Language Planning in Primary Schools in Asia

Edited by
Richard B. Baldauf, Jr., Robert B. Kaplan,
Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu
and Pauline Bryant

ROUTLEDGE

Language Planning in Primary Schools in Asia

People in many Asian polities have gradually come to believe that their children could be guaranteed better economic opportunities if they had English as part of their linguistic repertoire. This conviction has encouraged the addition of English to the school curriculum at an increasingly early age. However, early instruction is often implemented without regard to the availability of adequate support structures (e.g. teachers, facilities, funding) and in an environment where English has little real function outside the classroom. This volume presents nine case studies in Asia where these issues are examined and suggests various strategies that polities might attempt to employ in order to achieve their language learning objectives.

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Richard B. Baldauf, Jr. is Professor of TESOL at the School of Education at the University of Queensland, Australia. He has published numerous articles in refereed journals and books and is co-author of *Language Planning from Practice to Theory* (1997), *Language and Language-in-Education Planning in the Pacific Basin* (2003), and *Planning Chinese Characters: Evolution, Revolution or Reaction* (2008).

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Why educational language plans sometimes fail

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Language-in-education policy (decision taking) and planning (decision implementation) are complex processes requiring a number of decisions to be taken and implemented if they are to be successful. While there is research that suggests the factors that lead to successful outcomes, these are often either ignored or too difficult for polities to implement, given their resources. This insufficiency can lead to a waste of resources and a failure to meet language planning and learning objectives. A number of myths have arisen about such planning, in general, and about the role of English as a second/foreign language, in particular, relating to English being a guarantee of access to economic opportunity and about starting language study early leading to better outcomes. In this paper, we examine 12 common fallacies related to educational language planning to provide some insights into why such plans sometimes fail. This paper provides an introduction to eight polity case study papers, which follow, that highlight particular aspects of these fallacies.

1. Introduction

In 1835, Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote a 'minute' or message to the government of British India, suggesting ways to deal with the complex mix of languages that the British rulers of India faced. Macaulay had been sent to Calcutta in an official capacity (as 'advisor' to the government). He knew nothing about any of the South Asian languages; indeed, he appeared actually to have despised them. His 'minute' concerned the intent of education and colonial language policy in India, dealing particularly with the use of English in the education of Indian people. His advice was widely accepted not only in India but, subsequently, in British colonial Africa and Asia. Macaulay urged the introduction to the future leaders of India (and eventually those of the Commonwealth) of English literature and history, thus providing a common language in multilingual India and laying the groundwork in the traditions of English law. More specifically, Macaulay's advice was:

> … to form a class Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect; a class who could serve as interpreters between the government and the masses, and

> who, by refining the vernaculars, would supply the means of widespread dissemination of western knowledge. (cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 110)

More than a century later, Macaulay's recommendations have proved so useful – when taken together with a range of subsequent events, including conflicts in the Asian region and elsewhere (e.g. Wright, 2002), the geopolitics of the cold war, globalization (e.g. Sheng, 2009), the emerging world economic system (e.g. Brutt-Griffler, 2002), and easier access to mass media and the Internet (e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002) – that English has become first foreign (second) language in many polities, the international language of science and technology (e.g. Kaplan, 2001), and the world's lingua franca as perceived by many individuals and governments in polities in Asia and elsewhere (e.g. Alisjahbana, 1971; Choi & Spolsky, 2007; Crystal, 2003; Gonzalez, 1989; Graddol, 1997; Qi, 2009).

Like the cargo cult mentality that appeared after World War II in the Pacific islands, these developments, in turn, have given rise to a number of urban legends. People in many polities have come to believe that their children would be guaranteed better economic opportunities if they had English as part of their linguistic repertoire. This belief has supported the addition of English to the school curriculum – initially at the secondary school level and then at the intermediate school level. A decade or more of experimentation demonstrated that English at intermediate school was not sufficient to develop proficiency, so another legend – that early introduction to English would be the panacea – spurred an international belief that English language education should begin at the first grade, or even better, in kindergarten (see, e.g. Arab News, 2011).

The fallacies inherent in both legends have emerged:

- being English-knowing is not a guarantee of an improvement in economic opportunity; and
- early English learning is not a guarantee of near-native English proficiency.

In this paper, it is suggested that these fallacies have some fairly apparent underlying causes, and 12 prominent ones are discussed. (However, see Phillipson, in press, p. 371, for a argument that the learning of English in whatever way for whatever time is a tragedy; Gandhi is alleged to have said: 'To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave us'.)

2. Time dedicated to language learning is inadequate

The school curriculum is crowded, so as a general rule, language instruction is introduced into rather inflexible academic schedules at something like 3 to 5 class hours (i.e. 50 minute-hours) per week during the 20 or so weeks of an academic term or twice that amount for an academic year of about 40 weeks: that is, 5 classes × 50 min × 40 weeks = 10,000 min (or about 167 h of total instruction per academic year). Instructional time in primary school may be as little as one or two class hours a week.

Typically, a school student may continue this activity for 4–6 academic years or perhaps for as much as 1000 h total instructional time. While it is true that there has not been a great deal of research to determine the real investment of time necessary to achieve anything like fluency, the actual investment of time would need to be calculated for various groups of learners, based on many variables, including aptitude, attitude, and motivation of learners; the relative age/maturity of learners; and the methods and supporting materials used as well

as a number of other variables. To indicate the difference between this typical allocation of instructional time and the somewhat greater duration that might actually be required, consider the implication of intensive instruction of the sort employed in Canada (see, e.g. Swain & Johnson, 1987). Carroll (1963, 1964) has suggested that something like 1000 hours of effective instruction administered over a span not so long that the rate of learning is exceeded by the rate of forgetting (i.e. one academic year) might be reasonable. While Carroll (1974, 1993) does not specify a number of hours normally required, he does specify the appropriate conditions:

> Success in learning is a function of whether the student takes the amount of time [she]/he needs to spend on learning a task. The amount of time [she]/he *needs* to spend is determined by his/[her] aptitude and the quality of instruction [she]/he is offered. Poor quality instruction requires him/[her] to spend more time, particularly if [she]/he had difficulty in understanding instruction. But the amount of time [she]/he *actually* spends on learning is a function of the amount of time [she]/he is allowed (i.e., his/[her] 'opportunity to learn') and his/[her] willingness to spend that time (i.e., his/[her] 'perseverance').

It is a reasonably well-documented reality that it may take as long as 10 years to acquire fluency in a language, depending on the degree of difference between the structure of the first language and that of the second. In short, the amount of time allocated in the school curriculum is often grossly inadequate to achieve any sort of fluency.

Many polities in Asia and around the world are attempting to deal with the issue of proficiency by increasing the exposure that students have to language learning (i.e. English) by extending language teaching to primary school (or by even creating language [English] villages where students interact with native speakers of the language, e.g. Song, 2011, for Korea). However, even when time is theoretically adequate – for instance, in Bangladesh where English is taught from Grade 1 to Grade 10 and occupies about 20% of the curriculum – the results may be far from satisfactory (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008, 2011). So while adequate exposure to language teaching is a necessary condition for learning, it is not sufficient in and of itself. Thus, a policy focus which predominantly increases class time (i.e. access policy) without simultaneously addressing related policy issues may not lead to increased levels of proficiency, but rather may lead to a waste of resources. The cost of implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education may significantly lower per-pupil expenditure, but early start may not improve the economic benefits (see, e.g. Vaillancourt & Grin, 2000).

3. Indigenous teacher training is not appropriate or sufficient

Indigenous teacher training does not necessarily prepare teachers to deliver successful instructional programs, nor are in-service programs readily available or accessible to trained teachers. In general, teacher training rarely exceeds four years of instruction; during that time, the trainee is expected to learn the language she/he will teach, the full curriculum required to be certified as a teacher, as well as to gain the practical classroom skills required to teach (Nguyen & Baldauf, 2010). In many countries, teacher training is likely to be considerably shorter; indeed, a year-long program would in many cases be exceptional (see, e.g. Snow, Kamhi-Stein, & Brinton, 2006; Walker, Ranney, & Fortune, 2005).

The problem is bifurcated; partly it reflects the reality that in a poor developing country, English is not a common commodity in the populace and that teacher-training facilities are not sufficient to train teachers simultaneously in a foreign language (FL) and in the basic

skills of pedagogy. Furthermore, when foreign aid agencies undertake to supplement teacher-training facilities, they frequently fail to recognize the problems inherent in the polity being helped – in the sense that the perception of the role of education in the polity may be quite different from that presumed by the aid agency. The problem may be additionally multiplied by several other realities. First, most second-language teachers are trained for secondary schools and there may be little or no specific training available for teaching languages at the primary school level, where specifically trained teachers are required, since second-language teaching now implicates basic literacy teaching. Second, many programs have large numbers of language teachers working in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts who require in-service upgrading of methodology and language skills, but such support may not be available. Finally, any teacher or principal opposed to the intent of instruction can delay the teacher-training process indefinitely by simply failing to act (see Hamid, 2010; Li, 2008, for further discussion; for an actual example in Mexico, see, e.g. Patthey-Chavez, 1994).

4. Native speakers can fill the proficiency and availability gap

The myth of the superiority of the native speaker as a language teacher is still widely held (Medgyes, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). This myth combined with the lack of adequate numbers of indigenous teachers has led some polities to attempt to ameliorate the shortage of language-proficient teachers by importing native speakers of the target language to teach indigenous children. There are several difficulties implicit in implementing such a solution. First, a large number of teachers are likely to be necessary; such a large number of imported teachers may destabilize the population, since imported teachers are not likely to be trained to fit neatly into the local culture. In addition, many of the teachers employed may only be native speakers and may not have undergone teacher training. This is an issue that a number of education authorities in polities have recognized implicitly, as English-speaking teachers are hired primarily as teaching assistants or to teach communication classes, while the core grammar-dominated work is taught by local teachers.

Then, there is the question of remuneration – should the imported teachers be paid less (because they are aliens) or more (because they are native speakers)? In either case, a sub-class is created within the teacher population, leading to questions such as:

- Should imported teachers be eligible for promotion within the teacher population?
- Will the presence of a large number of aliens (some of whom may not speak the national language of the host polity) be seen by the domestic teacher population as an irritant?
- What will happen to the imported teachers as they age?

Japan, for example, has experimented with such a solution. Since 1987, the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program has aimed to promote a more communicative teaching approach by providing native-speaker assistant language teachers (ALTs) to assist Japanese teachers with more communicatively oriented activities in middle- and high-school classrooms (see, e.g. JET Programme, 2006). The initial purpose of the JET program was to promote international relationships, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to believe that the main purpose of the JET program remains international exchange, while the Ministry of Education and the local governments view the program primarily as a provider of ALTs. This discrepancy has created a gap between the provider and the receiver in terms of the selection of participants and has muddied up the roles that the

ALTs should perform. This program was largely developed because of what is perceived as an important educational problem by both the government and Japanese parents. With the progress of globalization in the Japanese economy and in Japan's society, it is thought to be essential that Japanese children acquire communication skills in English, which has become a common international language, in order to live in the twenty-first century. This issue has become extremely important both in terms of the future of Japanese children and in terms of the further development of Japan as a nation. At present, the English-speaking abilities of a large percentage of the Japanese population are perceived to be inadequate. This situation is thought to impose restrictions on exchanges with foreigners and creates occasions when the ideas and opinions of Japanese people are not appropriately evaluated (see, e.g. Kaplan, 2000).

Thus, when programs are implemented, they must address issues of personnel policy, both in terms of their training and re-training (i.e. in-service) and in terms of the numbers available, and where they might come from. As such, personnel policy issues implicate funding, availability, and training, and these are issues that need to be adequately addressed in many polities.

5. Educational materials may not be sufficient or appropriate

Samuel Daniel voiced the following thoughts in his poem, *Musophitis*, in 1599:

> And who in time knows wither we may vent
> The treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores
> This gain of our best glory shall be sent.
> To enrich unknowing nations without store?
> Which worlds in the yet unformed Occident
> May come refined with the accents that are ours

Not much has changed in the thinking of English speakers over the past 400 years. On the contrary, the idea that English should be an international language has been extended by the desires of parents in developing countries. The teaching of English to speakers of other languages has become an enormous industry. Because of the global distribution of English and because it is being taught in so many places, English is no longer the exclusive property of English speakers. Many new varieties of English have developed/are developing – for example, Indian English, Nigerian English, Philippine English (English as a second language (ESL) varieties), Japanese English, Hong Kong English (EFL varieties), or Singaporean English (ESL/EFL varieties). These Englishes are not exactly like metropolitan English (i.e. that spoken, with relatively minor differences, in Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA); each one is unique. The growth of other Englishes is assured, because in many countries English is frequently taught to children by individuals who are not themselves native speakers of English and who may not have had extensive exposure to native English speakers (see, e.g. Medgyes, 1994). In polities such as India, Nigeria, Samoa, and Singapore, there are many native speakers of their national varieties – that is, the local variety of English is their first language. An individual may also be able to speak a metropolitan variety of English (e.g. North American or British English) as well. The international activity of teaching English, of course, requires materials, and the publishing industry has been happy to comply by providing a plethora of dictionaries, grammars, spellers, course books, readers, audiotapes, computer disk programs, and a multitude of other resources. Often, in this modern age,

these other resources require electronic equipment, and again manufacturers of such equipment are happy to comply by providing tape recorders, 35 mm cameras, slide projectors, copying machines, video cameras, videotape players, overhead projectors, CD-ROM players, entire language laboratories and, in some instances, even entire computer laboratories equipped to access e-mail and the World Wide Web. In summary, all of this activity generates money, and the teaching of English around the world has become big business.

All the members of the English-speaking world – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA – have been involved in teaching ESL/EFL through their agencies for international development – for example, the Australian Overseas Service Bureau, the Australian Agency for International Development, Britain's Overseas Development Administration, the British Council, the Canadian International Development Agency, the United States Agency for International Development and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State, and the United States Information Agency and even some agencies of nations where English is not the first language (e.g. the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) – by investing to varying degrees in development projects in less developed nations around the world; such development initiatives almost always carry a component in teaching EFL. In addition, a number of international agencies – for example, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, NATO, UNESCO, and the United Nations – are extensively involved in funding language education programs in less developed nations (see, e.g. Ablin, 1991; Crooks & Crewes, 1995; Kaplan, 1998, 2001; Kenny & Savage, 1997; World Bank, 2005). Tertiary academic institutions in the English-speaking nations are also recruiting international students and mounting programs in conjunction with academic institutions and other agencies in the third world.

Given the presence of agencies for international development from much richer polities, small countries are rarely able to develop appropriate instructional materials in competition with those imported from the aiding country partly because the expense of doing so is high and partly because the limited markets in developing polities do not make it economical to produce and distribute locally prepared materials. The high cost is, in part, a function of the small in-country market, but the direct cost may be multiplied by the difficulty of distributing materials as the consequence of an underdeveloped transportation system multiplied in some cases by a climate unfriendly to paper goods. In addition, the problem is exacerbated by the cultural gap between the material producers located in distant developed polities and the children and teachers in a less developed polities in which cultural histories may be vastly different from the Anglo-European cultural history common in more developed western polities. Such cultural gaps may redefine the roles of women, of families, of adolescents, and of other socio-culturally defined structures as schools and the values attributed to learning (Hinkel, 2005). While some polities are developing their own textbooks to try to bridge these cultural gaps, conditions within polities vary so greatly that these resources may still not be suitable for all groups within, or geographical parts of, a polity (see, e.g. Martin, 2005, for Malaysia).

6. Methodology may not be appropriate to desired outcomes

One of the most frequently changed features in many educational systems is the educational methodology. A large number of methodologies have been introduced over the past half-century: for example:

Audio-Lingual Method	Grammar-Translation
Cognitive-Code Learning	Language Immersion
Communicative Method	Natural Language Learning
Content-Based Instruction	Silent Way
Contrastive Rhetoric	Suggestopedia
Corpus-Based Method	Task-Based Method
Direct Method	Text-Analytic Method
Eclectic Approach	Total Physical Response
Grammar-Based Method	

(see, e.g. Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; de Bot, 2002; Ellis, 1999, 2003; Enkvist, 1997; Hornberger & Corson, 1997; Nelde, Göebl, Stary, & Wölck, 1996; Rivers, 1981; Schumann, 2007; Swain & Johnson, 1987; Wesche, 2010; Wesche & Skehan, 2002; Widdowson, 1983, 1990).

Many of these models operate on the presumption of the teacher-fronted classroom; for example, the learners sit silently while the teacher lectures *about* the grammar of the target language. Some of the models allow the student a speaking role, but the speaking is based exclusively upon memorized syntactic patterns arranged in dialogic form. Still others tend to create situations in which the learners actually participate in conversations, but the conversations are necessarily limited to classroom topics, since the learners have no opportunity to practice (or to hear) the language outside the classroom. There is a substantial literature on second-language acquisition (SLA) – a process long recognized as rather different from first (native)-language acquisition (see, e.g. Doughty & Long, 2003).

As previously noted, many methodologies are available. The question of which comes first – the methodology or the materials to facilitate teaching the method – is not easy to answer; however, the two are sufficiently linked that when education agencies change one, they also change the other. This generalization is true for indigenous Ministries of Education[1] as well as for national and global agencies for international development. It is demonstrable that any given generation of students passing through the system can, during their exposure, several times experience one or more changes in direction, shifts in methodology, and catastrophic alterations in financial support; the outcome of such variation may result in poorly trained students as well as in a waste of scarce resources as the result of such shifts in direction. For example, it has recently (since communicative language teaching has become popular) been suggested in some polities that the English curriculum teaching methodology should be student centered and task based rather than based on a teacher-centered approach in order to develop students' competence in using English as the objective of communicative language teaching and learning (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Wesche, 2010). In polities with a powerful central educational agency, teaching materials for primary and secondary schools as well as for tertiary institutions may be centrally compiled and published insuring their use for a stable period of time; that is, all the teaching materials may be compiled nationally, having been approved by a working group for FL teaching material compilation working under a central agency. (It is often the case that such working groupings often omit teachers, vesting all decision-making authority in bureaucrats with little or no actual classroom experience.) The same working group may compile appropriate reading materials. Supplementary audio-visual materials may also be developed centrally. Previous teaching materials of good quality may remain in use. But such a process ignores the reality that students across a large geographic area may vary considerably and may not benefit from centrally designed materials or from the method that is

thought to deliver the material effectively. Indeed, the given methodologies may not be appropriate across an entire population or from one polity to another depending on the respective cultural histories which may be vastly different. Furthermore, in developing polities, all schools may lack funds that can be spent on purchasing teaching and learning aids, resources, and library facilities specific to a particular methodology and may lack the expertise to develop such materials independently. In short, a methodology should be chosen to fit the needs of a particular student population and a particular teacher cadre.

