school (Sarr, 2013), which could also weigh in the low pass rate of the *baccalauréat* examination.

Given these educational challenges and its linguistic diversity, Senegal has a long tradition of valuing and advocating for African languages and their usage in education (Diallo, 2010; Diouf, 2019; Faty, 2016) in relation to their history of decolonization from French

control. The country boasts many self-proclaimed *militants* of national languages, meaning advocates of national languages with a strong political connotation in French. National languages in this context refer to the African languages such as Jola, Mandinka, Pulaar, Seereer, Soninke and Wolof, which were designated as *langues nationales* or national languages for the first time in the 1978 Senegalese Constitution (Faty, 2016) to recognize them as part of Senegal's national and intellectual landmark. The Constitution was then revised in 2002 to expand the category of national languages from these six initial languages to any codified language. Today, there are 25 officially recognized *langues nationales* (Diagne, 2017), and 22 out of the 25 are codified. National languages do not include Creole languages prevalent in border regions with the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, or Arabic, which is taught in *daaras* (Koranic schools).

In formal education, the Senegalese government attempted twice (the first time in 1977–1984, and the second time in 2002–2008) to integrate national languages as languages of instruction in formal schooling. However, neither of these two attempts were sustained (Diallo, 2010; Diouf, 2019) due to implementation challenges. Ever since 2008, civil society organizations and development agencies have taken the lead to address this gap by devising various bi-/multilingual models of education (Diouf, 2019). Some of these programs are ELAN-Afrique (2007–2011; 2012–2016; 2016–present) supported by the OIF through the *Institut de la Francophonie pour l'Éducation et la Formation* (IFEFF) and *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD); EMiLe (2009–2013), a Seereer and French bilingual program led by World Vision Senegal, the National Office of Catholic Education in Senegal (ONECS), and SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics); ADLAS (2011–2014) for Saafi-Saafi and French bilingual programs; ARED's simultaneous bilingual education program (2009–2019) (Benson, 2022; Iwasaki, 2022) and *Lecture Pour Tous* (LPT) an Early Grade Reading program with USAID from 2016 to 2021 (Diop, 2017; Diouf, 2019; Ministry of National Education, 2019). These programs involved many of these dedicated *militant* women and men who have operationalized national languages as languages of instruction at school, including the codification of national languages, the development of dictionaries and grammars, the nurturing of linguists and bilingual educators and research on learning outcomes.

In April 2021, Senegal's Ministry of National Education officially adopted a national bilingual education policy called the *Modèle harmonisé de l'éducation bilingue au Sénégal* (MOHEBS) (SIL LEAD, 2021). This policy states that national languages will be languages of instruction alongside French in formal primary school (MEN, 2019) and is meant to be rolled out in the 2023–2024 school year (SIL LEAD, 2021). It is no small feat generalizing a national bilingual education program,

especially in a multilingual country where French has been the official language of instruction in formal education and a foreign language to a large majority of students and teachers.

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptualize Senegal's language-in-education policy change as it is occurring in real time using Kosonen and Benson's (2021) language-in-education policy change analytical framework as it has been used for other contexts such as Ethiopia and Mozambique (Benson, 2021), Estonia (Brown, 2021) and the Philippines (Dekker, 2021). My analysis attempts to respond to the perceived lack of research 'at the level of agentive activity where policy and practice intersect, particularly in multilingual contexts in low- and middle-income countries' (Kosonen & Benson, 2021: 32). It seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How can Senegal's language-in-education policy change to bilingual education in national languages and French be conceptualized according to Kosonen and Benson's analytical framework?
- What part did/do the *militants* play in bilingual education advocacy, policy and practice up to present and what are their current efforts and strategies in influencing language-in-education policy change at present?

This research is significant as it documents an actual case of language-in-education policy change toward recognizing and utilizing the languages of learners as language of instruction in another so-called low-income but francophone country. Understanding how the change is occurring in Senegal can be informative for other similar contexts also working toward utilizing the languages of learners as language of instruction and adopting a bi-/multilingual model. Additionally, it further tests the interpretive validity of Kosonen and Benson's framework and provides ground for discussion on future language-in-education policy change analyses.

Methodology and Sources of Data

Various sources of data were collected for this research. I first conducted a document analysis of several policy documents in relation to national languages in education policy in Senegal from the 1950s to the present (see Table 8.1). This policy document analysis was intended to flesh out the historical context of national languages in Senegal. I also consulted other historical archives, as well as current media sources (newspaper articles and social media) to identify key events regarding national languages and education. Media sources ranged from newspaper articles, radio and TV shows to social media posts in relation to national language advocacy and the national bilingual education

Table 8.1 List of analyzed policy documents

Constitution of Senegal and its amendments over time in terms of national languages and education (Fall, 2007)
Les États-Généraux de l'Éducation et de la Formation (EGEF) de 1981/Estates-General ² of Education and Training (Ministry of National Education, 1981)
Programme de Développement de l'Éducation et de la Formation, Éducation Pour Tous (PDEF/EPT) de 2003/Education and Training Development Program, Education For All (Ministry of National Education, 2003)
Les Assises de l'Éducation Nationale de 2014/National Education Conference of 2014 (Ministry of National Education, 2014)
Programme de l'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Équité et de la Transparence - Éducation/Formation (PAQUET – EF) 2018–2030/Quality, Equity, and Transparency Improvement Program – Education and Training 2018–2030 (Ministry of National Education, 2018)
Le Modèle Harmonisé de l'Éducation Bilingue du Sénégal (MOHEBS)/Harmonized Bilingual Education Model of Senegal (Ministry of National Education, 2015, 2018)

policy. Media sources were particularly important to understand who the *militants* of national languages are and the extent of national language advocacy in Senegal.

Finally, I conducted 39 interviews (mainly online due to COVID-19 travel restrictions during a time that prevented travel to Senegal) with 36 self-proclaimed *militants* between March 2021 and February 2022 to understand the depth and scope of their advocacy work, and their reasons for engaging in it. Utilizing a snowball approach, I began interviewing people at the Senegalese NGO *Associates in Research and Educational Development* (ARED) known for their work in developing national languages in education. I have known ARED since November 2018 as I participated in an external evaluation of their simultaneous bilingual education program (Benson, 2022). I subsequently conducted a pilot study in July/August 2019 and heard for the first time the term ‘militant.e des langues nationales’ (‘militants for national languages’)¹ as the advocates for bilingual education were introducing themselves. This study concluded the existence of a vibrant community of women and men engaged in the advocacy for national languages in education. All the names cited here are pseudonyms for privacy and security reasons. I terminated my interviews when participants started referring me to the same people and providing similar responses, concluding that I had saturated my responses. All these data sources were triangulated and substantiate the timeline of key activities (see Figure 8.1) in Senegal’s language-in-education policy change I present below according to the Kosonen and Benson (2021) analytical framework.

One of the limitations of this study aside from pandemic travel restrictions is possibly the Wolof-, Pulaar- and Dakar-centric nature of the participants and documents collected as opposed to consulting a wider sample of national languages. This may have limited the

documentation of more grassroots initiatives in other languages and in other parts of Senegal.

Findings and Analysis

Kosonen and Benson's framework examines language-in-education policy change in favor of non-dominant languages or more precisely the language(s) of the learners. It identifies four possible language-in-education change trajectories by analyzing the work of actors from above, such as central government entities, actors from below, such as civil society organizations and associations, and actors from the side, such as consultants, researchers or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). The change trajectories are identified depending on whether they are initiated at the top, side and/or below levels. Model 1 describes change that is initiated from 'above', where policy passes down to side implementers who then mobilize linguistic community actors. Model 2 describes the reverse, where change is initiated by the community, picked up by side actors who provide technical and/or financial support, and may eventually reach policymakers. In Models 3 and 4, change is initiated by side actors; in Model 3, the side-level change is implemented along with actors from below and then advocated with policymaking actors from above, whereas in Model 4, the side-level change is advocated at the policymakers' level, followed by involvement at the community level. According to the timeline of language-in-education activities in Figure 8.1, I argue that Senegal's case is a blend of Models 2, 3 and 4, on which I elaborate below.

The timeline in Figure 8.1 conceptualizes actions at the below, side and above levels beginning a few years before Senegal's Independence from France in 1960. The decision to start the timeline at this point is informed by Robert Cowen's (1996, 2000) theory of transitology in comparative and international education. Cowen (2000) argues that societal complexities are most exposed during political transitions, which he terms 'transitology', and that educational sites reflect the intersections of history, social structures, and the pedagogical identities of individuals. As Cowen (2000: 336) explains, educational settings 'express forms and patterns that capture the intersections of the forces of history, social structures, and the pedagogic identities of the individuals'. In transitional moments, such as the period leading up to and following Senegal's Independence, 'patterning of the mixtures of educational inheritances and the mix of earlier and current reform purposes' (Cowen, 1996: 166) emerge. By examining this moment of transition and analyzing educational sites, programs and policies, it is possible to understand the various forces and underlying ideologies that shaped Senegal's trajectory toward a national bilingual education policy.

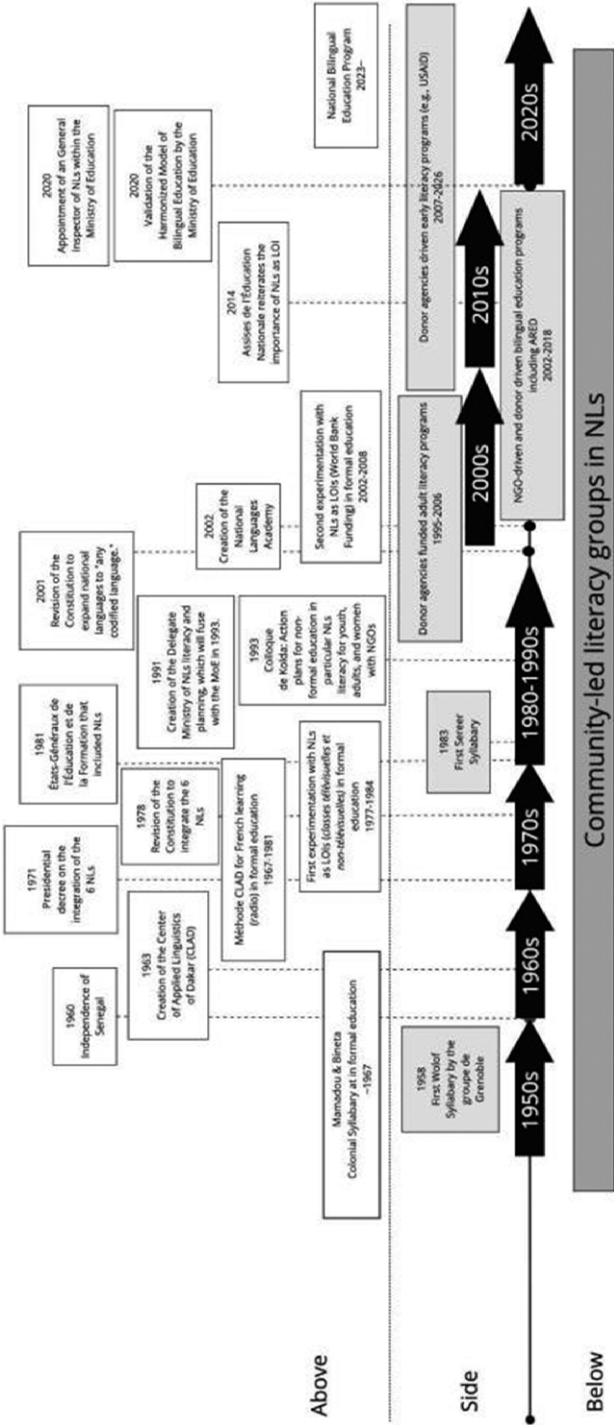


Figure 8.1 Senegal's language-in-education activities

At first glance, one might surmise that Senegal's move toward national bilingual education in French and national languages was primarily driven by the government. However, my research reveals that many of these above-level activities were made possible by a strong, long-standing tradition of language activism at the below level, combined with external funding and obligations from the side. In the case of Senegal, it is not entirely clear where the change originated, which is why I propose a blend of Models 2, 3 and 4, according to Kosonen and Benson's framework. Like Brown's (2021) case study of Võro language advocates in Estonia, the main actors advocating for change – the militants I interviewed – are predominantly linguists, university professors, NGO workers and government staff. These individuals have 'jumped' and 'slid' across levels over time, holding multiple roles at different points in their careers, yet remaining committed to national language activism. They exhibit traits of exemplary policy entrepreneurs, a concept I will explore further below.

Below level: A long tradition of grassroots language activism

While the work done at the above levels may seem significant to provide the national languages its political and linguistic legitimacy over time, and not without conflict, my research found that Senegal's movement toward the integration of national languages in education was mainly possible due to a long tradition of linguistic advocacy and actions in the context of colonial resistance pre-Independence and leading to it, such as the Mouride and Pulaar language activism. Many of our militants were part of these advocacy groups at the beginning of their careers or were heavily influenced by them. As one militant put it, *'Tu sais, les langues d'une manière générale, c'est lié à la décolonisation. Et donc, tout sénégalais est sensible à la question des langues'*.³ Senegal's national language activism is very much related to its history of decolonization from France. The issue of the French language and education was in fact already problematic during colonization, expressed as early as 1810 in the resistance to colonial schooling and its *'mission civilisatrice'*⁴ (Diallo, 2010; Fall, 2020). Senegalese people refused French schooling and Catholic proselytism because 'when education in the French language started on the coast of Senegal, Arabic language and Qur'anic schools were already solidly established' (Diallo, 2010: 38). Fall (2020) states that '[m]any religious communities showed stern resistance and categorically refused to send their children to the French schools' (Fall, 2020: 53), and he further notes that '[t]he early resistance of religious leaders to these French schools was motivated by their religious inclination and fear of being alienated and reshaped by a foreign culture with values very different from their own' (2020: 53). In fact, some militants that I interviewed

attributed their commitment to national languages to his membership to the Mouride community. He claimed that:

[...]chez les mourides, l'usage du français n'est pas en réalité le bienvenu. On préfère parler nos langues nationales, conserver notre culture et ne pas être travesti par le français. [...] Donc, moi j'utilise le français, par exemple, quand je travaille mais quand je sors, je refuse même de le parler. [...] Et nous, nous avons le wolof qui est la langue nationale que nous avons, est le wolof le plus authentique.

[...] amongst the Mourides, the usage of French is in reality not welcome. We prefer to speak our national languages, preserve our culture and not be distorted by French. [...] So, I use French, for example, when I work but when I leave, I even refuse to speak it. [...] And we, we have Wolof, which is the national language that we have, is the most authentic Wolof.

The Mouride community⁵ is one of Senegal's Sufi Muslim orders founded by Cheikh Amadou Bamba (1853–1927) in the 19th century who was exiled by the French for seven years to Gabon. It is perhaps the most documented Sufi order outside of Senegal due to its homegrown nature (Babou, 2007; Ross, 2008). This is to say that African language advocacy existed far before Independence from France. Many militants, particularly the Wolophones, have also attributed their language activism to the political philosophy of Cheikh Anta Diop, whom they consider to be their forefather. A political and intellectual figure, Cheikh Anta Diop (1996), who formed the African Renaissance political philosophy in the early 1950s, which claims a development by Africans for Africans, and the reinstatement of African values and cultures, constantly advocated for the usage and development of African languages as a prerequisite for Africa's development. His writings have inspired numerous people, particularly a group of Senegalese students studying in France, called the *groupe de Grenoble*, who published *Ijjib*, the first Wolof reader, in 1958, two years prior to Senegal's Independence from France.

This context also saw the rise of Pulaar language activism in Northern Senegal at the border of Mauritania in the late 1950s and early 1960s with people such as Amadou Malick Gaye who founded the *Groupe d'études pulaar*, which later became the *Association des Jeunes Pulaars* (Humery, 2012, in Hames, 2017a: 104). He later co-founded the *Association pour la Renaissance du Pulaar* or *Fedde Bamtoore Pulaar* in 1964 (Hames, 2017a: 105), in which some Pulaarphone militants from ARED I interviewed reported to have begun their work as a literacy trainer. This Pulaar language activism is reported to be very active through community radio stations (often supported by international agencies and NGOs) animated by the likes of the broadcaster Elhadj Tidiane Anne (Hames, 2017a, 2017b). In Hames'

(2017a) ethnographic work observing the Pulaar activism on both the Mauritanian and Senegalese sides, he found that ‘the connection between politics and the language question is less politically volatile, and NGOs and international agencies have been increasingly involved with literacy in Pulaar and other languages as part of educational and development projects’ (2017a: 119) in Senegal. He also mentions how as of 2016, ARED was in its pilot project phase of its bilingual Wolof/Pulaar and French education program in primary schools (Hames, 2017a: 119). Due to the limited nature of my study to Wolof- and Pulaar-centric sources, one can only surmise that similar activism could exist with other national languages. That said, throughout my study, I encountered other community-based national language organizations, some who were vocal in Wolof adult literacy classes guarding against Wolofization in the pursuit of national language capacity building (Fieldnotes, 18 December 2021), and other grassroots organizations such as ADLAS working on delivering education in Saafi-Saafi language alongside French, which benefited from the support from SIL, a side actor in the language development in Senegal (Aminata, interview, 30 October 2021).

Many militants involved at the above, side or below level were socialized in such movements and still justify today their continuous advocacy work based on this shared social imaginary.

Above and side levels: The role of militants and the institutionalization of national languages

As noted above, linguistic issues have been at the forefront of the Senegalese people’s agendas prior to Independence from France, including Leopold Sédar Senghor, the soon to be first president of the country in 1960. He had already been advocating for a bilingual model and the need for education in African languages in his speech ‘*Le problème culturel de l’Afrique Occidentale Française*’ at the conference at Chamber of Commerce in Dakar on 10 September 1937, 23 years prior to Senegal’s Independence (Senghor, 1964) while he was still a parliamentarian representing French Western Africa in the French colonial government. He argued against French colonialists that an only French education did not make sense for Senegalese children, and their African languages ought to be considered (Senghor, 1964).

In the period leading to Independence and beyond, the issue of language took on a more political and institutional character in the context of Senegal’s nation building as it emerged from French control. This process was not without tumult and conflicts between Senghor’s government and the opposition led by Cheikh Anta Diop, who considered Senghor too pro-French and insufficiently supportive of national languages (Diop, 2017; Faty, 2016). However, during his

presidency in 1978, Senghor integrated the first six national languages – Diola, Sereer, Wolof, Soninke, Mandinka and Pulaar – into the country's constitution. The constitution was later revised in 2002 under President Abdoulaye Wade to expand national languages to include 'any other codified language' (Diallo, 2010).

The post-Independence period retained national languages as an important point of focus in Senegal's postcolonial nation building, particularly in the process of 'senegalizing' its education. This process was not without unrest. In fact, between 1968 and 1980, Senegal experienced numerous strikes involving student syndicates, who fervently denounced French imperialism and its effects on Senegal, pressuring Senghor's government to be a more Senegalese government and requesting better education. It led in 1980 to the *grande grève des enseignants*, a nationwide teachers' strike in Senegal, which was officially launched by the teachers' syndicate (SUDES) on 13 May 1980, after growing discontent since 1968. The whole country experienced secondary student-led strikes on a quasi-annual basis expressing their discontent about the lack of materials and teachers, and the poor quality of education (Labrune-Badiane, 2012; Sylla, 1982). Teachers were unhappy being underpaid, especially with the degrading economic conditions (e.g. inflation and increases in the price of oil). Teachers and students began to question the contradictions of Senghor's government, which legally advocated for the Africanization of the schooling system yet were financially reliant on the government of France who still oversaw Senegal's education system (Labrune-Badiane, 2012). Yet Senghor's government refused to meet with the syndicate.

The SUDES teachers' strike led to the *États-Généraux de l'Éducation et de la Formation* in 1981 under the new President Abdou Diouf, a seminal event at the ministry of education level where the SUDES made their demands in terms of new educational reforms to the new government. These discussions turned into a policy document, which stipulated that education shall be delivered in national languages to 'senegalize' its education (Ministry of National Education, Clauses 23, 24, 31, 1981). One of the SUDES' demands was to terminate the *Méthode CLAD*, a radio-based method to teach students French, which was heavily criticized for teaching Senegalese students to speak like little French boys and girls. One of the militants who had taught this method when it first started in the 1970s recalled that French technical assistance was posted in Dakar just to speak on the radio and talk with the native French accent, which he had to repeat with the students in class (Tidiane, interview, 31 July 2019). Many militants shared that they were part of these discussions, ensuring that national languages are accounted for as languages of instruction in Senegal's education. The SUDES at that time was led by a young syndicalist militant Mamadou Ndoeye, who would later become the Minister of Literacy and Education under Abdou Diouf's presidency.

During the same period, the first-ever experimentation with national languages in formal education occurred from 1977 to 1984. It was conducted by the government with the support of the *Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique* (ACCT), which was later subsumed under the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF). Called *classes télévisuelles* and *classes non télévisuelles*, this first experiment aimed to introduce Wolof, Pulaar, Sereer and Diola through the medium of television in some classrooms and was conducted by the Center of Applied Linguistics of Dakar. This experiment was evaluated by UNESCO, which concluded that the intervention accentuated the diglossia (high versus low prestige) between the dominant language French and the non-dominant African languages (Diop, 2017). The experiment was interrupted in 1984 due to the lack of pedagogical materials, properly trained bilingual teachers, and appropriate terminologies in national languages needed to effectively teach each subject in national languages (M'bodj, 1994). Furthermore, the experiment relied on the usage of televisions and electricity, which were rare even in Dakar, the capital city, at that time. Therefore, to rely on this new technology to introduce national languages in schools in rural areas was already bound to fail before its implementation (Tidiane, personal communication, 31 July 2019). According to one elder *militant* who was a linguist trying to keep certain Sereer-based classrooms alive at that time, parents were displeased with the poor quality of implementation of national languages and the lack of pedagogical materials, which degraded the reputation of national languages in education (Tidiane, personal communication, 31 July 2019).

As many militants continued their advocacy, the 1990s to 2000s saw an institutional strengthening of national languages under President Abdou Diouf as his government focused on non-formal literacy programs in national languages for women and young adults. The national priority became combating illiteracy aligning with the goals of global education mandates such as the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 (UNESCO, 1990) and World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). At that time, globally, the narrative around literacy was coagulating into a convincing whole, which drove much of the international cooperation and assistance provided to developing countries henceforth. As international bodies such as UNESCO, and the World Bank alarmed against the dire situation of illiteracy in Sub-Saharan Africa, Senegal also aligned its national priority to this global narrative of functional literacy (Diallo, 2010). These programs were conducted under the leadership of Mamadou Ndoye, now Minister of Literacy and Education, with external funding from the World Bank, Canadian and German development funds (Cheikh, interview, 12 May 2021).

As the government implemented its non-formal literacy programs in national languages, they often utilized a bottom-up approach where

they would put out a call for proposals for local organizations to apply with a proposal (Cheikh, interview, 12 May 2021). This in turn led to the professionalization of many national languages in the NGO sector including ARED aforementioned (Cheikh, interview, 12 May 2021). The convergence of aligned side technical advocacy, assistance and funding, with a national priority set on national languages and literacy (following global education mandate), and an existing shared social imaginary of advocating for national languages in the context of colonial resistance and postcolonial nation building created opportune conditions for further national language and bilingual education program development in national languages and French. For these reasons, Senegal's case is a blend of bottom and side level-initiated actions being 'capitalized' at the above.

Strong advocacy across levels and 'capitalization' at the Ministry level

A second experimentation with national languages in formal education occurred between 2002 and 2008 under the presidency of Abdoulaye Wade and was expected to result in a scale-up of instruction in national languages throughout formal schooling across the country. Called 'Introduction of national languages at school', the program was conducted by the *Direction de l'alphabétisation et des langues nationales* (DALN), which is a governmental branch within the Ministry of Education concerned with the eradication of illiteracy and promotion of national languages at the national scale. The project was mainly supported by the OIF and UNESCO. However, the scaling up was aborted in 2008, despite having experimented with 465 bilingual classrooms in the six national languages over the course of six years (Ministry of National Education, 2019). In this model, classes started in L1, and French was gradually added, first orally, then in written form, and finally as the language of instruction in mathematics. In 2008, an external evaluation of the project was conducted by the *Association pour le Développement de l'Enseignement en Afrique* (ADEA), a pan-African forum for policy dialogue with the mission to facilitate 'better coordination among development agencies, built on a genuine partnership between African ministries of education and training and their technical and external partners' (ADEA, n.d.). ADEA reported that learners with bilingual instruction performed better on language related activities and mathematics than those learning only through French (ADEA, n.d., in Diouf, 2017). However, the evaluation also lamented the lack of financial resources to manage these experimental classrooms and the lack of political will to scale this experimentation to the whole country. In addition, the program was heavily criticized by parents of learners who, after the failure of the first experiment of 1977 to 1984,

had a very negative impression of the introduction of national languages as mediums of instruction (ADEA, 2008 as cited in Diouf, 2017). Since that time, the MEN has not experimented further.

Given the convergence of aligned side technical advocacy, assistance and funding, and a national priority set on national languages and education, leading to the professionalization of local NGOs, since 2008, non-governmental organizations and development agencies began to move in to fill the void of creating materials, developing multilingual materials and curricula (Diouf, 2019). Among the many NGOs and civil society interventions in support of national languages in education, as mentioned above, were ARED's simultaneous bilingual education model, which was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation from 2009 to 2013 and subsequently Dubai Cares from 2014 to 2019 (MWAI, 2019). By 2014, many militants were found operating within local NGOs, development agencies as local staff, at the ministerial levels, as well as consultants at various levels. Their concerted efforts along with donors such as USAID led to the national bilingual education policy called the MOHEBS, which was adopted in April 2021. The policy states that students in the first four grades of education will learn bilingually with a phased introduction of French first orally at Grade 1 then in written form in Grade 2. This policy was created to harmonize all the different 'models' experimented by different organizations. It is planned to be implemented in November 2023 in 9 different regions.

Discussion

The interpretive validity of the framework

Applying the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework to Senegal's language-in-education policy change had both benefits and limitations to account for the trajectory of Senegal's policy change. One of the strengths of this framework is its ability to situate the different levels and determine policy change trajectories. In this sense, it is a very helpful heuristic tool with the potential to be utilized in other policy change related to any aspect of education – be it gender or environmental education, for example. This framework would be particularly helpful for those working in development to map the different actors and to situate them by level of action that moves the agenda forward – in this case, toward the inclusion and implementation of non-dominant students' languages in education. In the case of Senegal, the levels help mark 'seminal points' (Kosonen & Benson, this volume) that institutionalized further national languages as part of formal education. However, while there are not a lot of events marking the 'below' level, the continuous grassroots activities seem to have been the critical element to prepare the grounds for external side actor support and institutionalization at the 'above' level.

One challenge when organizing and writing about Senegal's policy development according to these levels and actors was perhaps the interpretation of the chains of events, particularly when they happened across time and across levels and account for the mobility of certain actors in time who pushed the agenda forward. Kosonen and Benson's analytical framework benefitted in my case to consider the idea of policy as a 'deeply political process of cultural reproduction engaged in and shaped by social actors in disparate locations who exert incongruent amounts of influence over the design, implementation, and evaluation of policy' (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017: 2) as stated by comparativists Lesley Bartlett and Frances Vavrus who innovated on the comparative case study. In Senegal's language-in-education policy change case, militants were exerting influence on the design, implementation, and evaluation of the newly drafted 'harmonized bilingual education model' in disparate locations in time and levels. Similarly to Brown's (2021) study on Vöro language activists, the *militants* were also found to 'jump' levels and 'slide' across categories.

When interviewed, most *militants* had been educators in the past, either in formal or non-formal education, and many of them wore different hats. I further categorized my interlocutors by primary and secondary descriptors that they used themselves to describe their occupations or roles in relation to their national languages in education advocacy work. However, the table did not really do justice to the multifaceted identities of the people interviewed. Some referred to more than two descriptors, indicating that they inhabited multiple roles either at the same time or concurrently over the span of their careers, particularly those who work(ed) as consultants for the Ministry or other donor-funded educational programs. It was quite common to find *militants* who were university professors and served as Ministry officials, who at some point had also been consultants on projects and initiatives pertaining to national languages. There were retired professors who are now consultants, and there were Ministry officials on leave working for an NGO or an international consulting firm implementing donor-funded programs. It was not uncommon for me to interview a *militant* who had been involved as a consultant in the ELAN-Afrique bilingual program, or the USAID LPT program, and who was also an acting advisor to the Ministry of Education and participated in the various working groups leading up to the harmonized bilingual policy (MOHEBS). Others held multiple memberships in language affiliated organizations, whether at the national, Pan-African, Francophone Africa or UNESCO levels, some of which led them to participate in global-level policy discussions as well as drafting some regional and international policy documents. They all showcased traits of 'policy entrepreneurs' (Mintrom & Norman, 2009) *par excellence*, on which I elaborate further below.

The *militant.e.s*⁶ as policy entrepreneurs

In the field of public policy, policy entrepreneurs are defined as actors who take advantage of ‘windows of opportunity’ to advance a certain agenda or policy change (Kingdon, 1984, 1995). They are people who – in no particular order – display social acuity, are able to define problems, build teams and lead by example (Mintrom & Norman, 2009: 652). In the case of Senegal, the *militants* displayed the same signs. Much like Brown’s (2021) analysis of the Võro language activists in Estonia, the *militants* are mainly side actors who are not afraid to leverage their networks of influence to push the national language agenda forward. This is seen in how they ‘slide’ across communities of practices and ‘jump’ levels of influence throughout their careers and often wear multiple hats, which allows them to strategically and effectively intervene as needed. As national actors, whether providing technical assistance as a consultant or conducting grassroots adult literacy classes, the *militants* have been able to act where the State has not, and to continue the development and implementation of national languages in education. In short, they act as knowledge brokers between all these levels to intervene where governments, and institutions cannot always do so and influence the course of the national languages in education according to a bilingual education agenda. As many lamented a lack of political will, they also set an example by modeling behaviors needed to build social acceptance and institutionalize further national language usage within society. Many continue to provide adult literacy classes or are engaged in literary and media development in national languages.

Conclusion

The case of Senegal is exciting to follow, as change is occurring in real time toward a bilingual education policy and the implementation of national languages alongside French. According to Kosonen and Benson’s analytical framework, this situation blends Models 2, 3 and 4, as it is difficult to determine which level takes precedence. Militants have operated at different levels to advance the national languages in education agenda. From a bird’s eye view, there is a strong convergence of all levels working toward the gradual institutionalization of national languages in education, especially in the context of Senegal’s postcolonial nation-building aspirations. However, this would not have been possible without a strong tradition of grassroots movements at the civil society level, which fuel the human resources and ensure that the national languages agenda remains alive. Additionally, the government’s openness to receiving external funding from international donor agencies and collaborating with INGOs or development agencies has been crucial.

Future lines of research on language-in-education policy change toward the inclusion of students' languages may wish to draw on theories from public policy research, such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 1988) and the Multiple Streams Approach (Kingdon, 1984, 1995), to determine 'windows of opportunity' for policy change. These theories could be paired with those from international and comparative education, which explore how reforms are historically adopted (e.g. Cowen, 1996, 2000) and how national and global priorities are negotiated in a country's education system, depending on how open or closed a society is to grassroots activities. Another interesting line of inquiry could involve analyzing path dependencies related to language of instruction reforms through the lens of historical institutionalism.

Notes

- (1) 'Militant' in French means 'advocate' with a strong political connotation in English. The ending '.e' is a modern shortcut to avoid a gendered noun.
- (2) This French concept historically refers to a representative assembly of different 'estates' or classes of people.
- (3) 'You know, languages generally speaking, it's [all] connected to decolonization. And so, any Senegalese [person] is sensitive to the question of languages'.
- (4) 'Civilizing mission' is the political rationale that justified France to colonize and Westernize Indigenous people.
- (5) There are Sufi orders other than the Mourides in Senegal, and some of the militants interviewed may belong to these communities, though no one mentioned them. Other Sufi orders are the Qadiriyya order, introduced by Mauritanian teachers to Senegal representing about 10% of Senegal's Muslim population, the Tijaniyya order, which is more popular among the Halpulaaren and in the Futa Toro, as well as the numerically small also homegrown Layène order almost entirely inhabited by Lebu people (Ross, 2008: 35–36).
- (6) This is the inclusive French spelling used to recognize that women self-identified as 'militantes'.

