BILINGUAL EDUCATION AGAIN.

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BILINGUAL EDUCATION AGAIN. ISSUES OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT WORK IN MOZAMBIQUE, AS RAISED IN CHIMBUTANE'S RECENT BOOK [1]

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Abstract

Since 2003 a Bilingual Education programme has been offered in selected rural schools of Mozambique. An instance of an early-exit transitional model, the local language is used as medium of instruction (MoI) during the first three years and maintained henceforward as subject whereas Portuguese is introduced orally from the start with its share of time as subject and role as MoI gradually increasing. In respect of education proper Chimbutane's book undertakes to inform on, review and assess the experiment, the issues raised evolving essentially around language practices in schools. I look here specifically at some educational and linguistic aspects and conclude by drawing from the South African scene where African languages have been used as MoI for a much longer period but where they face significant and growing challenges, especially in urban areas, to bring in some lessons that might prove relevant for the future of what is no more an experiment in Mozambique.

Au Mozambique un programme expérimental d'éducation bilingue, faisant des langues locales les langues de première alphabétisation pour être remplacées progressivement par le portugais, a été introduit depuis le début du millénaire. Le récent livre de Chimbutane nous informe sur cette expérience pilote dans le pays, tout en l'évaluant et en questionnant les

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patiques lingusitiques en classe. J'examine ici ces memes questions à travers ce qu'en dit Chimbutane, me référant à l'expérience sud-africaine pour en tirer des lessons qui peuvent etre pertinentes dans la perspective d'une extension du modèle éducatif aux cités.

This paper was triggered by Chimbutane's recent book on the bilingual education programme presently at work in rural Mozambique. Based on a PhD elaborated at Birmingham in Great-Britain, it deals with the realities of the experiment, drawing its argument from extensive field work in two neighbouring rural schools where it is implemented. Since many in Mozambique (and elsewhere) remain sceptical on the merits of resorting to African languages in education and consequently delaying or mitigating the introduction of Portuguese in education,[3] as is witnessed repeatedly by letters and debates in local newspapers (see Ribeiro 2005, 2007), Chimbutane's book is a very well-timed and eloquent counter-fire. Needless to say, Chimbutane is in broad agreement with the principle of an educational strategy in the development of which he has been involved, both as an academic and as an NGO consultant. Like most fact and observation–based accounts of schools in post-colonial contexts, and as the title suggests - even though an indication that it deals with Mozambique might have been helpful - it is an invitation to interrogate ourselves on the propriety, and effectiveness, of the generalisation of the western model of education to non-western societies. "*The shift from a Eurocentric to an African character of education has not occurred*" observed Ramoupi (2011) in respect of South Africa, but the same very much applies elsewhere. For the sake of the discussion, and as the book itself does, if implicitly, I will, for the sake of keeping the discussion within bounds, accept the overall validity and worthiness of the objective of universal schooling along the western model, as spelt out, inter alia, in the Education for All Framework and Millenium Development Goals documents.[4]

The book takes two main angles: one focuses on education proper and consists of excerpts of classes observations as well as interviews with teachers and parents, followed by recommendations, the issues raised evolving essentially around the choice and use of language in schools, while the other relates to broader societal issues, such as ethnic identity, self-pride, etc, illustrating the programme's 'emancipatory force' (p167).[5] It is one of Chimbutane's insights that, in the situation of Mozambique, both aspects are intrinsically linked. Planned and foreseen as a very limited experiment and motivated primarily to improve educational outcomes among the majority rural children, the new strategy has proved so popular with rural communities that many outside its envisaged scope have requested to be included as they longed for a linguistic and cultural recognition that had

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[3] Rather than its position as an international language - Portuguese is not *the* global language - it is essentially the prestige and role of Portuguese as the language instituted as the sole national one in Mozambique (see Stroud and Lafon in print and further references) and its compulsory knowledge for social and economic success in the country, which matter in this context.

[4] Brock-Utne (2000) is a powerful reminder of the western bias of this think-good concept which largely disregards local circumstances, particularly in respect of feasibility and societal impact. See also Shoko Yamada (2010) for an interesting historical perspective on the implicit 'universal' and a-temporal validity of such 'greater goods'. Notwithstanding, to avoid any misunderstanding, let me clarify my stand which underlies some of the views expressed in this paper. Even though I nurture doubts about the relevance of the generalization of the western education model, I was, and remain, for educational as well as ideological reasons, a convinced advocate of the extended use of vernacular languages in education and elsewhere.

[5] All pages refer to Chimbutane's book.

been denied them so far. The post peace-agreement political settlement as well as the regional environment made a strong case for government to concede. Thus, from its inception the experiment embraced 16 or 17 languages instead of the 7 initially considered and consequently well over twice more classrooms and pupils. Its extension continues much on the same way. As convincingly argued in the book, by the popular endorsement it triggered the programme has forced the political leadership to drastically change its ideological stance, entrenching the recognition of the country's linguistic diversity and its cultural and human value. Leaving explicit ideological and political considerations for another opportunity however,[6] I look here specifically at educational and linguistic aspects.