7. Resources may not be adequate for student population needs

Additional questions must be asked as to how an emphasis on early English language teaching may affect the teaching and learning of national languages, of minority languages, or of other FLs. The Asia Pacific region is language rich, incorporating large regional languages (e.g. Bengali, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Javanese, Korean, Malay/Indonesian, and Thai) and a multitude of minority languages (e.g. Crowley & Lynch, 1985). English has increasingly become the dominant FL in the region. Colonialism (e.g. Pennycook, 1998, 2000), missionary work, and religious proselytizing (Masagara, 1997; Paulston & Watt, in press) have played roles in the current language situation in the various polities in the region. At present, the impact of early English introduction on the educational system and on the resources available to it is rarely addressed. The absence of significant government initiatives in English teacher education and training provides evidence for the observation that English expansionist policies in poor polities have not fully considered whether and to what extent such policies can be implemented within a polity's existing resources and institutional capacity and, more directly, within the human resources from which English teachers may be found or developed. In the globalized environment in which English proficiency is perceived to be a key resource, many smaller countries have moved quickly to try to secure the advantage that English proficiency is alleged to provide – without having first explored the matter of evidence in support of the claim, what costs will be required to sustain such an effort (economic, social, and linguistic), and what measures may be employed to determine whether success has, in fact, been achieved. Countries in Asia have invested considerable resources in providing English, often at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum, but the evidence suggests that these resources are not achieving the instructional goals desired (see, e.g. Grin, 1996; Grin & Vaillancourt, 2000; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). All schools in developing polities lack funds that can be spent on purchasing teaching and learning aids, library facilities, and other resources. For example, in a country such as Bangladesh, financial and educational initiatives aimed at helping the indigenous population are extremely slow in implementation. Indeed, whether any government initiatives – such as constructing new classrooms and their maintenance – have, in fact, benefited indigenous communities remains an open question.

In an attempt to respond to pressures from parents and employers, educational systems have moved to make primary school English language programs universal; that is, all children are expected to participate in early English education and to profit from it (Mackey & Andersson, 1977). It is, however, generally recognized that all children do not have identical skills and aptitudes – *all* children are not usually required to take piano lessons or to participate in long-distance running. Requiring *all* students to participate in early English language instruction is wasteful of resources and also wasteful of student time and effort. All children do not share an aptitude for SLA. Unfortunately, determining how to identify and select those children who are likely to have an aptitude for SLA is difficult. Those who are not so inclined come to resist the imposed requirement. They might, otherwise, show an

inclination in later life, but the imposition of language study is likely to develop negative attitudes toward language learning. Thus, the outcome of universal early language study is self-defeating, since a significant portion of the target population will not learn but will, on the other hand, develop resistance to such study. It has proven itself to be a sure impulse to monolingualism.

8. Continuity of commitment may be problematic

The indigenous educational system may not be sufficiently committed to providing primary school English in terms of resources, space, and a prospect for continuity. Gaps between access policy requirements and actual resource allocations make delivery of expected policy outcomes unlikely or impossible. If it is the case that one of the most frequently changed features in many educational systems is the educational methodology, perhaps the next feature most susceptible to change has to be sustained funding for any feature of the system; that is, not only do bureaucrats change their minds about the best methodology for language teaching, but they also frequently change their minds about funding any sort of sustained change. Educational budgets are among the most frequently reduced segments of national operating expenses; they are perceived among bureaucrats as most easily adjusted to provide resources for new fiscal demands (see, e.g. Kaplan & Baldauf, 2007). Regrettably, the bureaucrats making the decisions are not likely to understand the complexity of what they are doing to a project by reducing or eliminating its funding (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2003). Often, each change in government, each new appointment to senior level, and each tremor in the economic structure can result in the restructuring of an educational program or (more serious still) the cancellation of a program and the institution of a different program well before the achievements and obstacles in the previous program can be evaluated:

> I am still constantly amazed how, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, education administrators around the world are still happy to promulgate instructional programs in which the rate of forgetting is quite like to exceed the rate of learning, in which time on task is so brief as essentially to insure fractured acquisition, and in which teacher training, materials development and achievement assessment are conducted in blissfully ignorance of the accumulated wealth of knowledge about language learning, language teaching and language testing. These problems arise in part because the key decision-makers in charge of the process normally remain largely unaware of the extant research, unfamiliar with researchers who are experts in the field, and unlikely or unwilling to seek the advice even of the teachers at the chalk face. (Kaplan, 2009, p. 282)

9. Language norms may be a problem

Traditional FL programs are based on the assumption that speakers will use the language mainly with native speakers. However, in the case of English, it may be used primarily with other second-language users, some of whom will have their own varieties of English – ones that differ from international norms. A major characteristic of the metropolitan English varieties spoken in locations where English is the language of a substantial often monolingual majority is that the varieties are endonormative; that is, they find within themselves the norms of correctness and appropriateness that is propagated through language education. In these societies, English is not passed on naturalistically to subsequent generations but rather is taught in schools and, in some cases, may be used in international trade or tourism. By contrast, the varieties spoken in locations that

typically emerged from British or USA colonial administration continue to be used for interethnic communication, largely by those at the top of the socio-economic ladder. These varieties tend to evoke ambivalence among commentators. While some commentators stress the role played by these varieties in perpetuating the socio-economic divisions between those who know English and those who do not, others call attention to ways in which these varieties capture the aspirations to technology and modernity in global trade and in the links developed between multilingual nations. Despite a gradual emerging linguistic self-reliance and a slow shift from exonormative to endonormative attitudes, these varieties continue to show the conflicts between linguistic norms and linguistic behavior based on the general belief that Anglo-American norms are somehow superior and that, consequently, local varieties are deficient. The English that is taught in schools tends to be exonormative in the sense that users – teachers and policy-makers – look to British or North American models for linguistic norms. However, since the metropolitan varieties are not likely to be well controlled, school-taught English floats in a sea of doubt. This situation causes educational systems to be uncertain of what should be taught, and the uncertainty causes vacillation in pedagogical methodologies, in materials and, perhaps most, in the commitment of materials and space and in fiscal continuity (Bruthiaux, 2003).

10. International assistance programs may not be useful

When foreign aid agencies undertake to supplement teacher-training facilities, the product often fails to recognize the problems inherent in the polity being assisted in the sense that the perception of the role of education may be quite different from that presumed by the aid agency (see, e.g. Fox, 1975; Goodman, 1984). Donor-funded teacher-training programs, despite short-term benefits, cannot fully address the quantity and quality issues of English teacher education in a given polity. By the same token, aid agencies are likely to miss quality and quantity issues implicated in English language teaching.

There is no doubt that foreign aid agencies act to a certain extent out of altruistic motivation, but it is also true that these agencies also have more nationalistic and economic motivations (Phillipson, in press). The spread of any given language is a sure technique to expand market opportunities. If populations of speakers of other languages can learn enough of the target language (whether English, German, Japanese, Portuguese, or any other language of wider communication) to learn about products and technologies deriving from states in which the language of wider communication is spoken, the states undertaking language contact expansion will want these products and technologies and will seek to procure them. In other words, the outward spread of any language is apt to increase the markets for the product output of the speakers of that language. At present, literally hundreds of products that are widely traded on the popular market are being produced in China and imported elsewhere – in part, because the PRC government intentionally maintains low exchange ratios with other currencies, thus making the products relatively cheap. One needs to only look at the role of national agencies intended to expand commercial outreach to recognize their sensitivity to language issues in global marketing. It is not surprising that altruistic and national-interest motivations play a huge role in language policy and planning. In short, the desire for English and, more recently, for early English language education has huge commercial implications.

In the 1960s and 1970s, international education seems to have been predicated on assumptions that education produces benefits for the learner and only incidentally for the state in which the education occurs. Since – and increasingly since – the 1980s, it has been realized that the imported education is not merely an appropriate educational fix for

the human capital needs of developing countries; rather, the view has come to recognize that simple technocratic approaches to education were inadequate and that the interests of the individual learner were not necessarily congruent with national interests. Just as societies are affected by the relationships among nations, so too are national educational systems shaped by the international context in which they exist. Consequently, education is an internationally institutionalized structure in which values seem to be defined in terms of western educational models as shaped by western societal forces.[2] Education institutionalizes and legitimates particular theories of knowledge and expertise; thus, apart from the direct socializing that occurs in the classrooms, the societies in which these classrooms exist are socialized to an international conception of learning, having an effect on societies that goes far beyond the subjects and languages learned in the classrooms.

11. Primary school children may not be prepared for early language instruction

Children of primary school age may not be prepared to undertake early language instruction, especially when the target language is an isolated school exercise unsupported by use in the world. Not all children will be equally ready to learn at precisely the same age for precisely the same amount of exposure by precisely the same method and with precisely the same materials (see, e.g. Ahn, 2005; Mũnoz, 2006). National early language education programs, however, for reasons of economic viability, of teacher supply, and of efficient use of facilities normally require all students to pass through a language-learning program in lock step. There is ample research evidence suggesting that such a plan is doomed to failure.

There has been a strong belief that learning is better among the young and that aging has a negative effect on language acquisition – that is, children – the younger the better – are good language learners, while older people are poor language learners. These views are not consistently supported by research. Many studies of SLA focused on the age of learners have resulted in mixed conclusions; no single variable (i.e. age) can be a salient predictor of success in language acquisition (see, e.g. Zuengler & Miller, 2006).

In the 1960s, FL education was introduced into the primary school curriculum of western polities with great expectations but with disappointing results. Evidence suggested that older learners were more efficient than younger learners, causing further experimentation to be discontinued for more than a decade. In Europe, attention turned toward achieving communicative proficiency for all children between the ages of 11 and 16. In the USA, FL study declined; in many developing polities, there was substantial pressure for primary education to be delivered in first language. However, Canadian immersion education was quite successful, demonstrating that motivated majority-language speakers could achieve near-native receptive competence in L2 with no adverse effects on subject learning or first-language proficiency. In the late 1980s, strong parental and employer pressure for international communication brought early FL learning back to government attention. In Europe, 14 states were in the process of lowering the starting age from 11 for FL instruction to children younger than eight. To a certain extent, the question of starting age has disappeared in the recent recognition of additive plurilingualism, conceived as a flexible lifelong process, though the concept has not yet penetrated the consciousness of education ministries in the developing world (see, e.g. Eurydice, 1997). In addition, there has been a growing recognition that the intended outcome constituted a significant variable; some outcomes were inappropriate for very young learners, because they required maturation only available in older learners. In short, while early introduction of language instruction will not damage learners in any way, the objective of such learning should be appropriate to the learners. Additionally, the introduction of early language instruction should take account of

national objectives and of the need to preserve minority languages. It must recognize that the curriculum is not endlessly permeable; it is time constrained, and the addition of elements normally requires the reduction or removal of other elements.

12. Instruction may not actually meet community and/or national objectives

Although the theoretical framework and means to implement needs-based community policy are available (van Els, 2005), there is scant evidence that this knowledge is being used to develop policies and instruction that actually meet community and/or national objectives in terms of utility for participants. Community language policy concerns the question of who is consulted or involved in the decision-making process of language-in-education policy or curriculum development. In polities where curriculum policy is centrally defined, there is little opportunity to develop a consultative community policy. Because education is centralized in many countries, with authority totally vested in a national Ministry of Education, the community is rarely consulted about which languages should be taught, when they should be taught, to whom they should be taught, or by whom they should be taught. Parents may be genuinely interested in the answers to these questions, and the community at large may be concerned that the language selected is likely to accord with what is best for children, best for the community, and best for the role of the state in global affairs. In addition, teachers are rarely consulted; after all, they have some expertise in the matter and they too are members of the larger community.

There are two kinds of language decisions that must be made: official language selection may be simply defined as the political choice of which language or languages to use in the legislative, executive, and judicial business of government. Given that all polities in the twenty-first century contain populations speaking different languages, the selection of official languages is much more complex than the definition. This is so because granting of official status to a particular language enhances its prestige, extends its use into educational and non-official domains, privileges its speakers, and impinges on the linguistic rights of speakers of other languages within the community. Both newly independent and well-established polities face difficulties in selecting official languages, although the contributing factors differ from state to state. Language is not merely a means of communication: it is an extremely important cultural symbol of a community. For many countries – Japan, Malta, Somalia, and a long list of others – the official national language is a core value that unites the people and defines the essential culture of the community. Increasingly, however, all polities are host to one or more linguistic minority communities, as the result of temporary business activity, permanent migration, political asylum-seeking, or the revival of indigenous languages. Consequently, it is necessary for national policy-makers to consider the extent to which multilingualism (and/or multiculturalism) represents either a threat or a resource to the communities and subsequently to select official languages and to frame national language policies reflecting that understanding.

The more complex decision is the one regarding educational languages. In the past, such decisions were sometimes made on the basis of popular beliefs about the importance or prestige or beauty of some language; for many years, English-speaking polities tended to choose French and/or German as the languages to be taught in the schools. After World War II, the available choices changed; in North America, for example, Spanish became a widely taught school language, because the numbers of Spanish speakers in the community increased dramatically. Australia added Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean to its list of school languages, because its location in the south Pacific defined its vastly increased trade with Asia. Since 1994, the newly emerged Republic of South Africa has been

presenting a very different kind of problem – one arising out of national linguistic pluralism. At the national level, nine indigenous languages, as well as English and Afrikaans, have official status, and each provincial legislature has the authority to determine which of the languages will be used for internal official purposes. In 2002, the European Council in Barcelona called for a plan designed to improve language education, specifically in two languages for everyone from an early age. The problem became as to how to find time in the already crowded curriculum for language teaching, and the solution proposed was to employ Content and Language Integrated Learning – a system in which curricular information and language learning were wedded (see 'Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity', 2003). This solution, however, did not take adequate account of minority languages, indigenous languages, and a variety of other languages that had escaped attention in the past. In recent years, educational systems have taken greater account of these small languages and have in many instances moved to preserve these languages while at the same time promoting one or more languages of wider communication.

Doing so is ethically appropriate, but the number of languages implicated, the absence of educational materials, and the lack of research to determine appropriate methodologies have constituted a serious economic and manpower problem. In fact, in many instances, educational languages have had serious negative effects on small languages, replacing them, depriving them of registers, and often decreasing the spread of speakers in the population. In short, national objectives, community desires, and individual aspirations are lost in the process of identifying school languages and implementing their teaching.

13. Language endangerment may increase

The impact of such instruction on other languages in the language ecology (i.e. immigrant and indigenous minority languages) is unknown, but the introduction of early language instruction in a language of wider communication may endanger other languages by replacing them in some or all registers. The preceding sections described underlying causes that are likely to cause Ministries of Education to behave in predictable ways; that is, where money appears to be pouring down a rat hole, the tendency is to stop the flow. Thus, funds necessary to improve conditions are often not available, and experimental programs are often discontinued long before their achievements can be demonstrated. Consequently, weak teacher training becomes weaker, and inadequate materials do not suddenly become adequate, inappropriate pedagogical models do not become appropriate, and children are forced to memorize a language that is entirely alien to their lives, since no one they know actually uses it. The contemporary global economic difficulties have simply multiplied the problems and simultaneously reduced the opportunity to try alternatives. Indeed, economic constraints have in some instances substantially reduced the teacher population, thereby increasing the pressure on the remaining reduced pool.

Educators' expectations based on the language of their students may contribute to persistent inequality in tracking students who enter schooling speaking a minority or an immigrant language into lower level classes. Poor students and students from historically excluded cultural groups are disproportionately tracked into lower level classes in ways that do not always reflect their actual academic abilities. The institutional structure is then reflected through the manifestation of self-fulfilling prophecies, linguistic insecurity that leads to educational insecurity and hesitancy to participate in the mainstream school structure. Equivalent to loss of confidence in the alphabet is an overall loss of confidence in the school (see, e.g. Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2011).

Given that, as of 2008, 193 polities are recognized as internationally sovereign states and given that there are between 7000 and 9000 spoken worldwide, it seems reasonable to assume that the majority of these languages are minority languages in the polities in which they are spoken. In Europe, and in some other polities (e.g. Canada), minority languages are often defined in legislation or in constitutional documents (e.g. the Republic of South Africa) and are often provided with some kind of official support, including language educational rights; a few minority languages are simultaneously also designated as official languages (e.g. Irish – Gaelic – in the Republic of Ireland) – often without reference to the numbers of speakers. The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML)[3] offers a legal definition of the term *minority language*:

regional or minority languages means languages that are:

- traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population and
- different from the official language(s) of that State.

Minority languages are often marginalized within polities because they have small numbers of speakers, or because the number of speakers is rapidly declining, or (quite commonly) because the language is regarded as uncultured, primitive, or inadequately sophisticated in technical and scientific registers when compared with the dominant language. Minority languages are also sometimes seen as a threat if they appear to support separatist movements or if they demonstrate a resistance to assimilation into the dominant population. Both threats arise from the perception that they exclude speakers of the majority language. On the other hand, it is not generally agreed that the protection of the dominant language violates the language rights of the minority. Signed languages are often excluded from consideration as either immigrant or minority languages, partly because they may not be thought to be 'real' languages but also because users of signed languages normally constitute a very small minority.

Some scholars (e.g. Fishman, 1991, 2001; Hornberger, 2008) believe that minority languages can be saved through the schools. However, because Ministries of Education are often considered of lesser importance among the senior agencies of government, they often do not receive an adequate portion of available funding, they are often first in line for budgetary reduction, and they are perhaps the only ministries that look inward rather than outward in terms of their responsibilities. But even in situations in which Ministries of Education are seen as equal among peers, the spread of a minority language or of any register or function of a minority language through a population is constrained, since not all citizens attend school at the same time, some citizens may be completely removed from the school population, schools deal largely with a narrow segment of the total population, and children engaged in education do not necessarily remain in school long enough to acquire an additional language. As noted previously, language activities in the school environment may be isolated from ordinary language use and may be removed from normal communication. There is, of course, some evidence of successful preservation of minority languages – for example, Maori in New Zealand; Catalon in Spain; Quechua in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador; and others, but these are somewhat balanced by far less successful efforts in Navajo and other Native American languages in the USA, Gaelic in Ireland, Aboriginal languages in Australia, and indigenous African languages across the entirety of Africa.