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9 Implementing the Kazakh Language Education Policy in Kazakhstan: Policy Change from Below and the Side

Gabit Zhumatay

Abstract

Бұл тарауда Косонен мен Бенсон (2021) ұсынған талдау құрылымын қолдана отырып Қазақстанның қалалық өңірлеріндегі орта мектеп деңгейіндегі қазақ тілінде білім берудің қалай және қаншалықты дәрежеде алға жылжып, іске асырылғаны қарастырылып, бағаланады. Патшалы Ресей мен Кеңес Одағының Қазақстандағы отарлық саясатының салдарынан автохтонды қазақ тілі қоғамдық өмірдің барлық саласынан ығыстырылып, кенжелеп дамымай қалды. 1991 жылы Қазақстан егемендікке қол жеткізгеннен бері түрлі акторлар мен қоғамдық топтар қазақ тілін қайта жандандыруға айтарлықтай күш-жігер жұмсап, орыс тілі үстемдік еткен қалалық жерлердегі білім саласына енгізуге барынша тырысты. Осындай талпыныстардың арқасында қазақша сөйлейтіндердің саны көбейіп, соңғы 30 жылда қазақша балабақшалар, мектептер, басқа да оқу орындарының саны айтарлықтай артты. Дәстүрлі жоғарыдан төменге және төменнен жоғарыға дихотомиясымен қатар, Косонен мен Бенсонның талдау құрылымын пайдалану қазақ контекстіндегі тіл саясатындағы өзгерістерді жаңа қырдан зерттеуге ерекше мүмкіндік береді. Үкімет пен саяси элита жоғарыдан төмен кеңестік отаршылдық тіл саясаты мен тіл идеологиясын мұра еткендіктен, жоғарыдан төменнен мәжбүрлеу арқылы тіл саясатын жүзеге асыру ондаған жылдар бойы білім беру саясатында басым бағыт болды. Осыған орай Қазақстандағы білім берудегі тілдің даму үдерістерін тереңнен түсіну үшін қоғамның төменгі және шеткі тараптарының тіл білімі саясатындағы өзгерістерге қосқан үлестерін жан-жақты

зерттеу аса маңызды. Сондықтан бұл тарауда төмендегі және шеткі тараптардың білім берудегі тіл саясатына, олардың қазақ тілін жандандыру бағытындағы іс-қимылдарға және L1-негізіндегі көп тілде мемлекеттік білім беру жүйесін енгізуге қандай үлес қосқандары қарастырылады. (*Abstract in Kazakh [kaz], an Indigenous language of Kazakhstan, translated by Gabit Zhumatay.*)

This chapter applies the analytical framework introduced by Kosonen and Benson (2021) to evaluate how and to what extent education in the Kazakh language at primary and secondary levels in urban areas of Kazakhstan has been promoted and implemented. Due to Imperial Russian and then Soviet colonial policies in Kazakhstan, the autochthonous Kazakh language was long subjected to marginalization. Since Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991, unprecedented efforts have been made by various actors to revitalize the Kazakh language and bring it into urban education, which had long been dominated by the Russian language. Owing to such efforts, more people have started to speak Kazakh, and over the past 30 years the number of Kazakh kindergartens, schools and other educational institutions has increased. Use of the Kosonen and Benson framework, which refines the traditional top-down/bottom-up dichotomy, allows for a new analysis of the Kazakhstan context. As the government and political elites inherited a top-down Soviet colonial language policy and language ideologies, top-down implementation through imposition has been the approach to language-in-education policy for decades. Consequently, to get better insight into language-in-education development processes in Kazakhstan it is critical to investigate policy changes from below and the side. This chapter examines how the below and side actors have been involved in language-in-education policy, how they have engaged in language revitalization efforts and what contributions they have made so far in bringing L1-based MLE into the public education system.

Introduction

On 14 June 2023, Kazybek Isa, a member of Kazakhstan's parliament, drew lawmakers' attention to the miserable condition of the only Kazakh-medium public school out of 16 public schools in the city of Ridder located in the eastern part of Kazakhstan (Isa, 2023). The buildings of Russian-medium schools are either new or frequently renovated, whereas the only Kazakh school is underfunded and neglected (Isa, 2023). Similar patterns are seen in other parts of Kazakhstan. Due to the lack of Kazakh-medium schools across the country, tens of thousands of Kazakh children are deprived of their right to receive education in their L1. This chapter sheds light on the evolution of language-in-education policy in Kazakhstan vis-à-vis initiating, implementing and expanding Kazakh language education

across the country during the late Soviet era and independence period. During the Soviet era even if primary and secondary education was offered in Kazakh language, the Soviet government and education authorities privileged Russian as the language of wider communication and a *lingua franca*. As the education system was dominated by the Russian language at that time, meaningful change in language-in-education policy in favor of Kazakh language education was not possible. Yet, at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, due to dramatic transformations in the Soviet Union, change in language-in-education policy was triggered by the mobilization of masses from below and the side – with the partial contribution from above – towards revitalizing Kazakh language, and towards introducing and expanding Kazakh language education across the country. In Kazakhstan, changes in language-in-education policies were conventionally initiated by actors from above with limited input from side and below-level actors.

Empirical studies on L1-based MLE highlight the opportunities that the L1 offers to learners across many sociolinguistic settings where schooling has already been offered in a language that most learners do not speak or use outside of school (Benson, 2005, 2021; Brown, 2021; Dekker, 2021; Kosonen, 2013; Kosonen & Benson, 2013, 2021; Walter & Benson 2012). Previous studies have provided conclusive evidence of how and in what ways current speakers of NDLs have been minoritized (Kosonen & Benson, 2021). Minoritization of certain languages and cultures has not been accidental as it has been the direct result of deliberate efforts and policies of a majoritized population who systematically erased the colonized and subjugated ethnolinguistic groups, making them invisible (Valenzuela, 1999). In this respect, each sociolinguistic and cultural setting ought to be approached and considered separately as each tends to have its own peculiarities and patterns specific to that context.

From this standpoint, the issues pertaining to the inception and development of L1-based MLE and bringing Kazakh into mainstream education make Kazakhstan an interesting context to examine and understand in depth. In this chapter, the Kosonen and Benson framework will be applied to investigate the historical background and recent developments pertaining to the language-in-education policies in Kazakhstan with the focus on the main actors from above, below and side who constitute key agents of change and transformations in bringing Kazakh into education. As I will point out, due to the autocratic character and strong top-down support for NDLs, the Soviet Union and other similar contexts have been less prone to any meaningful change in integrating NDLs into the education system, yet my analysis also suggests that policy change has not necessarily followed traditional top-down and bottom-up trajectories.

Background of Language-in-Education Policies in Kazakhstan

Kazakh belongs to the Turkic language group and is indigenous to Kazakhstan (Smagulova, 2008). The roots of issues pertaining to education in the Kazakh language date back to the Soviet period, especially in the 1930s and 1950s. Although education in the Kazakh language was always in place, its role shrank substantially and became nonexistent in urban centers and even rural areas due to state-supported cultural and linguistic Russification policies in the 1930s to 1950s. During the 1920s to 1930s, flourishing side actors represented by national Kazakh intelligentsia were quickly suppressed and then eliminated by the totalitarian Soviet regime. The removal of below and side actors meant that language-in-education policy change in the Soviet Union would be exclusively top-down (Pavlenko, 2008).

Soviet colonization and systemic Russification yielded two major results. While indigenous Kazakh was minoritized, Russian was majoritized due to the language-in-education policies of the Soviet government. In the nation-building process, the Soviet authorities imposed a new linguistic regime upon Kazakhstan, which implied that Russian – which had previously been integrated mostly into national elites' linguistic repertoires – was to become a *lingua franca* or the common national language that would unite all ethnic groups into a single Soviet identity (Laitin, 1998; Pavlenko, 2008). Although in theory the Soviet regime promoted bilingualism, in practice the preference was given to monolingualism in Russian, which was seen as the main language of nation-building process and an emerging Soviet people.

In the 1930s, the Soviet authorities carried out the policy of linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Kazakh people, in which education was perceived as instrumental in implementing and imposing the desired monolingualism. In 1938 a decree made Russian a compulsory subject in all schools across the country (Pavlenko, 2008; Smagulova, 2008). The 1938 decree stipulated that all existing barriers to an effective implementation of this policy ought to be eliminated (Abduali & Griбанова, 2014), which signaled the termination of multilingual education and deliberate closure of national schools ('Töl tiliñ – küre tamyrñ', 1990).

Applying the Kosonen and Benson Framework

This chapter applies the Kosonen and Benson (2021) above-below-side framework to Kazakhstan's context. Although the boundaries between the three levels can be fluid, Kosonen and Benson (2021) identify the overall characteristics and peculiarities of each level. Kosonen and Benson (2021) indicate several peculiarities of language-in-education policies, practices and approaches to language planning in authoritarian and illiberal contexts like the Soviet Union. During the Soviet times, language-in-education policy of the Soviet regime and

educational authorities was not prone to any substantial change in terms of promoting and bringing non-dominant languages into mainstream education. The exclusive and subtractive nature of the Soviet language-in-education policy gradually marginalized and minoritized non-dominant languages. In this respect, while designing their analytical framework, Kosonen and Benson (2021) consider specific features of various sociolinguistic contexts, and contextual factors within the setting. Nonetheless, the Kosonen and Benson framework has mostly been applied to postcolonial contexts such as Ethiopia and Mozambique (Benson, 2021), the Philippines (Dekker, 2021) and both postcolonial and post-socialist contexts like Estonia (Brown, 2021).

Like in other postcolonial and post-socialist contexts (Benson, 2021; Brown, 2021; Dekker, 2021) language-in-education policies in Kazakhstan have been shaped by hegemonic monoglossic language ideologies and beliefs of dominant political and ethnic groups. During the Soviet era the identity of Kazakhs was closely intertwined with Russian culture and language (Fierman, 1998), yet at the second half of the 1980s due to the erosion of the very foundation of the Soviet regime the conventional linguistic status quo started to gradually change. The top-down political and economic reforms initiated by Gorbachev in 1985 led to gradual loosening of the highly centralized single-party totalitarian political system, which allowed republics in the peripheries certain autonomy in their internal affairs, notably in deciding their national language-in-education policies.

In response to enormous pressure from the side and below, Kazakhstan's government and communist party leaders adopted specific law, regulations and policies aimed at revitalizing Kazakh and expanding Kazakh schools (Fierman, 2006). Figure 9.1 illustrates the evolution of language-in-education policies and what change has been initiated and implemented from above, from the side and from below over an extended period starting in the 1930s. Like in the contexts of China (Bahry, this volume) and Ethiopia (Benson, 2021), the Kazakhstan government and educational authorities have been the major initiators and facilitators of language-in-education policy change.

Change from above

The drastic changes caused by the weakening of the Soviet regime in the mid-1980s made the deeply entrenched Soviet linguistic and educational environment prone to meaningful transformations. Progressive change in Soviet language-in-education policy towards promoting and use of Kazakh in education started in 1987 when the Kazakh Council of Ministers and the Central Committee of the Kazakhstan Communist Party adopted the resolution 'On Improving the Study of the Kazakh language' (Fierman, 1998). Fierman (1998)

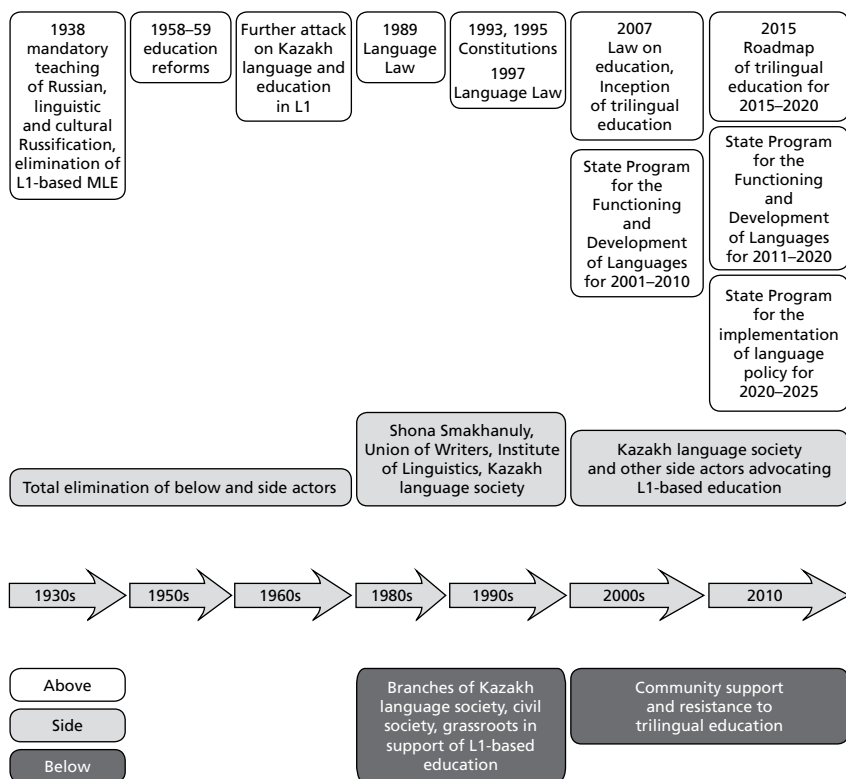


Figure 9.1 Language-in-education policy change and activities in Kazakhstan

highlights the historic importance of this document as a pivotal milestone as the Communist Party of Kazakhstan for the first time officially acknowledged the role and significance of the Kazakh language in the field of education. Previously all attention had exclusively been given to Russian. Although this resolution had a symbolic meaning, it was designed to improve the instruction of the Kazakh language in both Kazakh-medium and Russian-medium schools (Fierman, 1998). Further, two tectonic shifts and transformations in the linguistic and political environment of Kazakhstan triggered meaningful changes in language-in-education policies, which were conceptualized in the literature as a ‘double cataclysm’ (Laitin, 1998). While the first transformation was the passage of the Language Law in 1989, another pivotal change was the breakup of the Soviet regime in 1991.

The 1989 Law was particularly ambitious (Fierman, 2006), as it aimed to turn Kazakhstan into a multilingual society, ensuring education in Kazakh, Russian and other non-dominant languages (Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR, 1989). Alongside Russian, Kazakh was

Table 9.1 Schools in Kazakhstan by language of instruction in 1988–1989 school year (Fierman, 2006: 105)

Type of school	All areas	Urban areas	Rural areas
Pure Kazakh	31.9%	11.3%	37.1%
Pure Russian	52.4%	72.7%	47.3%
Mixed	14.6%	15.1%	14.5%

also made a compulsory subject at all levels of education as the state language (Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR, 1989). However, Kazakh had not been in use in urban areas and in higher education. Due to the lack of investment, it became underdeveloped, many urban centers and even rural areas lacked Kazakh-medium schools, which is illustrated in Table 9.1 (Fierman, 2006: 105). As Table 9.1 shows, the share of Kazakh-medium schools in urban areas was insignificant and uneven as most schools were concentrated in mostly Kazakh populated urban centers in Kyzylorda region (Fierman, 2006). While in the capital of Almaty Kazakh schools were nonexistent, teaching Kazakh as a language subject in Russian schools was not effective and children tended to complete school with no competence in Kazakh (Fierman, 2006). Since urban centers were demographically dominated by Russians and other European populations (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, etc.), education was predominantly and even exclusively in Russian. As urban centers were Russified areas, education in Kazakh was virtually unavailable for Kazakhs, who in turn had to send their children to Russian schools.

Gaining political independence on 16 December 1991 brought high hopes for more effective and sustainable change in revitalizing Kazakh, expanding its use in larger society, and bringing it into mainstream education, especially in urban centers. During the 1990s the Kazakhstan's government adopted several major policy documents pertaining to language-in-education policy. The 1993 and 1995 Constitutions legitimized Kazakh as the state language, while reaffirming the status of Russian as the language interethnic communication and official language (Constitutional Council of Kazakhstan, 1995). Kosonen and Benson (2021) indicate that, in certain contexts, NDLs are given symbolic or legislative status, yet written policies tend to remain rhetoric without a realistic implementation plan. After the adoption of the 1995 Constitution, Model 1 has become dominant whereas influence of civil society and side actors has declined. At the end of the first decade of independence the Kazakhstan government adopted the Law on languages on 11 July 1997 (Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan, 1997). Article 4 reaffirmed the status of Kazakh as the state language (Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan, 1997).

Change from the side and below

During the Soviet era while civil society was virtually nonexistent, actors from the side either were silenced or were rendered mere recipients of the top-down policies. Yet in the mid-1980s the gradual liberalization of the totalitarian political system across the Soviet Union allowed for the emergence of civil society and more autonomy of the side actors. Yet at the end of the 1980s, the loosening of the political climate allowed the side actors to be more vigorous in initiating change and advocating alternative policy in support of the Kazakh language. According to Kosonen and Benson (2021), actors from below involve civil society organizations, grassroots movements and non-dominant language communities, whereas actors from the side entail local academics, linguists and educators with technical expertise and knowledge as well as international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Kosonen and Benson (2021) suggest that the side actors, especially individual actors, tend to be the most autonomous agents of change with greater capacity and agency.

In the totalitarian Soviet context, it was dangerous to voice alternative opinions and challenge the existing status quo. In the mid-1980s, many dedicated individuals from the side undertook the challenge of reversing language loss among Kazakhs. Actors from the side started to challenge the deeply embedded hegemonic language ideologies underpinning official assimilationist subtractive language-in-education policies. Like in the Philippines (Ardazon & Colicó, this volume; Dekker, 2021), Mozambique (Benson, 2021) and Estonia (Brown, 2021) contexts, in the late Soviet and early independence periods, the engines of the Kazakh language revitalization and Kazakh education movement were actors from the side. In this regard, the side actors became a bridge between above and below actors as illustrated in Figure 9.2.

The side takes the lead in the 1980s and 1990s

In the mid-1980s, Kazakh intellectuals advocated mother tongue-based education for Kazakh children. Until the late 1980s no specific

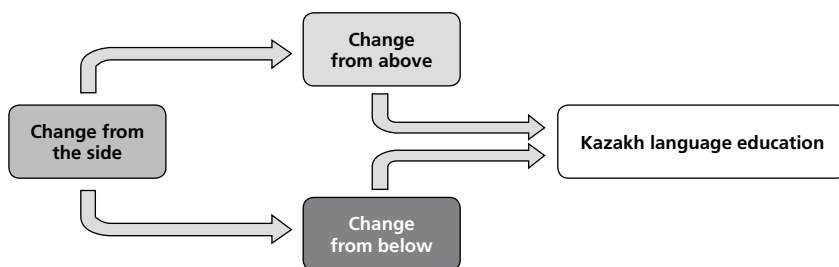


Figure 9.2 Policy change trajectory in Kazakhstan

Kazakh language grassroots movement or any organized advocacy groups had emerged, yet Kazakh intellectuals opposed the regime's attempts to shut down Kazakh schools and turn them into Russian or mixed schools (Nüsip, 2023). Kazakh intellectuals affiliated with two main organizations, namely the Union of Writers of the Kazakh SSR and the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Science of the Kazakh SSR challenged Russification policies, advocating education of Kazakh children in their mother tongue. Among leading actors from the side were a prominent Kazakh poet Shona Smakhanuly, affiliated with the Union of Writers, and the Kazakh linguists Abdulali Kaidarov and Omirzak Aitbaev, affiliated with the Institute of Linguistics, who in late 1980s founded nationwide grassroots organizations and Kazakh language press to advance the cause of Kazakh language revitalization and education.

One of the most esteemed individuals from the side who made an immense contribution towards expanding Kazakh schools was Shona Smakhanuly, affiliated with the Union of Writers, who started his campaign for Kazakh language education in the mid-1970s (Amirbek, 2023). At that time the assaults on Kazakh schools were on the rise across Kazakhstan, in Almaty one out of over one hundred schools was in Kazakh, the same pattern was observed in other large urban areas such Tselinograd, Shymkent (Aidarqyzy, 2021). Having stated that the lack of Kazakh schools and kindergartens in Almaty and other areas of Kazakhstan was a great injustice to the Kazakh people and deviation from Lenin's nationality policy, Shona Smakhanuly became increasingly convinced that one of the powerful methods to initiate and implement meaningful change towards Kazakh language education at the local, urban, regional and national levels was to mobilize the masses at the grassroots level (Anuarbek, 2014; Tañjaryq, 2022). By mobilizing the grassroots level actors, specifically parents, it was quite feasible to create powerful pressure groups that would demand from the government and educational authorities to implement change in favor of Kazakh language education. To do that, Shona Smakhanuly managed to use the Union of Writers for this purpose, mobilizing many of his contemporaries in this campaign, well-known poets, writers and journalists (Tañjaryq, 2022; Tokashbaev, 2011).

The activities of the side actors towards implementing L1-based education were spearheaded and coordinated by Shona Smakhanuly (Aqyş, 2014). Shona Smakhanuly could transform the campaign for Kazakh language education into what was truly a grassroots movement that involved mostly actors from the side and below (Aqyş, 2014). Shona Smakhanuly and his followers ascertained the major obstacles that hindered the expansion of Kazakh schools and kindergartens in Almaty. They understood it well that since urban centers and even many rural areas were fully Russified and education was overwhelmingly offered in Russian, Kazakhs adapted to these linguistic and cultural environments.

In addition, the only Kazakh school in Almaty could not accommodate all Kazakh children, which forced parents to send their children to Russian schools. The most important task for the side actors was to mobilize parents to support their cause and to opt for Kazakh schools for their children instead of Russian. Only through involving parents in this process was it possible to induce changes and place pressure on the educational authorities at all levels to implement needed change in favor of Kazakh language education.

Agents of change from the side targeted neighborhoods with high concentrations of Kazakhs in Almaty as well as public places to talk to Kazakh parents to convince them to lend their support for L1 education. Activists visited public places such as local bazaars and other crowded spaces in Almaty, meeting Kazakhs, explaining to them the reasons why it was necessary to focus on L1 education and demand from education authorities to open Kazakh-medium schools for their children (Taňjaryq, 2022). By mobilizing parents, the side actors applied pressure on above actors, drawing their attention to the dire situation of Kazakh language education and lack of Kazakh-medium schools. Shona Smakhanuly started to open Kazakh classes in Russian schools. Visiting residential buildings where Kazakh families lived, language activists obtained parents' consent to send their children to Kazakh classes in Russian schools (Amirbek, 2023). If the number of Kazakh children exceeded the school's capacity to accommodate them, together with parents the side actors demanded from the educational authorities a separate Kazakh school (Tokashbaev, 2011). One of the districts with a high concentration of Kazakhs was Orbita district where language activists and parents pushed for opening Kazakh classes in No 45 Russian school (Anuarbek, 2014). As a result, language activists could attract and enroll over 500 children in Kazakh classes from grades 1 to 10 (Anuarbek, 2014). As No 45 school could not accommodate all children wishing to study in Kazakh, language activists and parents demanded from the educational authorities to open a separate Kazakh school. Due to the pressure from the side and below the authorities soon opened a new No 145 Kazakh school in Orbita district (Anuarbek, 2014).

Shona Smakhanuly could bring Kazakh language into mainstream education in Almaty. From 1983 to 1990 with the efforts of language activists and parents over 20 Kazakh schools and over 5 Kazakh kindergartens were opened (Tokashbaev, 2011). In 1988, Shona Smakhanuly passed away. Thanks to his efforts the linguistic and education status quo in Almaty and other areas started to change in favor of Kazakh. No 62 Kazakh school in Almaty, was named after him. Shona Smakhanuly and other Kazakh intellectuals dismantled the deeply biased hegemonic discourses about the Kazakh language and narratives about poor quality education in Kazakh schools not only with their words, but also, with their deeds (Taňjaryq, 2022).

Thus, meaningful language-in-education policy change towards Kazakh started from the side, which involved below actors and then above actors. Shona Smakhanuly's efforts towards initiating and implementing Kazakh language education policy change laid the strong foundation for further strengthening the role of side actors in policy change. Side-level actors continued to lead the campaign for L1 education. Moreover, the late Soviet era coincided with the partial liberalization of the highly centralized totalitarian system in the Soviet Union, which gave rise to the emergence of civil society and grassroots movements. In 1988–1989, several grassroots level organizations were established by actors from the side Abdulali Kaidarov and Omirzak Aitbaev from the Institute of Linguistics. In 1987, the government officially authorized bilingual education in Kazakhstan's schools (Fierman, 1998).

Perhaps the largest grassroots level organization established by the side actors was the 'Kazakh language society', which unlike previous Kazakh language movements like led by Shona Smakhanuly was nationwide. 'Kazakh language society' was launched by Abdulali Kaidarov, the director of the Institute of Linguistics, Omirzak Aitbaev and many other actors from the side in October 1989 (Abduali, 2014; Aitbaiūly, 2010). Side actors from these institutions called for Kazakh to be recognized as an official state language of the Kazakh SSR (Aitbaiūly, 2010). Within a short time, branches of the Society were opened in 17 regions, over 50 urban centers, more than 250 districts and rural areas ('Respublikalyq 'Qazaq tili' qoğamy plenumynyñ qaulysy', 1990).

Expanding Kazakh schools was one of the many objectives that the organization pursued to achieve (Aitbaiūly, 2010). It sought to revitalize and popularize Kazakh, ensuring the development of L1-based MLE in cooperation with other ethno-cultural groups, preparing and publishing dictionaries, methodical instructions, guidelines, textbooks for teaching and learning Kazakh and other languages (Charter of Kazakh Language Society, 1996). As the Society was set up with the approval of above actors, it was given access to radio, television and press to raise awareness and disseminate information ('Qyrküiek qyr astynda', 1991). In this regard, the Society and its branches founded their own republican, regional and local newspapers. 'Ana Tili' (Mother tongue) was the official newspaper of the Society (Dombai, 2010). Through 'Ana Tili', and other newspapers, the Society and its branches appealed to the public to support revitalization efforts of the Kazakh language and send their children to Kazakh kindergartens and schools ('Qyrküiek qyr astynda', 1991). After the country became independent, education in Kazakh at levels expanded significantly. In the mid-1990s the number of Kazakh schools increased to 3414, Russian schools 2624, mixed schools 3414 and 268 schools in NDLs such as Uzbek, Uyghur, Tajik and others (Aitbaiūly, 2010).

Recent developments in language-in-education policy in Kazakhstan: Change from above

In the late Soviet period and early 1990s, systemic language-in-education policy change in favor of Kazakh was predominantly triggered by the burgeoning civil society, especially by community engagement and most importantly by the efforts of actors from the side, who became the bridge between below and above actors. Yet bringing Kazakh into mainstream education and a substantial increase in the number of Kazakh-medium kindergartens and schools both in urban and rural areas over the past three decades has been possible due to the involvement of all three actors in policy change processes. If during the Soviet period there was only one Kazakh school in Almaty, today according to the available data, there are 207 public and 88 private schools in the city, of which 70 are Kazakh schools, 64 are Russian and 70 are mixed schools offering education in Kazakh, Russian, Uyghur and other languages, yet private schools mostly provide education in English and Russian (Taňjaryq, 2022). Over 300,000 children were enrolled in these schools (Taňjaryq, 2022). In addition, Table 9.2 illustrates a dramatic increase in the proportion of student populations enrolled in Kazakh schools that stood at 30.7% in the 1985–1986 academic year and then experienced a steady growth, reaching 65.35% in the 2020–2021 school year (Baikhozha, 2021).

Table 9.2 The ratio of the number of students in Kazakh and Russian schools (Baikhozha, 2021)

School year	Total number of students	Percentage of students enrolled in Kazakh schools	Percentage of students enrolled in Russian schools
1985–1986	3,062,500	30.7	66.8
1990–1991	3,116,000	32.4	63.1
1995–1996	3,036,600	44.7	52.2
2000–2001	3,247,400	52.1	44.4
2005–2006	2,824,600	56.8	39.5
2010–2011	2,516,100	62.5	33.5
2013–2014	2,567,300	64.7	31.5
2014–2015	2,615,900	65.6	30.6
2015–2016	2,785,300	N/A	N/A
2016–2017	2,917,800	65.65	31.24
2017–2018	3,039,100	65.64	31.31
2018–2019	3,175,000	65.69	31.35
2019–2020	3,327,800	65.60	31.49
2020–2021	3,481,300	65.35	31.54

Table 9.3 Number of schools in Kazakhstan by languages of instruction (Buchelnikova, 2022)

School year	Kazakh	Mixed	Russian
2015–2016	3777	2088	1262
2016–2017	3805	2235	1374
2017–2018	3794	2239	1351
2018–2019	3797	2255	1312
2019–2020	3792	2275	1305
2020–2021	3809	2319	1287
2021–2022	3847	2431	1259

Since 1991 the growth pattern of schools in Kazakhstan over an extended period has been in favor of Kazakh. However, if one considers mixed and private schools, where the prevalence of Russian is palpable, Russian seems to have maintained its dominant status. Moreover, Table 9.2 shows that since the 2014–2015 school year the percentage of students in Kazakh schools has remained unchanged. In contrast, Russian schools have seen a gradual growth in the number of student population (Baikhozha, 2021). Although data from Table 9.2 illustrates how the proportion of children in Russian schools has increased, whereas in Kazakh schools has decreased, Table 9.3 indicates a steady growth in the number of Kazakh schools from 3777 in 2015 to 3847 in 2022 (Buchelnikova, 2022).

General public enthusiasm and ‘Kazakh fever’ in the 1980s to 1990s seem to have simmered down, giving way to the pressure of globalization and neoliberalism that requires drastic changes in language-in-education policy (Buchelnikova, 2022), specifically the shift from local languages to international languages as a medium of instruction at all phases of education. The global pervasiveness of English has forced language-in-education planners of Kazakhstan to introduce, implement and impose upon the population the so-called trilingual education policy. Although the 1995 Constitution and the 1997 Language Law stipulate that Kazakh is the state language and every citizen of the country is obliged to master it (Constitutional Council of Kazakhstan, 1995; Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan, 1997), Russian has remained the dominant language, and the authorities have placed a greater emphasis on English.

Despite the side and grassroots level actors having been allowed to exist and function, their involvement in inducing language-in-education policy change has been reduced. The authorities have consistently reused and recycled the Soviet era approaches to language-in-education policy, thereby Kazakhstan’s policy in this field has been dominated by above actors (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). This top-down policy reflected in the 2007 landmark major policy change that was triggered by above-level actors. On the one hand, the 2007 Education Law reaffirmed the

compulsory status of Kazakh and Russian at all phases of education, as well as indicated that NDLs like education in Uzbek, Uyghur and Tajik ought to be ensured (Ministry of Justice of Kazakhstan, 2007). On the other hand, in 2007 Nursultan Nazarbayev, the first president of Kazakhstan, launched the cultural project ‘Trinity of languages’ or ‘Trilingual education’, highlighting literacy in three languages, Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as the language of successful integration into the world economy (Nazarbayev, 2007). The rationale behind this top-down government-driven policy change was that above actors sought to make citizens of the country at least trilingual (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018).

To put the ‘Trilingual education’ policy into practice, the government established a state funded elite network of secondary schools known as Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), which started to pilot the top-down trilingual education through integrating Kazakh, Russian and English into the curriculum (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). Yet this policy soon fell short of the expectations, producing a backlash against top-down imposition of language-in-education policy change. Trilingual education turned out to be dominated by English at the expense of other two languages, especially Kazakh. In this regard, Karabassova (2020) points out that the initial idea of using Kazakh and Russian as medium of instructions was soon neglected, English being given greater preference. In this case, marginalized actors from below and above showed their deep dissatisfaction and resentment towards the government’s one-sided imposition of a trilingual education policy that had detrimental effects on L1 education. One of the founders of ‘Kazakh Language Society’, Omirzak Aitbaev (Aitbaiuly, 2010) emphasized that this policy was in fact intended to remove Kazakh from school and education, now being suppressed due to the introduction of English.