Language classes – Portuguese as a foreign language and as a resource

The two schools surveyed are located in rural expanses of the same southern province of Gaza, both areas sharing broadly the same socio-economic and cultural circumstances – impoverished subsistence agriculture and subsequent importance of emigration and trade - but differing linguistically: one is mainly Chope-speaking, the other, Changana (viz. Tsonga) –speaking. In neither is the presence of Portuguese heavily felt. Chimbutane very clearly sets the scene, emphasising the triple difficulty pupils who discover the MoI (medium of instruction) in the school are faced with: "*acquisition of the language, of classroom genres and of legitimated forms of knowledge*" (p27), not discounting the limited knowledge of the language displayed by the teachers themselves (for an example see p90 & below). His analysis of Portuguese-subject gr 5 classes, where Portuguese is supposed to be both the medium of instruction and the content, is particularly enlightening. It debunks the myth that Portuguese, in rural Mozambique at least, is an L2 as opposed to a foreign language (p87 & seq). Chimbutane himself acknowledges this fact as he shifts to calling the language (once) L2/FL (foreign language) (p92). Indeed, if it were admitted that in rural areas Portuguese is for all purposes a foreign language, there would be little discussion as to whether the L1 may be used as a medium of instruction, possibly jointly with the target language, as Chimbutane cautiously proposes (p100). This is rational. Immersion strategy may work, but provided there is immersion. When the school language is not spoken widely outside school, there is no linguistic immersion to speak of. Mere language classes, or even school attendance, cannot be substitutes. After all, *in a school situation,* nobody would claim to teach Arabic or Chinese or German to, say, French or Portuguese or Hindi monolingual learners (that is, with no foreknowledge of the target language) when it is not spoken commonly in the area, without recourse to a language already known to them, even if the teachers happen to be native speakers of the target language. Children in rural Mozambique hardly ever hear Portuguese outside school.[7] The short-cut to meaning which is used in such instances to avoid translation, by showing, designating,

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[6] See Lafon (forthcoming) for a development of this line of argument.
[7] In border regions, but not in the areas herein considered, they may in fact hear more English.

body language, etc, goes for things and objects that can be shown (body parts, pencil, table, etc), for basic actions (walking, speaking, standing up, etc) or for simple messages (*how are you today?*) but the domains covered are per nature limited. The strategy becomes problematic and uncertain when more subtle notions are introduced (reference to events or things outside the classroom, in past or future time, concepts, even social relations, etc). This requires the explicit use of a medium familiar to the children, preferably the L1, in term of a curriculum organised in a gradual progression. A confirmation of the superiority of this strategy can be found in a case study in the Philippines where Tupas (2010:114) observes that "*primary pupils taught English through the mother-tongue performed better (…) than those who were taught English through English*". Translation is not a sinful activity that should be avoided at all cost. On the contrary, it is a rich exercise that creates awareness of the linguistic and cultural similarities and differences between the languages at stake, and it is a powerful tool for meaning making, as is now often accepted in bilingual classes. What is probably of less value in term of lasting transmission of knowledge is for the teacher to resort to L1 somewhat inadvertently or, worse, ashamedly, through spontaneous, unprepared code-switching, when she realizes that communication with the pupils is amiss. Indeed, the point has been accepted even in Mozambique: the NGO Progresso is preparing a manual to teach Portuguese as a foreign language in such contexts (E Sequiera, Progresso, pers. com. Maputo, October 2011).[8]

Paradoxical as this may seem, it is when we turn to L1 subject classes that recourse to Portuguese appears the most inescapable (p101 and below). This is probably due to the fact that the limited period during which the local language functions as official MoI: in the first three to four years, grammar is the only scientific discipline considered. Otherwise the lack of terminology development in the African languages would impose, as it does elsewhere, borrowings, at least for technical terms.[9] However the book shows an ambiguity. A parallel is drawn between the use of the L1 in Portuguese classes and that of Portuguese in L1 classes. Tempting as symmetry may be, the two situations are in fact opposite: in L1 classes, the language is already known and terminology is required for grammatical purposes, and this is where L2 plays its part as a source of technical terms which are presumably inserted in otherwise L1 sentences (borrowings or loans); in L2 classes, the language is unfamiliar if not unknown and L1 may be resorted to as a teaching help, for meaning making, etc, through various strategies, much beyond the mere borrowings of words, from code-mixing to code-switching, that fall under the new catch term of translanguaging (Pluddemann 2011).

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[8] The eventual role of the L1 in the teaching is unclear however. One suspects that it is barred, as the manual is not language-specific – that is, presumably valid across the country.