In summary, speakers of minority and immigrant languages are rarely consulted when the Ministry of Education considers introducing a global language into early childhood

education. By the same token, the community at large, as represented by the parents of school children, also is rarely consulted when a major change in language education is introduced. In polities in which authority is centrally controlled, even teachers are rarely consulted before a major change in language education is considered. The fact remains that policy decisions in Ministries of Education are largely in the hands of professional bureaucrats to the exclusion of all other segments of the population (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2007).

14. So what does it all mean?

Recently, there has been a growing tendency in Asia, as well as elsewhere in the world, for EFL/ESL programs to be implemented in the early years of primary schooling. Vigorous testimonials from parents as to how their child has learned English from an early age – with the implication that such early opportunity should be available to all children – abound. As Eggington (2010) indicates, when such a decision is taken in the ecological context of minority language maintenance, the decision can undermine efforts to maintain endangered languages. This parental pressure on educational systems has increasingly led governments to support primary school English teaching curricula for all students, despite evidence that there may be great potential dangers in doing so. Parents have already expended vast sums in private tutoring or out of school tuition to access early opportunities for their offspring. Arguments in favor of early FL exposure are often based on the 'earlier is better' E*S*L hypothesis rather than on sound language policy settings and ample E*F*L research. In fact, research evidence suggests that none of the major social problems (massive poverty, land-holding inequity, inadequate access to modern agricultural technology, and so on) can be solved entirely by the introduction of education and literacy in any language and that the promotion of English as a linguistic 'silver bullet' is a fiction. In Asia, government policies supporting teaching primary school English are often framed in terms of the need for a language that permits learners to enter into the global community and the need to compete both with other Asian neighbors and with competitors in other parts of the developing world. These trends raise a range of questions that remain unanswered to date.

It is a reality that significant populations in Asia live in poverty and are constrained by rural underdevelopment and isolation from entering the global community. It is perhaps naïve to believe that learning snippets of a language of wider communication will improve their opportunities. Each developing polity needs to create an enabling environment and to expand that environment into the more impoverished and isolated areas. Doing so will necessitate involving multifaceted efforts such as:

- deepening macro-economic, legal, and institutional reforms;
- reducing isolation by developing rural roads to markets, improving social services – especially to the impoverished – increasing functional literacy in the first language of the population, improving communication systems not only in the national language but also in all languages in the language ecology across political borders, and improving bilingual language training in ethnic areas (Garcia & Fishman, 2011);
- increasing access to available resources such as land, credit, and technologies;
- reducing risks, for example, by building seawalls and irrigation systems, improving preventive health care services, and increasing family planning choices;
- insuring sustainability through improved land management and reforestation, rational investment, and financial planning; and

- increasing participation from geographically and linguistically isolated areas in identifying priority needs and in developing solutions by arranging and sustaining sufficient fiscal decentralization and by modifying the decision-making processes by decentralization and augmented employment activities.

While language proficiency is unquestionably central to the range of activities suggested, proficiency cannot be only in the national language, since linguistic isolation is as serious a problem as financial, racial, or gender discrimination. Unquestionably, some democratic processes need to be exploited in the elimination of discrimination. The implementation of democratic processes involves the total population. The danger is that democratization may be used to move the population to the lowest common denominator rather than to encourage individuals to seek their own highest possible level of attainment – everyone cannot be a clone of everyone else. Not every child in the population needs to be perfectly fluent in the same national language and the same second language. The objective is to build and sustain flexibility.

The series of papers in this volume discuss current existing problems, current failures to recognize the underlying causes of the problems, and available solutions to the underlying causes of failure. The danger in this case is that the populations that are experiencing the outcomes of failure are likely to be the only readers of this volume.

It is to be devoutly hoped that the decision-makers, bureaucrats, political leaders, legislators, and teachers will read the book, will see the error of their ways, and will, therefore, seek to find real solutions rather than stop-gap measures; of which, a plethora already exists.

Notes

1. Throughout this paper, the term *Ministry of Education* is used to designate the national governmental agency that deals with educational matters, especially language education; the terminology is far from standardized across the world. No doubt the term is inappropriate in some contexts, but using it obviates the need to research every nomenclature and define how each such agency exercises constraints in some educational matters.
2. See, for example, frequent international comparisons of student achievement; international comparisons of student achievement involve assessing the knowledge of elementary and secondary school students in subjects such as mathematics, science, reading, civics, and technology. The comparisons use test items that have been standardized and agreed upon by participating countries. These complex studies have been carried out since 1959 to compare explicitly student performance among countries for students at a common age. PISA is a triennial assessment that the OECD administers to students in its member and partner countries. It is the world's most comprehensive and rigorous comparison of international student achievement; participating countries make up nearly 90% of the world's economy (see, e.g. International Organization for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), 2002; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).
3. The ECRML is a Council of Europe Treaty (CET 148) adopted in 1992 to protect and promote languages recognized as traditionally spoken in Europe; the treaty does not apply to languages of recent immigrants from outside of Europe.

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Singapore's E(Si)nglish-knowing bilingualism

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This paper discusses Singapore's bilingual policy and looks at how the government's top-down and structured language policy has transformed the country into an English-knowing society. Education and language-in-education planning in Singapore are linked closely to the country's economic development and nation-building process. This pair of planning activities has been instituted to sustain Singaporean economic development, to establish a sense of Singaporean identity and to ensure national survival and economic success. In comparison with English policies in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, language planning in Singapore has several characteristics that are tailored to the polity's unique linguistic and social situation. First, the policy embraces a foreign language that belongs to none of the indigenous ethnic groups at independence, but yet it is learned by all as a 'neutral' language for effective communication. Secondly, the bilingual policy introduced in 1966 was an island-wide language transformation strategy to change Singapore into an English-knowing nation, and kindergartens and primary schools have been important contributors to this process. Thirdly, the Singapore government provides substantial funding for its education system and works closely with its Ministry of Education in designing the curriculum. This paper examines the assumptions that underlie these changes in Singapore's language-in-education policy, especially at the primary school level, and points out that this 'success' challenges the maintenance of the other pillar of the 'English + 1' bilingual policy, the learning of cultural/ethnic languages – that is, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. The interaction of English along with the three cultural/ethnic languages as well as other vernacular languages has contributed to forming *Singlish*, a Singaporean model of English that was originally spoken by older non-English-educated people who were forced to cope with English, but is now increasingly being used by younger people as a marker of identity.

Introduction

Singapore, a post-colonial country, inherited English from Britain. In 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles found Singapore and successfully transformed it into a flourishing colony. Colonialism introduced the British education model into the country, and the teaching of literature was intended to assimilate Singaporeans into British culture (Foley, 2001). Similar to other Asian countries such as Malaysia and India, the language ecology in

Singapore has always been rich and complex as the arrival of English attracted migrants from different parts of the world. Of particular importance for the language situation in Singapore was the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries who introduced English-medium schools into the country (Low & Brown, 2003). Education during the colonial time was fragmented as the British were more interested in trade. Thus, different media of instruction were used by schools depending on their ethnic, linguistic, religious and occupational positions (Chew, 2007). During the Japanese Occupation, which lasted for a mere three years from 1942 to 1945, the Chinese, English, Malay and Indian schools continued to operate. However, unlike the British who preferred academic subjects, the Japanese emphasised 'character building, physical training, and vocational instruction' (Turnbull, 2009, p. 209). For the Japanese, education was one of the tools to promote Japanese values and cultures. Hence, the Japanese language was eventually introduced as the medium of instruction in the schools, and Singaporean children were expected to learn to sing the Japanese national anthem. The subsequent return of the British in 1945 led to the launching of the Ten-Year Programme that provided six years of primary education in any of the four languages – English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil – but with most resources channelled into expanding English-medium schools (Turnbull, 2009). In 1965, Singapore attained independence under the leadership of the People's Action Party (PAP) which had first been elected as a transitional government in 1959. Its leader, Lee Kuan Yew, became the prime minister, a position he held for the next 31 years. Although Singapore inherited English from the British, it was the PAP government that had made a pragmatic decision to choose English as the polity's common language alongside the major local languages (i.e. Chinese, Malay and Tamil) as 'only mastery of the English language would bring Singapore the international trade and investment it needed as well as access to Western science and technology' (Dixon, 2009, p. 119). Furthermore, with the global spread of English, it has become not only a priority in Singapore's foreign language teaching, but also a practical first language for Singaporeans. From the government's perspective, English is 'the language of commerce, international trade and science, and a wide use of English would serve to link Singapore to the world and [to] also give Singapore a competitive advantage' (Mauzy & Milne, 2002, p. 101). According to Lee Kuan Yew, learning English is necessary because:

> English would give us [Singaporeans] the best entree into the developed world: America, Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, probably large parts of Europe because their companies would use English. And the Japanese coming here would use English. So it gave us [Singaporeans] the best advantage…. (Han et al., 2011, pp. 254–255)

According to Lee, the decision to learn English was the right decision, but the learning of Mandarin (and other mother tongues) was also important so as to ensure that the Chinese (Malays and Tamils) would not lose their ethnicity (their Chinesesness, Malayness and Tamilness), their sense of being themselves and their vitality. Lee believed that learning English and Mandarin (and other mother tongue languages) would enable Singaporeans to be connected with America and Europe and the English-speaking world, as well as to trade with other ASEAN countries, particularly China (Han et al., 2011). To understand how these outcomes have come about, it is necessary to examine language policy and planning in Singapore in more detail.

Language planning in Singapore: the bilingual policy

Language planning has been used in multilingual societies to promote a shared sense of identity and a shared concept of nationhood. Mass schooling functions as one of the

language planning tools that polities use to create citizens' identification with and support for nationalism. For example, in France, during the nineteenth century, the French language and a national education system were introduced to help to bring the country together because linguistic and cultural diversity was perceived to be a threat and an imperfection in the overall development of the country (Robbins, 2008). Conversely, ethnic and linguistic diversity is celebrated in Singapore. In Singapore, 'education is not just a means to train a workforce, it is also a most effective means to build social stability and a sense of national identity among the diverse population', and 'a unified national education system provides equal opportunities for [every] student to learn and to achieve his or her potential' (*Keynote address by Dr Aline Wong*, 2000, p. 2). For the government, having a shared language (i.e. English) is considered to be a necessity for the perceived ability of a common language to unite Singaporeans and to build a common identity and a sense of nationhood. English also provides equal opportunity for all Singaporeans to learn, achieve and excel since it is a 'neutral' language, and therefore, it does not disadvantage any of the three major ethnic groups in Singapore. Other vernacular languages are learned simultaneously with the intention to safeguard Singapore's Asian cultures and values. Language planning in Singapore is built on three major assumptions (Dixon, 2009):

(1) language is instrumental, and it is, therefore, a tool that needs to be carefully chosen for national interests;
(2) only standardised languages are to be used for education; and
(3) high-status languages are encouraged at home and in other social settings (prestige planning to build the image of the chosen languages).

Using these fundamental assumptions, the government introduced the bilingual policy in 1966 as the overall framework for the country's language policy. While the intention has been to create a common language to unite the country, the bilingual policy's primary objective rests on the need to enhance the country's economic development. The Singapore government defined bilingual policy as proficiency in English and one of the official mother tongue languages[1] depending on one's ethnicity.

To develop a better educated workforce for the planned industrialisation of the polity (Silver, 2002), English has obtained official status as the first language for all Singaporeans and has become a universal requirement in the education system. However, in the early years, English was a foreign language for most Singaporeans, and like the acquisition of any foreign language, learning English in Singapore was difficult because the overall environment did not optimise English learning. According to Cenoz (2003), foreign language learners often find it difficult to attain native-like fluency when learning a new language especially if they have very limited exposure to the language. Non-native teachers are usually found to be teaching the subject, and the overall environment is mostly unsupportive of learning the chosen language, since the need to use that foreign language outside the classroom is often quite limited. Considered from this perspective, it was particularly challenging for the Singapore government to implement the bilingual policy in the 1960s as the majority of Singaporeans did not use English as their home language, and the exposure to this language outside school was very limited. Therefore, in order to ensure that the language planning was rolled out effectively, the government made sure that issues regarding corpus planning (i.e. language-related issues), status planning (British Standard English) and acquisition planning (first language in schools for all Singaporeans) were addressed and that the implemented activities were well coordinated (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that the language-in-education planning approach in Singapore is driven largely by the government (i.e. policy devised by the political decision-makers) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) (i.e. planning to implement policy).

To avoid the pitfalls of conflicting language policies, the government and the MOE have adopted a top-down approach in setting out new syllabi and curricula for the schools. In order for Singaporeans to benefit fully from the language policy, the Singaporean government has implemented a large-scale holistic approach consisting of organised interventions to ensure that the amount of time and exposure to English is maximised inside and outside schools. Regulations are also enforced to ensure that governmental bodies use English as the main medium of instruction. An extension of this approach has been encapsulated in the training programmes initiated by the government and the MOE. For example, Singaporean English teachers need to be adequately trained to teach the subject with the aim to sustain the effectiveness of the bilingual policy. As Table 1 indicates, English language teachers are sent to National Institute of Education (NIE) for training. This broadly based planned strategy supports Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) view of language planning where they argue that language planning is:

> … a body of ideas, laws and regulations (language policy), change rules, beliefs and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities…. [It] is an attempt by someone to modify the linguistic behavior of some community…. (p. 3)

In the Singaporean context, the government and MOE have set out a body of ideas, laws, regulations, curriculum, teaching materials and resources to ensure that the policy goals are attained, and this goal attainment has occurred in different stages as the policy has developed and matured. This structural tactic has been adopted as a strategy to reduce unnecessary wastage of resources and manpower and, more importantly, to maximise success (Table 2).

Table 1. Language-in-education planning approach in Singapore.

Language-in-education policies (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997)	Responsible bodies; policies
(1) Access policy (to whom and when are languages offered)	English is compulsory for all Singaporeans
(2) Personnel policy (where will the teachers come from and how will they be trained)	NIE[a], MOE
(3) Curriculum policy	MOE
(4) Methods and materials policy	NIE and MOE
(5) Resourcing policy (where will the money come from and how will it be allocated)	Government budget allocations
(6) Community policy (how is the community involved)	Speak Good English Movement (2000); governmental bodies, institutions and media use English as the main medium of instruction
(7) Evaluation policy	PSLE; GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels[b]

Notes: [a]The National Institute of Education is a teacher training institution. Potential teachers are selected by the ministry and sent to NIE for training before they are allowed to teach in the local schools full time.
[b]PSLE refers to the *Primary School Leaving Examination* taken at the end of six years of primary school education; GCE 'O' and 'A' Levels refer to the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level ('O level') and Advanced Level ('A level'), developed, published and distributed by Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate. GCE 'O level' is taken at the end of four or five years of secondary school education and GCE 'A level' is taken at the end of two or three years of education in a junior college or a centralised institute.

Table 2 illustrates the different curriculum implementation stages of the English policy in Singapore used by the government to transform the country from a multilingual and non-English-speaking nation to a predominately English-speaking one with multilingualism for cultural purposes. Curriculum refinements were introduced to bring about these changes by giving English education more emphasis. For example, from 1971 to 1981, the Advisory Committee on Curriculum Development and the Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore were established to strengthen the teaching of English in schools. New primary school textbooks such as *New English series for primary education (NESPE)* and *Primary English program (PEP)* were created and introduced for teaching English in primary schools. Language laboratories were also built in both primary and secondary schools to facilitate practising the English language in schools. To improve the English competency levels further, particularly at the primary level, the government introduced a language-based streaming system in 1980. This system assigned students to one of three designated streams depending on their performance in examinations, particularly on their language ability. The streaming examination was taken at the end of Primary 4 (i.e. at 10 years of age), and students were grouped into one of three categories: EM1, EM2 and EM3.[2] By 1985, English was taught as a first language in all Singapore schools. By 1987, there were only English-medium schools for all Primary 1 enrolments; Chinese-, Malay- or Tamil-medium schools ceased to exist (Chew, 2007). By 1990s, the English curriculum focused more on communicative skills, and by 2010, the outdated curriculum had been replaced with an up-to-date syllabus designed to meet the changing profile of students.

(Un)realistic and (un)attainable outcomes: a comparison with Bangladeshi, Bruneian and Malaysian language policies

For planning to be successful, the language policy decisions and language-in-education planning efforts (see, e.g. Table 1) that are taken need to match conditions to bring about desired outcomes. Unlike other Asian countries where English is seen as a second or

Table 2. The different stages in implementing English in Singapore (based on Silver, 2002, pp. 113–121; updated by the author).

2001–present	More emphasis on communicating fluently in internationally acceptable English
	More focus on listening and speaking skills, island-wide effort including the local media
	New English language syllabus 2010 launched to meet the needs of the new digital age
1991–2000	New English syllabuses were implemented at primary and secondary levels
	More communicative teaching and a thematic approach were adopted for teaching English
	Speak Good English Movement was launched to combat *Singlish*
1985–1991	Significant changes were made to English teaching in primary schools
	More communicative curricula to improve reading and language skills
	Only English-medium schools
1979–1984	High school drop-out rate or 'wastage', ability streaming was introduced (based on language ability)
1965–1978	Bilingual education introduced
	English language education was given more prominence – new textbooks for primary school education
	English language laboratories were built in schools
	More English-medium schools were established
	IE was established, which was later renamed the NIE in 1991

foreign language, in Singapore, English is regarded as the first language of the polity. According to Lee Kuan Yew, for Singapore to become a united nation, the people must speak English so that they can communicate with the government and with one another (*Speech by Mr Lee Kuan Yew*, 2009). In this section, to highlight how Singapore has tried to drive its policies to meet realistic and attainable outcomes for its situation, a brief comparison to the situations in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia is provided to show how the socio-economic, cultural and political situations in various polities in Asia influence the way language policies are formed, how they are developed and their effectiveness for particular purposes.