Discussion and Conclusion

The chapter provides insights into the introduction, expansion, and development of Kazakh language education in Kazakhstan, where historically actors from the side and below have had little agency in initiating and implementing meaningful language-in-education policy change. The prevalence of the above actors in initiating and implementing language-in-education policy change in Kazakhstan is due to the legacy of the Soviet period. Kosonen and Benson (2021) draw attention to similar sociolinguistic contexts such as China and Vietnam where macro-level actors tend to deny agency of the side and below actors in language-in-education policy change. Studies on policy change in the former USSR highlight the persistence of strong top-down traditions and approaches in Kazakhstan (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018; Pavlenko, 2008). Since the Communist Party of the Soviet Union monopolized the power in the

USSR, the party marginalized the side and below actors by subordinating them to the will of the regime. This research has shown the analytical power and usefulness of the Kosonen and Benson framework in exploring and understanding language-in-education policy change towards bringing and using NDLs in the education sector and how change is initiated and implemented, whether actors from all three levels are engaged in this process and to what extent implemented policy change is meaningful and sustainable (Kosonen & Benson, 2021).

The analytical framework proposed by Kosonen and Benson (2021) allowed for a proper understanding and explaining language-in-education policy change in favor of the Kazakh language as well as multilingual education over a short and extended period. Kosonen and Benson (2021) offer four models of change to trace different trajectories that may lead to the introduction and expansion of NDLs in education. Models 1 and 2 reflect the conventional dichotomous top-down and bottom-up conceptualization, whereas in Models 3 (piloting) and 4 (advocacy) change is activated and implemented by the side actors that would engage both below and above actors in educational activities (Kosonen & Benson, 2021, and this volume).

In Kazakhstan's case, language-in-education policy change has remained a mostly top-down process throughout the independence period. However, at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the side actors became increasingly active in initiating change and pushing for Kazakh language education. In the process of weakening the Soviet regime, the Kazakh language revitalization efforts and push for the expansion of Kazakh medium schools started as a side and below development.

Although revitalization of the Kazakh language and enlargement of Kazakh schools were initiated and implemented by side actors, Kazakhstan has maintained its strong top-down tradition inherited from the Soviet regime, in which above actors with access to power and resources increasingly focus on maintaining the linguistic status quo, specifically retaining conventional preeminence of Russian, providing certain spaces for Kazakh and integrating English into the education system as an important vehicle of globalization. Despite the fact that Model 1 has dominated language-in-education policy change in Kazakhstan over the past three decades, below and side actors occasionally apply considerable pressure on above actors regarding Kazakh medium schooling. Fierman (2006) points out that the language of instruction has always been at the center of public debate and main concern for civil society, language activists and advocacy groups in Kazakhstan. The emergence of civil society and mobilization of national forces in the late 1980s triggered the dramatic change in language and education policy areas and deep paradigm shifts in people's thinking and attitudes (Fierman, 2006).

The side-level actors, especially Kazakh intellectuals led by Shona Smakhanuly and later other side- and below-level agents of change, such

as ‘Kazakh language society’ and started tectonic change. They awoke a dormant society and a sense of pride in cultural and linguistic heritage, mobilizing below actors in support of Kazakh language education and drawing above actors’ attention to the need for meaningful change in L1 education. From this perspective, the side and below actors had the shared goals that were not confined to the revitalization of the language, rather they focused on bringing the long-oppressed language into mainstream education (Hermes *et al.*, 2012: 383). An alliance between side and below actors turned into a powerful pressure group who advocated for L1 education, overcoming existing barriers to change and pressurizing the above actors to create policies and a context more conducive to change.

Although the Kazakh language was elevated to the state language status in 1989, and then again in 1993 and 1995, scholars as well as my own observations have shown that Kazakh still plays a secondary role in society in relation to Russian and remains marginalized (Fierman, 2006; Smagulova, 2008). A caveat to keep in mind is that inconsistencies and even conflicts of interest have always been at the core of language-in-education policies in Kazakhstan. While the side and below actors tend to push for more assertive and bolder language-in-education policies in favor of Kazakh, as it has been mistreated for a long time and needs more support and investment (Smagulova, 2008), the above actors tend to demonstrate restraint in respect to aggressive promotion of Kazakh as such moves may irk monolingual Russians and other Russified groups. This trend in the nation-building process and language-in-education policy after 1991 has persisted as the current political elites of Kazakhstan strive to maintain a language balance in the country. Kazakhstan’s government has increasingly focused on expanding the scope of Kazakh in society and Kazakh medium education. Nonetheless, the government of Kazakhstan and educational authorities have placed a greater emphasis on maintaining the leading role of Russian as the language of wider communication as well as bringing English into mainstream education.

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10 Language Policy and Practice in Two Endangered Languages in China: Change from the Side Without Civil Society Institutions?

Stephen A. Bahry

Abstract

Bu lunwen SunanYuguzuzhixianning, Xuexiaoda uryedme däl azlâydeye yaqdab. SunanYuguzuzhixian Zhongguoning aryagning Gansushenda, bu bär däl qadänzhäg mingzu qadänzhäg yärdä, malchilöyning yanda yäl daranchi Hanzu däl aradadä. Kosonen nä Benson (2021)ning görerýe dälning zhengce guojia yaqadan guzuýa nä altändan örye bärleýse, zha gaşyaglasa, azlâyning däl uzalâygala en yaş bolýadä. Bu tangşa mänjar gujurlerýönnäbdä. Bu pelâyde yaqadan guzuýa näjever altändan gelyen, yaqadan guzuýa gelyen zhengcedo, döyerdan gelyen tangşalar Difang Zhengfuningdä, bunä degelse BGOdä xosänga görer, azlâyarnä Zhonghua Mingzuýa bärleýdärme nä sörsöz öryenme jöyör sörsöz öryenme värjin sözsäme yogdä. Bu pelâyning en ardända ene döyuryaydan gelyen bu yärlerden utgan yaldallarning bär qaiqadä. (*Abstract in Sarig Yughur[ybe], a Turkic language of Gansu province, China, translated by Yaghlakar, Gansu, China*).

This chapter explores how language-in-education policy change towards greater use of non-dominant languages may be analyzed in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, a multilingual, multiethnic traditionally nomadic minority area in Gansu, Northwest China surrounded by Han Chinese agriculturalism and language. Following Kosonen and Benson (2021), efforts to maintain or revive non-dominant languages under threat of language shift or even language death would be most likely to succeed if top-down language policies (change from above)

and bottom-up community initiatives (change from below) are provided with additional support that comes from another level, what has been called ‘change from the side’. The framework’s three levels are tested in this case from the People’s Republic of China, where civil society institutions do not exist, possibly limiting the possibility of support for change from the side – even in the presence of state policy mandates and local community demands for broader use of non-dominant languages. The chapter explores how change from below comes directly from local public opinion, change from above comes from the central state and change from the side comes from local autonomous government officials and agencies, who may be seen as acting like non-governmental organizations in advocating for local public opinion and change in language policy and practices. The analysis points out that two efforts – the effort to integrate all minority nationalities into a pan-Chinese nationality and improve Chinese language reading skills, and the effort to strengthen Yughur language and culture – are not necessarily contradictory, especially if the current weak multicultural and multilingual approach is strengthened. The chapter concludes with discussion of continuity and change in the influences of different institutions as mediated by key individuals within these institutions and those with multiple memberships.

Introduction

Language policy specialists posit that efforts to maintain or revive non-dominant languages, including languages under threat of language shift or even language death, are more likely to succeed if top-down language policies and bottom-up community initiatives are provided additional support that comes ‘from the side’. Language policy change from the side is understood as being mediated by civil society institutions (Kosonen & Benson, 2021). This chapter will examine a case from the People’s Republic of China, where civil society institutions have been severely weakened or even replaced by rule of a single party, which has limited the possibility of support for policy change from the side despite state policy mandates and local community demands for broad use of non-dominant languages. Alongside universal penetration of society by the ‘party state’, non-dominant linguistic and cultural groups recognized by the same ‘party state’ as distinct nationalities have been granted autonomous local government.

This chapter focuses on Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, a multilingual, multiethnic minority area in Gansu, Northwest China, created as a homeland and safeguard for Yughur¹ peoples, culture and languages, at the nexus of the Gansu-Qinghai plateau and the Gobi Desert, and of nomadic pastoralism of cultures speaking Turkic, Mongolic and Tibetan languages alongside the agriculturalism of Han

Chinese. The study examines the Yughur nationality, formed from two neighboring language groups with similar lifeways, endonyms and adherence to Tibetan Buddhism: the Sarigh or West Yughur, and the Shira or East Yughur.² It explores to what extent language policy change over time has come from above via macro-level policy, from below via local minority public opinion or from the ‘near side’ via local autonomous government officials and agencies. I propose that the ‘near side’ acts as non-governmental organizations might in other contexts, advocating for local opinion on language policy and practices, in addition to ‘far side’ academic actors from elsewhere in China or abroad.

‘Secular’ school education as a local innovation before 1949

In Yughur areas, including today’s Sunan, six secular schools were opened from 1939 to 1942 for boys not intending to be monks (Sunan County, 1984). The curriculum included Chinese and Tibetan Language and Literacy, Mathematics and Singing (Ba, 2010: 144–148).³ This movement was led by a Tibetan Buddhist monk/lama, QishiGujiaKanpu, born in Sunan to a Tibetan father and Yughur mother and proficient in Tibetan, Western Yughur, Mongolian, Monghuor (Tu) and Chinese. QishiGujiaKanpu served on the Mongolian-Tibetan Commission, responsible for local Tibetan Buddhists, including Yughurs. Arguing for more cultural and educational development, he convened a meeting using Chinese, Mongolian, Yughur and Tibetan languages to discuss plans to do so (An & Cai, 2014: 30; Ba, 2010: 141–144).

The pre-1949 Sunan Language Ecology involved overlapping networks of users of four languages. Some might understand and speak one; others would have productive ability in one, but receptive ability in one or more, while still others would have productive and receptive ability in two or more languages. The ecology can be described as diglossia with bilingualism (Fishman, 1967), as standard Tibetan was reserved for H (‘high’) status purposes, while vernacular Tibetan and both Yughur languages were used for daily L (‘low’) status purposes.

These schools added a second H language to the local ecology, standard Mandarin Chinese, likely giving schools a plurilingual nature: standard Tibetan and Chinese used for core content, with oral use of vernacular languages for discussing difficult points, for conversation or for pleasure (see Figure 10.1).

The nature of language-in-education policy in pre-1949 Yughur areas of NW China

In the multilingual Yughur areas shown in Figure 10.1, the impetus for spreading knowledge came from individuals with (a) local Yughur/Tibetan origins, knowledge of vernacular Yughur and regional Tibetan

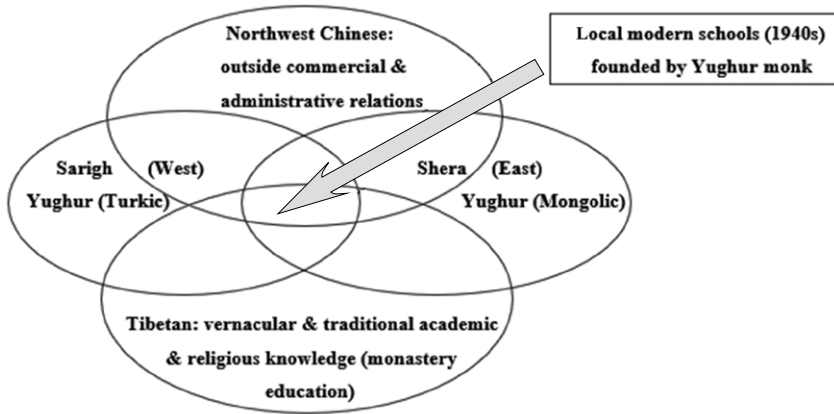


Figure 10.1 Plurilingual language ecology of pre-1949 Language Ecology of Yughurs in Gansu

Sources: An and Cai (2014), Chen and Lei (1985), Gao and He (2003), Nugteren and Roos (1996) and Zhaonasiu (1981).

languages (actors from below); (b) connection with local Tibetan Buddhist institutions, formal written Tibetan language (actors from the side); and (c) some Chinese proficiency and membership in meso-level government institutions responsible for local minority communities (actors from above). QishiGujiaKanpu and his associates cannot be said to be effecting change from any one level but rather from a combination of all of them, which may explain the ability of a small group to implement an unprecedented multilingual education reform in Yughur areas.

Language and School Education in Sunan after 1949

Nationalities and language policy in China

China post-1949 drew on 1920s Soviet policy, basing nationalities on common language, territory and way of life, and providing them territorial autonomy and status, corpus and acquisition development and use of their languages in administration and education through indigenization [*korenizatsiya*]. Studying and using the Russian language was voluntary: local languages, not Russian, were to be promoted. In the 1930s, however, indigenization ceased, Russian promotion increased, and new Russian-dominant minority elites developed in Russian-only boarding schools (Bahry *et al.*, 2017; Fierman, 1991; Lewis, 1972; Zhou, 2012).

Beginning in 1952, China's constitution, laws and regulations provide the rights for Chinese minorities to maintain and develop their heritage language as well as standard Chinese (Putonghua) proficiency. China divided its population into 57 official nationalities. Those with a written

Table 10.1 Article 49 on Language in the Regional Autonomy Law for Minority Nationalities (amended 2001)

Art.	Chapter V Relations Among Nationalities Within a National Autonomous Area
49	The organ of self-government of a national autonomous area shall persuade and encourage cadres of the various nationalities to learn each other's spoken and written languages. Cadres of Han nationality should learn the spoken and written languages of the local minority nationalities. While learning and using the spoken and written languages of their own nationalities, cadres of minority nationalities should also learn Putonghua [Mandarin] and the standard written Chinese (Han) language commonly used throughout the country. Awards should be given to State functionaries in national autonomous areas who can use skillfully two or more spoken or written languages that are commonly used in the locality.

Source: NPC (2001, Feb 28).

language and literature were provided mother-tongue education, while for other minority languages development of writing systems, grammars and dictionaries were planned. Members of various nationalities, particularly majority Han officials, in a given area are still officially encouraged to learn each other's languages, as shown in Table 10.1. In the early PRC, Han teachers trained in a local minority language came to minority areas such as Sunan County to help develop local education (Bahry, 2012; Blachford, 1998; Gao & He, 2003; Zhou, 2003; Zhou & Sun, 2004).

Nevertheless, macro-level central policy and regulations on languages and education for minority languages (or non-dominant languages/NDLs) are interpreted and implemented at provincial (meso-) and district (micro-) levels, producing a plethora of language policy models for education of children of minority (non-dominant/ND) groups, as summarized in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Range of minority language-in-education policy implementation in China

Approach	Function of Mandarin Chinese	Function of non-dominant language (NDL)
Mandarin submersion	All formal curriculum, textbooks and instruction in Mandarin	No formal support for NDL in school
NDL plus Mandarin	Mandarin subject only	Mother-tongue-medium instruction except for second-language class
Mandarin plus NDL	All subjects Chinese-medium, except mother-tongue subject	NDL as subject only
'Mixed' bilingual education	Formal instruction in Mandarin	Informal oral NDL explanation to supplement Mandarin instruction
Transitional bilingual education	Subject in early grades; later shift to main instructional medium	NDL as instructional medium in early grades; later occasional use
Maintenance bilingual education	Medium of instruction for some subjects throughout schooling	NDL as medium of instruction for some subjects throughout schooling

Source: Adapted from Bahry (2012: 388) (based on accounts in Blachford, 1998; Dai & Cheng, 2001; Teng & Wang, 2001; Zhou & Sun, 2004).

The evolving multilingual education policy environment in Sunan rural schools after 1949

Sunan County was affected by national and regional trends, especially the tension between proponents of mass education versus those who called for quality education. The former saw the latter as intrinsically elitist, divorced from experience and examination-based; the latter saw the former as intrinsically low in quality (Pepper, 1996). Thus, unlike better-resourced complete primary schools in township or country centers, those serving rural, remote communities relied heavily on incomplete village schools (Grades 1–3). In Gansu these could be twice as numerous as complete schools, but they were opposed by some policymakers for their teachers' low qualifications (Seeberg, 2006). As a result, in Chinese-medium minority village schools learning sometimes proceeded bilingually, allowing a familiar language environment both at home and school.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1979), militant 'Red Guard' youth spread out countrywide, combating old ideas, culture and customs with the progressive goal of expanding educational access, while treating minority languages and cultures as conservative and deserving of opposition. Schools using minority languages were often closed, with minority leadership and teachers harassed or worse (Dai & Dong, 2001; Dreyer, 1968; Heberer, 2018).

Sunan County 1949–1980s

After 1949, schools steadily expanded in number, from 40 to over 60 between 1964 and 1966. The number then oscillated between 60 and 80 until 1974, when another rapid expansion occurred from 80 to over 100 in two years. After 1977, the number fell rapidly to 60 by 1984, with many village schools closed or consolidated with township schools (An & Cai, 2014; Sunan County, 1994), as shown in Figure 10.2. Many of the rapidly opening and closing rural schools were incomplete primary schools (An & Cai, 2014), where children were close to home and community and could have used their mother tongue more freely. Closing of state schools was partly offset by rural production units operating innovative 'horseback schools' or 'tent schools' in communities from 1966 to 1978. In these schools, teachers would visit a different location each day, teaching Grades 1–2 from 8 to 10 am; 3–4 from 10 to 12 am and Grade 5 over the lunch break, then planning lessons in the afternoon, and teaching adult (Chinese) literacy in the evening (An & Cai, 2014). This flexibility kept rural NDL-speaking children enrolled in school in remote mountain and grassland areas, maintaining strong home-school connections and use of home languages, and inspiring similar programs in NDL-speaking areas like Inner Mongolia.

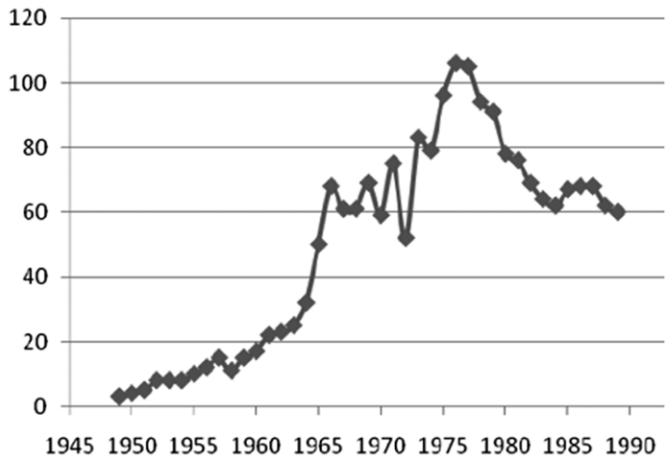


Figure 10.2 Number of schools in Sunan County, 1949–1990

Source: Sunan County (1994).

I conducted fieldwork in 2007, interviewing parents about their past experiences during the period following the Cultural Revolution in the 1980s to 1990s (Bahry, 2009, 2012). Yughur parents reported experiencing several school language policy environments: (A) symmetrical bilingualism: both teacher and students used Chinese and NDL in class (Teacher-student-student translanguaging/plurilingualism); (B) parallel monolingualism with student bilingualism: teacher and students speak Chinese to each other (students as able), while students with stronger Chinese use Yughur to support their peers’ learning (student-student translanguaging/plurilingualism); and (C) asymmetrical monolingualism: teacher speaks Chinese, students who can, respond in Chinese, while others are silent: no supplementary use of minority language (see Table 10.3).

Table 10.3 Selected examples of Sunan parents’ 1980s language-in-education experiences, 2007

Grade 2/7 parent 2 M Sarigh Yughur type A	Grade 2/7 parent 7 M Sarigh Yughur type B	Grade 2/7 parent 6 F Sarigh Yughur type C
I liked to go to school and liked to play. The teacher used Chinese to teach and at first, I couldn’t understand, but the teacher could give us an explanation [in Yughur]. I learned Chinese from my parents and the teacher, although their Chinese level was low. I didn’t need more than 1 year to be able to speak Chinese fluently.	The teacher didn’t understand Yughur and gave us lessons in Chinese. The teacher didn’t care and didn’t criticize us if we spoke Yughur in class. Sometimes we didn’t understand; when this happened, I asked other classmates. So, I gradually learned Chinese.	In class, I liked to study seriously.... The teacher used Mandarin, and didn’t understand Yughur. Sometimes I didn’t understand, but bit by bit I understood. The teacher didn’t let us speak in Yughur. When we were criticized for this, I felt we were wronged.

Source: Bahry (2009: 366–367).

Table 10.4 Institutions involved in Sunan change from above, below and the side

Tier		Institutions				
Macro 3	National	National Government Minority Autonomy Law				
Meso 2a	Provincial	Provincial Government	Gansu Provincial Education Bureau, Lanzhou		Northwest Minority University, Lanzhou	
			Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou		Gansu Pedagogical Institute, Hezuo, Gannan Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture	
Meso 2b	Prefecture	Zhangye Prefecture People's Government	Zhangye Prefecture Education Bureau, Zhangye		Hexi University, Zhangye	
		From Above	From Above ↓			
Micro 1a	County	Sunan Autonomous County People's Government	From the Side	Sunan County Education Office and Schools	From the Side	Yughur Culture Education Research Office
			→		←	
Micro 1b	Grassroots	From Below	From Below ↑			
		Sunan Yughur County, Yughur population				

Change from above, below, from the side or a combination in Sunan Yughur County, since 1949

Since 1949, a range of institutions have influenced language policy in Sunan County. National policies, especially the Law on Regional National Autonomy, encourage bilingualism and multilingualism in autonomous national minority territories. This is according to Article 49 (see Table 10.1) and Article 37, which states that ‘institutions of education where most of the students come from minority nationalities shall, **whenever possible**, use textbooks in their own languages and use their languages as the media of instruction’ (NPC, 2001). Such macro-level policies are overseen and facilitated by meso-level institutions in Gansu Province, the Provincial Education Bureau, implemented and influenced by meso-level institutions, but also influenced by micro-level grassroots society, as shown in Table 10.4. The Sunan County Education Office both participated in and resisted elements of the progressive education movement of the CR and the inclusion of non-dominant community culture and language-in-education. Unfortunately, published information as to local attitudes and debates on retaining or closing community schools is scarce.

Sunan County Language Ecology, Policy and Practices and Schools since 2000

East Yughur language maintenance and shift in a mountain community (up to 2003)

An ethnographic study of village life was conducted in the early 2000s in a Shira Yughur-speaking Kangle District, which included a survey of mother tongue proficiency (Zheng & Gao, 2004: 227–229). Their

Table 10.5 Shira Yughur proficiency level by age cohort in a village in Kangle district, Sunan County (*N*=50 participants)

Age groups	Years Junior Secondary school-aged	Very proficient	Proficient	Somewhat proficient	Not proficient	Proficiency Index /100	Total N
> 60	1946–1957	50	0	0	0	100	50
51–60	1956–1967	50	0	0	0	100	50
41–50	1966–1977	50	0	0	0	100	50
31–40	1976–1987	0	50	0	0	75.0	50
21–30	1986–1997	0	43	7	0	72.5	50
11–20	1996–2003	0	40	10	0	70.0	50

Source: Adapted from Zheng and Gao (2004: 228), proficiency index calculated by author.

method was to interview 50 villagers in each of five age groups, asking 10 questions in Shira Yughur for which points were awarded for quality of Shira Yughur responses. Table 10.5 displays the results by age and Shira Yughur proficiency, with a score of 10 points considered highly proficient; 6–9, proficient; 2–5, somewhat proficient, and 0–1, not proficient. Those who were elementary-school-aged from 1940 to 1972 are all deemed highly proficient in Yughur, while those school-aged from 1970 to 1982 during the Cultural Revolution, responded in Yughur from 60 to 90% of the time. Those in elementary school after the Cultural Revolution from 1980 to 2002 show a continued decrease in Yughur proficiency.

Weakened Yughur proficiency among the younger cohorts interviewed cannot be explained as much by changes in the quantity of elementary education, which still retained some village schools, as by increases in junior secondary participation, which often required boarding in a township center in a Mandarin-dominant environment, and little public NDL use. Figure 10.3 shows steady increases in junior secondary completion rates by gender and junior secondary age (four 5-year cohorts) between 1979 and 2000. The largest jump in completion rates is from the 1984–1990 to 1989–1995 cohorts, for females by 14.8%, and males by 9.4%. Similar increases were seen for senior secondary completion rates (Bahry & Zholdoshalieva, 2012).

Thus, Table 10.5 and Figure 10.3 together show that an increase in junior secondary classes, generally taught in Mandarin in township center schools far from rural homes, seems to be associated with decreased Yughur proficiency in the village studied by Zheng and Gao (2004), and perhaps in other villages as well. Table 10.3 shows that some elementary school classrooms in Sunan in the 1980s had supplementary Yughur-Mandarin bilingual instruction in Yughur, some were taught only in Mandarin but allowed Yughur-Mandarin translanguaging by students, and some classroom language policy was Mandarin only. We can conclude that junior secondary education overall was itself not

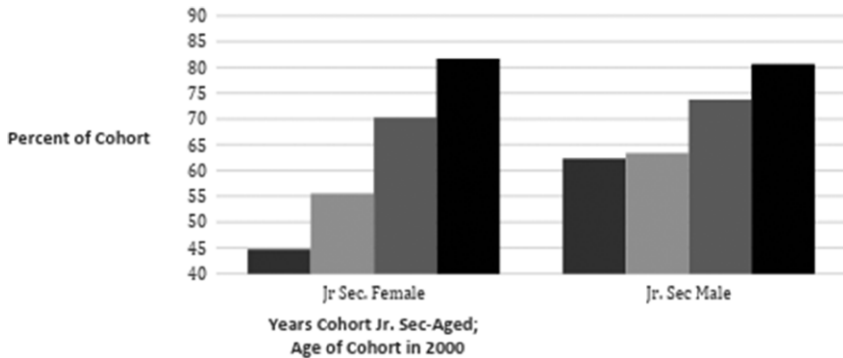


Figure 10.3 Yughur junior secondary completion rates by 5-year age cohort and gender
Source: Adapted from Bahry and Zholdoshalieva (2012: 37) (drawing from data in China, 2003).

strongly supportive of Yughur maintenance. Despite the reductions in Yughur proficiency, we see over time in Table 10.5, complete language shift had still not occurred: most junior secondary-aged youth interviewed were still considered proficient in Yughur in 2004.

Change from above, below, the side or a combination in Kangle Township, 1949–2000

The Sunan case study was part of a large-scale meso-level research study on the micro-level situation of minority communities in northwest China, including Kyrgyz and Tajik village investigations in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Dong & Wan, 2004; Luo & Zhao, 2004). The research team for the Sunan study (Zheng & Gao, 2004) supplemented Han nationality anthropologists from Yunnan University over 1500 kilometers away (far side, outsider view) with a Shira Yughur culture and language researcher (near side, insider view).

The participation of a major university in a minority research project spanning the non-dominant autonomous nationality districts in western China could be seen as an example of change from the side. Yunnan University researchers participated in carefully documenting East Yughur language shift in Sunan County, making the data less ‘anecdotal’ and more rigorous. At the same time, while the study was sponsored and led by researchers from Yunnan University, it was implemented with the assistance of bilingual (Yughur-Chinese) personnel who were part of the local Sunan County Yughur Cultural Research Office. The relationship between these organizations and individuals is depicted in Figure 10.4.

Thus, researchers could be considered both from the *far* side and the *near* side. Yunnan researchers would be from the *far* side, in part because of the great distance from Yunnan province to Gansu province (over 1500 km),

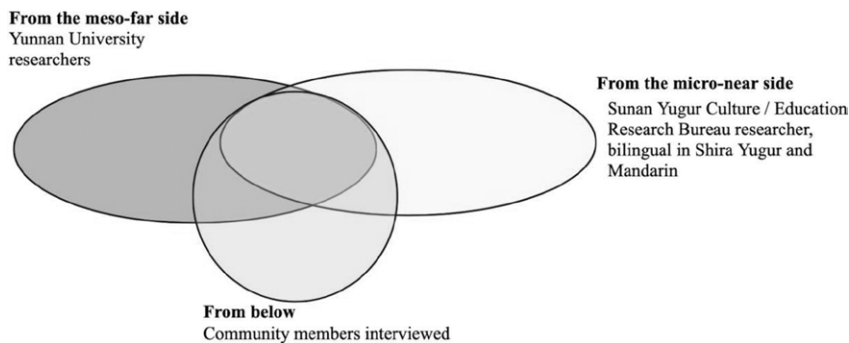


Figure 10.4 Relationship of institutions and individuals in the East Yughur Village Study
Source: Author.

but also due to their *outsider* research perspective as dominant group researchers interested *in* non-dominant groups, but not *of* non-dominant groups themselves. Meanwhile, Sunan researchers would be from the *near* side, being residents of Sunan County, with non-dominant Yughur *insider* perspectives as they are researching their *own* community, and their commitment, understandings, and knowledge include but transcend academic and policy considerations (Bahry, 2014; Bishop, 2005). The near-side Indigenous researchers add authenticity while non-Indigenous outsiders from a respected university lend authority to their research findings and recommendations; meanwhile, the mutuality of their dialogue and collaboration add further weight to their research.

Developments from 2003 to 2007

The Sunan Yughur Autonomous County government established its own Sunan County Yughur Culture Research office in June 2003. NDL language maintenance and revitalization requires status, corpus and acquisition development (Hornberger, 2002), which this office provides from the near side: it conducts research on Yughur culture and language, publishes a journal on Yughur language and culture *Yovhur Puchig* [Yughur Culture] and is preparing a Sarig/Shira Yughur-Mandarin dictionary (Luobuzangdunzhi, 2006). This office decided not to use the modified International Phonetic Alphabet [IPA] to record Sarigh and Shira Yughur (Chen, 2006; Chen & Lei, 1985; Zhaonasiu, 1981, 2006), as it was not seen as suitable for literacy acquisition, but to conform with longstanding official policy that new non-dominant language scripts should harmonize with existing Chinese *pinyin* romanization (Zhou, 2003). The office has thus developed a single Romanized script for writing both Yughur languages that supports

both learning pinyin and using pinyin to support learning written Yughur (Arslan, 2006).⁴

Perspectives on Yughur language use in Sunan County Schools in 2007

A field study in Sunan County in 2007 examined perspectives on Yughur language use in schools, asking one general and one supplementary question:

- (1) What should children learn in Sunan County schools to receive quality education?
- (2) What aspects of local knowledge, culture(s) and language(s) should be included in school curriculum as part of quality education?

These questions addressed Sunan County's developing language ecology, people's proficiency in minority languages, bilingualism in minority languages and Chinese, language shift to Chinese and language loss, as well as perspectives on use of minority languages within Sunan County Schools (Bahry, 2009, 2012).

For the 2007 study, I visited one town school and two rural boarding schools, where village schools had been consolidated with a unified township center Mandarin-only K-9 school, with a dormitory for those from distant homes. Rural boarders often experienced long separations from their family, many returning home only between terms and holidays. Consolidated township schools were meant to provide urban-style quality education for all children, and to develop minority children's Chinese proficiency, by immersing them in a Mandarin-Chinese environment.

Individual and group interviews were held with the principal, participating teachers, parents and students of each of these schools, asking them the above questions along with classroom observations of participating teachers to compare teachers' practices and stated opinions on inclusion of minority community content and language in local education. Background visits were also held with staff of the county level Yughur Cultural Research Organization, itself under the county government. This organization was responsible for the publication of Yughur linguistic and cultural materials and research, in response to concerns of the community of children attending boarding schools, returning home no longer able or willing to speak Yughur, and the resulting fear that the Yughur language might rapidly disappear if conditions remained the same.

Overall findings of the study

Almost all participants in the three school cases, whether Yughur, other minority participants, or Han Chinese supported in principle the inclusion of Yughur knowledge, cultural content and language in Sunan

County basic education (Bahry, 2009, 2012). Some strongly believed it *should* be done, more especially among Yughur parents; while some were unsure it *could* be done, particularly given the lack of a recognized script and written literature. Others wondered *how* to do it, as a compulsory or elective program; for Yughur children only, primarily, or for anyone interested; and by teaching *about* the language's vocabulary and rules or *using* Yughur language communicatively.