[9] Incidentally, one is reassured to note that grammar has not been banned from Mozambican curriculum.

Medium of Writing and Access

As a broad issue tackled by the book is language choice in the classroom, it is fitting to examine the book in this regard: similarly to all communicative endeavours, it is not exempted it from a likewise decision.

The overall language of the narrative is English. Most excerpts of class observations are given in their English translation, significant exceptions being the transcript of a song in Chope and a handful of instances in Portuguese or either African language, usually the inception of the dialogue, words at stake in the lessons or cultural expressions, including insults. All is then duly translated into English. Still, the research was conducted mainly in the local languages. Such a feature of the research is particularly appropriate here as it is congruent with the classroom situation where pupils are much more at ease with a teacher from their own who not only understands their social mores but can legitimately call on them should the need arise (see p25, *à propos* Indian teachers).[10]

The language choice calls for two comments.

One can only regret that the original Chope and Changana texts are not given in their entirety, especially as it is not always clear in which language (African or Portuguese) the exchange has been conducted (p 80 to 122). I do not underestimate issues of space, but a wider use of languages in the book would, in principle, make full sense, even if cumbersome. It would after all be a more genuine reflexion of the reality of the classrooms.

Another relates to the targeted audience. If one can only agree with Chimbutane that his book would be beneficial to teachers in rural areas involved (or not) in the programme (p2), there is a bit of well-wishing here. If the issue of distribution and price is being looked into – by October 2011 the book had not yet reached Maputo's bookshops but the author had come to an understanding with the publishers to make the book available in the country at a discounted price (pers. com Oct 2011 Maputo)[11] – there remains that of language. Few rural teachers in Mozambique would have sufficient command of English to peruse it, or else they would probably not remain rural primary teachers. However, a collective book in Portuguese dedicated to the programme of which Chimbutane is a co-editor is in its final stage, being scheduled to appear in 2012 (Chimbutane & Stroud 2012). Were it not for the good intention expressed above this might in part answer the

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[10] The advantage of empathetic observation, where the analyst shares the linguistic and cultural background with the population observed, need, I feel, no further argument and should remain the rule rather than the exception, even when the researcher is alien to the community. Indeed this was the rule among the British anthropological school at some stage, theories to the contrary betraying the fact that initially most anthropological research was meant to be conducted by Europeans on 'subaltern' groups of the periphery without any deep and long involvement Learning the target population's language for the purpose of research implies a longer and deeper relationship with the group, which naturally tended to lead the researchers to assume a critical position vis-à-vis colonial encroachment…. However in some cases it also fostered a traditionalist approach to the others' cultures and world-views, not least among some Southern African anthropologists, with unsavoury consequences.

[11] Even at a discounted price, the book would remain unfortunately quite out of reach of most rural primary teachers in Mozambique, who are unlikely to divert some of their scarce income towards purchasing intellectual aliments.

point as Chimbutane summarizes his findings in a chapter therein. Obviously, regardless of the author's stated intention, the present book primarily targets a wider audience, notably 'educated' Mozambicans and education consultants whose linguistic repertoire would per force include English.

Language modernisation and the temptation of purism

The sudden extension of the domains of use of African languages challenges native speakers ideologically as they are suddenly faced by what they may see as shortcomings of their own idiom. Obviously, the programme has triggered language development. This is piloted by linguists the majority of whom hails from University Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo, who may or may not speak the language at stake. Interestingly, as linguistic innovation (terminology and spelling essentially) is introduced, children become the bearers of language maintenance and development since it is through them that parents get acquainted with it (p116 & seq). In the highly sensitive area of terminology, communities' response, not unexpectedly, leans sometimes towards what can be labelled a 'purist' attitude. This is verified among Chope speakers who appear reluctant in front of borrowings and wish for 'pure' Chope words and forms, to 'retain the language' (p101, 109). This attitude plays itself in two directions, vis-à-vis Portuguese on the one hand, as expected, but also vis-à-vis the next door African language on the other. Understandable as it is, this attitude must be carefully monitored. In relation to Portuguese, it may easily prove counterproductive, as endless and fruitless debates on borrowings *vs* internal coinages for school terminology in the official African languages in South Africa have shown (for instance Taljard 2008). Chimbutane tries to bring some reason in the discussion, admitting that, given the socio-political context, borrowings from Portuguese are inevitable. The issue of the relation between 'sister' African languages, on which Chimbutane does not really position himself, is somewhat subtler. The two linguistic areas are appropriately chosen: they contrast two languages in contact, one smaller, one bigger. Mozambican African languages may share a diglossic position vis-à-vis Portuguese but this does not entail that they are all on the same level. Due to population size, sociological factors and/or historical accidents, some languages stand at the bottom whereas others take an upper seat. Chope ranks among the small languages in Mozambique. It is restricted to that country where it is spoken by cir. 4% of the population, viz. 750 000 persons, whereas Changana is ascribed in Mozambique to cir 12%, viz., 1 700 000, three times more, not discounting the fact that it counts significant minorities in neighbouring South Africa and Zimbabwe (see www.ethnologue.com). Changana can also boast a certain intellectual tradition, with a genuine literate history that goes back more than a 100 years, making it, with its close cognate Ronga, one of the first of its kind in Mozambique. After it was reduced to writing in the late 19th century, its written use was taken up by the small educated assimilado elite of the early 20th century in their bulletins (see Rocha 2006: and Lafon in print). This literary tradition was continued, or revived, by Sitoe in 1995 with the publication of a novel. Even though most Chope speakers would