Language planning in Singapore is dominated by economic concerns and by the recognition of the need to modernise the country. People are Singapore's most important resource, and consequently, education, including language-related educational initiatives, constitutes a major focus of government policy. By comparison, in Malaysia, this economic imperative plays a lesser role for the country, while the need for a language to function as an identity and cultural marker is more significant (Kirkpatrick, 2010). The Malaysian language policy is constructed based on the relationship between the races, and the education system is regarded as an important tool to nurture national consciousness, mould national identity and augment national unity (Hashim, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2010). For example, the primary schools in Malaysia are divided into national and national-type schools. National schools, which are fully government assisted, use Malay as the medium of instruction. In national-type schools, which are partially assisted by the government, English, Chinese or Tamil is used as the medium of instruction, and Malay is taught as a compulsory subject. The Language Act of 1967 required Malay to be used as the medium of instruction for all English-medium primary and secondary schools, and although English has remained as a compulsory subject, it is no longer a requirement for graduation. In 2002, English was used as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics in an attempt to improve the English proficiency levels as many Malaysian university graduates were found to be unable to communicate in English. However, this implementation process was too drastic a change for many schools in the system, and the success rate was limited as English has not been given a status comparable to that of the Malay language. In response to this limited success, the government has announced that there will be a switch back to Malay in all subjects as the medium of instruction in 2012 (Ali, Hamid & Moni, 2011; Gill, 2007; Hashim, 2009). As a result of this shuttling between English and Malay as the medium of instruction, more resources will be required to prepare the materials needed to teach in these languages, and more importantly, the proficiency level in English will be compromised because of the inconsistency in language planning.

In Brunei, the introduction of the National Education System and the birth of the bilingual – or *dwibahasa* – policy in 1984 involved Malay being used as the medium of instruction in the first three years of primary school, after which English becomes the medium of instruction for mathematics, science, geography, history and technical subjects, while Malay remains the medium of instruction for Malay literature, Islamic knowledge, civics, arts, handicrafts and physical education (Jones, 2007; Omar, 2007). The bilingual policy introduced in 1984 was intended to enable children to acquire the national language, Malay, and the English language. From 2009, a new system, known as SPN-21, required English to be used to teach mathematics and science from Primary 1. However, the linguistic structure of the Bruneian society is complex. Although the official language of the country is Malay, the local variety of Malay differs significantly from standard mainland Malay. What this means is that most students entering Primary 1 will have to learn two 'new' languages – the official language and the English language – that are used to

teach the different subjects (Wood, Henry, Abdullah, & Clyness, 2009). Although the bilingual programme has been in place for more than 25 years, English is still a foreign language for most members of the Bruneian community, and many students struggle to learn English well enough to succeed in secondary school where the medium of instruction is primarily English (Anderson, 2008).

Conversely, in Bangladesh, language planning was well intended and well established, but it has not been well coordinated or well funded – that is, it has been marked by high policy expectations but low resource investments (Hamid, 2010). As a result, the inadequate infrastructure and English teaching training programme have resulted in ineffective language planning. For example, the medium of instruction in schools is Bangla, the national language, and English constitutes only about 20% of the curriculum that is learned from Primary 1 onwards. To further complicate the situation, half of the population does not have access to English; the budgetary allocation intended for English instruction is usually spent on teacher salaries and school infrastructure (Hamid, 2010). According to Hamid (2010), language policy and planning in Bangladesh have not been truly effective because they lack 'a thoughtful, judicious and pragmatic English-in-education' approach to language education (p. 305).

When comparing the use of language policy in Bangladesh, Brunei and Malaysia, it becomes apparent that Singaporean language policy differs in terms of its approach. The dominant approach adopted by the Singaporean government has been to ensure sufficient allocation of resources to its education system (Table 3).

Table 3 provides the overall financial commitment to the Singaporean education system over the last 10 years. This expenditure forms a significant portion of the overall national budget for the country when compared with that spent by other countries (Table 4).

When looked at in light of education expenditure in other countries, the Singaporean government's heavy investment in education over the years reinforces its commitment to a resourcing policy that provides for the development of its education system. Given this heavy investment by the government, one measure of the success of the language policy is student achievement in the primary school national examination (Table 5).

As illustrated in Table 5, the proportion of 12-year-old students who have achieved the basic English competency level is almost 98% of those sitting for the Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) in 2009 when compared with only 63% of Singapore's

Table 3. Financial budget for the Singapore education system (*Ministry of Finance*, 2010).

Year	Budget for education (million)	Total expenditure[a] for FY2001–FY2010 (million)	Estimated percentage for education over total budget (%)
2001	S$6240	S$27,305	22.85
2002	S$6598	S$27,152	24.30
2003	S$6214	S$28,499	21.81
2004	S$6214	S$28,957	21.46
2005	S$6082	S$28,634	21.24
2006	S$6959	S$29,905	23.27
2007	S$7528	S$32,982	22.83
2008	S$8230	S$38,091	21.61
2009	S$8699	S$42,881	20.29
2010	S$9664	S$46,371	21.84

Notes: [a]Total expenditure includes spending on social development, security and external relations, and economic development and government administration. It excludes land-related expenditure. The figures may not add up due to rounding.

Table 4. Total public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, by source and country: 2007 (*OECD*, 2010, p. 243).

Country	All levels of education combined
Australia	4.3
Canada	4.9
Denmark	7.8
Finland	5.9
Japan	3.4
The Netherlands	5.3
Korea	4.2
Spain	4.3
Sweden	6.7
UK	5.4
USA	5.3

population that was literate in English in 1990 (*Singapore census of population*, 2000). Thus, such financial outlays by the government have contributed to changes that have seen the adoption of the English language as early as primary school, thereby transforming the language ecology of the country. This language planning by the Singapore government has increasingly led to most Singaporeans becoming 'English-knowing' bilinguals who are not only exposed to English extensively, but who also use it as a working language in most public spheres of life and increasingly as the home language (Pakir, 1999). Nonetheless, the implementation of the 'English + 1' language policy had created unintentional consequences. According to Kirkpatrick (2010), the policy has only been partially successful. This is so because although the government has been successful in engineering an English-speaking Singapore society, the ' + 1' component has not been successful as the Chinese literacy of Singaporean students is poor and increasingly Malay and Tamil literacy is declining as well.

The second approach that the government has adopted is the systematic utilisation of language planning. The Singaporean government not only adheres to a top-down and holistic approach but also uses a multi-level strategy whereby the language transforming process is designed as a polity-wide approach (Figure 1). Figure 1 illustrates that the most significant

Table 5. Percentage of PSLE passes.

Year	Percentage of PSLE students who scored A*–C in Standard English language[a]
2000	98.9
2001	97.6
2002	97.9
2003	97.5
2004	97.5
2005	97.5
2006	97.5
2007	97.9
2008	97.5
2009	97.5

Source: Taken from *MOE: Press releases – performance* (2010).
Notes: PSLE Grade distributions: A* (91 and above); A (75–90); B (60–74); C (50–59); D (35–49); E (20–34); U (ungraded – below 20).

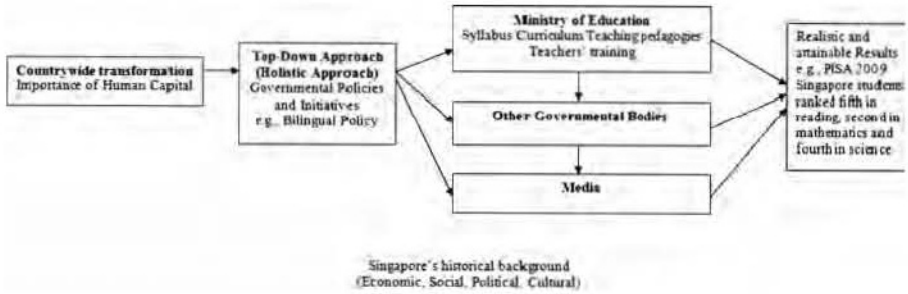

Figure 1. Singapore's English language policy and planning.

aspect of the development of language planning has been that English is increasingly being used in every domain in society. Essentially, English is a national lingua franca, an international code that is more frequently being used at the individual level.

In addition, Singapore's language planning extends beyond the national school system; proficiency in English language is further enhanced by external private organisations. A report in *The Sunday Times*, a Sunday supplement of the local English-language newspaper *The Straits Times*, described Singapore as a 'tuition nation'. A study of 100 primary, secondary and junior college students found that only three were not involved in some form of additional outside tuition. The two most popular subjects for additional tuition were mathematics and English with more younger children being enrolled in additional classes in these subjects. Furthermore, it was found that kindergarten and nursery children were being assisted by phonics tutors so that they would have an early start in learning to speak good English (Toh, 2008). Other manifestations of the phenomenon include Singapore's British Council, which supports *English Holiday Courses* from kindergarten to secondary levels. Courses offered include creative writing, speaking with confidence and fantastic fiction (studying of *Macbeth* and *Frankenstein*) (*British Council*, 2010). Although these foreign texts may seem rather alien to many Singaporean children, because Singapore was previously a colonised country, these and similar texts form the staple diet for many Singaporean students who take English literature as a subject in schools. Thus, with the strong pressure from the government to transform Singapore into an English-speaking nation and with support from external bodies, more students are now coming from households where English is the dominant home language compared with the past when English was hardly spoken at home (*MOE*: *Press releases – enhancing*, 2011). In comparison with Singapore, in Bangladesh, Brunei and Malaysia, where language policies have, or have had, English as a medium of instruction in schools, many students suffered because the policies are not designed to offer intensive enough instruction to help learners acquire English language skills; furthermore, English simply is not spoken in the community beyond school. In these polities, language planning is not designed to deliver realistic or attainable outcomes in English. In addition, in Malaysia, the recognition of this weakness has led to a major revision of language-in-education policy for 2012 (see Ali et al., 2011; Hamid, 2010). One of the reasons for the relative success of language policies in Singapore has been the emphasis on early education in English.

Early English education in the primary curriculum

Besides adopting a tripartite model whereby the government and the ministry, the schools and the society work together to build a positive learning environment, English is taught to

students at a very young age. The government adheres to an early learning framework in its language policy whereby English is taught from the time a child enters school. The education system consists of four main parts: the preschool education consists of three years of education in private or state-run kindergarten and/or childcare centres for children under six years; that segment is followed by six years of primary education, then by four or five years of secondary education and finally by post-secondary education. The system offers all Singaporean children an equal opportunity to learn through the main stream education system; more importantly, it strives to equip them with the language skills needed to support the country's economy. Figure 2 shows that from the beginning

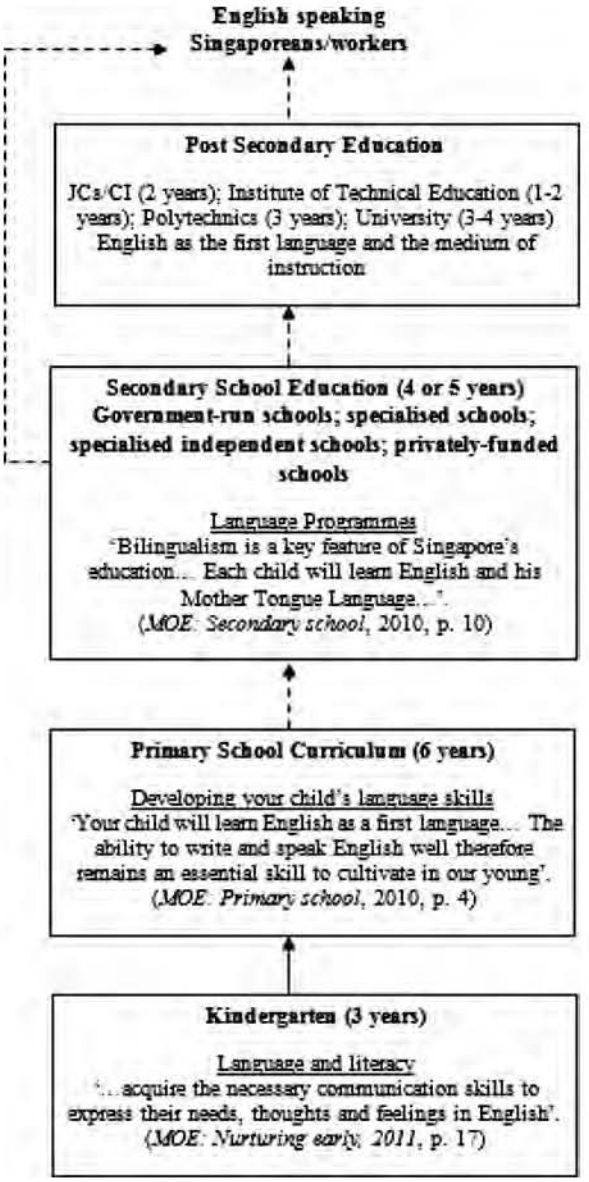

Figure 2. The status of English in the Singapore Education System.

of formal schooling, Singaporean students are learning English as early as kindergarten. All kindergartens are regulated by the MOE under the Education Act (1958) and Childcare Centres Act (1988) (Ng, 2011). The government believes that the early introduction of English in the school curriculum will benefit the children, and therefore, right from the beginning of a child's education, the Singapore education system places a heavy emphasis on laying the foundation for language skills. Mr Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister of Singapore from 1990 to 2004, pointed out that it is best for Singaporeans to learn to speak good English from their early years as learning language when getting older is likely to be difficult (*Speech by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong*, 2000).

Central to the literacy pedagogical approach in the kindergarten curriculum is the need to equip children with the skill 'to learn to think and think to learn' in English (*MOE*: *Nurturing early*, 2011, p. 12). This approach to the learning of English through expression and communication at an early age increases the total amount of time students have for the language and, therefore, increases English proficiency levels (Cenoz, 2003). Based on this assumption that children will learn English better when they learn the language in their early years, English is used as the main medium of instruction at the kindergarten level (except for foreign system kindergartens and international schools for children of expatriate parents). This practice is intended to provide the groundwork needed to support the learning of English when children enter primary school. According to the MOE, a significant number of students who have received more than two years of pre-primary education in English are better prepared for formal reading instruction even before they enter primary school (*MOE: Press releases – Singapore*, 2007). Thus, the most practical approach appears to recommend putting in place a system whereby children get totally immersed in English learning in kindergarten where they are required to converse in English (except for mother-tongue sessions) in an artificially created English-dominated classroom. The MOE's policy is that children are 'to be immersed in language-rich environments, and engaged in activities which foster the use of English in everyday, authentic situations to help them acquire the necessary communication skills' (*MOE*: *Nurturing early*, 2011, p. 170). Nonetheless, despite such structured immersion programmes in English language learning in kindergarten, the English competency levels of children vary across the kindergartens and childcare centres. An explanation for such variation is that in Singapore, children are often under the care of foreign maids and/or grandparents outside formal school hours (Ng, 2011). These caregivers may not speak English at home as 'the older generation (51 and above) used their mother tongue as their dominant language at home' (Silver, 2002, p. 132). For the Chinese community, these mother tongue languages could be Mandarin or other dialects such as Cantonese, Hokkien or Teochew. When mother tongues and/or dialects are used, the practice of total immersion is restricted to the school environment because these children will only be using English actively in school and will be conversing in either mother tongue languages and/or, for some, *Singlish* once they are outside the school.

The complementary role of the primary school curriculum is intended to continue the emphasis on communication skills in English with an additional focus on writing skills. English remains as the main medium of instruction as proficiency in English language is critical because most of the information and knowledge are in English (*MOE*: *Primary school*, 2010). As reflected in the curriculum for kindergarten and primary school education, the curriculum focuses on speaking, listening, reading and writing skills (*MOE*: *Nurturing early*, 2011). Students are encouraged to participate in imaginative play that involves a rich use of English so that they will 'acquire the necessary skills to express their needs, thoughts and feelings in English at primary school level' (*MOE: Nurturing*

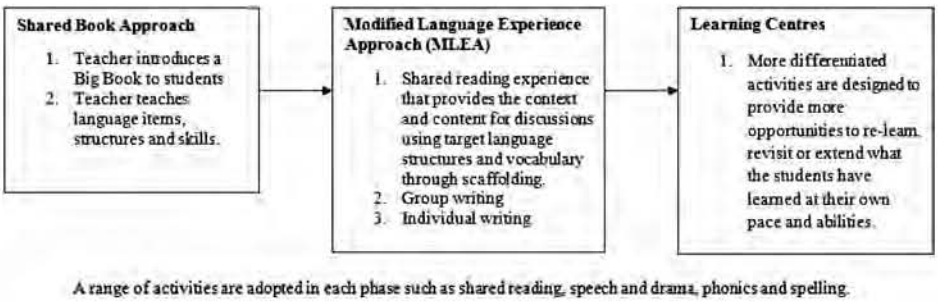

Figure 3. The STELLAR programme (adapted from *MOE: Welcome to STELLAR*, 2008).

early, 2011, p. 17). For example, in Ang Mo Kio Primary School, several school-wide activities were introduced to promote an English environment in the school. The school set aside time to introduce different genres of English – such as rap, chants and poems – to expose students to English beyond the classroom so that they would be more interested in learning the language (*Ang Mo Kio Primary School*, 2009).

To enhance the primary school curriculum further, the MOE has also introduced the STELLAR programme, which is widely used in Singapore's primary schools, in conjunction with the launching of the new English syllabus in 2010. *STELLAR* is an acronym composed of the letters of the words St*rategies for* E*nglish* L*anguage* L*earning* a*nd* R*eading*. The programme is made up of three major components: the Shared Book Approach; the Modified Language Experience Approach and Learning Centres. The main aims are to strengthen language and reading skills through the use of learner-centred teaching pedagogies (*MOE*: *Welcome to*, 2008). The belief is that children who enjoy reading will tend to have a stronger foundation in the language (Figure 3). The STELLAR programme provides children with opportunities and space to interact with English. The fundamental focus of the STELLAR programme is to build reading, writing, speaking and listening skills through various activities. For example, the Nanyang Primary School has adopted the STELLAR programme as its English instructional programme. Based on this framework, the school includes activities such as speech and drama, reading, writing, phonics and oral communications in its English curriculum (*Nanyang Primary School: English Department*, 2003). Essentially, the main aim of the primary school curriculum is to teach Standard English and to inculcate speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

At the secondary level, the English curriculum focuses on raising the level of competency. For example, in Jurong Secondary School, activities such as newscasting, podcasting, blogging, role play and creative drama are adopted to develop its students' creativity and innovation as well as their language and communication skills (*Jurong Secondary School*, 2008). In short, the MOE has listed three desired outcomes for English in Singapore (*MOE*: *Syllabuses*, 2011):

(1) all Singaporean students will obtain the essential fundamental skills – that is, grammar, spelling and basic pronunciation – and use them in everyday situations and for functional purposes;
(2) a majority of the students will obtain a good level of speaking and writing skills; and
(3) at least 20% of the students will attain a high degree of proficiency in the English language.