Participants discussed relatively freely the possibility of adding Yughur knowledge, culture and language under the framework of the national curriculum reform which now permitted local and school-based curriculum, leaving how to do this up to the initiative of teachers and principal. No discussion was made of reviving rural elementary education as a means to combat language shift of Yughur-speaking students in boarding school dormitories. The emphasis of discussion was about how to infuse *Yughurness* into town schools, now that they were the only type of school.

Individual Cases: Change from above, the side, below or a combination?

Case 1 School: County Centre Elementary School

Urban education was a model here with a Yughur theme evident in colorful wall posters of students and teachers in Yughur costume learning art, but no Yughur language use was noted. When asked about the possibility of including Yughur language in the school curriculum, the principal said that a previous experimental Yughur language class using a Chinese-language Yughur grammar had been unpopular. He added that it was possible that Yughur content and language could be added in the future because parents, many having undergone partial language shift themselves, were interested in their children learning Yughur. Earlier grade teachers were more supportive than higher grade teachers, who worried about the effect on learning regular curriculum. Younger pupils were curious about the possibility, while some older ones worried that Yughur was difficult.

- From below:
 - Moderate parental, teacher, and student support.
 - Weak support from leadership.
- From the side and above:
 - Support from side and top institutions was not noted.

Case 2: Township-center consolidated Elementary-Junior Secondary School (Shira Yughur)

School leadership supported multicultural education via school-based multicultural curriculum on local knowledge and Yughur culture, but the school curriculum committee did not plan to add Yughur and other NDLs. They had prepared colorful Chinese-language textbooks

with the support of two professors from Beijing universities, one from Yughur background, and one a senior minority education researcher, with funding from the US Ford Foundation. No Yughur use was noted, although several staff were Yughur speakers.

- From below:
 - Moderate to high ND parental and student support.
 - Strong leadership and teacher support for Yughur cultural content.
 - Weak to moderate teacher support for Yughur language.
- From the side:
 - Beijing university researchers back cultural inclusion, perhaps longer term NDL infusion.
 - International NGO provided generous financial support.
- From above:
 - Central curriculum policy allows school-based curriculum development.
 - Tolerance/possible tacit support from County Government.
 - No evidence of top-down support from Education Office/Bureau.

Case 3: Township-center merged Elementary-Junior Secondary School (Sarigh Yughur)

The school was in a rural township where Sarigh (West) Yughur language showed some vitality although Chinese was the official teaching medium. The principal was half Yughur, and could not speak Yughur, but expressed a desire to add some Yughur content and language in the future, although there were no plans mentioned. Some teachers were fluent in West Yughur, wished to include Yughur knowledge, culture and language. One was observed in early grade Chinese language arts to use short Yughur phrases in Yughur to encourage children or ask for questions. At a gathering three senior students sang a Yughur song; and one was able to tell a folk tale spontaneously without hesitation, first in Sarigh Yughur, then in Mandarin.

- From below:
 - High ND parental and student support for Yughur language.
 - Leadership support in principle for Yughur language content.
 - Strong to moderate teacher support for Yughur language.
- From the side and above:
 - Support from side and top institutions was not noted.

The study's role: Support for change from above, below, the side or a combination?

The children often expressed in group interviews interest in learning Yughur culture and language, especially songs. When shown a Shira Yughur-Mandarin glossary in *Shira Yughur Grammar* (Zhaonasitu, 1981), a group of Grade 7–8 Shira Yughur-speaking students greatly

enjoyed sounding out the Shira Yughur words written in IPA, using their bilingual oral knowledge and awareness of Chinese characters and pinyin romanization. This provided evidence of the potential for developing Yughur literacy. Parents and many teachers stated that Yughur learning should go on in schools and wondered if it was possible. I discussed with them the similar issues of NDL communities in Canada and research suggesting NDL-DL bilingual education was feasible in Sunan.

Thus, the role of University of Toronto doctoral research in Sunan is mainly from the far side, in engaging in bringing distant outsider perspectives to Sunan; but indirectly, in supporting the feasibility of changing language-in-education policy to more strongly promote Yughur. Via discussions with local Yughur researchers, students, parents, teachers and principals, it perhaps reinforced efforts from both the near side, and the bottom, by letting them know that their situation was important enough to merit international attention.

December 2011: Gannan-Sunan Minority Language Preschool Feasibility Conference (Mongolian, Tibetan and Yughur nationalities)

Responding to a new policy requiring preschool education in Gansu's minority areas, a conference was organized in December 2011 to discuss the feasibility of providing preschool in NDLs or bilingually in NDLs and Chinese (see Table 10.6). Participants included local minority autonomous territory government members, educators and community representatives of Mongolian, Tibetan and Yughur nationalities from Sunan Yughur Autonomous County and Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province, Han researchers from the Centre for Research on Minority Education and Development (CREMED) of Northwest Normal University; Mongolian, Tibetan and Yughur scholars from Northwest University for Minority Nationalities and two researchers focusing on minority language education from OISE, University of Toronto (myself and a Tibetan colleague), with funding from the Canadian Embassy in Beijing and CREMED, Northwest Normal University. NDL community representatives spoke in their own languages, with translation provided into Mandarin Chinese (Bahry, 2011; Zhang, 2012).

Educators and community members from Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Sunan Yughur Autonomous County spoke of their desire for home languages to be included in preschool education, their concerns about language shift when children attended all-Chinese schools away from home, and their fears for the disappearance of their languages and identity. Two former Tibetan-medium elementary school teachers whose village school had been closed with village students sent to a Chinese-medium township school spoke of their innovative Tibetan-medium weekend school in the premises of their former school. OISE researchers presented on international research on the benefits of including heritage languages in schooling for identity development and

Table 10.6 Canada–China collaboration program: Northwest minority nationality mother tongue preschool education feasibility mini-conference 18–21 December 2011, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, Gansu, China

Direction		Institutions/Groups	Actions
From above		Head of Regional Research Centre on Minority Education and Development at Northwest Normal University invoked national policies	• National policies allowing Minority Language Preschool: ◦ Central Autonomous Nationality policy and Constitution allow teaching of NDLs in areas of concentrated settlement ◦ New central policy on introducing preschool education in minority areas (silent on how to deal with language) • Central policy requires promotion of Mandarin Chinese in schools (silent on how to deal with preschools for minority children)
From the side	Near	Local government	• Support from Sunan Yughur Autonomous County government representatives present • Support from Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture government representatives present
		Local academics	• Support from non-dominant community scholars from Northwest University for Minority Nationalities (Mongolian, Tibetan and Yughur) • Support from the head and researchers of the Northwest Regional Research Centre on Minority Education and Development at Northwest Normal University • Participation of Researchers from Sunan County Yughur Culture and Education Research Office • Financial support from Research Centre on Minority Education, Northwest Normal University
	Far	International government	Financial support from Canada Fund, Canadian Embassy, Beijing
		International researchers	• Outsider/insider support from former NWUMN Tibetan Studies professor, graduate student in Sociology of Education, OISE, University of Toronto • Support from OISE (University of Toronto) researcher who studied stakeholder perspectives on inclusion of minority knowledge, culture and language in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County schools
From below		Local teachers and community members	Sunan Yughur Autonomous County: Yughur Teachers from Schools with East Yughur, West Yughur, Tibetan and Mongolian students East Yughur, West Yughur, and Mongolian parents/grandparents Gannan Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture • Tibetan principals and schoolteachers • Tibetan community representatives
From all levels?		Mini-conference policy based on mutuality of voices and languages	Status development via use of NDLs in a public meeting; retrieval of policy of learning and using each other's languages under Law on Autonomy (see Table 10.1, Art. 49) Presentations were in Mandarin, Tibetan and English Interpretation was provided into Mandarin NDL community participants responded to presentations in the language of their choice, including the following non-dominant languages; East Yughur, West Yughur, Tibetan, Mongolian

Source: Bahry (2011), 20 December and 18–21 December field notes; Zhang (2012).

later second language proficiency. Finally, a CREMED professor summed up the conference, concluding that Gansu should establish minority language preschools as: (1) they were desired by the community; (2) international research showed their clear benefits for minority community children; and (3) they were in accord with and permitted by central government policy.

In sum, this three-day seminar displayed a combination of support from below, from the side and from above at the local and regional level. The seminar concluded with a strong statement of commitment to include non-dominant language, culture and knowledge in preschools to be opened in Mongolian, Tibetan and Yughur areas in Gansu province.

Developments after 2011

After the Minority Language Preschool Feasibility meeting, activities on Yughur culture and language in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County were on the increase. In 2014, an additional institution supporting inclusion of Yughur knowledge, culture and language in school education was formed by the Sunan County government, the Yughur Educational Research Office. This office was engaged in preparing early literacy materials in the new harmonized Yughur script for Yughur children and supporting activities on Yughur language and culture in schools, as well as working on a Sarigh-Shira Yughur-Chinese trilingual dictionary. New teachers have been hired and trained, curriculum developed along with pedagogical workshops, and classes extended beyond preschool and primary education with weekly sessions with community volunteers proficient in Sarigh Yughur, Shira Yughur and Tibetan. Classes observed ranged from those using Yughur language to teach children traditional dances in an almost Total Physical Response manner to isolated vocabulary instruction related to traditional Yughur cultural objects.

This work has also been supported by aligning itself at the county and prefecture level with the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage approved in 2003 by UNESCO, and a central government law passed in 2011, 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China' in 2011 (Bahry, 2015; UNESCO, 2022; Zhong, 2019).

Recent activities

During the COVID pandemic, various levels of China's government were concerned about spread of the virus among minority nationalities, and so NDL speakers, musicians and artists produced anti-COVID campaign material, using a range of media, including social media platforms such as TikTok. Such anti-COVID activities also went on in Sunan County (Wang *et al.*, 2022). These activities

and their contribution to public wellbeing may have raised the social presence and status of NDLs.

More recently a comparative study of two schools in Sunan with national curriculum in Chinese and local multicultural, multilingual curriculum has appeared (Wang & Gao, 2023). The study includes interviews with a set of stakeholders on programs and practices and discusses several recent top-down supportive policies from the county level government and government-related bodies. These include:

- 2017. On strengthening the Yughur, Tibetan, and Mongolian language and script education in Sunan County: Guiding Opinions.
- 2019. The Education Regulations of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County.

Most notably, the 2019 policy states in Clause 25 that:

The autonomous county must guarantee the right to study and use the national spoken and written language for ethnic minority students receiving education within its jurisdiction. The autonomous county encourages other ethnic groups to learn and use the Yughur language. (The People's Representative Congress of Sunan Autonomous County, in Wang & Gao, 2023: 5)

Thus, micro-level quasi-government institutions acting from the side, such as the Yughur Education Research Institute on its own, by preparing materials, training teachers, involving community para-teachers and lobbying the micro-level government and education office for policies supporting Yughur cultural and language activities in schools seems to have produced cumulative, positive micro-level policy change in Sunan County education's inclusion of Yughur language and culture.

This seems to be borne out by the Yughur Education Research Institute's report on 2023, which mentions achievements such as a Yughur language drama, a traditional Yughur archery competition, and Yughur language teachers' participation in a national conference at the Central University for Minority Nationalities in Beijing where they spoke about research on 'Promoting Commonality and Reflecting Integration'. Several kindergartens' ethnic language and culture classes gave public performances on International Children's Day. Moreover, a team of 14 from the Institute attended the Yughur Studies Symposium at Hexi University centered on 'Building a Strong Consciousness of the Chinese Nation's Community – Mutual Learning of Civilizations and Cultural Integration'. In November, ethnic language classes for teachers, children and parents were held by the county town's Kindergarten. It is interesting that perhaps some of the local county communist party organization and members could be considered side actors regarding advocacy, as the party affiliation of several members of the Educational Institute's noteworthy accomplishments in 2023 was acknowledged (Yughur Education Research Institute, 2023).

Conclusion

This discussion demonstrates that central government policies may be implemented in various ways at local levels. Strong promotion of minority language rights in the 1950s in the Chinese Constitution and the laws on national (ethnic) autonomy remain virtually unchanged. Yet even then, policies often stated that local governments may, not must, implement education in non-dominant languages, seeming to leave implementation decisions to meso- (side) and micro- (below) levels for dialogue, negotiation, or dispute. This is supported by Blachford (1998), who visited many local jurisdictions in Northwest China and reported that local officials endeavor to identify ‘how serious the central authorities are’ about a given policy when deciding their response and how much attention they should give to implementing it. She also identified three types of officials in minority districts: *center representatives*, who always promoted what the center wanted, or they thought it wanted; *local representatives*, who strove to adapt policies to meet the wishes and needs of the population and to advocate for policy changes to better meet these needs; and a *middle group*, who expressed no opinion and took no action, waiting to see which trend would prevail. However, the cases described here demonstrate that there are actual effects resulting from the action of micro-level state agencies acting as quasi-civil society institutions as they use existing social and political frameworks to consistently advocate for policies and practices supporting non-dominant languages. This shows that micro-level local activities from the side have influenced the achievement of important micro-level changes in language-in-education policy and practice in Sunan County.

This is not to say that the quest for education in and revitalization of Yughur languages is over. In August 2023, the Yughur Education Research Institute held a 3-day seminar on ‘County Education Reform and Development and the Construction of a Learning Society’.⁵ Many presentations were made about the Yughur Education Research Institute’s accomplishments in strengthening Yughur language and culture, while some presentations also spoke about the importance of developing advanced second language proficiency in Chinese. These are not necessarily contradictory goals: much bilingual and plurilingual education research suggests that, under suitable educational circumstances, non-dominant (Yughur) language learning would support the development of even stronger proficiency in Yughur students’ second language, the mainstream language of China, standard Mandarin (Cummins, 2021). Without use of international research evidence, Yughur language advocates have arrived at a kind of pluricultural, plurilingual model on pragmatic, practical grounds.

In conclusion, this analysis suggests that there are implications for language policy change in Sunan County, China, and elsewhere. Despite China’s lack of non-state civil society institutions, we have seen that

micro- and meso-level local and regional institutions that are formally dependent on the state are able to act from the side as advocates for language-in-education policies and practices that permit a progressive inclusion of non-dominant languages in educational spaces where they had been absent or receding. We can conclude that local state-sponsored institutions advocating for the revitalization of moribund Yughur language and culture – and the steadily increased scope for their presence in education – is a key part of reversing language shift. It seems that these actions from the side have been a necessary component of the recent positive developments.

Yet it cannot be concluded that these actions by local government agencies and agents are sufficient. It is also clear that a major part has been played by collaboration with many other, non-local, actors: specifically, with higher meso-level governments and their agencies, researchers from regional universities in Gansu, the more distant Yunnan University, two national universities in Beijing and the University of Toronto, as well as financial support from international agencies. While near-side actors were necessary as instigators of actions, they would have had great difficulty or failed without broad support from below and without having achieved tolerance or support for change from above at the meso-level of the Zhangye Prefecture and Gansu Province governments and education bureaus. We have seen that the language policy environment in China (as shown in Table 10.2) includes a broad range of local level policy options. Despite recent tendencies countrywide to shift towards Mandarin Chinese-only language-in-education policy options, Sunan County has demonstrated that a combination of multiple agents and agencies of change from below, from above, and from the near and far side have been responsible for increased presence of Yughur language in Sunan County schools in Gansu province, China.

Notes

- (1) The spellings Yúgur and Yughur are both found in international research literature. However, 'Yughur' approximates Yughur pronunciation more closely, which features [ɣ], a voiced velar fricative, and so this chapter will use Yughur as its default spelling.
- (2) The Chinese terms West and East Yughur correspond to the self-designations of Sarigh Yughur (Yellow Yughur, Turkic-speaking) and Shira Yughur (Yellow Yughur, Mongolic-speaking), two groups with similar traditional lifestyles and attachment to Tibetan Buddhism that were merged in the 1950s in the process of delimitation of nationalities in China, following the previous similar Soviet process (see Hahn, 1998; Nugteren, 2003; Teng & Wang, 2001).
- (3) These sources do not report school language practices. Primary languages of instruction were likely Tibetan and Chinese, but presumably students and some teachers would have used oral Yughur among themselves.
- (4) For example, the voiceless uvular stop of both Yughur languages [q] in IPA might confuse learners of pinyin, as pinyin uses *q* to represent a Mandarin voiceless affricate [tʃ]. The *kh* is thus used to represent the voiceless Yughur uvular stop to clearly represent the Yughur sound without interfering with *pinyin*.

- (5) Yughur Education Research Institute (2023). *2023 Academic Seminars on County Education Reform and Development and Learning Society Construction*. Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, Gansu. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/wO2CCd6N9H0tXb9HQWnsKQ>.

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11 Warlpiri Schools in Australia's Northern Territory: Sustaining Change from Below with Championing from the Side

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Abstract

Panu-jarlu jaru Australia-rla. 150-pala ngulaju yapa-kurlangu-mipa jaru. 3000 yapa kalu wangkami Warlpiri. Warlpiri ngurra ngulaju Tanami Desert-rla. Warlpiri-patu kalu tarnnga-juku warrki-jarrimi junga nyayirni pirrjirdi pina-maninjaku Warlpiri-ki manu Englishi-ki kurrlurla. Nyampu karlujarra yirrarnu chapter Warlpiri jaru-kurlu manu pina-maninjaku jirrama jaru-kurlu, Warlpiri manu English, kuurlu-rla. Nyampu jarra-rlu Kosonen manu Benson (2021) yirrarnulu framework jungulu jana manngu-nyanyi multilingual education policy. Ngalipalu karnalu use-manu framework yungulu yimi ngarrirni Warlpiri jaru manu bilingual education-kurlu Nyirrpinka, Yurntumu-rla, Lajamanu-rla manu Wirliyajarrayi-rla. Nyampu nganimpa-nyangu yimi yungujana help-mani panu-kari yapa pina-pina-maninjaku nyanungurra-nyangu jaru kurdu-kurdu-ku. (*Abstract in Warlpiri [wbp], an Indigenous language of Australia, translated by Barbara Martin Napanangka*).

Australia is a linguistically and culturally diverse nation with over 300 different languages spoken across the country, including 150 traditional Indigenous languages and contact languages such as creoles, mixed languages, koines, new dialects and Aboriginal Englishes. Warlpiri, spoken by close to 3000 people mainly residing in four remote communities in the Northern Territory's Tanami desert, is one of the few Aboriginal languages that still has a cohort of fluent speakers across generations. Warlpiri communities have advocated long and hard for their language to be included in Northern Territory government-run schools alongside English and have historically viewed bilingual education as crucial in

language maintenance efforts. This chapter examines the mechanisms and trajectory of bilingual education policy in Central Australia using the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework to analyse efforts to promote Warlpiri language teaching alongside English in four schools. We describe the complementary roles played at different points in time by the actors working from below, the Warlpiri community members, their formal education networks such as the Warlpiri Triangle network and the Warlpiri Education Training Trust, supported by side-level allies in the linguistics and education sectors. We examine the ways in which the Northern Territory government policy has responded to and resisted efforts from below and the side over the decades and suggest some implications for multilingual education implementation in non-dominant languages.

Introduction

In March 2023, a small school in the remote Warlpiri community of Yuendumu, in the Tanami desert of Australia's Northern Territory (NT), hosted a celebration to launch the *Warlpiri Encyclopaedic Dictionary: Warlpiri yimi-kirli manu jaru-kurlu*. This dictionary was a feat of over six decades of collaboration between hundreds of Warlpiri speakers and linguists, and is the largest Australian Indigenous language dictionary ever compiled. In their speeches, Warlpiri contributors acknowledged the authority of their ancestors and the guidance of their elders in supporting generations of educators to develop resources, curricula and expertise to teach Warlpiri language in government schools. As Ormay Gallagher Nangala, a literacy worker at the Bilingual Resource Development Unit (BRDU) said, 'The dictionary makers brought together information and intentions from the elders who have now passed away, the people who have been working in education for many years, and the future generations who will continue to learn Warlpiri'.²

Nangala and others acknowledged many Warlpiri contributors as well as non-Warlpiri collaborators and allies – the linguists, anthropologists, teachers, literacy workers and others – who worked alongside them in the struggle for Warlpiri language to be taught in community schools, for quality Warlpiri resources to be produced and for Warlpiri teachers to receive adequate training and recognition for their work.³ The event acknowledged the importance of bilingual education in Warlpiri (the children's first language) and English, setting the foundations for literacy production, teacher education, and greater local decision making in schools (O'Shannessy *et al.*, 2023).

EB: Discussing this landmark moment afterwards with my colleague, mentor and senior Warlpiri teacher from Yuendumu community, Barbara, offered an opportunity to reflect on the efforts of and

interactions between various actors, both individuals and organisations, in shaping bilingual education in the NT over the decades. In writing this chapter together, we wanted both our voices to be included, so in some sections Napanangka's direct quotes explain our positions and in other parts you'll read my researcher voice.

We engaged with Kosonen and Benson's (2021) analytical framework for language-in-education policy change to explore the trajectory of the bilingual education programmes in four Warlpiri communities that are separated by hundreds of kilometres of desert but connected by common ties to the Warlpiri language and ancestral lands. We reflected together on the key themes, drawing up a timeline showing the trajectory of policy shifts and noting the key milestones over the decades. We examined the roles played over time by the actors working from 'below' (the Warlpiri community members) and from 'the side' (their local formal networks such as the Warlpiri Triangle network, the Warlpiri Education Training Trust (WETT) as well as allies from the linguistics and education sectors in Australia and abroad). We also reflected on the ways in which the 'top-down' federal and NT governments have responded to and resisted efforts from below and from the side in the policy articulation and resourcing of bilingual education.

In this chapter we draw on analysis of policy documents, reports from educator professional development and commentary by Warlpiri educators to analyse the vital efforts of Warlpiri community members and their professional networks in shaping language-in-education policy to realise community aspirations of Warlpiri language maintenance in school settings. We use Kosonen and Benson's (2021) framework to explore how language-in-education policies take place at all levels, from 'all directions' in a complementary and sometimes conflicting manner. Our impression is that actors from the side play a key role in collective advocacy between below and above levels. We note that principals as side actors, responsible for leading policy implementation at school level, have a particularly strong supportive or opposing role in multilingual education. We propose a distinction at the 'side' level between *local* organised community networks and *non-local* allies which reveals their different but significant influences. This Central Australian example might have explanatory value for other language maintenance contexts, especially contemporary settler-colonial societies, and suggest some implications for sustainability of multilingual education (MLE) for non-dominant languages (NDLs).

Conceptual Framing

Research on language policy, planning and management in schools describes a complex, multilayered, ideologically driven process (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2005). This process involves interrelated components of

language ideologies, language practices and language management (Spolsky, 2004). Ricento and Hornberger (1996: 402) use the metaphor of the language policy and planning onion to highlight the multiple layers comprising agents, levels and processes and to describe how they ‘permeate and interact with each other in a variety of ways and to varying degrees’. Within the field there is a growing interest exploring how both structural forces and individuals’ agency mediate language-in-education policy activities and processes (Palmer & Martinez, 2013). This process engages numerous actors at multiple institutional layers from top-down government policy at the macro-level, to regional and school level governance at the meso-level, and minority language representatives including students, teachers, and families at the micro level, what Kosonen and Benson (2021: 58) describe as ‘action from all directions’. Kosonen and Benson’s framework examines agency in between traditional dichotomies of top-down and bottom-up levels to include actors at the ‘side’, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms of policy change. Benson (2021: 58) summarises change from above as ‘change initiated by a government through legislation or decree, which is often justified on political grounds’. Change from below is ‘initiated by communities or civil society groups like local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while change from the side ‘involves a range of actors that are positioned somewhere between the grassroots and government who facilitate interaction between them’ (Benson, 2021: 58). Brown (2021), who engages with the framework in the context of Võro language education in Estonia, proposes that actors on the side can slide across or jump between levels at different points in time, an aspect we will also explore.

To theorise the mechanisms and trajectories of language-in-education policy processes, Kosonen and Benson (2021) have described four models which map out the trajectory of policy change in favour of NDL inclusion. Each model varies depending on the initiation of the process, where it is taken up and subsequent direction. Our context fits most comfortably with Model 1, where change is initiated from the top but sustained by bottom and side agents. However, we agree with Kosonen and Benson that identifying the level at which policy is initiated is not always clear-cut. In this chapter we recognise the distinct efforts at the bottom and side, not only for sustaining top-down policy changes but also in laying the groundwork for initiating this change in the first place, aligning our case more with Model 3.

Four Warlpiri Communities, their Language and their Schools

Australia is a linguistically and culturally diverse nation with over 300 different languages spoken across the continent, including 150 traditional Indigenous languages and contact languages such as creoles,

mixed languages, koines, new dialects and Aboriginal Englishes (Angelo, 2024). The dominant language of the education system, managed at six state and two territory government levels, is English (Jakubowicz, 2021). All state, territory and non-government education authorities are responsible for delivering the Australian National Curriculum from foundation years to year 10, with autonomy at the state and territory levels (ACARA, 2022).

The Northern Territory (NT) is one of six administrative divisions covering central and northern regions of Australia. It is sparsely populated, with half of the 250,000 population living in remote settlements with limited services and accessibility (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). These are Aboriginal communities and are often traditional lands for their residents (O'Shannessy *et al.*, 2022).

Warlpiri communities have estimated populations in the hundreds, such as Nyirrpri (200 residents), and Lajamanu (600), Willowra (300) and Yuendumu (800). They lie in the Tanami Desert in NT, forming a network known as the Warlpiri Triangle because of the shape of the connected points. Each of these communities has a single government school catering to 20 to 100 students and offering education in both Warlpiri and English. Lessons are co-delivered by teaching teams of formally trained English-speaking teachers and community-based Warlpiri-speaking educators (Browne, 2022).

The Warlpiri language, a member of the Pama-Nyungan family (Laughren & McConvell, 2004), is spoken by roughly 3000 people overall, with a significant diaspora living in major cities such as Adelaide (Burke, 2018). It is one of the fewer than twelve traditional languages in Australia that are spoken by all generations (Dinku *et al.*, 2020). Six major dialects of Warlpiri have been documented, with differences in pronunciation and vocabularies, usually influenced by neighbouring languages (Laughren *et al.*, 1996, 2022). In most Warlpiri communities, English is learned as a second language, and some community members speak other Aboriginal languages due to inter-community travel, marriage and ceremony (Browne, 2019, 2022).

The Mechanisms and Trajectory of Bilingual Education in Warlpiri Schools

In this section we describe the evolution of Warlpiri language education policy in the NT beginning with the period leading up to the establishment of the first bilingual schools. We explore how these programs were introduced and implemented over time, and the roles played by the various stakeholders at different levels.

The timeline in Figure 11.1 depicts key milestones in the initiation and development of bilingual education policies in Warlpiri schools. This timeline is by no means comprehensive, rather it is designed to

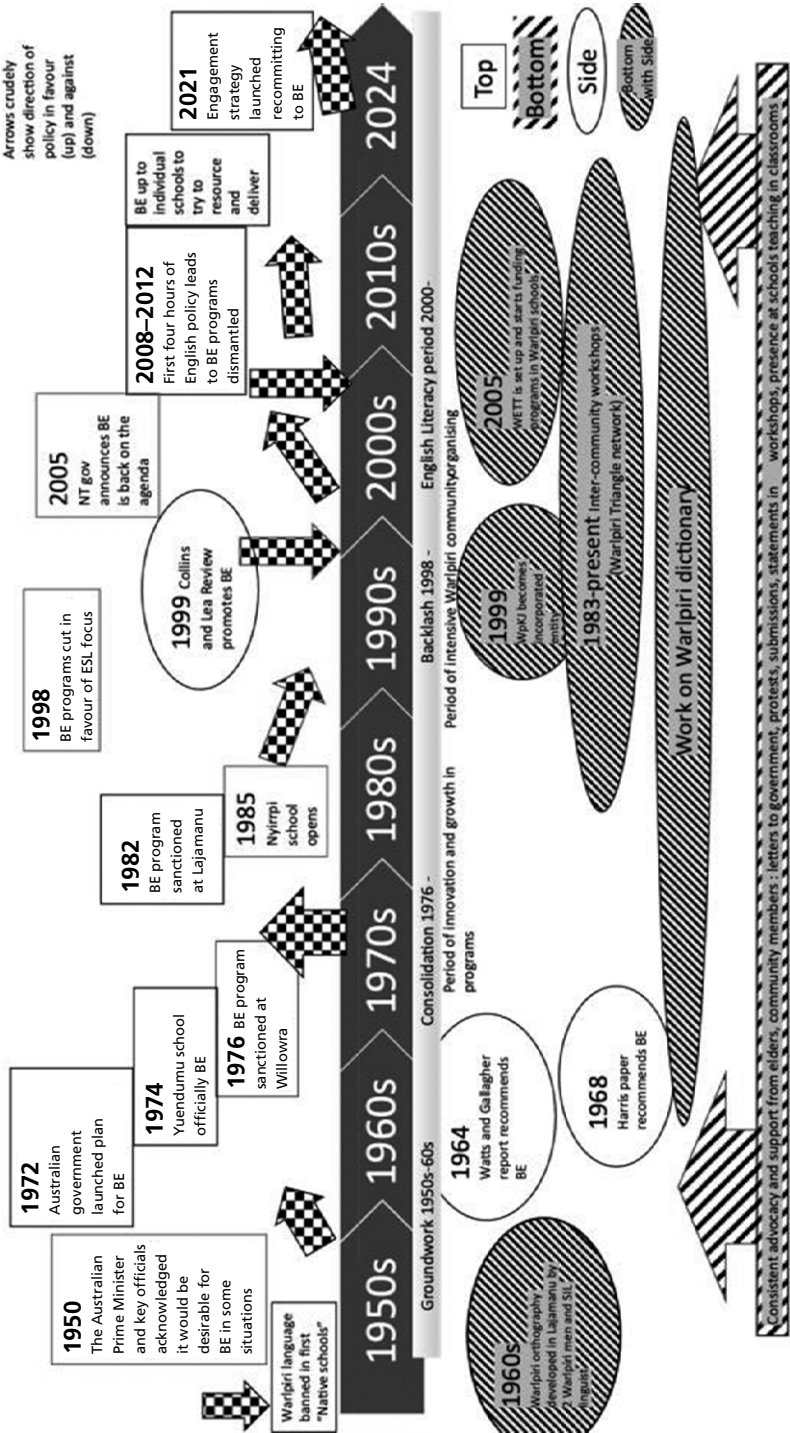


Figure 11.1 Timeline of significant milestones in bilingual education (BE) in the NT relevant to Warlpiri schools 1950s–2024

guide our analysis of the change process including cross-level influence. It foregrounds the earliest efforts by Warlpiri people supported by side actors to bring their languages into their community schools, and how these were taken up and later variously supported, neglected or resisted at government levels.

We divide the timeline into four phases beginning with the 'groundwork' period (1950s to 1970s), continuing to the 'consolidation' (1976 to 1990s) and 'backlash' (1998 to 2000) periods identified by Devlin (2022). The fourth phase is the contemporary 'English literacy period' (2000s to the present) whereby a monolingual habitus among non-Indigenous policymakers and educators and national standardised English-language testing regimes have strongly shaped both the content of schooling and how students are taught (Lo Bianco, 2016; Steele *et al.*, 2022).

The chequered arrows show the direction of government policy and resourcing in favour of bilingual education, with milestones captured in boxes. There was not enough space to detail the many efforts such as letter writing, submissions, marches and ongoing presence in schools by members of the four communities over time, so instead we have placed upward shaded arrows at the bottom of the timeline to reflect consistent community support in favour of bilingual education. The ovals show examples of community organising and actions. We created a combined 'bottom with side' category to reflect the prevalence and influence of collaborative activities. We'll now give some context to each period starting from the early days of contact with Europeans and finishing at the time of writing in 2024.

The Groundwork period (1950s to 1970s): Laying the foundations of change from below with support from the side and uptake from above

The development and transmission of local knowledges, languages and lore have occurred for thousands of generations in Australia (Anderson *et al.*, 2018). After the first settlers from Europe began colonising the Central Australian desert in the 1800s, formal schools were set up by missionaries and cattle stations, promoting the values, social organisation and language of the colonisers (Lee *et al.*, 2014; Watt, 1993). Early records note untrained Aboriginal teacher aides working in schools and Warlpiri people remember being punished for speaking their language in their schools (Vaarzon-Morell & Wafer, 2017).⁴ In 1950, then-Prime Minister of Australia Robert Menzies made the first recorded commitment to MLE, conceding that in NT, 'the language of instruction in Native schools shall be English, except where local conditions render bilingual instruction desirable' (Devlin *et al.*, 2017: 1).