be fluent in Changana and they would smoothly shift to Changana to accommodate the author's limited (by his own admission) command of Chope - another instance of the unrecognized but efficient linguistic skills developed by ordinary people when situation demands - they appear to resent the influence Changana has had, and has, on their own idiom and strive to keep to 'genuine' forms. As sociolinguistics has long established, languages have always influenced each other in complex ways and there is, at least in our age, no 'pure' language, but we are dealing with perceptions rather than averred truth. This is shifting sand and one must tread carefully. If claims for 'pure' language were too vocal, it would probably threaten the maintenance of the programme due to the political undertone and the inherent risk of tribalism entailed,[12] even though peace in Mozambique seems durably installed and the two language groups at stake, in spite of being neighbours, do not appear to have any history of conflict. To combat such very real tendencies of ethnic jingoism, African languages, especially those closely related as is the case here, could be used as lexical and terminological resources to each other, thus strengthening their internal ties. Post-apartheid South Africa offers a valuable example of what can be achieved. In reaction to the past when ethnic separation was further promoted by seeking different terms in each and every official education language for newly introduced concepts,[13] languages belonging to either one of the two main families (Nguni and Sotho) are now tentatively brought closer by sharing linguistic innovations, as happens in Parliament for the translation of official documents (Moses Biyela, former translator Parliament (Zulu), pers. com. 2008). In Mozambique that would imply that languages are being developed in a coordinated and centralised manner, through an ad hoc agency – a language academy of sorts as advocated as early as 2002 by Dias (2002:) but still to be set up. Such language development or management would go a long way to pre-empt potential negative effects of focusing on the particular and constitute an elegant way to take advantage of the closeness.

Translation, adaptation and local knowledge

In debates about language in education in post-colonial countries, there is all too often a tendency to focus on language and disregard contents, not to mention pedagogy, as Tupas (2010) observes in respect of the Philippines. These aspects however cannot be fully divorced. Former colonial languages on the one hand and languages of the periphery on the other, including African languages - one would like to posit a symmetry, by identifying them as *former* peripheral or subaltern languages but, for most of them at least, that would be mere lip service to political correctness - belong to totally unrelated linguistic families and express profoundly

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[12] It would in fact vindicate the past policy of denying space to African languages and promoting Portuguese as a crucial tool for national unity.

[13] If English and Afrikaans were the sole official languages at the country level, a number of African languages were used in the Bantu education system; the same were also (co-)official languages in the respective homelands.

differing cultures and world-views.[14] Those discrepancies make literal translation of schools manuals written in Portuguese into African languages such as the two Bantu ones considered herein largely inappropriate on both linguistic and cultural grounds, and this surfaces on several occasions.[15] I do not attempt here to 'essentialise' languages and cultures. I acknowledge, as postcolonial theory has underscored, that modern circumstances have by necessity triggered a measure of fluidity between linguistic systems as well as cultural viewpoints in individuals from non-western horizons (much less so though in natives of mainstream western countries even when confronted on a regular basis to non-western otherness). But this argument cannot be used to surreptitiously expand western models without giving dues to non-western ones.

Language-wise, that is, when language itself is the topic of the class, the logical solution doesn't involve a full paradigm change but just paying attention to the target language itself and build the lesson accordingly. An example will clarify things. An L1 lesson observed deals with degrees of comparison in adjectives (p78 & seq.). Chimbutane, a linguist himself, is well aware that adjectives are rather uncommon in Bantu languages and notes in passim that 'qualifiers' would be a better term. But he does not extrapolate further. Still, the whole exercise is somewhat out of tune with the intended aim of a rigorous grammatical lesson, as would have been (hopefully) the case in Portuguese. Comparison in Bantu languages is expressed in ways which have nothing to do with any alteration of the adjectives (or qualifiers) that could even loosely be termed 'degrees'. 'Adjectives', in a Bantu language perspective, are certainly not a central feature and probably do not deserve a lesson at an early stage of learning. Rather, the grammatical outlook in the L1s should be framed around the noun class system and the alliteration process, not to mention ideophones, which offer so much intriguing and exciting features for children to play with.[16] Note that in any case the lesson on adjectives is high jacked by a discussion on the proper form of the word (a verb) meaning 'being in good health', learners and teacher using slightly different items phono-morphologically (p80-81).