Based on these outcomes, students are expected to possess a significant level of competency in the English language when they enter post-secondary education, the level consisting of junior colleges or the centralised institution,[3] Institute of Technical Education, polytechnics, private institutions or universities. For example, for students in junior colleges, it is compulsory to sit for the General Paper or Knowledge Inquiry examinations. These examinations require the students to engage with various forms of information and knowledge that call on their abilities to analyse and reason critically and creatively and to discuss their views and interpretations in writing. Such top-down and bottom-up approaches are part of the process of trying to ensure that Singapore's language planning produces high literacy rates (Silver, 2002).

New challenges facing Singaporean language planning

The effort made by the Singaporean government in its language policy and planning has gained Singapore international recognition for its academic performance. For example, *The International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS), an international comparative study of reading literacy among students, placed Singapore at the 4th position among the 45 education systems that participated in the study in 2007 compared with 15th position in PIRLS in reading literacy in 2001 (Loh, 2007). However, as Singapore continues to become more globalised and diversified, this will continue to attract more new migrants into the country and into its school system. This changing linguistic situation is bringing about the emergence of a more complex multilingual Singapore that will require language education policies to be readjusted to meet new realities. This is so because the impact of migration on the school system is affecting the two key areas of language-in-education planning provision: mother-tongue instruction and Standard English instruction.

Mother-tongue instruction

Figure 4 illustrates how the process of policy reform is interpreted and re-interpreted within the framework of the education system. Policies – bilingual policy decisions made at the national level – are subject to a number of contextual influences that determine the effectiveness of these educational reforms when they are implemented at the school level.

Figure 4 shows that as more students foreign to Singapore enter the local education system, a new challenge to the country's language policy and planning is posed. The current language policy does not cater for new migrants such as those from Burma, Korea and Vietnam whose first languages are not likely to be English; this linguistic reality may disadvantage them in school since the medium of instruction in Singapore is English. In addition, these students foreign to Singapore who are admitted to schools at the primary level are expected to complete the PSLE like all local students. Therefore, they are required to take up one of the mother tongue languages (*MOE*: *International student*, 2011), which may not be their first language – indeed, which may be yet another language they must learn. Thus, one of the challenges that have arisen is the threat to the mother-tongue aspect of Singaporean language-in-education policy. This challenge has increased with the introduction of early English immersion in schools and the home language shift through parents' increasing use of English and, as a result, has led to a reduction in the use of the cultural languages, especially Chinese (e.g. Zhao & Liu, 2007). The recent migration creates substantial numbers of students who require Chinese, Malay or Tamil as second languages – a provision that is not well catered for in the current system. Thus, with the emergence of a new, more complex Singaporean society, the MOE needs to

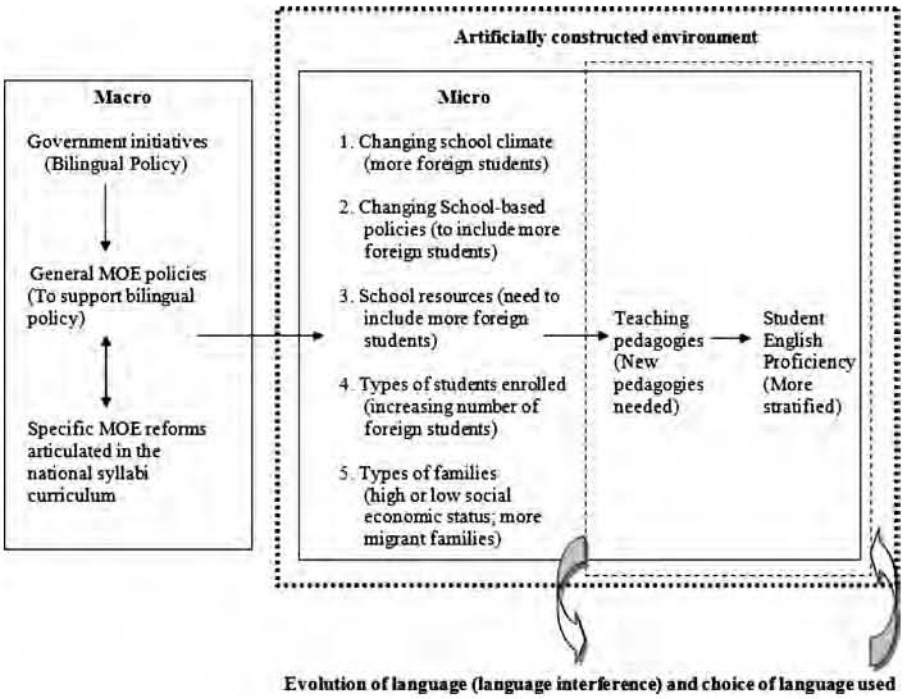

Figure 4. Language policy translating process.

consider introducing a 'bridging' curriculum for these students foreign to Singapore to learn the mother tongue languages as foreign languages first, before they join the local schools and are expected to learn them as second languages.

Standard English language instruction

Migration has brought other varieties of English such as Chinglish (China), Korlish (Korea), Manglish (Malaysia) and Spanglish (Spain), which may further reshape Singapore's linguistic geography (Chua, 2010). In Singapore, when English is learned simultaneously with the three mother tongue languages, code-switching and code-mixing occur. When the learners acquire two languages (and for some, three languages because they must also learn other languages, i.e., migrant students), over time, they become proficient in negotiating meaning among these languages. When these speakers are able to juxtapose the different languages efficiently, they develop meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic abilities (Gunderson, Odo, & D'Silva, 2011) that allow them to engage in plurilingualistic communication; that is, they are able to combine and alternate between the different languages during conversation. Code-switching ability is prevalent in Malaysia and Singapore because living in multilingual societies (Soo, 1987) exposes individuals regularly to two or more languages (David & Mclellan, 2007).

Colonialism and globalisation have meant that English has penetrated numerous non-English-speaking communities, and increasingly code-switching takes the common form of 'other + English', where the 'other' may be Chinese, Dutch, Egyptian or Korean (Ng & He, 2004). However, the linguistic complexity found in many parts of Asia means that the practice of code-switching is not restricted to the 'other + English' formula.

Instead, code-switching in these multilingual societies involves 'other[s] + English'. A possible consequence of this plurilingual ability is an increased difficulty in segregating Standard English from the other varieties of English like *Singlish*. Figure 5 illustrates how the existence of different languages and the learning of the mother tongues have led to the creation of a non-standard form of English, known as *Singlish*. It grafts language forms from Malay, Tamil, Hokkien and other Chinese languages onto an English language base (Abley, 2008). *Singlish* is becoming more widely used as people's first language and as an identity marker for Singaporeans, and therefore, it is not surprising to find that the current generation of students, allegedly the so-called English-knowing bilingual Singaporean natives, converse in *Singlish* and not in Standard English.

The consequence of these developments suggests that as more people communicate in *Singlish*, an increasing number of children are likely to learn *Singlish* and not Standard English as their first language (Dixon, 2009). The result of this linguistic shift is that when these children enter kindergarten and primary school, they are unaware that they are not proficient in Standard English, and consequently they are faced with the challenge of re-learning 'English' and rebuilding their 'English foundation' because they may have *Singlish* as their first language. Unlike English and the mother tongues that differ significantly in terms of speaking, writing and grammar, the linguistic gap between English and *Singlish* is less apparent. For example:

> How can you tell it's real? (Standard English)
> Real or not? So, how to see? (*Singlish*) (Ma, 2003, p. 119)

Hence, in order to counteract what has been seen as the 'evil force' of *Singlish*, the government introduced *The Speak Good English Movement* in 2000, a bottom-up approach in

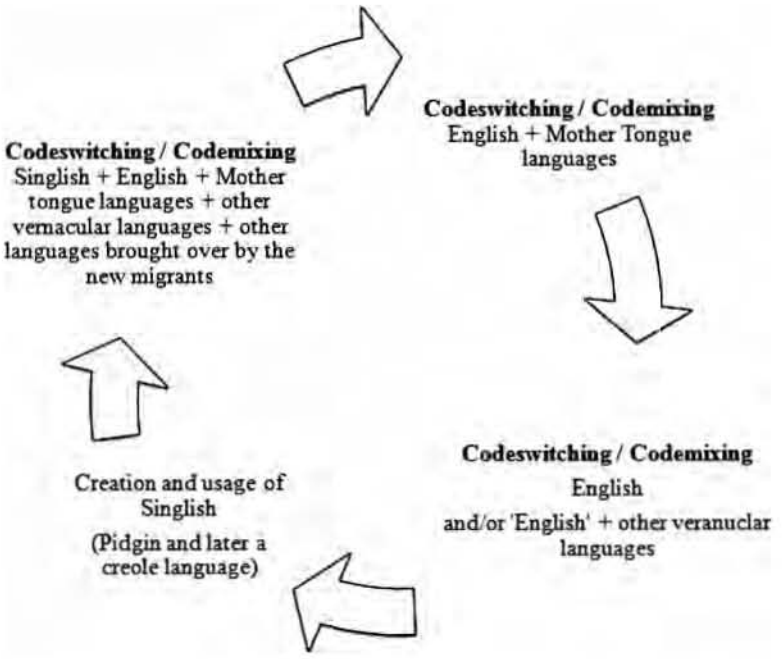

Figure 5. The evolution of language interactions in Singapore.

language planning in an attempt to eradicate this local variety. The main objectives of this campaign are to ensure that all Singaporeans 'recognise the importance of speaking Standard English' and actually 'speak Standard English'. For example, one of the most recent activities organised by the Standard English committee, *Are you a Grammar Ninja?*, encourages active participation from local Singaporeans to correct poor English found around them by taking pictures of incorrect English found in the public places such as shopping malls and restaurants and on product labels. They are asked to suggest corrections for these mistakes and to post them on the Straits Times Online Mobile Print forum, an online social networking forum where Singaporeans are able to engage and interact with others (*The Straits Times STOMP*, 2006) (Figure 6).

However, while this anti-*Singlish* campaign suggests that the government may believe that by using only Standard English, Singaporeans will converse in Standard English, *Singlish* is very much entrenched in Singaporean society. It is not found only in colloquial speech in the informal domain; it has moved into the education domains, and one hears teachers code-switching between Standard English and *Singlish* (Lim, 2009). As illustrated in Figure 5, when communities like Singapore adopt a lingua franca, they may communicate in simplified or modified varieties of English known as pidgins. Many such pidgins are found in territories which were formerly colonised by Europeans (Crystal, 2003). These pidgins gradually became first languages (i.e. creole varieties of English) in various communities. However, English creoles, like other new varieties of Englishes, are perceived to be inferior languages since many believe that 'there can be only one kind of English, the standard kind, and that all others should be eliminated' (Crystal, 2003, p. 175).

Figure 6. Holiday packages now coming with complimentary 'full terrorism' (*The Straits Times STOMP*, 2006).

This phenomenon shows that despite the top-down and bottom-up approaches in language policy and planning, there are unavoidable limitations to this holistic approach. This is so because language planning seeks to modify the linguistic behaviour of a society; like any other kind of social planning, it is subject to societal influences that are beyond government's control. Since *Singlish* is a 'natural' by-product of language interactions, Crystal (2003) argued that 'English language has already grown to be independent of any form of social control' (p. 190). Thus, an emerging challenge will be to introduce effective new teaching pedagogies for early primary English teaching so as to enable both the local and the migrant students to learn Standard English more effectively. Although the current state of Singapore's bilingual policy appears to be 'English + 1', since *Singlish* permeates every aspect of the society, the 'English + 1' policy increasingly resembles 'E(Si) nglish + 1' instead. Therefore, language policy and planning in Singapore need to be actively changing to meet local conditions, and this condition implies that it is not possible or necessary to eradicate *Singlish*; rather, it is necessary to ensure that *Singlish* does not replace English in all domains now reserved for English. For that reason, it is important for students, as early as in primary schools, to learn the difference between *Singlish* and Standard English. The English curriculum should include specific examples of *Singlish* and Standard English to allow students to learn to differentiate between the two varieties. In other words, bilingualism ideally should always be additive and not be subtractive.

Conclusion

In general, English-knowing bilingualism in Singapore has created a strong standard language ideology that pervades the teaching of English (Pakir, 2008). As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in all domains of the society has meant that most Singaporeans are increasingly becoming proficient speakers of English, with an increasing percentage claiming English to be their first language (Kirkpatrick, 2010). The high percentage of passes in English shown in Table 5 demonstrates that Singapore's bilingual policy has equipped most Singaporeans with the basic language skills needed to access a globalised world. As Singapore enters the twenty-first century – a time marked by the accelerated pace of technological development – English will continue to remain an essential tool for global education and international communication (Sinagatullin, 2006; Wagner, 2008). Therefore, it would be logical for the government to continue to strengthen the teaching of English as part of Singapore's bilingual policy. However, as English becomes the first language for many Singaporeans, the majority of Singaporeans will learn and use their mother tongue language only as second languages. English-educated Singaporeans who have been able to find better job opportunities and who have gained more economic power and social prestige have 'lost their ability to use their ethnic or regional languages and used English in the home, with their children learning English as their mother tongue' (Kwan-Terry, 2000, p. 90). As a result, many Singaporeans remain able to speak their mother tongue languages, but they are more proficient in English because they learn to read in English before they learn to read in their mother tongues (Zhang, Gu, & Hu, 2008, p. 246). In view of this development, although the bilingual policy has succeeded in making English the common language of Singapore, it has failed to help people to retain their links to their traditional cultures, as English, a foreign language, has been learned and adopted at the expense of other vernacular languages (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Language learning is not a static process. Given that policies exist as forms of text and action, and are also processes and products, they move through different stages of

implementation and reception by the people involved at each level. Consequentially, different outcomes emerge as policies are subjected to the various translating processes (Trowler, 2003). This occurs because these processes are only 'language in plan' (policy or texts and proposed actions) and, as such, the processes differ from actual 'language in use' – that is, the actual operation of the planning and the usage of the language by members of communities. The process involves social practices whereby the language is interpreted, communicated and mediated in different social settings, and the language undergoes a process of active construction whereby individuals use the language according to their linguistic background and then localise it in various social contexts. Furthermore, it has been found that an increasing number of young children are learning *Singlish* rather than Standard English as their first language. With such strong infiltration of *Singlish* into every domain of the society, *Singlish* (and *Singlish* further modified in the future) may become the first language for future generations of Singaporeans. With that in mind, when considering teaching English to young children, the school curriculum will need to include opportunities designed to help children develop multi-literacy abilities that allow them to engage in different social settings inside and outside the school. In the Singaporean context, the bilingual policy may have to morph into an 'English + *Singlish* + 1/1' because, on the practical side, it is ideal for children to learn at a very young age to differentiate among the varieties of Englishes. Therefore, the effectiveness of Singapore's bilingual policy needs to be reassessed to include the ability to identify and use the varieties of Englishes in different contexts. Given that the majority of English (or *Singlish*) interactions today occur among the 'English-knowing natives', it is clear that the early introduction of English to children needs to include effective pedagogical practices that will enable the children, as early as kindergarten and in primary school, to know when and how to code-switch between the two varieties as a means of developing proficiency in English.

In short, the objectives and intentions of Singapore's language policy may resemble an 'English + *Singlish* + 1/1', where '1/1' refers to other new immigrant languages in addition to the three designated mother tongue languages currently recognised as Singapore continues to open its door to more migrants. As reported in *The Sunday Times*, Singapore's cocktail of cultures has attracted children of expatriates, also known as 'half-pats', to return and work in Singapore after they have studied abroad (Vasko, 2011). Thus, government language planning and policy cannot be separated from the reality of societal language change, since the linguistic situation will continue to evolve in multilingual societies like Singapore (see, e.g. Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987). Therefore, it is unproductive and unrealistic for Singapore's language planning and policy to continue to ignore the existence of *Singlish* and to fail to recognise the need to expand the bilingual policy to include other languages and cultures brought to Singapore by recent migrants.

Notes

1. 'Mother tongue languages' is the term used in Singapore to refer to the vernacular languages of the three largest ethnic groups: Chinese (Mandarin), Malay (Malay) and Indians (Tamil).
2. EM stands for *English as first language*; *Mother tongue as second language*. Those who are in EM1 study both English and mother tongue as first languages; those in EM2 study English as the first language and mother tongue as the second language. As for EM3, students study both English and mother tongue in a more simplified version. This streaming exercise was replaced with subject-based banding exercise in 2008. The new system allows students to study a mixture of standard subjects (for those who do well in the subjects) and foundation subjects (for those who are weak in the subjects).
3. Pre-university education prepares students for the GCE 'A Level' examination at the end of the 2-year junior college or 3-year centralised institute course.

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English in primary education in Malaysia: policies, outcomes and stakeholders' lived experiences

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This paper examines English language-in-education policy and planning (LEPP) in Malaysia from macro- and micro-language planning perspectives over the past 50 years. Specifically, it focuses on English language policies at the primary level and investigates their outcomes and consequences at different levels of education. The major focus of this paper is a case study that was conducted on samples of students, lecturers and administrators in a public university providing an illustration of how macro-level policies are enacted at the micro-level. The analysis of the participants' views and perceptions suggests that macro-level planning alone may not produce the desired changes in language behaviour and that national-level planning needs to be complemented by micro-level work to create desirable language policy outcomes. This suggests that Malaysian LEPP needs to take micro-level realities, perceptions and stakeholders' experiences into consideration while promoting and strengthening the mastery of English if macro-level planning is to contribute to successful outcomes.

Introduction

Language-in-education policy and planning (LEPP) in Malaysia illustrates a rapid progression of planning activities over the past 50 years (Abdullah, 2005; Gill, 2004, 2005). Due to historic, economic, social and political sensitivities and motivations, Malaysian LEPP has taken a multi-pronged approach to goals in relation to the co-existence of Bahasa Malaysia (BM)[1] and English. Although, as Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) have argued, the education sector 'may be precisely the wrong place to begin planning and policy implementation, simply because of the inherent scope of the activity' (p. 321), LEPP in both languages has revolved around national education. While the use of LEPP in promulgating BM through the national curriculum has produced desirable outcomes over time in terms of language use in society, the use of LEPP to promulgate English, Malaysia's second language, has been much less successful in delivering outcomes. Therefore,

creation of desirable outcomes in English remains a challenge for the Malaysian education system, in general, and for LEPP, in particular.