Two independent reports paved the way for the introduction of bilingual education in NT (Devlin *et al.*, 2017). In 1964, the *Report of an Investigation into the Curriculum and Teaching Methods used in Aboriginal Schools in the Northern Territory* (Watts & Gallacher, 1969) was released, recommending dual language education programs to cater for the many speakers of Aboriginal languages. Four years later, a paper by linguist Joy Harris (1968) became a catalyst for piloting bilingual programs in select remote schools by describing a system of team teaching between first language speakers working with qualified non-Aboriginal teachers. Both papers were adopted as guides in developing programs when bilingual education was formally introduced 10 years later (Devlin *et al.*, 2017).

While the early position from above on teaching in Aboriginal languages in NT schools was a pragmatic response catering to the diverse language ecologies of its population, for Warlpiri the consistent goal of bilingual education must be viewed within a history of self-determination (Watt, 1993). As Devlin *et al.* (2017: 2) explain, ‘This larger struggle was for the right to choose to use their own languages in formal education settings, to retain and pass on knowledge and cultural practices, which were all part of determining how they should live as Aboriginal people’. Although Warlpiri language had been banned in the earliest schools, stories abound of the efforts of individual Warlpiri educators (e.g. Maurice Luther in Nash, 2021).

BMN: Our teaching was always really important from the beginning. We were always there in the schools, hanging around watching kids on duty but also going back in the classroom with the kids, teaching them, speaking Warlpiri to them. It is our way of having a say in our children’s lives and futures. It is our way of getting our language in the schools. It’s our identity and it’s our future.

The Consolidation period (1976–1990): Formalising change from above in alignment with below and side levels

A turning point for teaching Aboriginal languages came in 1972 with the election of the Whitlam labour government. Just hours after the election result, it was announced that as part of a broader policy of ‘self-determination’²⁵ bilingual education would be introduced in some pilot NT schools (Devlin *et al.*, 2017). By March 1973, the first bilingual education programs were being delivered in five schools in NT under the guidance of the Advisory Group on Teaching in Aboriginal Languages in Schools, and a bilingual program in Yuendumu began the next year. The process was top-down: ‘Aboriginal people were consulted, but the program was the result of a political decision, and it was ... centrally instigated and managed’ (Harris & Jones, 1991: 30). The original aims

were in close alignment with community aspirations, 'a) To help each child to believe in himself [sic] and be proud of his heritage by the regular use of the Aboriginal language in school and by learning about Aboriginal culture [and] b) To teach each student how to read and write in his own language' (Australian Department of Education, 1975, cited in McKay, 2017: 92). This exemplified a moment in time when the agenda from above aligned with community aspirations from below.

Approval for bilingual programs in the other three Warlpiri communities required significant community advocacy. Willowra's bilingual program was endorsed in 1976 and began running in 1977 after inquiries, letter writing, and lobbying from elders who even met the Commonwealth Minister for Education at the local dirt airstrip in 1976 (Vaarzon-Morell & Wafer, 2017). In Lajamanu, where Warlpiri language teaching and materials development had been happening for some years, resistant politicians and education officials only relented in 1982 'as a result of intense lobbying and agitation by Warlpiri people, especially Paddy Patrick Jangala, over a period of nearly ten years' (Watt, 1993: 32). Lajamanu educators remember the program at its strongest during its early years under a non-Warlpiri principal and teacher linguist who both learned to speak Warlpiri and worked closely with Warlpiri leaders (O'Shannessy *et al.*, 2022). The small community of Nyirrpri set up their first school in 1985 after years of letter writing, marches, and teaching under a bean tree (Morris *et al.*, 2023), and while they do not have a government-sanctioned bilingual program, they have continued to teach literacy and other learning areas in Warlpiri in addition to English. This demonstrates the degree to which communities were committed to bringing their language into the schools.

The official introduction of bilingual programs demanded policies and resourcing to facilitate more trained teachers of Aboriginal languages, curriculum, and teaching materials (Disbray, 2014). There was very little print available in Aboriginal languages and a great need to develop materials in the learners' home languages. Additional specialist positions were created within the department to address this gap, including teacher linguists (curriculum developers), linguists, literacy production supervisors and Aboriginal literacy workers (writers and artists) (Harris & Jones, 1991). The School of Australian Languages was set up at the Darwin Community College to train in the development of vernacular literacy materials in over 20 different languages (Devlin *et al.*, 2017). Significant foundations had already been laid in the 1960s by two Warlpiri men, Maurice Luther Jupurrula and Marlurrku Paddy Patrick Jangala, collaborating with linguist missionary Lothar Jagst to develop the Warlpiri orthography (originally for bible translation) (Nash, 2021; O'Shannessy *et al.*, 2023). Later came American linguist Ken Hale (1974, 1976), whose documentation of Warlpiri formed the basis of the Warlpiri dictionary (Laughren & Nash, 1983).

BMN: [Ken Hale] was the first linguist who came to our communities back in 1959, just before I was born, and he mainly spoke with old people and he learned Warlpiri from old people. When he came again many of us Warlpiri teachers were working at the Bilingual Resource Development Unit at Yuendumu School and he said, 'Wow it's so good to see all these young people working and helping with Warlpiri'... He taught people like Robin Granites, Georgie Robinson and Warlpiri people like that. And they taught him Warlpiri and they also did a lot of transcribing and a lot of translating with him.

The Bilingual Resource Development Unit (BRDU) began printing Warlpiri teaching materials in 1974. Tess Ross was a key bilingual teacher in Yuendumu who worked closely with linguist Mary Laughren from 1975 on to document, develop materials and teach Warlpiri.

BMN: We also worked with Mary Laughren and Tess Ross was there, and she was an early teacher in that she taught English and also Warlpiri and bilingual [education] came in 1974. Mary worked really hard with the old people, writing down their stories, making resources, helping teachers.

The Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATE) was set up by the NT Department of Education in 1976 to offer community-based training for Aboriginal teachers in remote areas, with graduates receiving a Diploma of Teaching (in Aboriginal Schools) with authority to teach in their home communities (Lee *et al.*, 2014). A method of bilingual team teaching was developed and widely promoted with three key elements: learning together, planning together and teaching together (Graham, 2017).

BMN: In those days we were working flat-out. We had government coming from the top and linguist people, and teacher-linguists who worked for government coming from the side. We were working from the bottom up. We knew there was a lot of support for us from everybody. There were some things not right for us, there were some good things happening, but bilingual [education] was so important during that time, everybody wrote Warlpiri and studied Warlpiri and also transcribed and translated. But mostly teacher linguists were there to support us, to talk in Warlpiri and write in Warlpiri. It was important to teach our kids in both languages, Warlpiri and English, because we know that Warlpiri is the first language, to make the kids understand. Knowing Warlpiri will also help with English. That was what we thought all the time.

In other Warlpiri schools, community support was crucial for developing school language policies, curriculum and supporting the direction of MLE. In 1985, Marjorie Watson Nungarrayi, a trainee Warlpiri teacher

at Lajamanu, commented on the growing community ownership of the school's program (in Watt, 1993: 33):

Another good thing that has been happening over the past few years is there is growing community involvement in the school. Old people are feeling more and more free to come into the school and mix and give us their ideas. Some of the old people joined in to help make the School Policy which we have now got. The Lajamanu Council also joined in making the School Policy, and so did all the people working in the school. The school policy shows the ideas of all of us and gives us all a clear idea of where we are heading.

When the NT was granted self-government from the Commonwealth in 1978, there were concerns that centralised support of the bilingual program would diminish (Harris & Jones, 1991). At first, a combination of factors prevented this fate, including, 'a passionate commitment to the program by a sufficient number of staff in schools, a genuine appreciation of the aims of the program on the part of one or two very senior Departmental officials, and the hesitance of policymakers to stop a program which had widespread support in the "grassroots" and in academic circles' (Harris & Jones, 1991: 30). However, some fears were warranted, because when the NT government endorsed the continuation of bilingual education in 1982 it was with revised aims, shifting from a self-determination agenda to emphasis on English language and literacy outcomes (McKay, 2017; O'Shannessy *et al.*, 2022).

In the 1980s, educators and community members from the four Warlpiri communities – people working at the side and below levels – formed the Warlpiri Triangle network. This provided a platform for meetings and professional development focusing on the teaching and learning in and of Warlpiri in schools. During this time, the Warlpiri Triangle articulated a consistent position on bilingual education, in stark contrast to the NT government's policies, described as 'chequered' and 'schizophrenic' (Disbray, 2014). Browne and Gibson (2021) have described how through this network, the teachers were able to negotiate, refine and advance a consistent message of language maintenance in the schools. Efforts were made to draw on research about Warlpiri acquisition and Warlpiri knowledge of child development to structure the sequence of learning. Achievement standards and content descriptions of the Australian curriculum were translated into Warlpiri.

The Backlash period (1990s to 2000s): Phasing out and reinstating bilingual programs with side-level organising

Even the coordinated efforts from side and below levels proved insufficient to sustain the momentum into the 1990s amidst top-down reductions in staffing and funding (Disbray, 2015). In 1998, the NT

Minister for Education announced in the Legislative Assembly the phasing out of bilingual programs in favour of ‘further development of English as a Second Language programs’, citing poor educational performance, community concerns around the operations of bilingual programs and a need to cut education spending (Devlin, 2022). Warlpiri communities spent considerable energy challenging the government’s position. In 1998, the Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu-jaru (WpKj) association was established through the Warlpiri professional network. In 2001, 90 elders and educators attended the first WpKj annual general meeting, and annual meetings were held in subsequent years. The association played an important advocacy role, and strong community backlash to the 1998 announcement prompted the commissioning of an independent review, *Learning Lessons Review* (Collins & Lea, 1999). In response to that review, a 2005 statement by the NT Minister for Education claimed bilingual education was back on the agenda (Devlin *et al.*, 2017).

That same year, Warlpiri educators, along with traditional owners of the Newmont Tanami gold mine, set up the Warlpiri Education Training Trust (WETT) to direct mining royalties to fund projects that met Warlpiri educational aspirations in four Warlpiri communities (Stanley, 2024). Since then, a dedicated committee of Warlpiri educators with equal representation from each of the four communities have met three times a year to design, fund and monitor education and training programs to support Warlpiri people to be strong in their knowledge of culture, country and language. Over 57 million Australian dollars have been invested in a range of culturally and linguistically grounded education and training initiatives aligned to WETT’s (2022: 2) vision:

We represent the four Warlpiri communities Yuendumu, Nyirrpri, Willowra and Lajamanu. Our vision is for our children’s children to be strong in their knowledge of culture, country and language to be strong role models for future generations and to stand up for our communities. Our language, culture and decisions will be respected. Our voices will be heard. We will have the same opportunities as everyone else. Our children will be confident, knowledgeable, disciplined, healthy and respected. They will have good roles and jobs, as will the generations to come. (Our translation)

One of the very first programs supported by WETT was the ‘Country Visits and Elder Payments’ program, which has enabled schools in the four Warlpiri communities to take students on bush trips, organise culture days and pay elders to teach on country⁶ and in the classroom (Disbray & Guenther, 2017). Over almost two decades, this program has promoted intergenerational learning and facilitated applied and deep cultural and ecological knowledge exchange. WETT advisory committee members have also been crucial in the development of a local curriculum known as the Warlpiri Theme Cycle and funding

of its expansion. The three-year recurring cycle includes 12 themes relating to land, language, and law. It is intended to be taught over the students' school life with deepening learning as students' progress from early years to high school classes. In 2018 WETT funded a further project to align the Warlpiri Theme Cycle to the Australian curriculum and achievement standards, differentiate age-appropriate outcomes and compile all related materials into a handbook that could be used by teaching teams in planning, teaching and assessment of Warlpiri in bilingual schools and those with Warlpiri Indigenous Language and Culture programs (MacDonald, 2018).

The English Literacy period (2000s to the present)

The turn of the century has seen further declines in top-down bilingual education policy NT-wide. In 2008, the then-NT Minister for Education announced that the first four hours of each school day must be taught in English, citing poor comparative performance of remote students on the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAP, 2024).

BMN: During the policy of four hours of English, one hour Warlpiri, we were worried about our bilingual program. During the time the Remote Learning Partnership came in, they didn't like the word bilingual, they wanted to use two-way learning, which really interrupted us and made things really bad... It was really painful to go through that whole process with the government and then at the last minute, the wording was changed from bilingual to 'two-way learning'. That's weak wording and weak commitment.

In response, some of the Warlpiri Triangle schools committed to continuing Warlpiri language teaching, albeit without institutional support and contrary to government mandate (Disbray, 2014). A lack of clarity over the status of bilingual programs in the intervening years meant that it was up to individual principals, schools, and communities to maintain bilingual programs (Disbray, 2014, 2015). The Warlpiri Triangle network, guided by WPKJ, WETT organisations and school governance bodies, provided policy direction and curriculum documentation and was a stable and unifying force in continuing to teach in Warlpiri. One way that WETT got around the power of principals was to fund language maintenance activities in schools that were contractually obligated to deliver them.

In 2011, the Federal House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs held an inquiry into Indigenous Languages in Education. The WpKJ provided a compelling submission to the Committee (Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu-jaru, 2011), in addition to 153 submissions from linguists working with Australian languages,

educators, language centres, governance organisations and other NT schools. The resulting report ‘Our Land Our Languages’ strongly endorsed bilingual programs (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs, 2012). Four years later, the NT Country Liberal Party fulfilled its election promise to reinstate bilingual education in interested communities but provided limited resourcing (Devlin *et al.*, 2017).

Despite significantly reduced funding and resources, recent years have seen some top-down policy developments supportive of teaching in Indigenous languages. In 2015, the NT Board of Studies released ‘Changing the Conversation – A Blueprint for Languages Education in Northern Territory’ (Northern Territory Board of Studies, 2015) which set a significant change agenda for sectors, schools and teachers in the provision of languages education in the NT. A Senior Manager in Bilingual Education and Indigenous Languages and Cultures based in Darwin was re-appointed to support and oversee bilingual programs across nine remaining bilingual schools. In 2017, the revised Indigenous Languages and Culture Curriculum was released within the ‘Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong – A Plan for the Teaching and Learning of Indigenous Languages and Cultures in Northern Territory Schools’ policy (Northern Territory Department of Education, 2017). The plan, developed and reviewed by a reference group led by Indigenous educators and emphasises strong ownership by Indigenous elders as the owners and custodians of their languages and cultures. This plan was supported by the reintroduction of the Remote Area Teacher Education program in 2020 for some NT schools.

In October 2021, the Minister for the NT Department of Education acknowledged ‘mistakes and missteps’ in education policies and proposed to reinvigorate government support for bilingual education in her Engagement Strategy for 2022–2031 (Nowroozi & Hynes, 2021). This included a modest budget for training opportunities for remote teachers, localised cultural competency training for school staff and an expansion of the Learning on Country program. However, a 2024 agreement between NT and the federal government included a plan to phase out targeted funding received by nine sanctioned bilingual schools for specialised positions such as teacher linguists and literacy production in students’ first languages. The stated rationale was that any school in NT can now choose to use their annual funding allocation for resourcing the teaching of Aboriginal languages alongside English as an additional language or dialect in their schools. At the time of this writing, actors at all levels are responding to this policy change through letters to the NT Department of Education’s Chief Executive, and submissions to a Senate Inquiry on the Federal Government’s Better and Fairer Schools bill, but it is too early to say how the policy and implementation space will unfold.

Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter has described the mechanisms of change in language-in-education policy in NT with particular attention to the role of Warlpiri communities in pushing for and implementing bilingual education with support from allies from the side. Expanding on Kosonen and Benson’s (2021) conceptual framework, we show how actors from below and side have joined forces. The diversity of ideologies can be understood as being shaped by political, economic and social negotiations, where Warlpiri educators must navigate local and global movements of resistance to and accommodation of pre- and neo-colonial structures.

Table 11.1 summarises the levels of change we have identified, their characteristics and key agents in favour of bilingual education.

The trajectory of change

The NT bilingual program has been described as ‘surviving or thriving in different places’ and ‘variously celebrated, nurtured, castigated and/or abandoned’ over its 50-year history (Devlin *et al.*, 2017: 1). The trajectory of change reveals intersecting dimensions of bottom, side and top actors that have variably influenced Warlpiri use. Understanding the level at which activities are initiated and how the different actors engage in the process is useful for understanding how language-in-education policy change occurs and evolves over time. After the initial establishment phase in the 1970s, the NT government has generally neglected and slowly reduced support for bilingual education, with brief moments of accommodation in response to community advocacy. The balance seems fragile and tenuous, and the timeline paints a reactive path.

Table 11.1 Levels of change in favour of bilingual education for Warlpiri schools

Change from the SIDE:	Change from BELOW:	Change from ABOVE:
Long-standing, relationships-based, influential in terms of policy development and implementation.	Efforts by individual Warlpiri educators in schools with increasingly networked and consistent community advocacy.	Ambivalent, politically responsive.
Key agents: <i>Non-local allies:</i> Bilingual Advisory committee, Friends of Bilingual Education, linguists, educators, independent reviews, school leaders, Central Land Council, Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics.	Key agents: <i>Individuals:</i> Warlpiri elders, community leaders, Warlpiri teachers in classrooms, students <i>Local networks:</i> Warlpiri Triangle network, Warlpiri patu-kurlangu jaru inc., Warlpiri Education Training Trust (WETT).	Key agents: Federal and NT government policies and resource models.

In the Warlpiri context, because all levels have always been engaged in some manner, it is helpful to consider the activities which led to the formal policy initiation phase. An understanding of what came before top-down official sanctioning of the first bilingual programs offers insights into the history of the process. It highlights the long-standing commitments and day-to-day implementation of the linguists and community members at the below and side levels who paved the way. Before the 1970s policy of bilingual education there were grassroots activities by communities, supported and bolstered by allies at the side level to include languages in learning. Independent reviews conducted in the 1960s prompted the first pilot programs to be introduced and then expanded. These papers and their rationales were referred back to in the 1990s and early 2000s when bilingual programs were under threat (by resourcing reductions and the First Four Hours of English policy). While formal inclusion in the state-run education system was only possible once the top-down policy climate allowed, Warlpiri language instruction has clearly been sustained by community efforts and by communities leveraging resources and support from the side to achieve their goals. The Warlpiri case might appear to align most closely with Kosonen and Benson's Model 1, where bilingual education was officially decreed and resourced from the top down first. However, if you start the timeline further back as we did, it is apparent that the preceding decades were characterised by community efforts in schools, work with linguists on Warlpiri orthography, papers describing the value of learning in first languages, and the presence of Warlpiri educators in classrooms which were hostile to their languages and culture, all creating the conditions for top-down policy change.

Interactions between the levels

Change from the bottom in dialogic relationship with the top

The ambivalent government policy context with both passive and overt resistance to teaching in Aboriginal languages alongside English in NT schools (Hoogenraad, 2001) has created the conditions for communities to network and organise to strengthen their advocacy. While systemic articulation for bilingual education has waxed and waned, community support has been unwavering (O'Shannessy *et al.*, 2023). The most important agents driving Warlpiri language education are the elders, on whose cultural and language authority the educators draw.

BMN: It is important to work with elders because they are the ones who know about country, about song, about dance, about Dreaming⁷ and we visit country and talk to the spirit people. They are the important people. We take them out on country visits so they can teach young people and us Warlpiri teachers. They teach us how to hunt and get bush tucker.⁸ We've lost a lot of old people with experience and knowledge.

The story of the WETT shows how culturally and linguistically grounded education and training outcomes can be improved through locally governed initiatives. WETT has increased the degree of bottom-up agency that Warlpiri community members have to bring their language into the schools through side-level organising. This network gives them the necessary resources to fund and support government-run community schools. These efforts have been supported by allies such as linguists and the Central Land Council.

BMN: We were organising culture days and nights and country visits and local excursions around Yuendumu and other communities around Yuendumu, and ceremonies. They organised a Tanami Desert yawulyu⁹ group. The youth organisation and the school were working really well together. We were building partnerships to make our goals come true.

The importance of side-below collaboration

The Warlpiri example is consistent with Benson's (2021: 59) suggestion that even if the side actors are not the initiators, they are crucial to 'make things happen'. Long-standing relationships built on trust and accountability between side-level allies and Warlpiri networks have been important. Martin and Martin (2016: 226) call these side agents 'outside-insiders'. In the Warlpiri context, actors at all levels have been engaging with each other throughout history, with some actors working across levels.

BMN: Even when those linguists, teachers or bilingual managers left the NT and moved away, they were still working, still supporting Warlpiri education. They are like family.

In her application of the Kosonen and Benson framework to the case of Võro language in Estonia, Brown (2021) describes side actors as 'sliding' across different organisations within the same level but also 'category jumping' from level to level. In the Warlpiri context, many side-level public servants with technical backgrounds such as teacher linguists took up university roles after years of in school support. They also fulfilled technical and advocacy roles, working on the dictionary, supporting literacy production and teachers in classrooms while also supporting educator workshops and submissions.

The considerable influence of school leaders

We wanted to draw attention to one special category of side-level agents: school leadership and in particular principals with significant influence over which aspects of bilingual policy are mobilised (e.g. Lajamanu in the 1980s) or hindered. We have seen that programs are strongly influenced by staffing dynamics and ideologies, and momentum

from energetic teaching teams can easily be diverted if there is a lack of alignment with school leadership operating within a culture of ambivalent commitment to bilingual education from the broader education system (Hoogenraad, 2001; Nicholls, 2005).

Concluding remarks: What is needed for sustainable language-in-education policy change in favour of NDLS?

Kosonen and Benson (2021) draw two conclusions that resonate in the Warlpiri example. First, the existence of policy documents in favour of including NDLS in education is important but will not guarantee that the policy is sustained without adequate resourcing and a strong systemic mandate that guides individual school leaders. Second, history has shown that where the rationale of the policy differs at top, side, and bottom levels, as has been the case for the past 50 years of bilingual education in NT, the result is a tenuous mandate and a patchy path to implementation.

In relation to the first point, Benson (2021: 59) has suggested, 'No matter which level initiates the change, we assume that all three levels should ideally be implicated in the process for change to be sustainable'. Despite the long and consistent position on Warlpiri by the actors from below and the commitment and resilience in day-to-day implementation with the side, there are still many risks to full, long-term inclusion of Warlpiri in NT government schools. Clearly there is great power in efforts and actors from below, but if that is not matched by resourcing and accountability from above, and if the below-level aspirations are out of alignment from above, the policy trajectory remains chequered. Kosonen and Benson (2021: 37) suggest that 'if policy is not matched with resources, momentum may be lost at the other levels resulting in little or no change in practice'. In the Warlpiri case, the communities have organised effectively through a mining trust, the WETT, to resource the inclusion of the non-dominant language in their schools, which has maintained momentum to some extent. The risks to sustainability lie in fragility of a decentralised system of leadership whereby non-Indigenous school leaders are not always supportive of Aboriginal control of the direction and shape of their own future (Hall, 2018). The question which is particularly pertinent is whether true policy change can occur without the alignment of aspirations (or rationales) from above, below and the side.

As shown in our timeline, the strongest progress in terms of policy, resourcing and implementation was during the 1970s period of 'consolidation' when the government's goals aligned most closely to those of the language communities. All actors from top, bottom and side were moving in the same direction in the very early days of pilot bilingual programs, and the momentum was greatest towards elevating the teaching of Warlpiri language in schools. Returning to our reflections

on the Warlpiri dictionary launch, we are reminded of the sustaining force of community efforts, organised formally in local networks and supported by external side actors. We believe that Warlpiri communities, alongside their allies, will continue to advocate for recognition and inclusion of their language, culture and identity in local schools to maintain linguistic and cultural knowledge, access the curriculum and make decisions about their children's education (Anderson *et al.*, 2018; Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu-jaru, 2011). History has shown that this commitment will mean continued presence and teaching of Warlpiri in classrooms day-to-day by Warlpiri educators. The path would be smoother if the above-level goals for Warlpiri children aligned with community aspirations.

BMN: *Yapa [Warlpiri people] have been bringing our languages into the classroom for decades, filling classrooms with young and old Warlpiri educators. Our hard work, our efforts must be recognised and supported so we can carry on teaching in our language, our way. We will keep doing this for our children and their children to come.*

Note from Emma Browne: *Barbara Martin Napanangka, respected leader in Warlpiri education, my mentor and treasured friend, passed away on 25 October 2025. She leaves behind a profound legacy of dedication to and advocacy for Warlpiri education which will be carried forward by her daughters, son and grandchildren, former students and colleagues in her memory.*

Notes

- (1) Note from the editors: The authors switch voice throughout this chapter, EB as an academic and researcher, BMN as a Warlpiri educator. To mark passages written in the first person, we begin with that author's initials for clarity. We also note that the naming of key people is done with permission, as it is important to the Warlpiri community.
- (2) Our translation of Nangala's speech from recordings of the dictionary launch provided by O'Shannessy *et al.* (2023), shared with permission.
- (3) See acknowledgements at the end of the chapter for a non-exhaustive list of individuals.
- (4) Note that the first Aboriginal school in Central Australia established in 1887 at Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission (now Ntaria community) was bilingual for many decades (Roennfeldt, 2020).
- (5) As defined by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Watt, 1993:7), self-determination was 'based on the recognition of the equal right of Aboriginal people along with other Australians to determine their own future within the Australian community'.
- (6) Country is the term used by Australian Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways, and seas to which they are connected. It contains complex ideas about law, place, language, material sustenance, identity and kin (AIATSIS, 2025).
- (7) The Warlpiri concept of Jukurrpa, meaning 'Dreaming' or 'Law' describes an ancestral past that continues in the present; see e.g. <https://theconversation.com/dreamtime-and-the-dreaming-an-introduction-20833>.

- (8) Bush tucker are native plant and animal foods that are gathered or hunted.
- (9) Yawulyu is a women's ceremony.

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12 Intercultural Bilingual Education in Chubut, Argentina

María Pía Maití

Abstract

Ngeno ti mapu may ta kiñe kakewmechi kewün wallmapuwe, kuifi mew Kimeltuyal Sistema Argentino, niefuy chümngechi zuam trapümkünun kañpüle tuwulu pu che ka ñamümün iney rume mapuche kimngepeyüm, nieleimüleyengün españolzungun chumngechi kiñengefel nacional kewün. Inangüman küla mari tripantü mew, trokin gobierno argentino, ngüzefkünufuy politikake kakekünun feimu fentren ingkan küzaw kakewmechi mapucheke trokinche, mapuche kewün pu kimeltuwe ngünekeyengün kom kimeltuchefe ka lofche, femngen kafey internacional kiñekünuy zungun feimew kom mapu che fillke derecho. Wüño zewmatuyal Constitución Nacional, 1994 kiñe warangka aylla pataka aylla mari meli tripantü, pita wingka, wall malotüfuy müleyechi weshakelu mapuche trokinche lof, wallmapu mew, ka Kimeltun Ley Nacional 2006 epu warangka cayu pita wingka mew, konkülefuy EIB modalidad Kimeltun Sistema; pengelüy kiñe kakünun püle we kakewechi kimküleyal trafküley rakizuam. Femngen kimeltuyal az, EIB trapümtükuy tamün kom azmapu, kom kewün mapuche pu lofche ka pu wütramche. Welu kiñeke kimeltuwe müten nieiyengüfiñ EIB. Füta inarumen ñi zuam feymu oficialke ukumento, kimeltuyal wirin küf kakewechi kimküleyal trafküley Argentina mew, ka kiñeke nütramkawün kom falichi düngu ngelu pu che, tüfachi capitulo kimeltufiñ ayechi pu kuzawfe zewman feimew trapümtükuy Kakewechi Kimküleyal Epuchikewün Chubut wallmapu mew, nieley fücha fillke mapuche lofche. Fey müngel chillkatun kintupay pelomtufiñ ayechi küme femün trokinche küf, küzawfe küf llegün feychi mapu mew, zemayengüfuy feymew azkünun politicazungu ka kom mapuche konküleyengün tüfachi fücha amun Kakewechi kimküleyal Epuchikewün (EIB)pu kimeltuwe mew. Nütramkünun Kakewechi Kimküleyal Epuchikewün(EIB)zuamtun Chubut mapu mew ta kiñe kakekünun kimfalküleam zungu miñche püle Kosonen ka Benson az inarumen (2021) feymew kakekünun kewünchi pu politika kimeltuwün mew, kiñe newenche küzaw llegmumchi mapu

kom che emu. (*Abstract in Mapuzungun [arn], a language of Chile and Argentina, translated by Verónica Castro Rañileo*)

Despite being an ethnolinguistically diverse country, Argentina's education system has historically aimed at assimilating immigrant populations and suppressing any distinguishing markers of Indigenous ethnicity, with a special emphasis on having Spanish as the only national language. In recent decades, influenced by the work of Indigenous people's advocacy groups, teacher- and community-led Indigenous language projects and international agreements on Indigenous peoples' rights, Argentina's government has started to introduce political changes. The reform of the National Constitution in 1994 that acknowledged the presence of Indigenous groups and the National Education Act in 2006 that included the Intercultural Bilingual Education track (EIB for its name in Spanish) into the education system denote a shift to a new paradigm of cultural diversity. As an educational approach, EIB incorporates Indigenous and immigrant peoples' cultures, worldviews and languages into the school curriculum. However, EIB has only been implemented in a limited number of schools. Through the qualitative analysis of policy texts, research on EIB in Argentina, and interviews with key stakeholders, this chapter analyzes the roles played by different actors in the implementation of EIB in Chubut, the province with the highest percentage of Indigenous people per inhabitant in Argentina (INDEC, 2010). Particularly, this chapter aims to shed light on the types of actions below and side actors have taken to influence policy change and Indigenous peoples' level of participation in advancing the implementation of EIB in schools. I propose that the case of EIB in Chubut is an example of change from below in Kosonen and Benson's (2021) analytical framework of language-in-education policy change, with a crucial role played by local side actors.

Introduction

Argentina is an ethnolinguistically diverse country, with 26 identified living languages, of which 15 are Indigenous with various degrees of vitality (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). According to the Ethnologue, two of these languages are developing (Iyo'wujwa Chorote and Wichí Lhamtés Vejoz), one is vigorous (Quichua in the province of Santiago del Estero), seven are threatened (Toba, Pilagá, Wichí Lhamtés Güisnay, Wichí Lhamtés Nocten, Iyojwa'ja Chorote, Mbyá Guaraní and Western Argentine Guaraní) and five are moribund (Ava Guaraní, Mapuzungun, Nivacle, Quechua and Tapieté) (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024). The fact that most Indigenous languages are either threatened or moribund is mainly the result of the Argentine government's nationalizing project that understood civilization as a homogenous white European-descendent identity (Warren, 2013), and that used schools as the main

instrument to suppress any distinguishing markers of Indigenous or Afro Descendant ethnicity (Banfi, 2018). In most Latin American countries, the assimilation, and in some cases extermination, of the *Pueblos Originarios* or *Pueblos Indígenas* [Original Peoples or Indigenous Peoples] was ‘regarded as the only means to modern nation-building’ (López, 2021: 955). In Argentina, Indigenous people were forced to adopt the Spanish language and culture in a process that Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) defines as psychological, linguistic, educational and sociological genocide. The interruption of intergenerational transmission of language and cultural practices has led to culture and language shift and loss.

In the last three decades, due to Indigenous people’s actions, new paradigms of cultural plurality and international agreements on Indigenous peoples’ rights, Argentina’s government has slowly started to introduce political changes. In 1993, the Federal Education Act stated that the National Government, together with the jurisdictions, would foster programs for the revitalization and strengthening of Indigenous languages and cultures (Ley Federal de Educación, 1993: art. 34). The following year, the reform of the National Constitution formally acknowledged the presence of Indigenous peoples in Argentina for the first time in the country’s history (Constitución Nacional, 1994: art. 75). More than a decade later, the National Education Act of 2006 included Intercultural Bilingual Education or *Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* (EIB) as an education track within the education system. The new law recognizes the importance of fostering respect and appreciation for the country’s cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity to strengthen the Argentine national identity (Ley Nacional de Educación, 2006: art. 52).