The case of the Chope counting system (p120) reveals another feat of the cultural gap. This language, as others in the wider region, has an original base-5 counting system (6 is 5 +1, etc). The education authorities are depicted as making an attempt to replace the composed numbers (5+1) by wholesome imports, presumably to align the language with the dominant decimal system – even though the point is not explicitly raised here. Happily, we learn that the Chope community, not at ease with the proposed change, managed to force the institution to back down and accept their own genuine numbering. It is not clarified though whether the logic of

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[14] The position of European-based creoles being somewhat in-between.

[15] The same obviously would apply to translation from French and/or English to Wolof, Swahili or Zulu, to take but a few examples.

[16] Ideophones often enough can be called upon to express quality. Still, because as a category they are lacking in European languages, ideophones are an all-time looser in African languages' manuals framed on a European-language model.

the base-5 numbering will influence (as it should) the school numeracy component (the way of explaining and decomposing operations), so that it can reconcile with mental calculus.[17]

And then we come to explicit cultural aspects. Inescapable in school context are body and health (as already transpired with the 'adjectives'). The lack of one-to-one correspondence between the two school languages (local language & Portuguese) appears in a lesson on proper nutrition, which leads to introducing the term 'diabetes'. Using its Changana equivalent *nyongwa*, which also (and probably primarily) means 'bile',[18] the teacher influenced by her mother-tongue refers back to the disease as 'bile' in Portuguese (p89-90). Besides showing her limited knowledge of Portuguese, this example illustrates differing conceptions of body, health and disease. This same issue is probably also underlying the lack of understanding by the pupils of the three-part division of the body, proposed in a Portuguese lesson (p85-86). The purely materialistic conception of the body instanced here is presumably at odds with local beliefs and children might have difficulty to conceptualize the body as a mere physical object isolated from all surroundings, physical and otherwise.

In his comments to explain the lack of response from pupils in those instances the author limits himself to the issue of language (p121-123). That is obviously a problem, but one regrets that he does not tackle the conceptual issues behind it, or that come along with it. He comes closer to such a comprehensive view when acknowledging the cognitive gain derived from the programme's acceptance of 'local funds of knowledge', allowing for a measure of agency from the pupils. Thus, when explicit reference is made to a local reality, 'bringing the outside in' as Lytra (2011) calls it, viz. the piece of cork used as a 'tooth-brush' (Changana *n'lala*) in lieu of the later, or ash to substitute soap, pupils relate more easily to the lesson's topics (hygiene, as it were). Still, what is at stake contents-wise goes beyond the mere inclusion of local terms in an otherwise Western framed lesson; rather, it is, or should be, about incorporating community knowledge as a resource for the lesson, even if this cannot be the end of the story. Community knowledge may be smoothly brought in by the use of the local language, especially through lore (see Lafon F. 1982 for an early acknowledgment and Haire & Matjila 2008 for a South-African illustration). A well-balanced example of what can be achieved in a true bilingual (French-Fulfulde) and bi-'ontics' approach[19] surfaces in a recent school manual edited by Henri Tourneux (2011), targeting schools in North Cameroun. Even though the overall framework reflects Western scientific conception, local knowledge about each topic is considered and presented, invited and supported as it is by the inclusion of genuine Fulfulde texts, further translated as a way to facilitate its use for those teachers not versed in either language. This, it seems, '*provides the children with opportunity to (…) reflect on how traditional*

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[17] Thanks to Ian Draisma who awakened me to this problematic while investigating the Ndau counting system.
[18] Meaning given in Sitoe's Ronga dictionary, to the exclusion of diabetes. Ronga is a close cognate to Shangana.
[19] Postma & Postma (2011) contrast ontology to 'ontics', which they project as a dynamic interaction with reality rather than just depicting it as otherwise inaccessible.

African society approached the subject' (Osaki 1994:64), without shutting on this one view which would obviously be problematic.