This paper examines English-in-education policy and planning in Malaysia from macro- and micro-language planning perspectives since national independence in 1957. Focusing on English language policies at the primary level, it investigates the outcomes of those policies at different levels of education. The major focus of this paper is a case study conducted on samples of students, lecturers and administrators in a public university in 2010 providing an illustration of how macro-policies are acted out at the micro-level. Our analysis of the participants' views and perceptions suggests that macro-level planning alone may not produce the desired changes in language behaviour and that national-level planning needs to be complemented by micro-level work to create desirable language policy outcomes (Chua, 2006; Chua & Baldauf, 2011).

To illustrate the emphasis put on English through LEPP, we begin with a brief overview of English-in-education policies at the primary level followed by an analysis of the learning outcomes of those policies, particularly, of the *Dasar Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (the Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, henceforth PPSMI) at primary and secondary school levels, in terms of students' performance data from the national assessment exam as well as through subjective, experiential accounts of students, lecturers and university administrators. A subsequent critical discussion relates the outcomes to macro-level LEPP and draws out their implications. This paper concludes with a critical examination of the proposed *Dasar memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia, memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris* [To uphold Bahasa Malaysia, to strengthen English] English-in-education policy in the country.

Malaysian educational context

Language-in-education policies in Malaysia are centralised and are regulated by the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for policy development around access, personnel, curriculum, methods and materials, resourcing, community and evaluation policies from pre-school to pre-university education under the national education system; that is, all government schools (national and national-type) all over the country must deliver the same curriculum employing the same medium of instruction (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010c).

Primary education under the national system consists of national schools and national-type schools (vernacular schools). In accordance with existing policies,[2] the national schools use BM and the vernacular schools use Chinese (Mandarin) or Tamil as the medium of instruction. The course of study at the primary education level consists of 6 years (Year 1–6). Children begin their primary education at the age of 7. English is taught as a subject in all schools under the national education system from primary Year 1. At the end of Year 6, all students have to take *Ujian Peperiksaan Sekolah Rendah* (UPSR) or Primary School Assessment in English, a national assessment that tests their achievement in English and four other subjects.

English-in-education planning: from status to acquisition planning

The focus on English in the Malaysian education system, as in many other former British colonies, has been twofold: English as a medium of instruction and English as a subject. There have been tensions between these two uses of English in the country. British colonial

rule had propagated status planning for English in education and sanctioned English as the medium of instruction in primary schools, organised and administered largely by Christian missionary groups (Asmah, 1994; Gill, 2004). Upon independence, however, there was a policy shift towards the formation of a single system of national education with BM as the medium of instruction as specified in the Razak Report 1956 and the Education Ordinance 1957 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010c). Despite the motivation to use BM (known as Bahasa Melayu at that time) as the medium of instruction, English had continued to be used as the medium of instruction until the racial riots of 1969, 12 years after independence, forced policy-makers to seriously implement BM-medium instruction at the school level (Abdullah, 2005; Asmah, 1992; Gill, 2005). In 1970, BM officially replaced English as the medium of instruction in primary education in phases, but English remained as a subject in all national schools (Asmah, 1994; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010d). By 1975, all English primary schools were transformed into national primary schools, putting an end to English-medium primary education. This change in the status of English – relegating the language from the medium of instruction to a mere school subject – de-emphasised English acquisition planning, directly affecting language management and learning outcomes. It is generally believed that one consequence of the switch to BM as the medium of instruction was that it created a generational gap in English proficiency between those educated in English-medium schools and those educated in BM-medium schools. For instance, educated Malaysians who are currently in their 40s are believed to have higher levels of English proficiency, a result attributable to their schooling through the medium of English (Gill, 2005, p. 212). Although English has been taught as a subject from primary Year 1 over the past 40 years, the phasing out of English-medium primary education is believed to have contributed to the deterioration of English proficiency among the younger generation (Gill, 2005). The following observation of Dr Karmila,[3] one of the lecturers who participated in the case study reported later in this paper, can be taken as representative of the widely held views on the relationships between English-medium education and English proficiency:

> *[T]hey did their SPM[4] in Malay, their degree in Malay, their masters in Malay. Their age is easily about 26 to 35. So we have this young group of lecturers, the one that has problem, they were educated in Malaysia. Their English … what do you call it … their mastery is good. They read English, but not speaking.*[5]

In the extract, Dr Karmilla is referring to her junior colleagues at the public university (see the section on the case study) who received their secondary and tertiary education through BM (Malay) and, therefore, she observed, were not sufficiently proficient in spoken English, although they might have grammatical competence. It is this limited ability of school leavers and local graduates to communicate in English from BM-medium education that persuaded the Ministry of Education to introduce one English-in-education policy after another to try to overcome the problem, for example, the change from English as a school subject to English as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics (i.e. the PPSMI policy). We discuss the PPSMI policy and its outcomes at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in the ensuing section.

Policy outcomes at the primary level

The Malaysian education system is mobilised by politics and national aspirations. Initiatives to reinvent the educational system to prepare the nation for the information age

provided the impetus for the reinstatement of English as a medium of instruction in primary education (Hashim, 2003; Multimedia Development Corporation, 2010). The integration of information and communication technology-based content in teaching and learning in the national school system stirred the need to use English, which re-energised the acquisition planning status of English in education. The policy mandating the use of English to teach science and mathematics (PPSMI), implemented from 2003 onwards, was a complementary effort of the *Smart School* programme, one of the Vision 2020 projects for education conceived by the then Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammad. Given that Malaysia has a unitary educational system, these two subjects were also taught in English in vernacular schools, using more flexible guidelines in terms of its implementation. In addition to the use of English as the medium of instruction for science and mathematics, the policy retained the teaching of English as a school subject.

However, the PPSMI policy was discontinued after the completion of its first cycle in 2008. In July 2009, the Minister of Education, Datuk Seri Muhyiddin Yassin, announced the reversal of the policy, which will be effective from the academic year 2012. Accordingly, the teaching of science and mathematics through BM has commenced in Year 1 in 2011. The reversal of the PPSMI policy is thought to have been informed by students' academic achievements in science, mathematics and English in the national evaluation called Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR)[6] (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010e). The Ministry of Education commissioned several studies (see Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010e) that also pointed out the gaps between urban and rural students' performance in the national assessment. These studies also showed that students from rural areas had difficulty in understanding the teaching of science and mathematics through English, since their English proficiency was at a nominal level (Haron, Gapor, Masran, Ibrahim, & Mohamed Nor, 2008; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010e; Poor English impedes lessons, 2006). On the other hand, the Ministry of Education reported that teachers' modest levels of English proficiency were a practical constraint leading them to use English for only 55% of classroom time. In summary, the Ministry of Education was concerned about socioeconomic polarisation between rural and urban pupils, practical challenges in implementing the policy and, finally, discouraging academic outcomes, and these factors informed the reversal of the PPSMI policy. The withdrawal of the policy indicates that the macro-level PPSMI policy had not paid sufficient attention to micro-level realities that might work as barriers to successful translation of policy goals and their implementation in the country (Chua, 2006; Chua & Baldauf, 2011).

Nevertheless, the reversal of PPSMI was not well received by many parents, particularly in urban areas, as reported in the media (Syukri, 2011; Tan, 2009). An example consists of a comment made by a parent interviewed in the case study presented later in this paper:

> *I wish the PPSMI is continued. You can see the benefit given to the students. First of all, it does not make their Malay language backward or the proficiency low. However, I do feel because from the experience with my daughter, my daughter's school at Sentul, a below average income school area, but I do believe the students can learn anything. SKS1 and SKS2 [names of two schools] are side by side. But SKS1 comes up with 30 of 5As and SKS2 only has 5 of 5As [based on five subjects in UPSR]. Same schools, same environment but different results. So basically it goes back to the teacher. For PPSMI, I wish it is continued because the failure for the PPSMI is not the students, it is the teachers themselves. These teachers coming from the Malay instruction university, because at that time most of the graduates were taught in Malay. So this becomes the teacher problems, and ask them to teach in English, what do you expect? Therefore, not the student who cannot learn in English but it is the teachers who cannot*

teach math and science in English. The Ministry [Education] is also not helping. At the time the announcement was made, they said the primary school, the English should be simple English. But the test is not. They use higher vocabulary. Something is wrong about the implementation.

The interviewee highlighted three points:

(1) the success of the PPSMI policy depended on teachers in a particular school;
(2) science and mathematics teachers had problems in teaching through the medium of English; and
(3) English at the primary level was difficult, although it had been publicised to be otherwise.

Despite the rationale given by the Ministry of Education for the reversal of the PPSMI, this parent was against the reversal of the policy, because with proper implementation, she believed, it had the potential to develop students' English proficiency. She argued that if the policy did not produce the desired outcomes, it was not due to students' inability to learn; rather, it was due to teachers' English proficiency that was insufficient to teach and due to improper management of the policy.

Learning outcomes at the secondary level

Students' academic achievement in English in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) [Malaysian Certificate of Examination] in 2009 was equally discouraging. The secondary school students' results reported in Table 1 represent the completion of the full cycle of the PPSMI from Form 1. At the end of secondary school (Form 5), all students were required to take the SPM. Their performance in the test determines their fields of study as well the institution for their tertiary studies. The SPM included two English papers: a compulsory English paper called 'English 1119' and an elective paper called 'Literature in English'. In SPM 2009, the elective English paper remained the least popular among test takers, since only 871 (0.22%) of the total 400,397 students opted for this paper in the test (Ministry of Education

Table 1. Students' national attainment in English 1119 paper on the SPM 2009.[a]

Grades	Percentage of test takers ($n = 400,397$)
A+	03.0
A	06.3
A–	04.8
B+	05.7
B	07.3
C+	07.5
C	07.2
D	18.7
E	15.0
F	24.4
Total	99.9

Notes: Data presented in this paper are based on 99.9% of the 400,397 students who took the examination. On reading the source closely, there was a discrepancy of 0.1% between grade A+ and grade E, possibly due to rounding errors. For grade F, the percentage was assumed to be correct.
Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2010a).

Malaysia, 2010a), suggesting that this paper was difficult to pass and, therefore, should be avoided.

The test content of English 1119 included reading comprehension and writing. Test takers' oral proficiency in English was assessed in the school and was not included in the results of the English 1119 paper reported in Table 1.

Based on their performance in the test, students were divided into three groups: (1) high-achievement group (A+, A and A−); (2) average-achievement group (B+, B, C+ and C); and (3) low-achievement group (D, E and F) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a, p. 272). As the table shows, only 14.1% of the students fell into the high-achievement band, while 27.7% fell into the average-achievement category. More than half of the students (58.1%) were in the low-achievement group and lacked basic competence in reading and writing, as denoted from the grade descriptors for the test (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a).

These figures indicate that a large percentage of the students had low levels of achievement in English. Despite 11 years (six years in primary school and five years in secondary school) of English language instruction, students' modest attainments in this examination raised concerns about the policy and its implementation. It should be noted that in addition to learning English as a subject, these students had learnt mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics through English for five years in secondary school. Nevertheless, about one-fourth of them (24.4%) failed in the English paper and close to three-quarters (73%) obtained grades between C+ and F, indicating the sorry state of English proficiency levels among school leavers.

Students' performance in the national assessment exam indicates that Malaysian English-in-education policy has had only limited success in delivering policy-mandated outcomes. To understand the policy outcomes further and to understand the challenge that the Ministry of Education faces, a case study that elucidates how stakeholders at the micro-level respond to macro-level policies through their lived experiences is presented.

Policy outcomes at the tertiary level: a case study

The case study reported here, conducted in 2010 in a public university where English is used as the medium of instruction for technical and mathematical subjects, is part of the first author's ongoing research on language planning in Malaysia (Ali, in preparation). The participants were 47 electrical engineering students[7] (Table 2), who were interviewed in focus groups, 10 content-area lecturers and 4 academic administrators, who were

Table 2. Students' English grades in SPM based on the pre-2009 grading system.

English grades	No. of second-year students	No. of third-year students
1A	3	8
2A	3	4
3B	8	4
4B	6	2
5C	1	1
6C	–	1
7D	5	1
8E	–	–
9F	–	–
Total ($N = 47$)	26	21

interviewed individually.[8] The majority of the staff and students used a mixture of BM and English in the interviews. From the perspective of this study, the interviews of the students should have been conducted in English to generate an understanding of their levels of communicative ability in oral communication. However, this strategy, although desirable, could not be followed, as the main study was concerned with the medium of instruction policy in action in Malaysian higher education, and the data for that study were derived from the content of the interviews rather than from their linguistic analysis. More crucially, given the students' proficiency levels in English, if they had been informed in advance that the interviews were going to be conducted in English, the majority of the students probably would not have consented to participate in the study in the first place.

Language management theory (Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987) was used to frame the study, while the qualitative data were analysed using an analytic approach to thematic categorisation. The data highlighted the tensions around students' English proficiency that were the results of, among other factors, the language-in-education policy and its management in the country.

Table 2 presents the student participants' English grades in SPM as indicators of their English proficiency, using the pre-2009 grading system, which is somewhat different from the grading system used from 2009 onwards shown in Table 1. The high-achievement group in the SPM 2009 onward system consists of three categories of As (A+, A and A−), which provide a more detailed breakdown of students' achievement to facilitate scholarship decisions, while the high-achievement group in the pre-2009 grading system was defined by two categories (1A and 2A), both of which suggested that students obtaining these grades displayed higher levels of ability to read and write as in the 2009 onward grading system. The average-achievement groups in both grading systems fall into four grades: 3B, 4B, 5C and 6C in the pre-2009 system and B+, B, C+ and C in the post-2009 system. In both systems, the low-achievement groups were divided into three grades: 7D, 8E and 9F in the pre-2009 and D, E and F in the post-2009 system. Although the two grading systems used slightly different labels for individual grades, the grade descriptors indicate that the achievement results for reading and writing were comparable across both systems (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010a).

The overall breakdown of English results in Table 2 shows that 38 students (81%) received grades in the A–B range, while 9 students (19%) received grades in the C–D range. Based on the SPM description of aggregated scores, approximately 81% of the students can be said to have achieved satisfactory levels of English proficiency, specifically in reading and writing. Grade 7D, which denotes poor writing and reading skills, was the minimum requirement for entry into the engineering programme. Although the data do not represent all the electrical engineering students at the university, this sample profile indicates that grades of A–B in English satisfy the requirements for admission to the electrical engineering programme.

An important difference between the two groups of students is that the second-year group was the first cohort under the PPSMI policy to undertake the study of science and mathematics in English during the first year of secondary school, while the third-year group was the last cohort to receive BM-medium education in those subjects at the school level. Table 2 shows that there were five second-year students from the PPSMI cohort who obtained a grade of 7D in English, despite the fact that the electrical engineering programme admission requirements stipulate grades in the A–C range in mathematics, additional mathematics, physics and one other science/technical subjects studied through the medium of English. As these two groups of students have had two different types of exposure to English, that is, BM medium and English medium (PPSMI), it could be expected that the different exposure to English would be mirrored in the students' views and perceptions.

Participants' views, perceptions and lived experiences

The responses of the three groups of participants (i.e. 47 students, 10 content-area lecturers and 4 administrators) raised a number of issues that illustrate stakeholders' lived experiences of the English-in-education policy at the micro-level. A brief summary of their voices is provided. The constant theme that runs through the three groups is a concern with the inadequate communicative competence in English that the students attained, indicating the limited success of English-in-education programmes at all levels of schooling.

Students' perspectives

In Malaysia, students' limited communicative skills in English present a key educational concern that can be found in the literature as well as in the media. The students' views and perceptions analysed in this study provide some substance for the general concern about their English proficiency. Focus group interviews elicited numerous comments from the students directly related to their limited ability to communicate in English. For example, Ati, a second-year student who scored 1A in English on the SPM, noted:

> Sometimes we knew what to say. But we had problems to express in words because we were not used to speaking English. We knew what to say but when speaking, we faltered. We couldn't think, [we were] not used to it.

Musa, a third-year student, had a similar experience: 'I can comprehend what people are saying but I am not confident to write or to speak, that is my problem'. The lack of confidence in speaking was a problem even for students who had achieved high grades in the national assessment (SPM). For example, Hassan obtained a grade of 1A in English, the highest possible grade, but he still considered himself deficient in speaking:

> I don't mean to brag that I am good in English but in terms of comprehension, I have no problem. From my primary to secondary schools, and even here, I scored A in the tests. But I admit that I am weak in speaking. I am not sure how to put it, but my sentences were choppy. Nothing came out. Sometimes I could not come up with the sentence.

Similarly, Rina (who also obtained a grade of 1A in English) referred to her limited ability to communicate when asked to comment on her English proficiency and the extent to which this proficiency had changed since she had left high school:

> I think no changes. A bit of improvement, but sometimes I also felt it deteriorated a bit. It was because we rarely practised speaking among friends. I rarely speak[…] with my friends. I felt that it has been a long time since I spoke in English. Now, I feel odd to speak in English.

It may not be the case that there was no clear relationship between the grades assigned to students and their overall proficiency in English, but certainly it appeared that higher school-leaving examination grades related to reading and writing did not necessarily mean proficiency in speaking, a phenomenon which is observed in other L2 (second language) contexts as well (see, e.g. Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). This is a plausible outcome particularly because the tests did not measure students' speaking skills, as previously mentioned.

This concern about limited communicative ability, pervasive in the data, requires critical scrutiny that will be undertaken later in this paper. No less pervasive were the students'

explanations for their limited English proficiency which were drawn from their language experiences at the university and in the larger society. Although the students pointed out that they lacked confidence or did not have the 'courage to speak' English (e.g. 'My problem is I don't have the confidence, that's all', as Musa said), an affective factor, they also referred to other factors which have direct implications for English-in-education policy and its management.

The first of these factors was related to local cultural and linguistic norms as applied to real-life communication. Although Malaysia is a multiethnic and multilingual society, where English may be considered essential for wider communication, the reality is that English is not essential for everyday communication, since all citizens are required to learn and use BM, the national language. This sociolinguistic reality makes the goal of English-in-education policy that requires students to be able to communicate in English somewhat paradoxical: students need to practise and communicate in English to develop communicative competence, but this communication in English in real life is unnecessary, unnatural and, to some extent, undesirable. This is so even on the university campus where the use of BM is ubiquitous, as pointed out succinctly by Rahimi, a third-year student (who was graduating at the end of the semester in which the research was being conducted):

> Everyone, from administrative staff, for example, when we went to the office to inquire, to collect certificate, spoke in Bahasa Melayu. Lecturers, students all spoke in Bahasa Melayu. We went to the library, and the people there also spoke in Bahasa Melayu. Everyone speaks in Bahasa Melayu.