The study described in this chapter grew out of an initial exploration of EIB in Argentina, for which I developed a list of Ministry of Education websites, education laws and official EIB-related sites and resources for each of the 24 jurisdictions in the country. Decentralized implementation of policy has meant that it is not possible to find one EIB, but different types of EIBs related to multiple sociocultural and linguistic contexts (Resolución CFE N° 119/10, 2010). Among all the jurisdictions, the province of Chubut stood out for a few reasons. First, Chubut has the highest proportion of Indigenous inhabitants in the country (INDEC, 2010). Next, the Chubut Education Law explicitly mentions the Mapuche-Tehuelche people as the main beneficiaries of the EIB track, includes words in Mapuzungun¹ in the policy text, and highlights the importance of Indigenous people’s participation in the design and implementation of EIB education projects. Finally, my initial research found that in 2020 some Mapuche-Tehuelche organizations took Ministry of Education authorities to court for non-compliance with the National Education Act with regard to EIB (Radio Nacional, 2021). The determination of the community-based organizations

to have the policy text translated into concrete action and effective implementation of EIB made me opt for depth over scope, and I decided to focus my study only on the province of Chubut.

Using Kosonen and Benson's (2021) analytical framework to examine language-in-education policy change from 'above', from 'below' and from 'the side', I focused on the mechanisms and strategies that different actors have used in the development and implementation of EIB in Chubut. With an exploratory lens, my research relies on primary and secondary data sources to investigate: (1) What are the actions taken by different actors to guarantee the implementation of EIB in schools in Chubut? And (2) what is the level of engagement and participation of Indigenous people in these mechanisms? Compared to actions taken from above, which relate to official policy and can be easily accessed on academia and ministries of education websites, actions from the side and from below tend to be under-documented. This makes it more difficult to find examples of language policy being initiated by actors from below (Benson, 2021). For that reason, this chapter aims to contribute to a better understanding of how language-in-education policies are developed, adopted and implemented by the action and influence of below and side actors, in the hope that it illuminates change processes and inspires similar mechanisms by other Indigenous groups in other parts of Argentina and the world.

A literature review on Intercultural Bilingual Education is followed by a timeline that illustrates the actions taken by above, side and below actors since the return to democracy in 1983. After this comes an analysis of EIB implementation in Argentina and, more specifically, in the province of Chubut. The bottom-up actions are incorporated through the voices of key actors who have, in different capacities, pushed for the implementation of EIB in Chubut schools. This chapter ends with a conclusion that highlights the crucial role of the local side and below actors.

Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) in Latin America and in Argentina

Language-in-education policy and bilingual/biliteracy programs are to be understood within their specific historical, geographical, and sociopolitical contexts (García & Lin, 2017; López, 2021; López & Sichra, 2008; Tsui & Tollefson, 2004). Throughout Latin America, EIB has been adopted as an educational approach that incorporates Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples' cultures, worldviews, and languages. EIB favors students' access to education in their first languages (L1s) when they do not speak the dominant language, as well as in Indigenous languages for revitalization efforts in the face of language shift and loss. But EIB is inseparable from the continent's

colonial history, where the choice of Spanish as the medium of instruction (MOI) in education systems has historically been part of the effort to assimilate non-dominant groups into a white European identity. As a result, EIB education policy does not necessarily mean democratization and flexibilization of power structures. As López and García (2019: 117) warn ‘even constitutional norms recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity do not have a real impact on everyday life, and particularly on the mindset of the hegemonic sectors of society’. For Latin American governments, EIB has become a politically correct discourse that proposes the education of Indigenous people as a right within racially structured societies ‘that still regard Indigenous individuals as second-class citizens’ (López, 2021: 956).

In Argentina, scholars agree that EIB is not intended to address social inequality and racism (Banfi, 2018; Banfi & Rettaroli, 2008; Montesinos, 2012; Nahuelquir, 2018). Hecht (2014: 77) points out that EIB was conceived more in terms of ‘redressing historical wrongs than as a policy that looks to construct an ethnically pluralist society in the future’. The current legislation states the role of EIB is to create a dialogue between all ethnicities and promote respect for cultural differences (Ley Nacional de Educación, 2006: art. 52). However, EIB has been mainly implemented as a compensatory policy targeting exclusively Indigenous populations in a small number of schools. Based on the national school directory, only 1.2% of schools in the country officially implement EIB (Ministerio de Educación, 2023). This focalized approach not only hides the socioeducational inequalities behind a discourse of respect for diversity (Hecht, 2007) but also prevents intercultural dialogue. As a result, EIB seems to remain invisible to mainstream society and the general social imaginary does not acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous peoples to the development of the country and a multicultural and multilingual national identity (Resolución CFE N° 119/10, 2010: art. 14). Within an international context that has favored a new multiethnic paradigm in the last three decades, especially with the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 (ILO, 1989), the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) adopted in Jomtien during the World Conference on Education for All, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007), Indigenous leaders in Argentina have started to denounce their lack of educational and other rights (see Astrid, 2020; Padin, 2020) and advocate for the expansion and implementation of EIB. Schools are a major stage where complex social relations take place (Montesinos, 2012), and educators, academics and civil society organization leaders are utilizing different strategies to narrow the enormous gap between discourse in policy texts and practice at the institutional level.

Analysis of Language-in-Education Policy and Practice in Chubut

Using Kosonen and Benson's (2021) analytical framework, I identify the National and Provincial Ministries of Education (MoE) and the EIB Department in the province of Chubut as actors from above. Actions from above include the National and Provincial Education Acts and policy documents. The actors from the side include the Training Program in Intercultural Bilingual Education for the Andean Countries (PROEIB Andes for its name in Spanish) and the Indigenous Peoples Center (CLPO) at the National University of the Patagonia San Juan Bosco. Finally, actors from below include local civil society organizations (CSOs), parent associations and school supervisors, principals, secretaries and teachers from all six school districts in Chubut.

Timeline of actions from above, from the side and from below

Efforts to develop EIB projects in Argentine schools date back to the post-dictatorship years in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1983 the end of the military dictatorship allowed for the creation of organizations that started to denounce the lack of educational and other rights and worked to make visible the presence of Indigenous people. The timeline in Figure 12.1 shows the actions taken by above, side, and below actors concerning the development and implementation of EIB in Chubut from 1983 to the present day.

In 1985, the national government passed Act 23,302, known as the Support to Indigenous Peoples' Issues Act. This law provided legal status to the groups of Indigenous Peoples of Argentina and set the framework for the creation of the National Institute of Indigenous Issues (INAI for its name in Spanish), a council with Indigenous representatives from different ethnolinguistic communities and government officials. Almost a decade later in 1993, the Argentine government passed the Federal Education Act stating that the National Government and the jurisdictions would foster programs for the revitalization and strengthening of Indigenous languages and cultures (Ley Federal de Educación, 1993, art.34). Finally in 1994, the reform of the National Constitution formally acknowledged the presence of Indigenous People in Argentina for the first time in the country's history (Constitución Nacional, 1994). It should be noted that these changes to the Argentine legal framework were not specific to language-in-education policy, but rather focused on the visibility of Indigenous people, who had been severely silenced and ignored by the government until then (Secretaría de Evaluación Educativa, 2019).

Although the new policy brought about a new discourse of recognition and respect for diversity, these laws took place within a set of neoliberalism reforms that aimed at reducing the role of the state in the economic and social fields and fostered decentralization, privatization

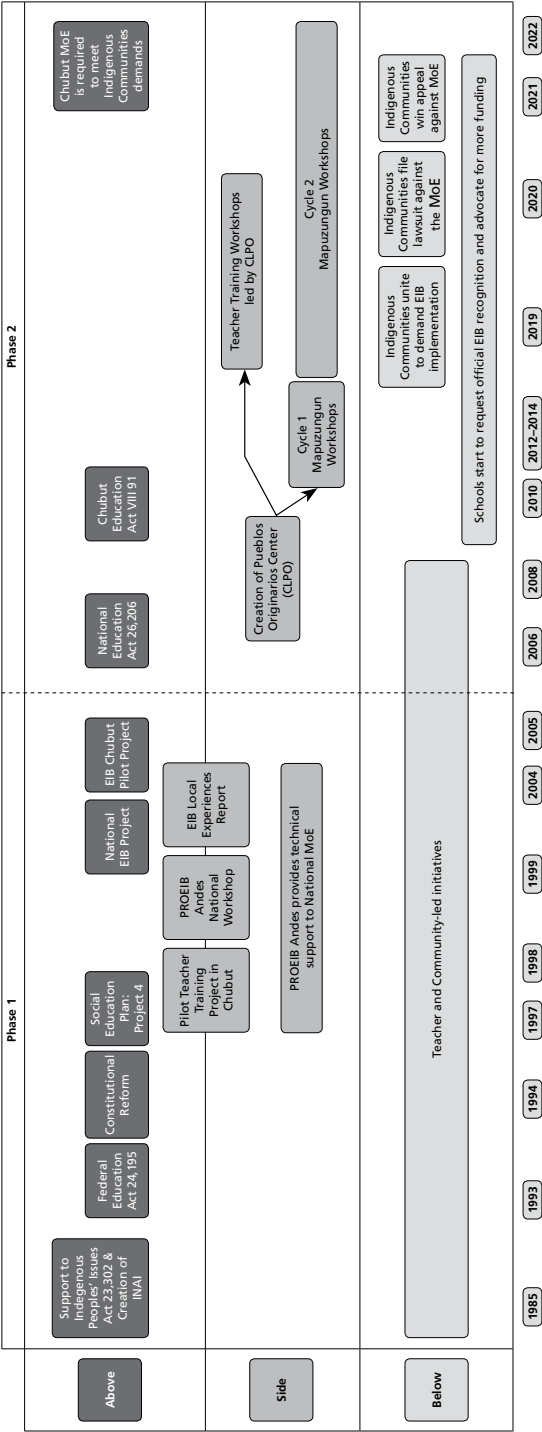


Figure 12.1 Timeline of EIB related actions in Chubut, Argentina since 1983

and reduction of public spending. In education, the state ameliorated the budget cuts by implementing the Social Education Plan (PSE for its name in Spanish), a set of focalized and compensatory programs aimed at the most vulnerable sectors of society (Duschatzky & Redondo, 2000). Rather than transforming historically built inequalities, Hecht (2007) argues that these programs functioned as a mask that tried to hide the inequality that neoliberalism generated (2007: 189).

Project 4 was launched in 1997 as part of the PSE and with technical assistance from the Training Program in Intercultural Bilingual Education for the Andean Countries (PROEIB Andes for its name in Spanish).² Titled ‘Attending the educational needs of Indigenous Peoples’, Project 4 aimed at providing technical and pedagogical support to schools with Indigenous populations and gathering information on local educational experiences (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación de la Nación, 1999). The city of Cushamen in Chubut was one of the three selected locations for the Project 4 pilot teacher training program on Indigenous languages and cultures. Based on official reports, twenty young teachers participated with ‘satisfactory’ outcomes (Gómez Otero, 2001). The second stage of Project 4 consisted of a national three-day workshop in the capital city of Buenos Aires in 1999 led by the PROEIB Andes expert Luis Enrique López (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación de la Nación, 1999).

PROEIB Andes and the National MoE collaborated again in 2004. The result was a new report that gathered a more extensive collection of local initiatives and included 107 teacher and community-led experiences in different regions of the country. The report highlighted the multiplicity of educational, social, and linguistic realities, ranging from Indigenous children whose L1 was an Indigenous language and learned Spanish when they started school, to Indigenous children whose L1 was Spanish and had only heard the Indigenous language being spoken by elders in celebrations and ceremonies (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología, 2004). Following this publication, the national government started the National Intercultural Bilingual Education Project to be implemented by the Department of National Compensatory Programs. This project was defined as the framework and starting point for all other national programs and acknowledged the demand of Indigenous peoples throughout the country for their right to EIB (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología, 2004: 3). Based on this national framework, the province of Chubut started a pilot EIB project in 2005. Called ‘*Ka feipituan ñi mongelen*’ [And I will say again that I am alive] in Mapuzungun, the Mapuche language, this pilot project was implemented in seven rural schools and consisted of teacher training workshops and a weekly Mapuzungun class (Tozzini *et al.*, 2015: 99).

In 2006 the National Education Act repealed the Federal Education Act of 1993 and incorporated EIB as an educational track. EIB aims to

foster respect and appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity and to revitalize Indigenous peoples' knowledge, languages, worldviews, and identities at all education levels (Ley Nacional de Educación, 2006: art. 52). Because of Argentina's decentralized education system, the 24 jurisdictions are required to interpret and adapt the National Education Act to their contexts and resources in their jurisdictional legal frameworks. The Province of Chubut Education Act VIII 91, passed in 2010, includes Intercultural Bilingual Education as one of the official education tracks for all education levels (Ley de Educación de la Provincia de Chubut, 2010). It defines EIB as the track that guarantees Indigenous and immigrant populations' constitutional right to access education that is respectful of their cultures, particularly the Mapuche-Tehuelche people who are the majority in the province (Ley de Educación de la Provincia de Chubut, 2010: art. 72). Among the responsibilities of the provincial government, special focus is given to Indigenous and migrant populations' participation in the planning and implementation of teaching and learning processes, as well as the development of teaching materials. However, the policy text does not include a definite time frame or clear guidance for implementation in terms of bilingual models and methodology.

Actions from below and local side actors

Before the official recognition of EIB in the national and provincial education systems in 2006 and 2010 respectively, EIB pilot programs were common throughout the country, especially in school districts with high concentrations of Indigenous students. The Project 4 report acknowledged that there was little understanding of Indigenous peoples' education at university and governmental levels, but there were a lot of educators implementing concrete actions and teaching from an intercultural bilingual education approach (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación de la Nación, 1999: 5).

Mostly in rural schools, these EIB projects were either initiated by teachers or at the communities' request and consisted of bilingual elders appointed as *ad hoc* language teachers by the local school authorities (Díaz-Fernández, 2006). A documented case is that of Mapuche 'abuelos' [grandparents] who were invited to share their life stories and teach Mapuzungun twice a week in Elementary School N° 69 in School District I (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología, 2004: 411). In the same district, a school cook was invited to give Mapuche language and weaving workshops. Her niece recalls:

Hablaba en mapuche y también tehuelche, y era una atracción ahí en el pueblo porque bueno era de las pocas, de las últimas hablantes que manejaba fluidamente los dos idiomas. Por un lado era compartir el lenguaje y que no se pierda. Pero por otro lado también esto de

aprovecharse del otro. Como siempre ha pasado, estas culturas dominantes que creen... bueno sacar provecho del otro.

She spoke Mapuche and also Tehuelche, and she was an attraction there in the town because, well, she was one of the few, one of the last speakers who was fluent in both languages. On one hand, it meant sharing the language so it wouldn't get lost. But on the other hand, it also meant taking advantage of the Other. As it has always happened with these dominant cultures, they believe...well they take advantage of the Other. (CSO Leader and Mapuzungun Teacher, District VI, 23 February 2022)

In school district IV, an EIB teacher shares a similar experience:

Un grupo de padres de la cooperadora de la escuela me conocía y me invitaron a enseñar Mapuzungun. Le presentaron un proyecto al director y así empecé. El director tenía mucho interés en que se enseñe EIB, pero todos los años tenía que aprobar el proyecto otra vez. Cuando cambió la dirección de la escuela, las nuevas autoridades no tenían el mismo interés y sacaron el proyecto de EIB.

A group of parents from the parents' association knew me and invited me to teach Mapuzungun. They presented a project to the Principal and that is how I started. The Principal was very interested in having EIB, but every year he had to approve the project again. When the Principal of the school changed, the new authorities did not have the same interest and removed the EIB classes. (EIB Teacher, District IV, 1 June 2023)

Before the official incorporation of EIB into the provincial law in 2010, these initiatives depended exclusively on the communities' interest in Indigenous languages and cultures and the school authorities' capacity to facilitate the implementation of EIB projects. Under the current Education Act in Chubut, schools are required to submit EIB proposals to the EIB Department at the MoE for approval. Although the new regulations give more job security to EIB teachers, the current implementation of EIB in Chubut still relies on the schools' interest, understanding of the governmental bureaucratic processes, and advocacy strategies to request EIB recognition and approval from the MoE:

Cada vez que hay un acto oficial y viene alguien del ministerio a la escuela, yo me presento y trato de explicarles la importancia de EIB para ver si nos dan más horas.

Every time there is an official event and someone from the ministry comes to the school, I introduce myself and try to explain the importance of EIB to see if we get more EIB teaching hours. (EIB Teacher, District I, 19 May 2023)

According to this study, the number of schools that have implemented EIB projects with the MoE's approval remains low. In 2015, Tozzini *et al.* reported only 39 elementary schools and later, Root (2022) reported 59

schools, which represent only 7% of the total number of schools in the province. The national school directory, however, only reports 18 EIB schools in the province of Chubut (Ministerio de Educación, 2023). At the school level, EIB implementation varies significantly among schools. EIB teachers can be *Kimches* (elder leaders), *Kimeltuchefes* or *Konorsh'ken* (knowledge transmitters), Bilingual Assistants, or Artisans (Ministerio de Educación Chubut, n.d.: 3) who are recommended by the Indigenous community and work as co-teachers for an average of eight hours of EIB classes or workshops a week. Some EIB teachers have an education degree and experience working in the school system, but in most cases, they are appointed because they are respected members of the community, who speak the Indigenous language with various levels of proficiency. The content and methodology for the EIB projects are decided based on the characteristics of the school, the principal's and teachers' understanding of EIB and the needs of the community. In the view of the EIB Department at the Chubut MoE, this decentralized approach allows for schools and communities to collaborate in a participatory project where the pedagogy is built from and in the diversity, fostering different ways of teaching and learning (Ministerio de Educación Chubut n.d.: 3):

Tenemos un taller de telar y queremos conectar a los estudiantes con saberes ancestrales que son importantes para nuestra comunidad, como todo el proceso del trabajo con lana de oveja.

We have a weaving workshop, and we want the students to connect with the ancestral knowledge that is important for our community, like the processing cycles of sheep wool. (School Secretary, District IV, 19 May 2023)

Trabajamos para que se recupere la lengua, pero también cuestiones culturales. Esta escuela es agropecuaria, entonces trabajamos con el reconocimiento de las técnicas indígenas de conservación de alimentos comparadas con las nuevas tecnologías.

We work to recover the language but also cultural aspects. This is an agricultural school, so we work with the recognition of Indigenous techniques for food preservation compared to new technologies. (School Principal, District IV, 22 May 2023)

Because schools cannot guarantee EIB classes for all age groups, school authorities usually choose which groups are to be the beneficiaries. '*Solamente a los niños de tercer grado. Nos gustaría que tenga toda la escuela, pero eso es lo que la provincia paga.* Only the third-grade children. We would love for the entire school to have EIB, but that is what the province pays for' (School Secretary, District I, 22 May 2023).

Despite the government's responsibility to provide teacher training opportunities for all education levels (Ley Nacional de Educación, 2006: art. 53), the lack of initial and in-service teacher training is another obstacle

to EIB. *‘Necesitamos más capacitación docente. Uno no puede enseñar lo que no conoce’*. We need more teacher training. You cannot teach what you do not know’ (Elementary School Supervisor, District VI, 9 February 2022). Hecht (2007) reflects that lack of quality teacher training increases the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, because while non-Indigenous children are educated by ‘teachers’, Indigenous children are educated by ‘elders’ (2007: 189). Moreover, quality teacher training must be based on a multiethnic and multilingual understanding of society to challenge the traditional roles of teachers and students that have ignored and denied the cultural and linguistic presence of Indigenous peoples:

Hace falta mejor formación para que los docentes puedan desaprender la larga tradición de invisibilización que traen.

Better training is needed so that teachers can unlearn the long tradition of invisibilization they bring with them. (Pre-School Supervisor, District VI, 3 February 2022)

En la escuela no se habla de conflicto, de tensión. Hay un maquillaje, una visión romántica de los pueblos originarios. Las maestras evitan el tema si los padres están criminalizados. Es más fácil que el mapuche cante una canción, o venga con un telar. Eso no es interculturalidad.

Conflict or tension is not talked about at school. There is a romantic view of Indigenous people. Teachers avoid the subject if parents are criminalized. It is easier for the Mapuche to sing a song or come with a loom. That is not interculturality. (University Professor, 18 February 2022)

Talking about cultural diversity without having concrete practices to challenge the power dynamics can result in a simplistic depoliticizing discourse that might worsen the marginalization of non-dominant groups (Hetch, 2014; Montesinos, 2012). This is crucial for EIB in Chubut and neighboring provinces, where the Mapuche-Tehuelche people have been continuously portrayed as violent by mainstream media and charged with criminal activity in their struggles to recover their ancestral lands (see Azcona & Vázquez, 2018; Radovich, 2013). Teacher training approaches that change the traditional monolingual and monocultural paradigm of education would help move ‘far beyond just the technicalities of learning and teaching in order to professionally prepare individuals who will assume a personal and collective commitment to struggle against racism and discrimination’ (López & Sichra, 2008: 6).

In the face of the limited support and resources provided by the Chubut MoE, the Center for *Pueblos Originarios* (CLPO for its name in Spanish) has become a relevant side actor advocating for Indigenous people’s rights and the successful implementation of EIB, especially in Comodoro Rivadavia, the most populated city in the province. The CLPO was created in 2008 by Indigenous people’s advocates and professors and

researchers from the National University of the Patagonia San Juan Bosco. Since then, the CLPO has worked as an open space for reflection, research, advocacy, and action, and it aims to build strategic alliances with civil society, Indigenous organizations, other universities, and governmental and non-governmental institutions (Ivanoff & Loncon, 2016):

The CLPO also offers Mapuzungun workshops, which have challenged the tradition of exclusion of Indigenous people from higher education and allowed many participants to connect to their ethnic roots as well as with Mapuche people in other cities and provinces:

Muchas abuelas nos decían ‘yo jamás pensé que iba a pisar una universidad’. Y después se expandió en pandemia. Como era virtual se sumó gente de La Plata, de universidades de Buenos Aires, de Córdoba, de Rosario y de Chile. Pudimos enriquecer mucho más las distintas variantes que tiene el Mapuzungun según la región.

Many of the elders told us ‘I never thought I would set foot in a university. And then it grew during the pandemic. Because it was virtual people joined from La Plata, from universities in Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosario and Chile. We were able to further enrich the different variants that Mapuzungun has depending on the region. (CSO Leader and Mapuzungun Teacher, District VI, 23 February 2022)

In 2019, a group of parents from different Indigenous communities wrote a letter to the Department of Protection of Children and Adolescents Rights denouncing the MoE’s non-compliance with the Chubut Education Law and demanding the implementation of EIB in schools. When their claims went unheard, they sought legal advice from the CLPO, and in 2020 they sued the Ministry of Education of Chubut for non-compliance with the National and Provincial Education Laws. Their case was first dismissed, but after an appeal in June 2021, the Court of Justice of Chubut ruled in favor of all the Indigenous peoples of the province (Radio Nacional, 2021). The Governor was then required to meet the representatives of Indigenous communities and agree on a work plan, not only to provide the resources necessary for EIB implementation but also to guarantee the participation of Indigenous peoples in the design of teaching methodologies that are respectful of their worldview and culture. At the time of this study, the Governor summoned the Indigenous Communities in the province, but the meeting had not yet taken place.

In addition to more and better teacher training opportunities, the CLPO, teachers, and CSOs demand the opening of more EIB teaching positions:

Hay falta de presupuesto y por lo tanto no se crean los cargos docentes necesarios de maestros bilingües. De hecho, hay reducción de los cargos ya existentes.

There isn’t enough budget and therefore, they don’t assign the necessary EIB teachers. In fact, there are budget cuts to the teachers that are already working. (Pre-School Supervisor, District VI, 3 February 2022)

Cuando empecé tenía 10 horas semanales, ahora me lo redujeron a 7 horas. Cuando reclamas la respuesta es que no hay presupuesto.

When I started, I had 10 hours a week, now they have been reduced to 7. When you request more the answer is that there is no budget for it. (EIB Teacher, District IV, 1 June 2023)

A common claim used by governments to justify their inaction is that there are no qualified teachers to teach through the non-dominant languages (Kosonen & Benson, 2021). However, in the case of Comodoro Rivadavia, CSOs have argued that Mapuche people are becoming more proficient in Mapuzungun thanks to the CLPO workshops, that they are already recognized as *Kimeltuchefes* (transmitters of knowledge) and that they are eager to work in schools.

The CLPO, teachers, and CSOs also advocate for transparency and accountability. There are currently no schools listed with the EIB track on the Chubut MoE's website. This is not the case for schools offering the Arts Education or Education for People with Disabilities tracks, which are properly listed in the MoE's school database. By hindering access to the official number of schools offering EIB, the MoE is not only failing to comply with the national and provincial education laws but also contributes to the historical efforts to make Indigenous peoples invisible to society and prevents teachers and principals from easily accessing information about other schools working with EIB.

Finally, the advocates for EIB's main claim is to expand the implementation of EIB to all schools in the province. This demand challenges the national government's suggestion that EIB should be implemented in schools with at least 50% of Indigenous students' enrollment (Secretaría de Evaluación Educativa, 2019). On the one hand, school registration forms do not require the disclosure of ethnicity or languages spoken at home, so the percentage of Indigenous students at schools is almost always unknown and underreported. In a society where being Indigenous is highly stigmatized and associated with poverty, laziness and in some cases crime, it is possible to infer that many children might hide their ethnicity in institutional spaces that have greatly contributed to their marginalization (D'Amore & Díaz, 2020). On the other hand, the governmental requirement for a high concentration of Indigenous students for EIB approval goes against the National Education Act that states that *all* Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and immigrant students have the right to access EIB education (Ley Nacional de Educación, 2006). It is a fact that 'throughout history Indigenous peoples have always had to learn from the non-indigenous but the opposite has never been the case' (López & Sichra, 2008: 4). Were EIB implemented as the mainstream educational approach rather than a focalized policy, it has the potential to foster intercultural dialogue, bring visibility to Indigenous people and become a transformative practice for social justice.

The Impact of Side and Below Actors in EIB Implementation

In this Section I discuss the actions taken by the side and below actors to guarantee the implementation of EIB in the province of Chubut, and the level of engagement and participation of Indigenous people in the mechanisms employed. I propose that the case of EIB in the province of Chubut can be analyzed in two phases of time. Phase 1, between the 1980s and the National Education Act in 2006, is characterized by little interaction among the below, side, and above levels. Phase 2 starts after the inclusion of EIB in the national and provincial education legislation. I argue that this second phase is an example of Model 2, bottom-up, in Kosonen and Benson's (2021) framework for language-in-education policy, where actions were initiated from below, moving next to side and above levels.

Phase 1 (1980s to 2006)

According to my analysis, Phase 1 started after Argentina's return to democracy with below actors implementing teacher and community-led initiatives and above actors passing on new legislation. Kosonen and Benson (2021) claim that the interaction among all three levels over an extended period is paramount for 'successful and sustainable change' (2021: 2). In the Argentine case, the interaction between levels in Phase 1 was ephemeral and sporadic.

As an international side actor, PROEIB Andes only partnered with the government to provide technical support and expertise for a short period of time. In their first collaboration, they interacted with local teachers twice: a three-month field investigation in the provinces of Formosa, Santa Fe and Chubut; and a three-day National EIB workshop held in Buenos Aires in 1999 (Ministerio de Cultura y Educación de la Nación, 1999). The second instance of interaction between levels took place in 2004 when teachers working with Indigenous populations were invited to submit short papers about their experiences to be evaluated by PROEIB Andes and published by the National MoE. The publication aimed to socialize the Argentine teachers' imagination and effort, as well as to express the commitment of the government to transform these initiatives into a state policy (Ministerio de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología, 2004: 3). In its 'celebration' and 'acknowledgment' of teachers' efforts, the publication does not problematize the lack of governmental support and/or resources for EIB projects.

This phase was characterized by the implementation of local projects, but a lack of participation of actors from below in decision-making processes at the side and above levels. As an international side actor, PROEIB Andes had a positive but limited role considering that the government was interested in incorporating EIB into its political agenda without the political will to bring about change at the school level.

Based on the Kosonen and Benson framework, I propose that Phase 1 is in a pre-model stage where above and below actors initiated intra-level actions that did not have a significant impact on the other levels, with only limited and sporadic inter-level interaction facilitated by PROEIB Andes.

Phase 2 (early 2000s to the present)

The second and current phase according to my analysis started in the early 2000s, within a new national social paradigm of pluralism and a legal framework that recognizes Indigenous people's right to EIB. In this second phase, actors from below continue to work intra-level in the implementation of EIB in local schools but have also started to work collaboratively with side-level actors to make demands and hold the above actors accountable for their non-compliance with the law.

In her work with Võro language in Estonia, Brown (2021) points out the fluidity of actors at the below- and side-levels. The author defines 'category jumping' as the movement of actors between levels and 'category sliding' as the movement within one level (Brown, 2021: 91). In the case of Chubut, it is possible to identify actors that take on different roles, like EIB teachers who are also leaders or members of Indigenous civil society organizations and slide within the below-level on a regular basis. It is also possible to identify actors who jump between the side and below levels, like CLPO researchers and professors who are also parents who advocate for their children's right to intercultural bilingual education or leaders of Indigenous Communities. Different from PROEIB Andes, an international non-governmental organization, this fluidity of below and side levels is possible because the CLPO is a local side actor that is connected to the community, shares the interest of the Indigenous peoples of Chubut, and fosters the participation of Indigenous people with horizontal interactions, rather than hierarchical structures organized by levels of expertise.

The intervention of the CLPO as a local side actor has the potential to create a more lasting impact in the province of Chubut. For instance, the Mapuzungun workshops have deeply contributed to language revitalization efforts, their teacher training workshops have enhanced teachers' knowledge, resources and motivation to implement EIB in their schools, and their publications through the university publishing house have placed Indigenous issues on the academic and public agendas of the region (Ivanoff & Loncon, 2016). Although the future of EIB implementation and the direction of the policy trajectory is still unclear as Indigenous people and teachers start to work with the MoE, the collaborative well-planned and concrete actions taken by the CLPO, teachers, and Indigenous Communities seem to be leading to sustainable change at the regional level.

Conclusion

As my analysis of the Chubut case reveals, and in harmony with Kosonen and Benson's (2021) cases, side actors can play different roles with different levels of impact in language-in-education policy change. Their motivations in advancing EIB policy, the kinds of alliances they establish with above or below actors and their positioning as foreign, national or regional stakeholders seem to make a significant difference in the language-in-education policy trajectory.

In contexts like Argentina, a democratic system where the implementation of education policy is often affected by cycles of economic crisis, reduction of public spending, and political parties generally overturning opposing predecessor's policies, the collective efforts from below and side levels to negotiate with the MoE and keep the above level accountable are crucial for the sustainability and success of language-in-education policy. The case of Chubut shows that the permeability of the boundaries between categories (Brown, 2021: 83) facilitates this inter-level cooperation of below and side actors, resulting in promising advances for language-in-education policy implementation and bringing about change in the power dynamics. Below and side actors' coordinated and diversified actions have bridged and narrowed the gaps between below and above levels and advanced the implementation of EIB in schools in Chubut.

The Kosonen and Benson framework proves to be significantly useful in this kind of study where a top-down/bottom-top analysis would have failed to capture the nuances of cases like Chubut. Because there are diverse education projects designed for Indigenous populations in different provinces in Argentina (Hetch, 2007), more case studies at the local levels can reveal similar strategies or new mechanisms used by side and below actors to advance the recognition, development, and implementation of EIB.

Notes

- (1) Mapuzungun is the language of the Mapuche people. It is also known as Mapudungun and Mupudungu (Eberhard *et al.*, 2024).
- (2) PROEIB Andes is a training and research center that was founded in 1996 as a joint initiative between international cooperation agencies and universities, ministries of education and organizations from Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina (López & Sichra, 2008).