The future of the programme: lessons from SA shortcomings

After 10 years, the bilingual education programme affects only a tiny minority of learners, estimated at cir. 20 000 for the whole primary education (E Sequiera, Progresso, pers. com. Maputo, October 2011), which amounts to less than 5% of the school going population, all classes being located in rural areas. A more determined expansion is crucial if the programme is to have any significant impact on the present generation of learners, and this includes the burning issue of its entry into urban areas where the ideological argument of linguistic and cultural recognition bears, presumably, much less weight. The future of the programme, especially its expansion outside rural areas, will therefore depend ultimately on its ability to deliver on its initial aim, viz. improving educational achievement (p160, 165, 166). Like many innovations, to retain favour the programme has to prove itself over its (mainstream) alternative. Hence quality is of the essence, as Chimbutane acknowledges (p137, 151), opposing 'authenticity' to 'material reward'. Now, the quality of the bilingual schools, gauged mostly at this stage by the level of Portuguese obtained among pupils, has been found lacking.[20] His observations and discussions with teachers lead Chimbutane to advance well-supported and balanced recommendations. His advices, directed, presumably, to stake-holders – local education practitioners and consultants as well as education authorities – give the relevant chapters the trappings of a consultant's report but this is appropriate given the fact that there are still swords hanging over the programme. I particularly appreciate his reminder that even though the much vaunted learners' participation is an improvement on teacher-centred methodology, it is not a silver bullet to ensuring effective learning: there may be participation without learning and learning without participation (p98). Not unexpectedly, he advocates the extension of the use of African languages as MoI further up the grades, but not without qualification: there are prerequisites, the main ones being i) for the languages to have developed, terminologically at least, to cope with the new demands; ii) for written material of various kinds to be ready and available; and iii) for teachers to have been trained adequately (p103 & seq). In that regard, the analysis by Pretorius (2008) of literacy progress in South Africa townships' schools might be worth looking at: she observed that the level of L1 literacy in African pupils taught in their mother-tongue, which is the usual and recommended policy in that country and applies to children of non-affluent black families (see further), is in fact dependent on their later acquisition of English L2 literacy, a fact she attributes to the lack of reading material in the L1 (here Sepedi) and its low status.

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[20] A comparative assessment with monolingual schools in similar circumstances would probably show that it is not any worse, but this is not sufficiently taken into consideration.

Without belittling the central issue of resources –teacher training, manuals and texts, decent classrooms, etc- which are fundamental but on which academic research has little purchase,[21] I will focus on language choices which are an intractable part of the package, with the expansion into urban areas in mind. Comparison with South Africa, a country with a longer experience of resorting to Black pupils' home languages, might throw valuable light, if only to warn of shortcomings that have largely blighted the educational and transformational potential of this educational strategy in the country. Furthermore, a more informed knowledge of the realities on the ground may nuance the appreciation Mozambican parents in the two areas are reported to have forged of SA language in education policy and practices, which they know from an outsider's perspective (p 111).

A main characteristic of the South African school system is its duality which opposes dysfunctional schools, commonly estimated to represent up to 80% of the whole complement (Mail and Guardian 22/05/09 p 23), to functional ones, and their respective language policy has become *de facto* a defining criteria. This cannot be understood without looking at the historical roots of this differentiation and its associated features.

In South Africa, the pedagogically sound policy of resorting to an African mother-tongue up to a medium level of schooling – for the first 7 years reduced to 5 from 1976[22] - was shot down after 1994 by its inherent link with apartheid Bantu Education, at the time when all racial restrictions to schools were abolished. Nevertheless, in the last decade before the demise of apartheid, when the initial infamy of Bantu Education was being mitigated by curriculum change and increased funding, and even if the resources of many black schools and of the subsystem as a whole still remained shockingly inferior to those of schools reserved for whites and other minority groups, notably Indians, quality had improved and black education had achieved decent results. Heugh (2002:4) has ascribed a significant raise in the rate of matric passes to the longer period of use of the mother-tongue, since decline started after the 1976 and later cohorts reached matric. Her analysis refers, even if Fleisch (2008) contends that it is difficult to isolate a unique causing factor among many coincident and inter-related ones. Nowadays, the use of African languages as MoI, or Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in local educational parlance ('Newspeak' as Macdonald (2002) acidly terms it) is maintained but limited to the 3 first years of compulsory schooling (Foundation Phase) and restricted de facto to former black schools, invariably located in black townships and rural areas formerly under a homeland. This includes post-apartheid schools, built therein and in informal settlements, so-called 'transitional suburban areas' (Lewin & Sayed 2005: 46). All these schools are perceived as globally dysfunctional and few parents with the wherewithal to do

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[21] The bilingual programme does not appear to fare significantly better or worse funding-wise than the overall education system in Mozambique (see however Lafon in print).
[22] In the aftermath of the 1976 revolt that pitted Black townships schools' pupils against the compulsory use of Afrikaans as medium of instruction in secondary education on a par with English, and more broadly against the second-class education they were condemned to by the apartheid regime, Afrikaans as MoI was made optional and the compulsory use of African languages, in a first helping, reduced from 7 to 5 years.