Consequently, the students had only limited opportunity to communicate in English, an activity required for developing fluency in the language. As Ati, who obtained a grade of 1A in English, observed:

> For me, after completing the English course, I still wanted to improve my English. In my own way, I read the papers, checked the vocabulary. That was all. But to learn to express, practice speaking, I did not have the opportunity to do that.

Virtually, therefore, it was only in the classroom where the students were able to use English, as Ati explained:

> The English course helps me to improve my speaking ability because we had to speak in English in the class. Both we and the lecturer had to use English. So it's interesting. Actually we seldom got to speak English in this campus. So only in the English class that we got to practice speaking in English.

However, even the classroom did not provide sufficient opportunity for communication, since the previously mentioned sociolinguistic reality permeates the classroom and produces undesirable social experiences for students, as Rina, who also achieved a grade of 1A in English, noted:

> Actually, I tell you sincerely, I felt shy to use English. If I or he used English, those students at the back would start saying, 'Eey, speak in Bahasa Melayu, enough'. Something like that. So people like us, who wanted to speak in English, felt discouraged. If we do, those friends at the back would not understand what we asked. And also they made fun of us.

Ati stressed having similar experiences when she wanted to use English for classroom tasks:

> When I wanted to prepare for my oral presentation, no way I could do it in front of my friends because when we practised with friends, particularly with Malay friends, it seemed odd. I felt shy, it's like, 'She's showy', all sorts of thinking as if she is good in English […] I really have problems to speak in English with friends. I felt shy. Sometimes, 'What happened to you speaking in English?' remarks like that. I am just not used to speaking English. So, if we have English class, we can practise to speak in English.

The interview transcripts showed that students who attempted to use English were commonly ridiculed, a practice that poured cold water on their enthusiasm for using English. While this practice can be seen as self-defeating because the students themselves undermined their opportunity to use the language and to develop the required proficiency which is undeniably important in the society, it also marked an assertion of their agencies which resisted policies which apparently did not make sense to them from a sociolinguistic point of view.

The students' lived experiences indicated other weaknesses in the educational policies which made English an essential component of the curriculum, either as a medium of instruction for other subjects or as a compulsory subject. In the case of the latter, the students treated the language as a (mere) subject to study from which to extract the necessary knowledge and information, rather than as a *skill* to develop for use in practical communication. Treating the language as a subject was probably unavoidable, because the students could not relate the language to their communicative needs even in the academic domain, let alone in the wider social domain. As Hakim, a second-year student who obtained a grade of 3B in English, observed: 'What I see that students used Bahasa Melayu in the class because they treat English as a subject. We did not have that English speaking culture'.

The students underscored another related issue. Science students, who were studying a heavy curriculum, placed more emphasis on science subjects than on English, considering that those subjects were of more direct relevance to their future education and career plans. As a consequence, they failed to take advantage of the English used in the subject to develop communicative skills, as was pointed out by Aizat, a second-year student who scored a grade of 7D in English:

> We had to take ten subjects at SPM. Most of them were difficult subjects, Chemistry, Physics and others. I put more focus on these important subjects. Subjects like Bahasa Melayu, English, I never studied. When the results came out, my English (.) I did not study English at all for SPM […] I was the best student for other subjects, but my English result was bad.

Aizat had studied science and mathematics in English, under the PPSMI policy, from secondary Year 1 to secondary Year 5. In addition to English, he learned biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and additional mathematics in English, although all student participants claimed that those subjects were not taught totally in English. Aizat stated that he scored grades of A in all content subjects except in chemistry, in which he obtained a grade of B, but his grade in English was D. Another second-year student, Firdaus, who scored a grade of 3B in English, felt that he was 'lucky' to obtain a grade of B in English; he admitted that he did not put enough effort into English and consequently his level of English proficiency was, in his own words, 'low'. These two students' academic achievement (or underachievement) in English indicates that the PPSMI policy produced

neither reliable nor desirable outcomes: neither of the students put enough effort into English, but while one of them ended up with a grade of B, the other received a grade of D. Comments made by other students also indicated that they perceived English as a subject and did not achieve its pragmatic, instrumental value.

The students' experiences highlighted their opinion of the PPSMI policy. They believed that the policy helped them to learn scientific and mathematical content, but it did not contribute to their English proficiency. Kamil, a second-year student who obtained a grade of 4B in English, noted that the English-medium instruction introduced the concepts in English, but learning those concepts did not result in language competence:

> Learning science and maths in English didn't help us to improve our English proficiency. However it helped us to understand science and maths terms. So we got familiar with the English terms.

Finally, the students raised a practical issue; inadequate English proficiency was a major hindrance to their successful learning experiences. Azam, who obtained a grade of 7D in English, represented the views of the whole cohort who underwent the PPSMI policy:

> The teachers were also shocked to teach in English, we were also shocked to learn in English. So we learned together. During the teaching, the teachers did not use 100% English … terminology were in English. They used Bahasa Melayu when communicating with students. So, it was confusing sometimes. There were also teachers who used only Malay. The notes on the whiteboard were in English. They read from the whiteboard when explaining. And then they spoke in Malay.

The students' recollections of their classroom experiences pointed to the inadequate management of the PPSMI policy which resulted in ineffective teaching and learning of English as well as of science and mathematics. In the following section, lecturers' perspectives on students' limited communicative ability in English are discussed.

Lecturers' perspectives

The lecturers' perceptions and experiences of teaching in the classroom provided further evidence of the limited communicative ability of the students. Ms Jannah, a senior lecturer in English, presented a clear picture of students' low communicative ability:

> *They are often afraid in doing presentation, their grammatical mistakes sometimes quite obvious. Even though they want to speak they want to talk, and that grammatical mistakes are still there […] they also sometimes don't have enough information to discuss certain issues, something like that, probably they need to do more reading in English. And we probably need, like like it or not, brush up a lot on the basic grammar. At least they know the rudimentary rules of tenses, at least, or subject–verb agreement, you know, those kind of things are very much lacking, you know. That is obvious ones that I know.*

Ms Jannah argued that, in addition to grammatical problems, one of the reasons the students experienced problems in communicating in English was that they had done insufficient reading, a practice required to develop vocabulary and content knowledge. While the students were mainly concerned about their speaking ability, the lecturer pointed to their academic ability – particularly in reading – the lack of which is also obvious from comments made by Dr Salina, a content-area lecturer:

[W]hat the university should stress now is how to read faster. Then they don't get scared of reading 15 chapters of my text (showing the book). The textbook is very wordy. Somebody has to teach them how to read fast. The textbook is very wordy. Normally what I did, I teach them to read. I read to them (illustrating reading from the book and highlighting points and summary). You have to read very fast and underline, highlight the words. The books already has summary and highlights but you need to read, you cannot depend of this summary. I have to show students….

Dr Salina felt that students were unable to handle long reading texts. She pointed out that in her style of teaching, which required students to read textbooks extensively, students who shied away from reading did not do well. In addition to reading, she commented on her students' inadequate skills in different aspects of writing:

Ability to summarise, ability to paraphrase, report writing and then especially this part, their technical writing and report writing, is very, very weak. When we ask them, they keep asking, 'give us the format'. Then I gave the layout, 'This is the format and follow this.' They cannot think about how to write. And this goes on, not only in the diploma, degree and also the post grad… The thing is what they put in the introduction, background, showed that they don't have the ability. Everybody can have the headings. What they put under the headings do not reflect, this is the abstract or introduction or topic. As if no training at all.

Apart from grammatical problems, which were earlier reported by Ms Jannah, Dr Salina pointed out that students across the board had difficulty with academic writing. She explained that the students were struggling to learn not only the language but also the concepts and the content of the main disciplines that she taught.

Both English language and content-area lecturers underscored the students' inadequate English language foundation, an outcome of English studies at the primary and secondary levels being viewed as inadequate for English-medium instruction at the university. As Ms Zizie, another content-area lecturer, pointed out:

They were not that responsive during the class time but they tended to ask questions when close to test. But they still used Bahasa Malaysia. They hardly used English to ask. They used English for terms but others in BM.

Consequently, content-area teachers who were supposed to be teaching in English had to compromise the English medium of instruction policy and switch to BM to allow the students to understand the content:

Sometimes, students seemed not clear with what I was explaining. They seemed lost, they didn't understand the topic that I was talking about. When I asked them whether they understood or not, there was no reply. That cued me to rephrase and switch to Bahasa Malaysia. (Ms Zizie)

Other lecturers took a more radical approach and taught through the medium of BM by default, as Mr Wan, a content-area lecturer, observed: 'For me, this policy is good but not for all subjects. Engineering subjects are okay but certain subjects require thorough explanation, that hands-on type of subjects better in Bahasa Melayu or mix'.

In summary, in their concern for students' academic English, both English and content-area lecturers pointed to the outcomes of English language policies in schools which did not prepare students for English-medium instruction at the university and which forced lecturers to compromise the English medium of instruction policy to varying degrees. Their language practices (and policies) demonstrate that they were mediators between

English-in-education policy and the target population (i.e. students) (Chua, 2006; Chua & Baldauf, 2011), and in working in the interests of their students' academic needs (i.e. making the content accessible to them), they worked against policy expectations, either knowingly or unknowingly. Similar teacher practices have been reported previously by Martin (2005; see also Chua & Baldauf, 2011).

Administrators' perspectives

University executives interviewed in the study acknowledged low levels of English proficiency among students and thus supported the views of the students and of the lecturers. Prof Rashdan, a senior executive, made the following observation that was representative of other administrators interviewed:

> *While the concern is basically the students who are coming from the school system, their proficiency in English is not very strong, the percentage of the people not proficient is quite large. Those who reach level band 6 or band 5 are very few and the majority are in 2, 3 and 4. That is a big concern so, because English, you know that 4 years that we have in the university, the question that arises is whether it is sufficient for us to make them be proficient in English.*

In accounting for the limited proficiency of students, he refers to school instruction in English, thus indirectly to the outcomes of school English policies:

> *Probably I think it goes back to what is happening in school. I think if there is a lot of emphasis on English at the school level, then probably we can at the entry at university level, we can put minimum requirements but if we do it now, I think it will jeopardize a lot of opportunities for school leavers to join the university, especially people from the rural area.*

He argued for placing emphasis on English at the school level, although this curricular emphasis was already in place because, in addition to teaching English as a subject, the PPSMI policy required the teaching of science and mathematics through the medium of English. What became evident from these interviews was that the school-level policies did not produce the expected outcomes, and the students coming through the education system ended up with limited proficiency in English, thus creating a 'burden to the university' which was expected to take responsibility for developing their proficiency in English before they graduated.

Discussion and implications

Our aim in this paper was to examine English language-in-education policies, particularly at the primary level, and to highlight the outcomes of those policies in terms of students' achievement and stakeholders' subjective perceptions of English language proficiency among students. In keeping with this aim, the case study data presented and analysed in this paper provided a micro-level critique of macro-level policies which unravelled when viewed from the lived experiences of students, teachers and higher education administrators who have had to grapple with those policies and their consequences. The issue common to all three groups of stakeholders was the students' limited communicative ability in English resulting from, among other factors (see the discussion that follows), existing policies and their implementation at the school level.

The theme of limited proficiency, without denying its gravity, can be subjected to a critical examination, as previously indicated. First of all, the students admitted (and their

lecturers and administrators provided further evidence) that they were not proficient enough in English – not even those who had earned the highest grades in the national assessment exams. However, the notion of language proficiency and, by extension, limited communicative ability, defined in policies and in performance data as well as by stakeholders' perceptions, should not be taken as unproblematic. For instance, as Hassan stated, while he had no problem with 'comprehension', he had problems with production, since he considered himself 'weak in speaking', or as Musa stated, he could comprehend what other people said, but he was not 'confident to write or to speak'. Similarly, Ati felt that she was confident, but her confidence did not extend to '100%' of instances. Furthermore, Rose stated that she could speak with her family members, but she could not engage with outsiders. What these lived experiences suggest is that students compared their existing levels of language proficiency against an abstract, ideal concept, rather than against a practical, functional competence. They erred in believing that being proficient means being perfect in all aspects of language, for example, the grammar, the four macro-skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and other abilities, both singularly and collectively. Nor Aslah, Samsiah, Syazliyati and Kamaruzaman (2009) reported similar perceptions among their student participants. Thus, in the absence of a concrete model of language proficiency, the students compared themselves with an elusive notion leading them to underestimate what they could already do with the language. Here, it is not argued that the students and their teachers and administrators had the same understanding of the concept of English proficiency or communicative competence; rather, what is implied is that the students probably (mis)believed that being proficient was like being as functional as the 'native speaker' of the language and, therefore, what they could already do with the language falls far short of the idealised target.

In a way, English-in-education policies in Malaysia and other L2 countries encourage school learners, although unintentionally, to internalise such elusive notions of proficiency (e.g. Kirkgöz, 2009; Kovačić, Kirinić, & Divjak, 2009; Wu, 2006). Typically, such policies aim to develop communicative competence (the meaning of which is often taken for granted) and do not specify the range of functions and contexts (e.g. using the language for communicative needs in academic, workplace and social domains) in which a communicatively competent language user is expected to operate successfully. The assessment policies are, at best, not helpful, because learning outcomes that are measured in terms of socially desirable grades may not fully represent successful learning.

Communicative competence as the goal of primary English policies, in general, and of the PPSMI policy, in particular, appears to have been problematised by students when they referred to the sociolinguistic reality on the ground which makes the use of BM the default choice for communication. They also attributed their limited success in English learning to the curriculum policy, as their lived experiences indicated that although the teaching of science and mathematics through English helped them enrich their vocabulary knowledge, this instruction did not contribute to the achievement of English proficiency. Finally, the students as well as the administrators pointed out the issues related to school teachers' inadequate English proficiency which were obstacles to effective instruction and to fruitful learning experiences and outcomes. Other studies including Haron et al. (2008) and Ong and Tan (2008) have also pointed out the mismatch between the macro-policy goals and the complexities of their implementation at the micro-level.

The stakeholders' perceptions and experiences as examined through the case study demonstrate a discontinuity or a lack of communication between macro-level planning and the micro-level reality. Chua and Baldauf (2011) have argued that the success of macro-level planning depends on a range of factors including: (a) effective translation of

policy goals from the macro-level to the micro-level, or convergent understanding and interpretations of policies by actors at different levels; (b) taking linguistic ecology of the society into consideration in macro-level planning; (c) proper management and implementation of macro-policies at the micro-level; and (d) effective involvement of communities (e.g. families, teachers and students) in the implementation process. The qualitative insights generated through the case study suggest that the Malaysian LEPP failed to connect with the micro-context on all these grounds. For instance, neither the students nor the lecturers interpreted the medium of instruction policy the way it was intended to be: while the policy aimed to develop students' English language skills, the students understood it just as a vehicle for learning content in their engineering subjects and the teachers relied on BM or English–BM code-mixing to make the content accessible to students. Moreover, given the local linguistic ecology, developing communicative competence among the students was an impractical goal, as previously argued. Furthermore, the fact that teachers' English proficiency was an issue in the implementation of the medium of instruction policy indicates that personnel policy issues received inadequate emphasis in the formulation of the policy. This macro–micro disjuncture suggests that language policies at the national level positioned people as mere consumers of policies who are assumed to have nothing to feed back to policy formulation. Moreover, the participants' views and perceptions of policy-makers point to a hierarchical frame of policy-making in which the macro-context remains uninformed by community perceptions at the micro-level even though it is in the latter context that policies are implemented and that outcomes are produced, justifying the need to perceive language planning at different levels including macro, meso and micro (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

However, if the macro-policy-makers were incognisant of the micro-level planning when the PPSMI policy was promulgated, over time, they became aware of how this policy performed and how people perceived this performance in the micro-context. As discussed previously, it was mainly the occurrence of undesirable outcomes – in terms of students' content and language learning and the urban–rural divide – that led the government to withdraw the PPSMI policy and replace it with a new policy called *Dasar Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris* (MBMMBI). In the next section, we will examine this new policy, compare it with the PPSMI and make predictions about its performance.

Future English-in-education policy landscape in Malaysia

Literally, the new policy, MBMMBI, means 'to uphold Bahasa Malaysia, to strengthen the English language'. The new policy constitutes the reversal of the PPSMI, because from 2012 when the new policy will be seeing its full implementation, science and mathematics subjects will be taught through the medium of BM. If the PPSMI emphasised English, at the expense of BM, the new policy will reverse this by positioning BM as the language of knowledge. Although the unsatisfactory learning outcomes of the PPSMI were the major driving force behind the policy reversal, language-based national and racial issues also played an important role (see Semanggol.com, 2011; 7 Kilas, 2011) which cannot be overlooked. Arguably, the PPSMI regime did not instantiate racial riots like those in 1969. However, there might have been an apprehension at the policy level that an overemphasis on English, underlying the PPSMI policy, could affect the status of BM and, consequently, the racial harmony that is so important in this multiracial and multiethnic country. This reading of the new policy appears apparent from its title, which presents the planning of the national and global languages as 'a balancing act', maintaining the higher status of BM even when English is empowered,

which was missing from the PPSMI policy. In this sense, the new policy is comparable to the Japanese EFL policy discourses which, as Hashimoto (2009, 2011, this volume) has argued elsewhere, aim to cultivate Japanese people 'who can use English'.

Nevertheless, the MBMMBI policy makes provision for significant changes in English teaching and thus differs from the PPSMI policy in important ways. The new policy places a clear emphasis on ensuring that the younger generation masters both BM and English through instruction in primary and secondary schools. It introduces three main strategies to transform the mastery of English in national and national-type primary schools: (a) teaching time; (b) curriculum; and (c) personnel (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010e).

Teaching time

The new policy provides an additional three periods or 90 min of teaching time for the English subject per week.

Table 3 shows an increase in teaching time from 7 to 10 30 min periods per week in Years 1–6 in national primary schools, equivalent to two periods a day. Time allocated for national-type (vernacular) primary schools has been increased from two periods to five periods per week for Years 1–6, the equivalent of one period a day. Thus, it is inferred that more teaching time will lead to higher levels of proficiency achievement, although there has been little research evidence for this inference (see Phillipson, 1992).