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13 Reconsidering Unified Kichwa as an L1 in Ecuador: Change from the Side and Below

Nicholas Limerick

Abstract

ImashinataK Kichwa shimita yachana wasikunapi yachachinchik? Kay pankakunaka Ecuador mama llaktapa educación intercultural bilingüemantami kan. Sarun ashka watakunapi indígena runakunaka yachana wasikunapi educación bilingüe nishkatami yachachishpa pushan. Tukuy llaktakunapi Kichwa shimita yachachinkapakka, apukkunaka Ministerio de Educaciónpi Kichwa Unificadotami rurarkakuna. Shinapash, shuk yachachikkunaka, taytamamakunapash mana Kichwa Unificadota munankunachu. Mana intindinchikchu shukkuna nin. Imatak rurana kanchik? Runa shimita yachachinkapakka Kitu llaktapi ashka dialectosmanta yuyashpa ñukanchik yachachikkunaka yachana wasipi mushuk kamutami (libro de texto nishka) rurashkanchik. Wakin wamrakunaka ña mishu shimipilla riman, shinaka kay kamuka chay wamprakunaman alli rimankapakmi kapan, uyankapak, killkakatinkapak, killkankapakpash. Kay kamuka yanapankachu? Mana yachanchikchu, shinapash kay shamuk watakunapimi rikukrinchik. (*Abstract in Kichwa, Imbabura Highland [qvi], a language of Ecuador, translated by Nicholas Limerick with Soledad Chango*)

How can learners' ways of communicating be brought into education systems that have traditionally privileged a single dominant language? This chapter considers this question (from Kosonen & Benson, 2021) in a case of schooling in the Indigenous language family known as Kichwa in Ecuador. The chapter begins by spelling out how members of Indigenous pueblos and nationalities gained a national public school system for bilingual education, aiming to teach students in Spanish and Indigenous languages. Based on ethnographic research from 2011 to 2013, it summarizes some of the ways that the management of this school system from within Ministry of Education offices has

brought promises and challenges for teaching and using varieties from the Kichwa (Quechuan) language family, including the standardized ideologies implicit in official language planning. It focuses on my own participatory action research with educators at a single school to develop a heteroglossic textbook for teaching Kichwa as heritage varieties, registers and other forms of non-standard communication. The textbook prioritizes the concerns of teachers about monologic language ideologies in national Kichwa bilingual education policy. Ultimately, the multiplicity in linguistic communication has become a major theme of Indigenous language policy and practice, which complicates L1/L2 planning discourses. The case also draws from and challenges ideas of what is considered change from above, from below or from the side.

Introduction

Ecuador provides an especially interesting case to learn about policy and practice in the teaching of Indigenous languages in schools. This is because activists demanded and gained a second national school system parallel to the Spanish-medium system called intercultural bilingual education (EIB,¹ from *educación intercultural bilingüe* in Spanish), which has promoted the use of Indigenous languages in society, led by members of Indigenous *pueblos* and nationalities who coordinate and plan for schooling. Since the establishment of EIB in 1988, the *bilingual* part of the name has sought to recognize the importance of Indigenous languages and their instruction in primary, secondary and occasionally tertiary education. Ecuador is one of the smallest nation states in South America with around 18 million estimated inhabitants,² and Ecuadorian citizens self-identifying as Indigenous are between 7 and 25% of the population. There are around 13 Indigenous languages and 14 named Indigenous nationalities within Ecuador (Haboud, 2019).

Meanwhile, a major language shift from Kichwa to Spanish continues.³ Kichwa is the most spoken family of Indigenous languages in Ecuador, with an estimated 600,000 to 2 million speakers in Ecuador and a total of 6 million speakers throughout South America, particularly in Bolivia and Peru, where the language family is collectively referred to as ‘Quechua’ (Andrade Ciudad & Howard, 2021). Yet, Haboud Buchamar and Ortega Pérez (2023: 292) write that, across Ecuador, there are currently low levels of intergenerational Kichwa transmission and that schooling, even within the intercultural bilingual school system, has largely not managed to halt the assimilation of students into speaking Spanish. While upper-level policymaking has become more inclusive of Kichwa (and/or of Indigenous languages more generally), it has been challenging to make students proficient in Kichwa in classrooms, since many students are ‘heritage’

language learners who may not be able to communicate in Kichwa. Many EIB classrooms do not actually teach Indigenous languages, or they teach them only as the topic of a single class once a week and not as a medium of instruction (Haboud, 2019; King & Haboud, 2007; Martínez Novo, 2014), so bilingual education is a bit of a misnomer. Much of the school system's planning, like some cases of Indigenous languages elsewhere, has focused on a standardized variety of Kichwa, which brings other challenges, as I examine below.

This chapter discusses the struggle of speakers of historically oppressed languages to gain recognition and planning for their languages, describes some challenges that arise due to official recognition and provides a small-scale example of a collectively written textbook that takes into consideration some of these larger challenges. Throughout the chapter, I engage with relevant parts of the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework analyzing policy change from above, below and side levels, while thinking through some aspects of the framework and some presuppositions of language-in-education policy and implementation. Ecuador's case has two lessons for thinking about the policy and practice of teaching NDLs and using them as mediums of instruction. First, as has increasingly occurred throughout South America, more and more Indigenous peoples now learn their families' languages as secondary languages. After years of colonial oppression and ongoing marginalization, many members of Indigenous *pueblos* and nationalities have shifted to communicate in the more dominant languages of society, so one cannot assume in a straightforward fashion that an Indigenous language is the one that they speak most at home. Second, this research in Ecuador shows that the ideologies of language planning, as illustrated by the use of terminology like L1 and L2, mask the vast linguistic diversity that exists within and across what is termed 'a language' (see also Costa *et al.*, 2017). I conclude this discussion by describing a textbook for teaching Kichwa that I wrote collaboratively that tries to work against these challenges.

Actors in Intercultural Bilingual Education in Ecuador

Following the Kosonen and Benson (2021) framework, members of Indigenous *pueblos* and nationalities have been 'actors from above' or at least 'actors from the side' for decades. They have worked in the Ministry of Education and in the National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education, the EIB coordinating offices that have been located in the Ministry of Education since 2009, though these have changed names several times and have seen the emergence of higher-level regulatory bodies that restrict some of their policies. They have produced national educational materials in Indigenous languages while making Kichwa into a language of the state for policy and planning. Preceding and

following the establishment of the directorate offices that would govern the school system in 1988, coordinators identifying as both Indigenous and *mestizo/a* – linguists, curriculum experts, translators, pedagogists, managers, human resources officers, accountants, social media managers – have carried out ‘actions from above’ like official written educational policy statements and national curriculum decisions promoting the use of Indigenous languages. They have raised literacy rates, carried out ongoing workshops for teachers, established and supported early childhood education and developed a pedagogical philosophy for the school system, among many other things. These educational directors have also produced hundreds of books, including the well-known *Kukayus* textbook series, dictionaries and grammar books. Officials from regional education offices have also been instrumental in the production of textbooks and in enacting many educational policies, since many of these materials are made collectively in workshops. These actors have also raised the status of Indigenous languages, such as when the 2008 Constitution recognized Kichwa and Shuar (another Indigenous language) as *lenguas de relación intercultural*, or languages of intercultural relations, jumpstarting translations of Kichwa in many state-sponsored events and on building signage (see e.g. Limerick, 2023a). Despite this remarkable progress, it has been challenging to raise student proficiency levels in any variety of Kichwa, as I further consider below.

How did members of Indigenous *pueblos* and nationalities arrive at decision-making or implementational positions? Many who have worked in the National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education began their careers through employment in education in various capacities. Some are academics. All hold bachelor’s degrees, some have master’s degrees and a few hold doctoral degrees. Some previously worked in regional-level EIB offices. Many of those in national coordinating offices previously worked in the 1980s either for a major Indigenous education center at the Pontifical Catholic University of Quito, which was instrumental in crafting Kichwa materials and starting to discuss the standardization of Kichwa, or for a prominent bilingual education project largely headed by the German government’s development organization GTZ (now called GIZ), which sought to start and support schooling in Indigenous languages, especially with local varieties of Kichwa. An early requirement for employment in the school system was to be sponsored by an Indigenous political organization, and most employees have continued to belong to national and/or regional political organizations. This is perhaps an important lesson from Central and South America for other kinds of actors to be considered in the Kosonen and Benson framework. Many continued other kinds of affiliations while carrying out their jobs in the Ministry, such as belonging to local religious groups or organizations. Many were formerly educators in schools or adult literacy programs.

This background shows that, three decades after the start of a school system for teaching Indigenous languages, it is hard to conclusively sort actors as belonging to the ‘top’, ‘side’ or ‘below’. Without attention to the specific contexts through which people communicate and the specific roles that they occupy in those contexts, many policymakers at both national and regional levels could be considered ‘from above’, ‘from the side’ and/or ‘from below’. The management of the school system depends upon people who have inhabited and continue to inhabit different roles, and their jobs and affiliations are often overlapping.

Reconsidering the Concept of ‘L1’ in Education Policy Discourse

A key question of this chapter is: What is the relationship between learners’ and their families’ ways of communicating and the concept of an L1? In the introduction to their framework, Kosonen and Benson (2021) describe a worldwide challenge in terms of educational policymaking that often overlooks the actual ways that people communicate:

How can learners’ own languages or first languages (L1s) be brought into education systems that have traditionally privileged a single dominant language? ... Instead of designing the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to meet the actual linguistic and learning needs of learners, decision-makers tend to default to mass education systems that privilege dominant languages. The language proficiency aims of such systems are more aspirational than realistic, especially where tiny proportions of the school-aged population speak the dominant language at home. (Kosonen & Benson, 2021: 27)

Importantly, Kosonen and Benson demonstrate how hierarchies are attached to historically oppressed languages like Kichwa and how policy and schooling have, throughout the world, tended to marginalize those languages. The authors draw on years of experience to argue that simply teaching students in a society’s most dominant language is, at best, ‘aspirational’, if not also assimilatory. Most policymakers for Ecuador’s intercultural bilingual school system would agree with this, since many have experienced decades of assimilationist Ecuadorian educational policy first-hand that did not recognize any Indigenous language officially and did not allow teachers to use such languages in schools. Bilingual education policymakers have sought to correct this with the establishment of EIB.

The above quote calls for the rethinking of curriculum to better support ‘the actual linguistic and learning needs of learners’. I would add here that a critical analysis of language ideologies would help to unpack what an L1 is for planning purposes. The Ecuadorian case examined here raises questions about assumptions that are made about

learners' language proficiencies; how long-standing language contact leads to communication across and through different languages in ways that defy a clear L1/L2 divide; and how different registers like dialects may mean that an L1 is anything but a single, non-dominant language. The L1 instead represents multiple, vastly different ways of communicating within and beyond a single language family.

State policies tend to entail similar kinds of assumptions. Scholars have shown how a 'one nation, one language' ideology promotes an entire recognized population – usually equating 'nation' with a nation state, even though many Indigenous peoples identify as nations, too – as speaking a single language and explicitly foregrounding citizens who speak that language (Jaffe, 1999; May, 2007). As worldwide applied linguistics research (e.g. Makoni & Pennycook, 2006) and bilingual education research on translanguaging (e.g. García & Li, 2014) has emphasized, and this case shows, it is important to move beyond conceptions of single, monolithic 'languages' to study the imaginative ways through which speakers communicate, including blending their languages together (e.g. Cenoz, 2017; García & Li, 2014). Indeed, terms like *L1-based multilingual education*, *MLE*, and *L1/L2* risk perpetuating monoglossic ideologies through taking a simplified 'additive' lens (Bartlett & García, 2011); they reify languages as somewhat homogeneous, compartmentalized static things a first and a second while largely overlooking the co-existence and mutual influence of different varieties and multilingual practices through which young speakers communicate. Especially for languages with fewer decades of standardization, there is vast linguistic diversity common in any language family, which also challenges which communicative forms are being taught and used and whether they align with those that students may hear among community members.

My ongoing ethnographic work has evidence that notions of bounded languages contrast with the actual communicative practices of families, which means that even progressive MLE conceptions need more reflection around their monoglossic *additive* ideologies that project the teaching of one additional homogeneous, neatly bounded L2, with no connections to an L1 or consideration of the diversity within notions of an L1, on to students. In this context, many young members of the Kichwa nationality in Ecuador are more proficient in a variety of Spanish as an L1 or 'first language', whereas their parents may be highly bilingual in Kichwa and Spanish, or their mothers may be much more comfortable speaking their local variety of Kichwa than Spanish in any systematic way. This sociolinguistic shift presents a national bilingual education policy with a challenge, since any policy which assumes that Kichwa is an L1 for students – as has historically been true for Kichwa in Ecuador's school system, such as holding that teaching materials written entirely in Kichwa will be understood by students – is now somewhat off.

Many (or even most) students identified as ‘Kichwa’ and having Kichwa as an L1 or mother tongue are not proficient in this context. Thus, a focus on the L1 for learning may mask a variety of situations, including in the case of Ecuador the fact that Kichwa has become more of a non-dominant, heritage or second language for most current students. This raises a predicament for current policy in EIB, demonstrating the need for new policy descriptions and instructional approaches, including some considerations of proficiency. Successful language revitalization in this context tends to involve pedagogical strategies that are appropriate for situations of language shift, such as immersion programming, with careful attention to how and when those Indigenous languages are spoken and written for communicative purposes (May, 2013; McIvor & McCarty, 2016).

Unified Kichwa in Intercultural Bilingual Education in Ecuador

In Ecuador, schooling materials are in Unified Kichwa, which bilingual education planners, educators, linguists and academics developed mainly in the 1970s and 1980s and is closely based on Kichwa forms in the Northern and Central Highlands, such as the province where the largest number of Kichwa speakers reside. Language planning is shaped by those who do the planning. In meetings to standardize Kichwa, there were many Kichwa speakers from these select highland regions (Hornberger & King, 1998). This overrepresentation also has to do with the demographics of the National Directorate offices and of academic and professional work more generally, as most employees in the National Directorate, and most employees dedicated to language policy, teacher workshops or curriculum planning, have historically been Kichwa speakers from two Highland provinces. Thus, Unified Kichwa forms are particularly challenging for those who speak Lowland Amazonian Kichwa (Montaluisa-Chasiquiza, 2019).

Unified Kichwa also consists of many Spanish calques, or forms that have been translated literally into Kichwa, such as how *alli puncha* (good morning) in Unified Kichwa, which is a parallel of Spanish’s *buenos días*, a greeting common to office spaces. Many Kichwa speakers would simply say *buenos días* before going onto use other kinds of greetings. The word *mashi* mentioned in the ethnographic vignette below is another example of calquing in Unified Kichwa and in some Northern Highland varieties like Imbabura Kichwa. *Mashi* in Unified Kichwa is roughly equivalent to *compañero* (comrade or colleague) in Spanish, but it is believed to be adapted from a grammatical particle from Bolivian and Peruvian Quechua (*masi*) (Howard, 2008: 16). This fact is probably indicative of how language policies were influenced by Quechua and other Indigenous language planning across the Andes and even in other parts of Latin America.

Many speakers find this register difficult to comprehend and feel that it differs significantly from their everyday Kichwa ways of communicating. Take the following previously published ethnographic example (Limerick, 2023b) from a conversation with two teachers about how they preferred to speak in the Kichwa that they learned growing up. Manuel commented about an institution of higher education that he had attended to become a bilingual teacher:

Entonces ahí es una fábrica grande de docentes y lo primerito que como requisito tienen que aprobar es kichwa unificado. Todo el mundo hablaba [decía] mashikuna, llankashuchik y los jóvenes ya contagiados, es como una gripe. Con kichwa unificado teníamos que ver bien [pensar] para hablar, porque las comunidades [se] expresan diferente.

So there it's a large teacher factory and the very first thing that they have to pass as a requirement is Unified Kichwa. [There] the whole world was saying mashikuna (colleagues), llankashunchik (let's work) and the young people [were] already infected. It's like a cold. With Unified Kichwa we had to really concentrate to be able to talk because the communities express things differently. [from fieldnotes and recording, 5 June 2013]. (Limerick, 2023b: 221–222)

The fact that teachers studying at the institute were speaking Kichwa at all is exciting and illustrates, at least partially, the result of successful bilingual education. Yet, Manuel, as an educator, is in touch daily with very different worlds like the official curriculum largely written in Unified Kichwa and the everyday speaking practices of his students' relatives and even his own family. Despite undergoing Kichwa instruction, even at the level of tertiary education, Manuel's example shows that 'Kichwa' instruction looks and sounds very different; it includes standardized forms, which many speakers say that they do not understand or do not identify with (Montaluisa-Chasiquiza, 2019). Textbooks and instructions about Kichwa (and in Spanish) are mostly written or spoken in Unified Kichwa, and as mentioned above EIB is not always practiced according to policy. Manuel's words encourage us to interrogate the language ideologies of defining a language in a straightforward fashion in language planning. Despite constituting 'Kichwa', he did not identify with such ways of communicating. But he describes them as the dominant – even required – ways of communicating in a classroom for Indigenous teachers.

A more heteroglossic description of Kichwa/Quechua is that varieties or registers can be significantly different in terms of sounds, lexicon, and morphology (Muysken, 2019; Wroblewski, 2012), which complicates the notion of a single language for planning. In this case, a focus on L1 implicitly means a standardized variety or register of Kichwa, even as the Quechuan language family varies widely, with centuries of differences

emerging across sites of communication. Ecuadorian varieties of Kichwa vary in their mutual intelligibility. Although linguists have maintained that there are not major differences across Kichwa(s) in Ecuador, Kichwa speakers, including bilingual education teachers, describe challenges in understanding between Andean and Amazonian varieties, and they may not self-identify with forms that look and sound so different to them (Montaluisa-Chasiquiza, 2019).

These are some of the ways through which language planning has occurred in Kichwa, which leaves many speakers like Manuel unhappy about how terms are hard to understand and how they may replace more localized forms of communicating with logics, including grammatical ones, translated from Spanish.⁴ Repeatedly in my research, teachers and parents expressed frustration and laughter when hearing Unified Kichwa spoken in speeches or in materials, and they often did not identify with such communicative forms, instead preferring how their family members and friends would communicate.

Taking Less Standardized Forms of Kichwa Seriously: A Collaborative Textbook

This section describes an effort undertaken by colleagues and I that could be considered change from below and from the side in the Kosonen and Benson framework. Based on my previous research, I became interested in initiatives that might consider a finding of that work – that smaller-scale initiatives more closely considering Kichwa linguistic diversity might hold greater promise for teaching Kichwa in classrooms. During the two years from 2011 to 2013 that I spent carrying out ethnographic research in the Ministry of Education, in schools, at conferences, and in everyday Kichwa spaces at markets and visiting families, these were the kinds of conversations that I heard time and time again with teachers and even many policymakers in the school system (see e.g. Limerick, 2023a).

After that research concluded, I began conversations with teachers from Manuel's school about how we could collaborate for multilingual instruction. I had learned a great deal from their critiques of Unified Kichwa and their ideas about how education could better respond to students' lives. I was impressed by their thoughtful approaches to Kichwa and suspected that they would be interested in developing pedagogies to improve Kichwa instruction at the school. They agreed that it would be of help to develop materials for students who understood some Kichwa but struggled to communicate, and they emphasized the importance of teaching methods that encourage non-standardized forms of communication. I also learned much from a close friend, J., who had often expressed critiques of national EIB policy despite working as an official in the Ministry of Education. At that time, he and several other

office employees were forced to take an early retirement, and so he had more time to work on putting our ideas into practice. He returned to the school as a teacher on a volunteer basis and was later sent to a different EIB school to be a paid educator. His wife, I., has worked as the school's director and as a high school teacher there for years. She had also been a vocal critic of the school system's tendencies towards monoglossic language ideologies.

The school is located in Ecuador's capital of Quito, and nearly all students at the school, across levels, are the children of Kichwa speakers who have migrated from the countryside to the city. Some students were born in provinces, and others were born in the city. Many of the school's students, like most urban adolescent members of the Kichwa nationality, understand some Kichwa, if perhaps not entire conversations, and they have a much harder time speaking than their parents.

In 2016, J. and I decided to work together to research, write and pilot a textbook for Kichwa that would be based on the students' experiences and would include diverse forms of Kichwa. I. and other teachers were eager to support the initiative. Our book aimed to teach Kichwa in a register more closely resembling how parents speak, to increase awareness for the challenges of standardizing Indigenous languages and to value the multiple ways of communicating in Kichwa and even in Spanish. We workshopped ideas with students and asked them to write content for the book, such as reading passages, which we edited and fit to chapter themes. The students also contributed drawings for the textbook. When we had a full draft, we workshopped the draft with teachers in whole-day meetings, where teachers collectively read and provided feedback on each line and assignment in the book.

In 2022, we had a first edition printed. I piloted the textbook with 9th graders at J. and I.'s school and taught them Kichwa, and another teacher piloted it with 12th graders. J. simultaneously piloted our book in the other EIB school in a different part of Quito where he now works with 4th to 6th graders, mostly students who do not identify as Indigenous and are not heritage-language learners. We took notes on where we needed to clarify, add or delete parts of the book, and then J. and I spent the summer of 2023 and parts of 2024 rewriting the book based on our experiences teaching it. We are currently finishing edits and seeking publication.

This textbook project is one very small, experimental example not of what language to use for instruction but, rather, which version(s) of a language can be used, and how to draw from the range of registers and forms of communication that students bring to a classroom. This shows one pathway for collaboration that challenges top-down policies, a pathway promoting change from below and involving the collaboration of school directors, educators, students and a linguistic anthropologist from the United States.

The textbook is written for students who understand some Kichwa but may not be able to speak or write any variety of Kichwa, and it is meant to be used by students in middle school or above. In other words, the target audience is students whose Spanish proficiency is more developed than their Kichwa proficiency and who have especially little familiarity with Unified Kichwa, even while they identify as a member of the Kichwa nationality. Its goal is to help scaffold an intermediate level of oral and written Kichwa proficiency, in a way similar to their families' communicative repertoires, among students from 12 years and older. Because these levels of proficiency vary, we aimed to write a book that would be useful for students who may not feel confident with Kichwa, while also building on and encouraging the use of the students' existing proficiency, whatever that level may be. The book can be used across grade levels, and the idea is that, when students finish the book, they could continue studying (including at the school) by using pre-existing textbooks that are written entirely in Kichwa. The book is divided similarly to many foreign or second language textbooks, with each chapter having a grammatical focus or two; vocabulary words to learn; activities and practice exercises; reading comprehension and questions; and also many games, puzzles, activities, and opportunities to draw and color, as a key philosophy of the school is that students learn through playing and other kinds of activities that are often written out of schooling. The book is designed for middle and high school students.

As we wrote the textbook, there were several ways in which multilingualism beyond monoglossic or additive ideologies became important: use of different families, critical linguistic awareness of power and multilingualism, consideration of different alphabets and use of old words. The following discusses each of these aspects in turn.

Use of different language families

While most of the textbook is bilingual, all passages have a translation in standardized Ecuadorian Spanish, as none of the students speak only Kichwa, and nearly all speak mostly Spanish daily, across a wide range of contexts. Though the Spanish they use to communicate is often non-standardized, they are also conversant in standardized Ecuadorian Spanish. Thus, we felt that, given that many of the official school Kichwa textbooks are entirely in Kichwa, the textbook would have to be multilingual. Including both languages meant that we had to think carefully about many details, including how to position Kichwa vis-à-vis Spanish on each page. Throughout the textbook, the text itself models Kichwa's importance, such as by translating most headings of sections to an easily intelligible Kichwa and ensuring that Kichwa translations go before the Spanish translation, following norms that

readers start on the left side of the page (Ochs, 1979). Grammatical explanations are largely in standardized Ecuadorian Spanish, which avoids using Kichwa neologisms that frustrate many readers for their unintelligibility.

Most chapters in the book include a reading passage (written by the students) that is followed by reading comprehension questions. The passages in the first half of the book are largely in Spanish, but gradually the passages become entirely in colloquial Kichwa with relatively standardized Spanish translations of them listed in the back of the book, assuming that students will gradually become better at understanding written Kichwa. As the book progresses, the comprehension questions, too, change. We start out asking students to respond to the Kichwa readings in Spanish, and then later we ask students to write in Kichwa in any way that they can – a dialect, Unified Kichwa, all of the above, and/or with Spanish mixed in – instead of solely in standardized or nonstandard Spanish. We see this as gradually building up to increased oral and written Kichwa proficiency and use, in any variety.

Comprehension, register differences and critical language awareness

From the beginning, the teachers wanted to ensure that the textbook was written in a way that they and their students could understand. A main goal of the project was to avoid simply reproducing Unified Kichwa and to teach about and through the diverse ways of communicating in Kichwa. This is consistent with scholars who have promoted critical language awareness as a pedagogical practice of fostering conversations and instruction to help students understand how communication is interwoven with power, how others can react to their language use and even how others may cite communicative forms to justify racism and white supremacy (Alim, 2010; Clark *et al.*, 1990; Lee, 2013). This approach aims to promote respect for linguistic diversity in the classroom and to introduce discussions of power in relation to linguistic differences, asking students to think through what linguistic differences may exist, how they and others communicate and when and how they might overturn such hierarchies. These kinds of pedagogical interventions can also help students learn across their differences by naming linguistic features from more sanctioned ways of communicating (such as standardized linguistic varieties) and asking students for contrastive forms, potentially building solidarity for ways of speaking that institutions tend to stigmatize, such as ‘Kichwañol’, the mixing of Kichwa and Spanish (Leeman & Serafini, 2016; Parra, 2013). Through passages in the book and conversations with students, we sought to foster awareness not just around the marginalization of Indigenous languages – which is an important topic to discuss, too, given how students and their families have much experience

with it – but also about different ways of communicating in Kichwa. For example, the draft introduction⁵ states:

Hay quienes afirman que la estandarización del Quichua ha sido contraproducente porque ha causado confusiones derivadas de la reducción del número de letras para la escritura....la unificación del Quichua ha excluido vocabulario perteneciente a territorios específicos para mantener una manera común de escribir que buscaba hacerse entender en todo el Ecuador. Por ejemplo, en la provincia de Bolívar existen las palabras llillu [arena], munchi [pájaro] y chuku [pilar o columna], estas no han sido recogidas en la versión estandarizada del idioma.

There are those who claim that the standardization of Quichua has been counterproductive because it has caused confusion due to the reduction in the number of letters for writing. The unification of Quichua has excluded vocabulary belonging to specific territories in order to maintain a common way of writing that sought to be understood throughout Ecuador. For example, in the province of Bolivar there are the words *llillu* [sand], *munchi* [bird] and *chuku* [pillar or column]. These have not been included in the standardized version of the language.

The text goes on to explain how many words vary depending on the regionally associated way of speaking. Another activity has students interview their parents or friends to document words that their parents may associate with a particular region. Additionally, we included a mix of localized and standardized terms in the vocabulary sections at the beginning of many chapters. There is also a section in the book on dialectal variation, and students read and respond to a short passage written in Kichwa that is clearly nonstandard, asking them to understand and to translate to Spanish. These are some ways in which we try to support a range of registers and ways of communicating, especially regional ones.

Accepting alternative orthographies

One part of teaching students to read and write in Kichwa in state policy is that there is one writing system, a Roman alphabet, that is supposed to be used in all the school system's materials that is associated with Unified Kichwa. The converse is true, too, in that planners have largely associated Unified Kichwa with following certain written norms, including the use of a writing system that was made official in 1998. Some of the letters associated with the Unified Kichwa orthography, such as the letter *k*, are rarely used in Spanish and are often viewed by readers as confusing and as markers of a way of writing that they do not wish to read. Indeed, many school system employees and most members of churches learned to read in Kichwa with another Roman alphabet, one that shares many letters with the Unified Kichwa writing system

but that has more letters and more closely shares Spanish's orthography. For a book, this raises some challenges like how to promote and model alternative alphabets – ones that parents may have seen before or that they might encounter at church – while not teaching students to read in a way that will make it harder for them to understand 'official' Kichwa materials or detracting from state-sponsored efforts to teach people to read Kichwa.

From the outset of the first edition, we made our position clear to encourage diverse ways of writing, both in writing the title of the book in two ways, each with a different alphabet, and explaining in the third paragraph of the introduction that '*en la primera se utiliza el alfabeto del idioma español para la escritura en Quichua; en la segunda se representa al alfabeto del Kichwa unificado*'. 'The first uses the Spanish alphabet for writing in Quichua; the second represents the unified Kichwa alphabet'. There is also a section explaining what the Unified Kichwa alphabet is and which letters from the Spanish alphabet are not in the Unified Kichwa alphabet. Over the years, we have seen that there is not enough explicit instruction and explanation about these alphabet differences. Furthermore, vocabulary words of several of the early chapters are written twice, once with the reduced and slightly contrastive writing system of Unified Kichwa, and again with a version of the Roman alphabet used for Spanish so that students can see the differences and read across them. The book also encourages students to write however they can, noting explicitly that all ways are acceptable.

Despite all these parameters, through piloting the textbook, we decided that the students needed more help and emphasis on working with different alphabets, reading and writing across those differences and understanding the logics of the standardization project. As we have revised the book into a second edition, we have added activities in which students rewrite words written in the Unified Kichwa orthography with a more Spanish-centered Roman orthography that is common to local ways of writing Kichwa and vice versa. The book also now includes some explicit instructions about these different ways of writing, such as why Unified Kichwa tends to write diphthongs differently (and what a diphthong is). This provides more opportunities for students to practice differences across orthographies and varieties.

Old words

In one of the workshops with teachers to review and improve the first draft of the first edition, in which the teachers collectively read the draft out loud with us and made suggestions, they emphasized the importance of including Kichwa words from where they grew up that are falling out of use. Indeed, Unified Kichwa dictionaries and documents tend to list, sometimes for the first time in published form,

neologisms. Yet, as described above, those words are often calqued from Spanish and leave many Kichwa speakers unsure of what they mean because they have not heard them before. The school's educators worry that the words that their grandparents and other community members use are not being documented and encouraged in communication. The teachers brainstormed a list of *mawka shimikuna* (old words) to include in the book for students to learn, and many sections of the book include, among regular vocabulary words to learn, older words, too. The teachers saw this effort as essential to de-standardizing the language and including words that may get left out of dictionaries or grammar books.

Conclusions

For decades scholars have shown how classrooms practice a form of 'submersion' for students who are not necessarily conversant in the dominant language of a society (e.g. Benson, 2005). When Indigenous languages are taught in classrooms, their teaching conveys the aspirations of teachers and parents to work against such dynamics of language shift and to make nation-states more inclusive (Hornberger & De Korne, 2018; López-Gopar *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, research on L1-based multilingual education has shown how instruction in the languages students speak helps to confront their erasure and even assimilation (Chiatoh, 2018), and this change in instruction is as important as ever.

Yet, as Benson (2013: 285) writes in critiquing a monolingual habitus in school and society, the terms L1 and L2 'break down quickly' in many contexts like 'when learners speak more than one language at home..., when groups of learners enter the school with different home languages, or when the L1 of one group is the L2 of another'. Building on these critiques, this case from Ecuador shows that predominant monoglossic ideologies in language planning continue to work to the detriment of students, including their presumptions that L1s or home languages are single, homogeneous things. This case calls importance to understanding the varieties and registers of instruction and classroom texts that come to represent a single language family, and how communication in general, and instances of language shift in particular, often mean that people communicate across languages and blend them together, all with differing proficiencies. These multilingual forms of communication may be as important to understand as which named language is being used. In reference to what constitutes Kichwa, this is certainly how the teachers described in this chapter have felt. They have long seen additive, sequential ideologies as not going far enough, and worse – sometimes even making them feel like they do not speak Kichwa at all, since 'Kichwa' has tended to mean Unified Kichwa, and official texts written in Unified Kichwa are often hard to understand. Our collaborative textbook project is one small, collective effort from below

to try to reconfigure pedagogies to better support such diverse and non-standardized forms of communication in classrooms.

It is too early in the process to know whether and how this initiative of actors from below has the potential to change instruction at other sites, across a larger region, or in official policy. Whether this effort will lead to expanded implementational activities elsewhere is unclear. Three different state offices have asked the school if the director would allow them to publish the textbook, and we have been discussing publication with an independent local press. However, our emphasis on small scale means that some of these strategies may not travel well to other settings. We imagine that the book would be useful to other educational institutions in southern Quito, where many students come from similar migratory backgrounds and ways of communicating, but it may not work even in the northern part of the city with its migrants from Northern Ecuadorian provinces, much less beyond Quito's limits.