otherwise would register their offspring there, aggravating the situation further.[23] In spite of the fees and transport costs,[24] following the example of the vast majority of township school teachers themselves, middle-class parents opt for former white or Indian only schools, known as 'former model Cs',[25] usually located in a neighbouring city, which are invariably English- (occasionally Afrikaans-) medium and where African languages are at best taught as 'First Additional Language' (FAL), competing with Afrikaans (or rarely English).[26] Parents might not mention explicitly the school language policy as the motive behind their decision, but it is rarely far in their mind as any sustained discussion shows (see Lafon 2008). More than elsewhere on the continent, this attitude does not merely betray a positive preference for English, even if this rationale plays a growing part (see p151 for examples elsewhere in Africa). Their language policy, featuring African languages as LoLT, has become a shortcut for non-performing primary schools, to the extent that some townships' schools, in the hope of correcting their image and retaining parents, opt – as the 1996 School Act allows - for a 'straight for English' policy. And indeed, even if other factors powerfully contribute to create a context of poor quality education and failure,[27] in townships' schools located around the major urban centres, especially in Gauteng, the inadequacy of the language policy is patent. This is hinged mainly and crucially on the choice of language and language variety, the lack of terminology development, a dire shortage of textbooks and appealing reading materials in that language,[28] the limited or altogether non-existent training of teachers for teaching in the said language,[29] etc (see inter alia Webb, Lafon & Pare 2010).[30] Based on these and other failings, some educationists advocate,

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[23] On the flight away from townships' schools, see Lafon (2008).

[24] Schools serving poor communities have been made free (no-fee schools). In 2011 they comprise over half of all schools under the Department of Education, including the vast majority of townships' schools.

[25] SA schools enjoy a significant measure of autonomy, reinforced in the case of former Model Cs by the importance played by private funding, through fees and donations. Such schools function much as private institutions, even though, as state schools, they must abide by Departmental regulations. Thus needy parents may benefit from partial or total fee exemption if they meet the residential criteria. But admission of black learners is a source of frequent litigations. In December 2011 for instance, a landmark judgment (to be appealed) rescinded a school's decision to deny access to a black learner, on account of alleged lack of space (see Mooki 2011 ; Jansen 2011 blasts the adjudication).

[26] FAL is probably a South African hapax. FAL normally assumes a level of fluency in children, somewhere between first and second language, but closer to first.

[27] They range from poverty, with many children suffering from lack of parental care (over 22% of black children are classified as orphans - see Stat SA 2002-2010 report in Bua News online, www.buanews.gov.za/11/11121314551001, visited Jan 2012), malnutrition and disease, to social environment, with high incidence of crime, through education, with many unqualified teachers, ill discipline among learners and teachers, lack of equipment, etc. See Fleisch (2008) for a systematic review of major factors.

[28] In spite of the relative development of SA languages as compared to the situation in Mozambique.

[29] Ever since the closure of the Teacher Training Colleges from 2002, teachers have been formed in universities' faculties of education, which use English, rarely Afrikaans, as medium. Until recently they did not even feature African languages in their curriculum. It is only in the last years that streams using African languages as MoI have been parsimoniously reintroduced in a handful of faculties.

[30] In 2011, the Gauteng province introduced the Gauteng Primary Literacy Strategy in circa half its schools, which aimed to address some of these issues. New ad hoc manuals were compiled in all 11 official languages and distributed to all learners, teachers were trained in their use, etc, but the overall deficient quality of the manuals grounded in a mechanistic phonic approach reduced the positive impact the programme might have had.

and they have a point even if they have not (yet?) won the day, for the generalised use of English (for instance, Fowley 2007).

Leaving aside other problem areas I shall dwell briefly on language *stricto sensu*, more relevant to the issue at hand, focussing on Gauteng. In Gauteng, a constant and diverse immigration from within the country and outside has made many areas in townships complexly multilingual, bypassing the forced ethnic groupings of the past. This is especially true of poorer new settlements. Dominant languages in a school catchment area may even change within a couple of years, due to intense movements of population. Schools and the Department of Education are at pain to adapt. It is not rare to find that in a given Foundation Phase language stream, a majority of the learners do not speak in their homes, or do not speak mainly, the language used as LoLT (Soweto and Mamelodi, observations, 2008 to date). To compound the situation further, school varieties are based on obsolete rural canons which are largely alien to township children socialised in urban, mixed varieties. This complex situation challenges the feasibility of offering the languages really spoken by the learners as LoLT on both counts of language per se and language variety and seriously questions the rationale of the mother tongue argument, maintained as it is within a monolingual policy framework where one language only can be nominated as LoLT in any given classroom.[31]

To complicate the overall picture further, middle-class African children attending former model C schools rarely acquire structured literacy in an African language, even if oral fluency is maintained (Mesthrie 2008) while those in whose urban homes English has become the usual language may even fail to acquire oral competence in an African medium, which insulates them from the wider Black society and leads to their being chastised as 'coconuts' by their township peers, fostering in them ambiguous feelings of belonging (see Mckinney 2007; Rudwick 2008). Both groups, arguably, are thus led to forfeit a significant part of their cultural heritage. This situation further widens the dichotomy between schools and reinforces the perception that it is rooted in language policy and use, which appear as a ploy to further marginalize the poor and underprivileged and entrench their disadvantages.