This small initiative, of which we are still unsure of its effectiveness even at the school where it is being used, raises other questions about the longer trajectory of policy and practice in teaching Indigenous languages in Ecuadorian classrooms. The establishment of intercultural bilingual education and the elaboration of Unified Kichwa could be considered change from above to the side and below. Since the 1980s, language planning has emerged from the Ministry of Education, traveling out to regional directorates and to schools. Yet, as evidenced by the involvement of Indigenous peoples at many levels, a neat linear progression, or even a straightforward manner of diffusion, is not easy to segment. What counts as the 'start' to a policy? As mentioned above, though the intercultural bilingual directorate offices began in 1988, their commencement was only possible through the grassroots organizing by Indigenous organizations beforehand that allowed such a change to exist. Many of the directors in the office had worked on other Indigenous education initiatives of various levels of scope or institutional affiliation, which also raises questions about the kinds of actors that they would be considered – as in, which current or previous roles account for how people make official policies and curriculums, and how do those roles blend through working in multiple capacities or through career changes, promotions and retirements?

Both before and after the start of the bilingual school system, there has been collaboration from actors who worked in multiple roles in any official policy. For most curricular materials, the National Directorate has organized workshops by ensuring that a range of professions are present, including national policymakers, regional policymakers and school-based educators, as well as Kichwa speakers from across all of Ecuador's regions. This is, by design, how directors have tried to make more inclusive materials, even if they have not always succeeded. It is worth noting that even careful planning has still led to work being produced

in hard-to-understand Unified Kichwa, so perhaps the making and harmonizing of that register of the language is the most salient example of change from ‘above’ and from the ‘side’. The specific direction of change is somewhat murky, given the various contributors and the decades of meetings that have shaped the emergence of Unified Kichwa.

Notes

- (1) See Maití (Chapter 12, this volume) for a brief description of EIB in Latin America.
- (2) <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ecuador-population/>.
- (3) I use Kichwa here instead of Quichua, since this is the official way of writing the name of the language family.
- (4) Some parts of this section also appear in Limerick (2023a), Chapter 3.
- (5) To respect the privacy of the book collaborators, the publication reference is withheld; please consult the chapter author for further information.

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14 Possible Worlds: Concluding Thoughts on Temporalities and Non-Dominant Language-in-Education Policies

Kara Brown

Introduction

This edited volume shares a remarkable collection of non-dominant language-in-education policy changes across the world. With wide-ranging global contributions from Argentina to Timor-Leste, the 21 authors investigate the agents and agency involved in transforming schooling and society. These chapters highlight the importance of place – the particular historic, cultural, economic and sociopolitical details of states and regions – in understanding developments in multilingual education (MLE) policy. The contributions underscore careful engagement with the questions of ‘where’ and ‘who’ in unpacking complex policy stories. Kosonen and Benson’s (2021) ‘above-below-side’ framework invites scholars to engage with an additional, important set of questions, namely ‘when’ and ‘how’. These temporal-related inquiries are needed since MLE developments, as with other policies and politics, are essentially part of time-related projects and ‘require[s] attention to future generations, to the immediate challenges of the present, and to the legacies of the past’ (Goetz, 2024: 2). The volume’s engagement with temporalities offers needed perspectives and insights on varied policies that bring non-dominant languages (NDLs) into education systems.

Three time-related dimensions – temporal direction, temporal agentive and temporal spatial – run through the volume. Temporal direction refers to the three defining aspects of the ‘from above-below-the side’ framework: timeline, trajectories and phases. These elements center the sequencing, pathways and projection of policies. Temporal-agentive dimensions point to the framework’s crucial focus on the policy actors, particularly those ‘from the side’. All policy actors operate in defined

periods, but they also carry their own time-stamped histories. Attention to the naming and temporal framing of these actors' involvement in language policy highlights the dynamic and rich context of each case. The temporal-spatial dimension speaks to the ways non-linear constructs of time play a role in some NDL policies as well as how time and space intersect to give rise to, suppress and/or maintain NDL-policy ideas and developments. All three of these time threads work to address the complexity of temporal perspectives on NDL policies. They facilitate our ability to locate these policies *over* (in trajectories that span the past, present and future), *in* (at one defined moment) and *through* (in people's experiences and interpretations of change/stability) time (Saldaña, 2003). Drawing on insights from the fields of anthropology, political science, research methodology and comparative education, I share here the ways the contributing authors incorporate these three temporal dimensions into their conceptual and analytic engagement with the Kosonen and Benson framework.

A focus on policy temporalities provides a needed window onto the long arc of imagining, or working toward, alternative, possible worlds. These case studies serve as a reminder of the potential, and actual, dynamism of language policies. The authors share the creative and consistent work needed over generations to counter restrictive policies and move towards more equitable, inclusive MLE policy futures. The contributions together point to the ways that those involved in transforming NDL policy are foundationally engaged in future work. They remind us that to rethink 'the taken-for-granted world-views' (Hillgren *et al.*, 2020: 110) about the role of NDLs in society, we need, at minimum, to believe in transformative change, to hope for the potential for change, and to have an expansive imagination about other possible worlds.

In this concluding chapter, I explore the ways the volume's case studies speak to these three temporal dimensions: direction, agentive and spatial. When relevant, I include methodological reflections, prompted by the studies here, about the challenges in using time-focused concepts and analyses. I conclude by sharing several ideas for future research generated based on this rich volume.

The Temporal-Direction Dimension

Timelines

The 'above-below-side' framework centers a longitudinal, time-infused perspective on NDL policy development. This approach to understanding language-in-education development and change embraces a long-term, holistic view of the policy process and the extended work of cultural change. As such, the framework helps us see, in novel ways, policies as complex entities and to avoid what Tobin (2014: 6)

identifies as a ‘timeless’ present, something existing outside of history. Attention to the long view helps us to consider ‘the influence of time over time’ (Neale, 2021: 17, *italics mine*). In this spirit, the last several decades of NDL policy work have been particularly rich. As the editors note (Kosonen & Benson, Chapter 1), the past 30 years have seen unprecedented efforts to demonstrate the potential for learners’ own languages to be brought into the education systems, even as the systems continue to focus on dominant national and international languages.

Policy timelines, which often accompany the framework analysis, depict the temporal direction of key events shaping language-in-education developments. These maps illustrate the ways these policies unfold in sometimes encouraging, sometimes back-sliding, directions; progress is possible, but not guaranteed. The framework shifts the focus from ‘a top-bottom, hierarchical view of linear policy directionality to one that is dynamic, context-dependent, accumulative and reactive to different timescales’ (Ross & Taylor-Leech, Chapter 4: 87). Deep interdisciplinary knowledge is needed to create these maps. Understanding the birth and growth (or birth, growth and death) of policies that support non-dominant languages in education requires skills in multiple languages, in-depth country/regional knowledge, connections with NDL communities and an awareness of a range of policy actors and actions. These contributors bring these skills and expertise to their beautifully diverse timelines.

The timeline is a researcher-specific creation with the form and design depending on the scholar. As Benson and Kosonen note in their Introduction to the volume, timelines are ‘*determined by the researcher* based on salient actions taken or events that occurred in the history of the policy change, meaning the analysis can begin at any arguably important time and continue to the present’ (this volume: 2–3, *italics mine*). To create these maps multiple data points are needed: dates, actors, cultural developments, policies and more. The timelines, which the majority of the volume’s contributors include, reflect their cases’ complex policy trajectories. These policy maps differ considerably in style and detail, providing generative ideas for future researchers. For example, Burarungrot and Person (Chapter 3: 63) divide their timeline of NDLs in Thailand into named eras (e.g. ‘1939–1987 Security and Identity’, ‘1988–2003 Tycoons and Tourists’), while Browne and Napanangka include arrows to show the direction of policy in favour (up) and against (down) (Chapter 11) regarding the Warlpiri language in Australia.

The framework has already resulted in a dynamic rethinking of ways to depict NDL policy work beyond timelines. In their 2021 volume, Benson and Kosonen issued a challenge to take this framework forward by applying it to other cases and amending its features to account for policy change and multilingual education. Ball and Smith (Chapter 2)

have responded to this call here by proposing an alternative to the traditional hierarchy in their timeline model with decision-makers ‘on the top’ and community members on the bottom. They suggest turning the schema ‘on its head’ to position communities on the top and those who are elected to serve them on the bottom. This reimagining of power evokes the Mick Dyer ‘upside down’ world map to prompt a reconsideration of taken-for-granted orientations and perspectives in policy development.¹

The process of creating a timeline presents numerous temporal-conceptual challenges. First, the task of determining a starting point of a language policy or movement poses difficulties. Limerick asks, ‘What counts as the “start” to a policy?’ (Chapter 13: 285). Browne and Martin Napanangka note a similar ‘starting’ observation in their research on the Warlpiri of Northern Australia: ‘If you start the timeline further back as we did [in the 1950s], it is apparent that the preceding decades were characterized by community efforts in schools, work with linguists on Warlpiri orthography, papers describing the value of learning in first languages, and the presence of Warlpiri educators in classrooms’ (Chapter 10: 242). Determining additional timeline markers proves just as complex: How do we decide and depict which ‘pre-policy’ (if something like that exists) is essential to include? And, how wide should we cast the policy and cultural development net to capture all the crucial timeline events? Second, the timeline presents a ‘linear challenge’ to depict key moments in a neat sequence. The unevenness around NDL-related developments might be just as important to capture, but it is a much messier endeavor. In her reflections on the study of linguistic ideology, Inoue (2004: 1) raises the need to ‘bring to light multiple, heterogenous, and uneven temporalities and histories that the dominant historical narrative, often presenting itself as singular and linear, suppresses’. Limerick (this volume: 285) remarks on the challenge of creating a traditional timeline of Kichwa in Ecuador: ‘Yet, as evidenced by the involvement of Indigenous peoples at many levels, a neat linear progression, or even a straightforward manner of diffusion, is not easy to segment. What counts as the “start” to a policy?’.

The tripartite temporal view of policy activity from above, from below, and from the side points to the third timeline challenge: how to address the uneven visibility of policy actors. State policies and public figures ‘from above’ lend themselves to distinct identification and clear starting/end points. Individuals working from the side and below, especially those who are part of groups or collectives, as well as those who work in homes and community settings, might be impossible to name given uneven historic records (or the idea of who makes policy) and the anonymity of group work. As Maiti remarks in her research on intercultural bilingual education in Argentina, ‘Compared to actions taken from above, which relate to official policy and can be

easily accessed on academia and ministries of education websites, actions from the side and from below tend to be under-documented' (Chapter 12: 253). This collective 'community' role is captured, for example, by Kay *et al.* in the case study of the Mon in Myanmar (Chapter 5) and by Iwasaki's reference to community-led literacy groups in Senegal at the change from below level in her timeline (Chapter 8: 173). The capturing, making sense of and contextualizing these policy efforts 'from below' make the timeline documentation all the more urgent for full accounts and for acknowledging the contributions of *all* policy actors. Solutions are limited for addressing any temporal lopsidedness, or imbalance, in the language policy and practice timelines resulting from the depiction of specific, punctuated policies 'from above' and largely anonymous, generalized and spatially attenuated community action 'from below'. Burarungrot and Person (Chapter 3) offer one potential corrective using the case of Thailand; they issue a call to identify individual 'champions' of MLE embedded within institutions working for change.

Policy trajectories

Kosonen and Benson have identified four models to trace the directionality of change and processes related to the use of NDLs in different countries and contexts. These trajectories, as noted in their introduction, help to predict which combinations of actions will have the best chance of success in terms of large-scale implementation and sustainability (Chapter 1). Capturing the shifts of MLE policy trajectories illustrates the arc of change and works against any notion that policies are static. These trajectories point to the temporality of public policy, particularly their 'ability...to shift, and even reverse, direction' (Howlett, 2024: 235). Trajectories, wherever they start (e.g. above, the side or below), have pivot points, and mapping them may help to reveal useful patterns for future planning, practice and/or research.

Most contributors to this volume locate their cases among the existing four models. Interestingly, a handful of authors mix several of the four models, including Iwasaki's analysis of bilingual education in Senegal (Chapter 8), which blends Models 2, 3 and 4, and Ball and Smith's study of multilingual education in Cambodia, which also mixes models. While many authors identify several historical switch points and 'openings' to advance policy, some also point to problematic vulnerabilities. These include shifts in political climates (as seen in the multilingual pilot programs of Timor-Leste, Chapter 4, and the recent national policy reversal in the Philippines, Chapter 6); a range of structural and attitudinal challenges including unsupportive school directors (as evident in Tamazight education in Morocco, Chapter 7);

the persistence of top-down traditions (as highlighted with Kazakh language education policy, Chapter 9); and the stubborn adherence to monoglossic ideologies in language planning (as found in Kichwa education in Ecuador, Chapter 13). These case studies support the need for careful trajectory mapping of each major NDL-related policy.

These trajectories also reveal the epistemological challenges involved in MLE policy analyses. Mapping change requires us to identify key moments in the ‘life’ of a policy: What constitutes a shift in policy direction? What evidence is needed to identify a new policy direction? How do we determine which policies to map if multiple NDL policies collectively influence language use and position in society? Howlett (referencing Abbott, 1992) speaks to this analytic challenge as ‘problems of multiple overlapping and intersecting “plots” that can make a central narrative storyline difficult to discern; and problems with too many characters obscuring the plotlines of a story’ (2024: 227). The variety of ways that the volume’s contributors respond to these foundational challenges and engage with this important policy analysis points to another major contribution of this collection.

Phases

Phases – initial, intermediate, future – constitute the final temporal-direction element of the framework. Fewer of the volume’s authors incorporate these phases into their analyses. Eneh’s contribution is a notable exception. In his study of Tamazight in Moroccan education, Eneh (Chapter 7) sketches out the details of a proposed directional model, describing what would be needed to progress from teacher surveys and data collection at the initial phase to the use of Tamazight as a language of instruction in the long-term phase. Other contributors allude to phase-like aspects of their cases when sharing their concerns about incremental change and the risks to sustaining policy advances. Insights from political science might help to shed light on strategic slow changes. Wegrich (2024) proposes the possible benefits of ‘tactical incrementalism’: ‘While actors pursue small-scale changes in short time, they in effect follow a more long-term strategy; that is they have a longer time horizon but use quickly achieved small-scale changes to increase their chances for achieving longer-term goals’ (2024: 279). These incremental measures ‘can be used to change the political forces of demand and support for a political policy that would not have been generated without visibly implementing a small-scale change’ (2024: 279). Continued investigation of these cases could address the ways the framework’s phases work to capture the temporal dynamics of policy duration, sustainability, stagnancy, and rupture. This research could further identify the ‘resources and restraints’ of the ‘timing, sequencing, speed, and duration of processes in parliaments, policy

arenas, or multilevel governance constellations’ (Straßheim, 2024: 286) within any region or state.

The Temporal-Agentive Dimension

The case studies attest to the range of policy actors needed for NDL policy change over place and time. The authors reveal the crucial ways that actors ‘from the side’, in particular, facilitate, communicate and collaborate across above and below levels. Time intertwines with the agency of these actors in various ways, including their individual experience of temporality; in short, they have their own ‘time horizons’ (Wegrich, 2024: 281). Holland and Lave’s ‘history in person’ concept helps us to understand the relationship of individuals to broader developments by exploring the ways individuals operate in certain spatial/institutional moments; as they explain, ‘history is brought to the present moment of local time/space in the body/minds of actors’ (Holland & Lave, 2019: 4). A ‘history in person’ perspective thus highlights the ways that temporality, including different tempos, the short term, and the long term, ‘constitute frameworks that social actors themselves bring to their subjective experiences’ (Howard, 2012: 67). Arzadon and Colicol (Chapter 6: 141) draw our attention to these personal, temporal scales in their analysis of MLE in the Philippines, where the teachers’ ‘sad memories of English-dominated classes they attended as pupils or led as teachers’ play a formative role in their sense of agency. Both pasts *and* futures shape, and are shaped, by individuals. Henry and MacIntyre (2024) point to the ways individual’s relationship with the future can influence policy directions, especially their ‘anticipation of the future, including expectations, specific time horizons and planning perspectives that shape current actions and decision-making’ (citing Hollstein, 2021: 9). This volume reveals the ways the integration and compression of pasts, presents and futures shapes individual responses to NDL opportunities.

This volume helps us to appreciate the ways NDL policy actors look different across time and place. The contours of ‘the side’ depend on the country/region and time period. Bahry (Chapter 10) notes that in the case of Yughur education in China, local autonomous government officials and agencies work more like NGOs, which are often the side actors found elsewhere around the globe. In Australia, Browne and Martin Napanangka (Chapter 11: 229) distinguish Warlpiri MLE actors ‘on the side’ between the ‘local organized’ community networks and the ‘non-local’ allies. Finally, Ball and Smith find the category ‘from the side’ overly broad for their case study of MLE in Cambodia (Chapter 2); they reserve the term ‘side actors’ instead for those individuals outside both the formal education and the system of accountability, who typically work outside the system of accountability as part of the language policy implementation.

The Temporal-Spatial Dimension

Beech *et al.* (2025) posit that time can be considered in multiple ways in relation to space, not just as linear. They argue that ‘the construction of space-time is relational and embedded in one’s social, cultural, and political background, as well as our relationships with the beyond-human world’ (2025: 188). With these observations in mind, we find that time can be cyclical and circular, and that these temporal-spatial concepts shape NDL language efforts and policies, particularly in Indigenous communities. Browne and Martin Napanangka take up temporal themes in their case study of Warlpiri and the crucial role that elders play in cultural continuity: ‘It is important to work with elders because they are the ones who know about country, about song, about dance, about Dreaming [the ancestral past that continues in the present] and we visit country and talk to the spirit people’ (Chapter 11: 242).

Temporal-spatial concepts also shed light on the ways that time and space intersect to give rise to, suppress, and/or maintain NDL-policy ideas and developments. Benson and Kosonen (this volume: 8) note in their introduction, for example, that one NDL-speaking contributor to the volume observed that ‘actors working from below have more access to side actors than to those from above’. Which spaces and times facilitate this access? Further, in which ways might interdependence be facilitated? We know from several cases including Senegal (Chapter 8) and Australia (Chapter 11) that at key points in time, side actors opened access through jumping between levels and sliding across levels to work with actors above and below. Which times and places would be opportune for actors ‘from above’, who seem to have less cross-level interaction, to cooperate and interact with others?

Generative Ideas for Future Research

The cases included in this edited volume demonstrate the analytic power of conceptualizing change from the side and distinguishing the side from below and above in language-in-education policy development. The authors reveal the fruitfulness of a ‘time-centered conceptual agenda’ (Goetz, 2024: 15) to explore contrasting approaches and solutions for the recurring problem of NDL exclusion from formal schooling. This collection also points to the role of time in the researchers’ own work in understanding the arc of NDL policies. Researchers need a deep contextual understanding to make longitudinal sense of NDL policies and a thorough awareness of the multiple actors involved in language preservation, protection and advancement. Foundational to these researcher abilities are skills in the NDL or multiple regional/national languages, connections with communities involved with language

preservation, and interdisciplinary understandings and sensitivities. This can be slow work, needing long-term commitment.

This volume also invites us to develop further time-centered concepts and to advance temporal-focused research methods. The case studies contribute to ongoing discussions about the methodological challenges of temporal analysis. Henry and MacIntyre (2024: 3) note these complexities: ‘Attempts to understand the present take place along a temporal axis where the shadow of time is cast from the past and future simultaneously’. In the future, scholars could focus on how an array of temporal-focused concepts like incrementalism and sustainability play a role at key points or over the life of NDL-in-education policy development. Further work on the relevance of phases to these cases, and especially attention to policy acceleration, resistance, dissolution, and maintenance, could contribute to a much-needed expansion of temporal understandings of educational language policy. Methodologically rich opportunities exist to expand participatory aspects in these framework projects. These might involve collaborative (i.e. insider–outsider) timeline creation, shared policy-trajectory mapping and/or the joint identification of key actors (on and across all levels) as well as of major policy turning points.

Additional research opportunities exist along the temporal-agentive line to explore more deeply individual side actors or organizing on the ‘side’. With additional attention to temporal aspects, researchers could examine these side actors at key cultural-political moments and across time. Of particular interest could be the times of turbulence or of opportunity for side actors. Likewise, researchers could engage in comparative analyses of these side actors across countries and within regions.

Possibilities abound for further temporal-spatial research related to the Kosonen and Benson framework. As mentioned above, one area needing greater attention is the space (or spaces) where above, side, and below actors interact. Identifying and exploring the spaces, especially those that provide opportunities for ‘dialogue, cooperation and exchange’ (Ross & Taylor-Leech, Chapter 4: 98) of actors from different levels would provide needed policy insights. In my chapter for the Benson and Kosonen (2021) volume, for example, I explored shared, generative events, like regional-language song festivals, for Võro language-in-education planning in Estonia. Of particular interest were those events with enduring tradition-making and cross-community multiplier effects (Brown, 2021). Understanding the constellation of developments that give rise to these mixed spaces, the factors leading to their persistence, and/or the causes for their closure would be valuable empirical data.

This collection marks a significant step in a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the diverse work to advance NDLs in education around the world. Animating these positive efforts at

all levels is a belief in a different possible world for non-dominant languages and their speakers. The case studies with their temporal throughlines provide us with a glimpse of new worlds in the making. As Irvine (2004: 107) notes, ‘temporalities must often - always? – come in pairs, as ways in which one compares and assesses possible worlds, whether these worlds are different aspects of one’s own experience or different hypothetical realms’. In this volume, we find several temporal pairs – past–present, linear–cyclical/circular, short term–long term – featuring significantly in the lived experiences, understandings and imaginations of actors involved in bringing NDLs. These case studies and the framework they apply to their analyses inspire further research that, as Ball and Smith note, can lead to ‘more relevant, context-fitting, community-paced, and community-based social change’ (Chapter 2: 57). The Kosonen and Benson framework provides a way to more deeply understand the work of all actors to bring about these possible worlds that support education for non-dominant language speakers.

Note

- (1) See ‘The world turned upside down’. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center (at the Boston Public Library). (n.d.). <https://collections.leventhalmap.org/search/commonwealth:9s161j433>.

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Index

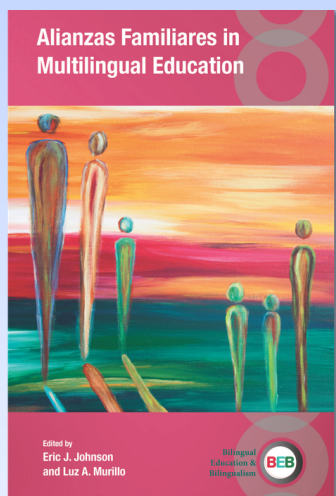
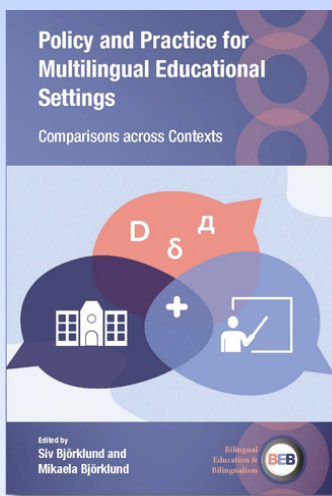
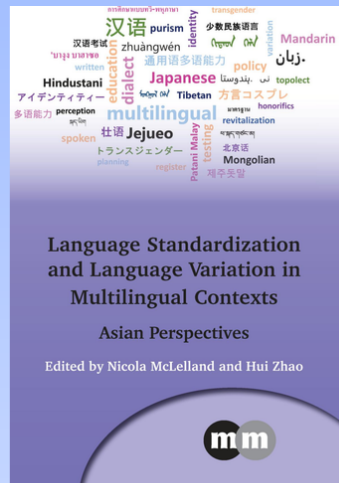
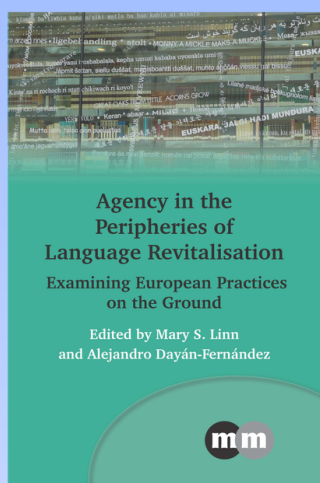
- Above-side-below framework 2–3, 5–6,
8–12, 14–19, 22–24, 32, 34–37, 41–42,
49, 54–55, 57, 61, 70, 78, 83, 86–88,
97–98, 104–106, 109–110, 122, 128,
132–133, 141, 143, 147, 159, 168,
170–172, 174, 180–182, 187–205,
227–230, 241, 243, 251, 253, 255,
264–266, 272–274, 278, 289–291, 294,
297–298
- Actors from above 3, 5, 8, 11, 17, 19, 22,
24–29, 31–32, 34, 36, 41, 63–67,
69–74, 77, 88, 93–94, 98, 106, 108,
110–111, 113, 115, 117, 119–123,
127–128, 130, 147, 153, 155, 159–160,
172, 188, 190, 197, 204–207, 211,
216–217, 219, 223, 230, 233–235, 241,
244, 253, 255, 272–274, 285, 292–293,
296
- Actors from below 3, 8, 10–12, 17–20, 22,
24–29, 31, 34, 63, 66–67, 69, 73, 76,
89, 95, 106, 111, 115, 117–120, 122,
127–131, 134–135, 143, 147, 151–152,
159, 161–162, 172, 187–188, 193, 199,
205–207, 211, 216–217, 219–220, 223,
228–230, 233, 235, 241, 244, 251, 253,
255, 258, 264–266, 278–279, 284–285,
293, 296
- Actors from the side 3, 6–7, 9, 11–12,
19–20, 22, 24–26, 28–29, 31, 33–34,
41–42, 55, 61, 63, 65, 68, 72–73,
75, 77–78, 88, 90–93, 111, 113–115,
117–120, 122, 130, 135, 142, 147, 153,
155, 162, 172, 174, 190, 193–197, 199,
205, 207, 211, 213, 216–217, 219–223,
229–230, 233, 236, 241–242, 244, 253,
255, 271–272, 274, 278, 289, 292–293,
295–296
- Agency 10, 15–23, 26, 28, 32–33, 36,
55–56, 119, 127, 129, 131–132,
134–143, 147, 159, 193, 199, 230, 243,
289, 295, 293
- Argentina 5, 12, 20, 22, 34–35, 250–268,
289, 292,
- Australia 5, 11, 18, 20, 23, 30, 34–35,
227–249, 291–292, 295–296
- Bunong 40, 43–45
- Cambodia 23, 27, 29–30, 33, 35, 40–59,
293, 295
- China 11, 19, 25, 32, 34, 36, 190, 199,
204–226, 295
- Chubut (province) 12, 22, 35, 250–253,
255–266
- Ecuador 12, 22, 26, 270–288, 292, 294
- Fataluku 82–83, 88, 90–92, 98
- Filipino (Tagalog) 128–131, 133, 136,
139, 142
- Indigenous language 12, 17, 21, 40, 43–53,
55, 128, 133, 189, 227, 228, 230,
239–240, 251, 253, 255, 257, 259–260,
270–274, 276, 279, 281, 284–285,
- Indigenous people 2, 5, 7–9, 12, 18, 21–23,
30, 35, 41–53, 57, 64, 71, 73, 76–77,
130, 132–134, 214, 240, 251–255,
257–258, 260–266, 270–273, 275, 277,
279, 285, 292, 296,
- Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) 12,
21–22, 35, 63, 250–255, 257–258, 265,
270–274, 276, 285, 292
- Jinghpaw (Jingpho) 5, 18, 104, 106, 110,
116–119, 121–122
- Kachin 9, 28, 32, 105–106, 109–110,
115–123
- Kazakh 5, 11, 16, 26, 186–201, 294
- Kazakhstan 5, 16, 25, 32, 186–203
- Kichwa (Quichua) 12, 251, 270–286,
292, 294
- Language revitalization 26, 68–69, 71,
149, 187, 193–194, 196, 200–201, 214,
222–223, 252–253, 255, 265, 276
- L1-based multilingual education (first
language-based multilingual
education) 4, 18, 22, 61, 103, 118,
127, 275, 284

- Mapuzungun (Mapudungun) 12, 35,
250–251, 257–259, 262–263, 265
- Model 1: Top-down 10, 23–26, 31–32, 34,
147, 160–161, 172, 192, 200, 230, 242
- Model 2: Bottom-up 23–24, 27–28, 172,
174, 182, 200, 264, 293
- Model 3: Piloting 22, 24, 28–32, 56, 61, 71,
78, 172, 174, 200, 230, 293
- Model 4: Advocacy 22, 24, 31, 98, 172,
174, 182, 200, 293
- Mon 5, 9, 18, 28, 32, 62, 103–106,
109–115, 120–122, 293
- Morocco 10, 18, 36, 146–165, 293
- Mother tongue-based multilingual
education (MTB-MLE) 4, 76,
105–110, 112, 114–116, 118, 118–123,
128, 136, 138, 140, 142
- Myanmar 5, 9–10, 18, 22–23, 27–28,
32–34, 103–126, 293
- Non-dominant language 1–3, 5–11, 14–15,
17, 20–28, 32–35, 37, 41–43, 46, 49,
54, 56–58, 60–61, 86, 90, 105, 110,
122, 128, 147, 172, 178, 180, 190–191,
193, 204–205, 208, 211, 213–214,
219–220, 222–223, 228–229, 244, 254,
261, 263, 275–276, 289, 291, 298
- Northern Territory 11, 30, 35, 227–228,
231, 234, 240
- Patani Malay 60–63, 65, 67, 69–72, 77
- Philippines 5, 10, 18, 29–30, 33, 127–145,
170, 190, 193, 293, 295
- Policy implementation (implementation)
2, 10, 14, 19, 22, 24, 25–27, 30–34,
41–42, 45–54, 56–58, 62–63, 67,
72–73, 75, 83, 86, 88–89, 93, 97,
105–110, 115, 118, 120–121, 127–132,
135–140, 142–143, 150–152, 158–161,
163, 169, 178, 180–182, 187, 189,
192, 208, 222, 228–229, 240–242, 244,
251–255, 258–266, 272, 293, 295
- Pulaar 166–167, 169, 171, 174–178
- Quechua 251, 271, 276–277
- Senegal 10, 23, 29, 36, 166–185, 293, 296
- Subanen 5, 127–128, 133
- Sunan (county) 204–215, 218–223
- Sustainability: 2–3, 8–9, 11–12,
15–16, 24–26, 29–30, 32–34, 36,
42, 44, 47, 49–51, 53–54, 58, 61,
90, 93–94, 97, 114–115, 120,
122–123, 128–129, 143–144,
169, 192, 200, 227, 229–230,
237, 242, 244–245, 264–266,
293–294, 297
- Thailand 5, 9, 27, 29–30, 33, 60–81, 178,
291, 293
- Tamazight 10, 18, 146–147, 149–163,
293–294
- Tetun (Tetum, Official Tetun,
Tetun-Dili/Tetun-Prasa, Tetun
Terik, Tetun-Belu) 31, 82–85,
88–92, 96
- Timeline (change over time) 2–3, 9, 17,
24, 32, 34–36, 45, 61, 62–63, 97–98,
108, 110–111, 115–116, 129–130,
148–151, 171–173, 181, 190–192, 229,
231–233, 241–244, 255–257,
289–293, 297
- Timor-Leste 9, 22, 31, 33, 70, 82–102,
289, 293
- Trajectory (policy change trajectory)
10, 23, 31, 34–36, 55–56, 61, 78,
92, 98, 147, 160, 168, 172, 180, 193,
228–231, 241, 244, 265–266, 285,
294, 297
- Warlpiri 5, 11, 18, 23, 30, 35, 227–239,
241–245, 291–292, 295–296
- Wolof 169, 171, 175–178
- Yughur (including Sarigh/West and Shira/
East Yughur) 11, 25, 204–207,
210–223, 295



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