Mozambican cities, especially Maputo, affected by a diverse rural immigration, show a growing heterogeneous socio-linguistic setting, with several languages in contact. Meanwhile, the new socio-economic dispensation has opened the gate for private enterprise and the wealthy and middle classes now have a growing choice of private schools at hand, some even offering English as MoI (or co-MoI) as the ultimate selling argument. Private schools in Mozambique correspond broadly to SA former model Cs (as well as independent ones). Even if it might not be possible to keep clear of all the pitfalls that befall the South African education

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[31] It is true to mention that, according to principals interviewed, most children adapt fairly easily to a LoLT different from their main language after a term or so, at least when they start from grade 1. However, those who shift MoI in the middle of a year or in a later grade following a change of residence or other event may experience serious difficulties. In either case, it remains that parents or guardians may not be in a position to help their charges with schoolwork.

system, it seems appropriate to try and avoid fostering a similar partition of schools in Mozambique with bilingual schools perceived as offering poor quality learning, when the bilingual programme enters urban centres. Careful consideration should be paid, therefore, I feel, to two essential aspects:

i) *quality*. Special attention must be given to the teaching of Portuguese so that the bilingual schools do not appear non-performing. I mentioned the manual for Portuguese as a foreign language in preparation. In the bilingual schools of the two northern provinces of Cabo-Delgado and Niassa where Progresso is active, the teaching of Portuguese is now done by a specialised teacher in order to limit the ever-present temptations of code-switching (E Sequiera, Progresso, pers. com. Maputo, October 2011). This is surely a good way to expose the learners to more and better Portuguese, but use of the L1 should not necessarily be ruled out, as long as it is done in a clear and structured manner.

ii) *African language as discipline*. The new 1997 syllabus that paved the way for the bilingual education strategy included more than the validated use of the local language as MoI in the early years. It specifically envisaged that a local language become a discipline in the monolingual Portuguese stream from gr7 onwards. This option has not being implemented.[32] The introduction of African languages in the country's secondary schools may seem unrelated to the bilingual programme that focuses on the primary. I contend that in fact it could resonate powerful cords. On a scholarly level, it would not only lend African languages prestige and legitimacy, signalling their full recognition as discipline worthy of an academic pursuit and possibly as a job qualification, but also stimulate research and books' production which remain the programme's Achilles' heel. On a social level, it might create, if they are duly used, many opportunities for interactions across class, generation, and modes of livelihoods, when learners would seek speakers in various communities to put their new knowledge to the test.[33] Thus they would verify, albeit probably not in the anticipated direction, the relation between identity and language learning as outlined by Norton & Toohey (2011).

The implementation of this part of the reform might also offer an elegant solution to the choice of language in multilingual settings: rather than resorting to an African language as MoI in the early years, the African language could be taught as a discipline from the first year (on a level akin to SA FAL), with Portuguese as the

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[32] One reason often quoted is lack of resources, both human and material. Still, on the material department, the situation is not all that bleak: some languages such as Ronga and Changana in the South, which can boast a long history of writing (see Lafon forthcoming) are comparatively well endowed in written resources; other languages, or their close cognates, have been developed in neighbouring countries and this external material could be resorted to for the time being at least: this is the case of Changana (isiTsonga) in South Africa (again), of Nyanja in Malawi, of Shona in Zimbabwe (for Ndau and Tewe), of Swahili in Tanzania (for Mwani); and texts are being produced for other languages, such as Yao. Moreover, preferable as it may be for communicative purposes, there is no strict obligation that the language introduced as discipline equate strictly with the local one. It could well be, for a time at least, a neighbouring one. If we adopt that view, the whole country is covered with reasonably developed languages that can serve as FAL. Regarding human resources, id est, teachers, obviously training is in order but the country is building capacity in this domain.
[33] See Lafon (2010) for the same argument developed for South Africa.

official MoI, in what could be called an L2 mother-tongue additive model. If there was no agreement on one language, more than one could easily be offered. Clearly, code-switching and code-mixing between the African languages could be a valid strategy to scaffold the learning of the selected one when it is different from the local variety. Thus the discrepancy between varieties would be slighted and the choice of language less problematic.

By its mere introduction, the Mozambican bilingual education programme has undoubtedly won an ideological battle. It has powerfully contributed to the rehabilitation of local languages and cultures and fostered a new definition of Mozambicanhood (p.161). African linguistic and cultural realities will not again be pushed so easily under the carpet. But, in a circular process, the long-term acceptability of the bilingual education programme will depend eventually, beyond its ability to deliver on its promises, on the role African languages will come to play in the education system as a whole and in society at large. In Mozambique, after a first inroad, this positive image is largely hinged on the educational success of the programme. Let us hope for the best.

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