Curriculum

The new English curriculum will be implemented progressively with Year 1 implementation starting in 2011. The curriculum 'emphasises […] mastering basic literacy and strengthening of English through the modular approach' (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010e, p. 13). Important features of the curriculum are not new, but they are receiving greater emphasis now:

- Building competencies in basic literacy through phonics to enable pupils to have a sound knowledge of letter sounds in Years 1 and 2. Unlike the existing curriculum, grammar will only be introduced from Year 3 onwards and will be taught in context.
- Learning English the fun way through activities such as singing, jazz chants, choral speaking and other teaching aids.

Table 3. Additional teaching time (minutes) per week for English in primary schools.

Type of school	PPSMI	MBMMBI
National schools		
Lower primary (Years 1–3)	210	300
Upper primary (Years 4–6)	210	300
National-type schools (vernacular)		
Lower primary (Years 1–3)	60	150
Upper primary (Years 4–6)	60	150

Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010e.

- Language appreciation through aesthetic reading materials such as contemporary literature.
- Science and mathematics elements will be integrated in the curriculum.
- The standard British English model is used for pronunciation, writing and grammar.

The new curriculum emphasises active learning and social and cultural appreciation in language learning which represents a broadening of understanding of the role of English that extends beyond the school to being part of everyday social and cultural activities. However, there is no consideration of whether and to what extent such activities will be effective in the local context which is generally characterised by a passive, rote-learning-dependent academic culture, on the one hand, and high social values attributed to school grades at the expense of functional ability, on the other hand.

Personnel

The Ministry of Education has recognised the need to improve the quality of its English teachers and has emphasised that the English-teachers cadre must consist of those who are trained to teach English. The Ministry has already started running training programmes to train in-service teachers (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010b).

New measures to improve the quality of its personnel and to ensure the success of English language teaching in the education system have resulted in the intention to hire 376 native English-speaking teachers to train local teachers in five teacher-training institutes and selected schools. In addition, the Ministry will also recruit 600 retired English teachers and increase the intake of English language teachers (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010b). There is also a plan to reintroduce the USA Peace Corps to assist in the improvement of English teaching in the country (Lim, 2011).

In addition to the increase in the contact time between teachers and students, assistant teachers will be provided for classes with more than 35 students, a new feature in the Malaysian classrooms (Mass hiring among measures to strengthen learning of language, 2009). While these measures reflect the government's commitment to strengthening the mastery of English among its younger generation, it is again guided by the belief that an increase in personnel will improve their proficiency achievement in English.

The new policy introduces some new measures that are expected to improve English learning outcomes in schools. However, whether and to what extent these expectations will translate into reality can be understood only after the implementation of the policy completely. It can be anticipated that the new measures, particularly the recruitment of native-speaking teachers informed by the discredited native-speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992), may create tensions between local non-native and non-local native English teachers. In addition, the increase in instructional time is also guided by an assumption that 'more is better', which may or may not produce the expected outcomes. Importantly, the new policy does not mark significant changes in the policy-making and feedback processes, suggesting the prevalence of the macro–micro discontinuity discussed previously. Finally, as the students' lived experiences suggested, their limited proficiency achievement was attributable to, among other factors, the sociolinguistic make-up of the society, the communicative resources and constraints, and the relevance of communicative competence as a goal. It is hard to be optimistic about the outcomes of the new policy which simply does not take account of these realities on the ground.

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Notes

1. Bahasa Melayu and BM are used interchangeably to refer to Malaysia's national language.
2. This is according to the Dasar Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris (MBMMBI) [To uphold Bahasa Malaysia, to strengthen the English language policy.] MBMMBI policy implemented from Year 1 in 2011. This policy has replaced the PPSMI policy. The last section of this paper provides details about this policy.
3. All participants were given pseudonyms. Designation and given title were retained.
4. SPM is the BM acronym for Malaysian Certificate of Examination, a national assessment which students take at the end of Form 5. More details appear later in this paper.
5. Translated excerpts (where BM was mostly spoken) are presented in normal font, whereas English spoken excerpts are presented in italics. All excerpts were translated by the first author and were crossed-checked together with another bilingual BM and English speaker.
6. UPSR is the BM acronym for Primary School Assessment, a national assessment administered at the end of Year 6.
7. The student sample was drawn from second-year and third-year students who were studying for diplomas in electrical engineering. All students were invited to participate in the research, but 47 of them voluntarily agreed.
8. The focus groups and teacher interviews were conducted in BM or English depending on the participants' preference. However, participants had the tendency to speak in English or BM or mixed BM/English. Beyond translation, we have kept the language of original transcripts and have not edited them.

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Compulsory 'foreign language activities' in Japanese primary schools

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From 2011, the new curriculum for introducing English to Japanese primary schools will be fully implemented in the form of 'foreign language activities'. This innovation forms part of the government's plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities', a development based on the awareness, particularly in the business sector, that equipping Japanese citizens with English skills is imperative if Japan is to remain competitive in the international market. Although Teaching English as a Foreign Language has been a key element of Japan's internationalisation and one of the most hotly debated educational issues in Japan since the 1980s, the new curriculum is not a straightforward matter of early education in foreign language acquisition. Using critical discourse analysis as a methodological tool, this study analyses language policy documents, including the Course of Study for primary schools and junior high schools, to argue that it is rather an elaborate scheme to foster a particular attitude towards communication with foreigners by emphasising the differences between foreign languages and cultures and Japanese language and culture in the name of international understanding.

Introduction

The new curriculum to introduce English in Japanese primary schools is being implemented from 2011 in the form of 'foreign language activities' in one class per week for Grades 5 and 6. Individual schools were able to implement such programmes from 2009 if they wished. The classes are usually conducted by homeroom teachers, sometimes with the assistance of native English speakers or local experts, using 'English Notebook'[1] and the accompanying audio materials published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (hereafter the Ministry of Education). Japan lags behind such other Asian countries as China, Korea, Taiwan and Thailand in introducing such a programme, and its plan is also on a lesser scale in terms of number of class hours and starting year. The Japanese plan to introduce English in primary schools also differs in other respects: English is being introduced in the form of 'activities', rather than in the form of a normal subject such as history, mathematics or the national language (Japanese).[2]

Labelling the activities 'foreign language activities' is also peculiar because the Ministry of Education does not actually promote any other foreign languages as an alternative to English.

In many countries, primary school education is the beginning of children's formal and compulsory education, and the tension surrounding the formulation of language policy for English teaching is especially evident because it is taking place during the formative period for children's first-language proficiency and identity formation (Sook & Norton, 2002). In terms of language policy, Japan is a monolingual country where ethnicity, culture, language and identity are closely connected,[3] and national language policies have focused on the development of a nationalistic adherence to a particular concept of Japanese identity (Liddicoat, 2007). In this environment, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in secondary schools has been controlled and regulated by the government in order to prevent the influence of English from undermining Japanese culture and traditions: consequently, the pedagogical aspects of TEFL and learners' competence – in particular their communicative ability – have been compromised (Hashimoto, 2009). Similarly, in the tertiary sector, even though university curricula are not under the direct control of the Ministry of Education, pedagogical motivations have been compromised by the political agendas of government and of universities (Rivers, 2011). Given that TEFL has been identified as one of the key elements of Japan's internationalisation (*kokusaika*) since the 1980s, the tardiness of Japan's introduction of English to primary schools indicates a considerable level of tension surrounding the implementation of the new curriculum. This article examines the process of policy-making for the new curriculum by analysing relevant political and educational documents, and discusses how particular aspects of the new curriculum were formulated and what impact this has for delivery.

For text analysis, I have applied critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a methodological tool, using both original Japanese and the English versions of documents where available. CDA is an approach to language use that aims to explore and expose the roles that discourse plays in reproducing or resisting social inequalities (Richardson, 2007). There are many studies of Japanese policy documents in the fields of politics, economics and education, and their approaches to policy texts predominantly involve content analysis, which assumes an interpretation of a text identical to the one intended by the policy-makers. CDA, on the other hand, allows the readers to see beyond the particular reading of policy documents that the policy-makers intend. The relationship between public debates and government policies in Japan is complex, but outside Japan the implementation of Japanese educational policies is often assumed to be top-down and bureaucratic, and therefore difficult to change. CDA is an effective tool in this respect, helping to achieve an understanding of 'how public debates about policies often have the effect of precluding alternatives, making state policies seem to be the natural condition of social systems' (Tollefson, 2002, p. 4).

Before examining the formulation of the policy designed to introduce the new English curriculum to primary schools, I should note the latest political developments in relation to the new curriculum. As 'education is a site of struggle and compromise' (Apple, 2005, p. 213), educational policies surrounding TEFL have never been unproblematic, presenting TEFL as a place where the differing interests of different parties conflict. In fact, 'English education' is one of the most hotly debated educational topics in contemporary Japan, involving not only teachers and parents but also the business and political sectors. The most recent example is the Government Revitalisation Unit screening process, established by the previous Hatoyama cabinet in 2009 'in order to reform the overall national administration, including the budget and system of national administration'.[4]

The political climate: government revitalisation unit screening

On 11 November 2009, in Round One of the Government Revitalisation Unit screening process, a working group advised that the Total Plan for English Education Reform[5] proposed by the Ministry of Education would be abolished. In Round Two, on 21 May 2010, another working group advised that the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme,[6] which is administered jointly by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (hereafter the Ministry of Internal Affairs), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, would be reviewed. Even though the Government Revitalisation Unit does not have the legal power to enforce its assessments of ministerial proposals, the outcomes of the screening could have an impact on the implementation of the new curriculum to introduce English in primary schools because the proposed Total Plan for English Education Reform would have helped to facilitate the successful delivery of the new curriculum, and the JET Programme would have served as a key provider of English native speakers to work as assistant language teachers (ALTs). Working groups of the Government Revitalisation Unit consist of members of the Diet and various experts. Documents including budget proposals and supporting materials prepared by relevant offices, assessments and comments on proposals, and minutes of discussions between working groups and representatives from government offices are available to the public.[7]

The proposed Total Plan for English Education Reform had three components:

(1) the distribution of 'English Notebook', including teaching aids to primary schools;
(2) research on the effective use of teaching materials and assessment methods at selected primary schools; and
(3) research on 'English education reform' at selected primary schools, junior high schools and high schools.

In other words, the Ministry of Education was seeking funds to publish and distribute teaching/learning materials, different from normal textbooks,[8] and to assess the effectiveness of the materials and the overall improvement in TEFL using model schools. The working group rejected the proposal, stating that the plan lacked a concrete long-term view of the learning process, and that it had failed to take into consideration previous projects to reform TEFL in secondary and tertiary education. The working group also addressed concerns about the qualifications of teachers and encouraged the active use of online resources rather than the distribution of hard copy materials.

The Ministry of Education responded to the outcomes of the Government Revitalisation Unit screening by seeking comments from the public about its assessments, and by publishing a summary of the public comments with its own response to the assessments. The Total Plan for English Education Reform was 1 of around 70 proposals the Ministry of Education submitted to the screening in 2009:

[Assessment]
Abolishment
Main reason/comment
- The English Education Plan should be designed with clear goals of achievement and learning content according to learner's progress throughout primary and junior high schools.

[Public comment]
- Approx. 2000 comments

- Less than 10 per cent support the assessment: e.g., comments such as 'English education is not necessary in primary schools' and 'Japanese language education is more important than foreign language education'.
- More than 90 per cent oppose the assessment: e.g., comments such as 'The distribution of English Notebook should be continued', 'English Notebook is needed to carry out Foreign Language Activities', and 'Without English Notebook, Foreign Language Activities cannot be conducted from 2011'.

[Response in relation to the budget proposal]

- Based on the assessment and the public comments, the Ministry of Education has decided to abolish the Plan in 2010. The details are:
  - Research projects will be abolished in 2009.
  - Hard copies of the 2009 version of 'English Notebook' will be distributed in 2010, but the situation will be reviewed with the possibility of using online materials after 2011.
  - A joint project with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affair to improve the quality of ALT etc. will be conducted in 2009, but reviewed in 2010.

[Proposed budget: 841,000,000 Yen]

[Estimated budget: 219,000,000 Yen]. (Author's translation. Underlining in original)[9]

This published summary of public comments and response of the Ministry of Education shows that, as a result of the screening process, the initial budget was reduced by nearly 75% meaning that the Ministry of Education had accepted the assessment albeit reluctantly. The information the Ministry provided about the public comments is interesting in many ways. First, it stated that only 10% of the public comments support the assessment and listed two comments as examples. These comments – 'English education is not necessary in primary schools' and 'Japanese language education is more important than foreign language education' – are, however, unrelated to the recommendation of the working group. (Eleven individual comments from the working group are listed, none of which are similar to these two comments.) Therefore, this way of presenting the public comments is misleading: it gives the impression that the Government Revitalisation Unit wants to abolish the plan because it does not see the need to teach English in primary schools. Second, it indicates that the Ministry of Education views the reasons it gives as the two major reasons why some people opposed the introduction of English in primary schools prior to its implementation. (Incidentally, the Ministry did not publish the approximately 2000 public comments it received.) In a sense, the Ministry of Education is right in believing that these are the main reasons: according to a survey about the introduction of English in primary schools conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* in 2009 (with 7133 respondents), 43% opposed the proposal, and 'Japanese language should be given priority' was listed as first among eight reasons. The new curriculum was not popular with the general public when the gradual implementation of the curriculum started. Third, the comments by those who disagreed with the assessment all relate to 'English Notebook'. This negative response reflects the fact that primary school teachers – most of whom are not qualified English teachers – need to depend on 'English Notebook' to conduct 'foreign language activities', even though grammar and reading/writing are not introduced in the curriculum. Normally, schools choose their textbooks from texts produced by commercial publishers and authorised by the Ministry of Education, but since primary English is a new subject there are as yet no guidelines for textbook authorisation and commercial publishers have only produced various materials complementary to 'English Notebook'.[10] Nevertheless, the way the Ministry presents the public comments is misleading because it gives the impression that the Government Revitalisation Unit wants to abolish 'English Notebook'

itself. In fact, its recommendation relates to the digital publication of 'English Notebook', not its abolition. Overall, the document that the Ministry published in response to the assessment attempts to defend its original plan based on the argument that the Ministry represents the majority of public opinion, rather than demonstrating how the Ministry intends to address the issues raised by the Government Revitalisation Unit.

The JET Programme was criticised by the Government Revitalisation Unit on two grounds. First, the programme itself has not changed since it was established in 1987, and no comprehensive review has ever been undertaken. The lack of long-term vision and planning is similar to the criticism of the proposal for the Total Plan for English Education Reform. Second, the division of the responsibilities for the programme between central and local governments in terms of cost are unclear.[11] In relation to the first point, the working group pointed out that there had been some confusion between language education and international exchange; the working group questioned the effectiveness of having unqualified ALTs. In the JET Programme, a teaching qualification is not an essential requirement for an ALT. The issue of the qualifications of ALTs reflects the gap between the original Japanese term and the English version: the literal translation of the original Japanese is 'foreign language teaching assistant', but the English term is 'ALT'. In other words, in English they are teachers, but in Japanese they are assistants to teachers. The ambiguity or confusion over language teaching and international exchange was also discussed at a separate ministerial review meeting conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 15 June 2010.[12]

In the discussion with outside experts, it was revealed that the initial purpose of the JET Programme was to promote international relationships (McConnell, 2000). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed that the main purpose of the JET Programme remained international exchange, whereas the local governments viewed the Programme as primarily a provider of ALTs. This discrepancy has created a gap between the provider and the receiver in terms of the selection of ALTs. The Ministry of Education's statement that 'A joint project to improve the quality of ALT etc. with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be conducted in 2009, but reviewed in 2010' seems to refer to this situation.

The common issue in the two screening outcomes appears to be a lack of coordinated planning, taking a broad view of TEFL in the current education system. It might be simplistic, however, to blame the Ministry of Education for the lack of vision and preparation for embarking on the new projects. The Ministry of Foreign Affair's view of the JET Programme as an instrument for international exchange, giving foreign youth an opportunity to become familiar with Japanese culture and society rather than as a scheme to attract qualified language teachers to boost domestic foreign language education, is based on its own agenda, and the Ministry of Education's response to the Government Revitalisation Unit's criticism without addressing the core issue is also a political decision. Certainly, time is needed to assess the overall impact of the screening on the implementation of individual policies, but it is clear at least that, the message is that, in the current financial climate, the government cannot afford to spend money on projects that do not have clear attainable goals and this puts the Ministry of Education in an awkward position. It could be concluded that the Ministry's TEFL projects did not have, or perhaps did not need to have, attainable goals in terms of language acquisition: the TEFL policies have objectives other than improving learners' English proficiency. In the following section, I examine how the particular discourse concerning the introduction of English in primary schools has been formed within a larger framework for improving Japanese people's English proficiency.

Plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities'

The original Japanese term for 'Japanese with English abilities' is '英語が使える日本人' (literally, 'Japanese who can use English'), which is rather informal wording for a policy document. The expression is effective because of its directness and similarity to an expression widely used about Japanese people with a good command of English, '英語ができる日本人' (literally, 'Japanese who can do English'). It appears similar to the 'English-knowing bilingualism' of Singapore, but the two terms are fundamentally different: the plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities' is not about the bilingualism of Japanese people, but about acquiring additional language skills while the Singaporean 'English-knowing bilingualism' has attached first-language status to English and second-language status to the languages spoken at home (Pakir, 2004).

Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century

A proposal to introduce English in primary schools first appeared in a report entitled 'The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century' in January 2000. That proposal led to the plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities' in 2002. The idea that the early exposure of children to English is desirable for effective language learning was not new. In 1986, based on the view that TEFL had to date been delivered ineffectively in the education system an Ad Hoc Educational Committee suggested reviewing the starting school year in which TEFL was introduced: English had been given weight as an academic subject for entrance examinations, rather than as a practical communication tool since the 1970s when mathematics and English were perceived as the key subjects for measuring students' academic performance (Kurosaki, 1995). In the twenty-first century, the situation has not changed, and Japanese parents' enthusiastic support for their children having early contact with English is based on their belief that obtaining high marks in English subjects will provide their children with an academic advantage, and therefore an advantage in employment.[13]

After the so-called Lost Decade,[14] backed by the business sector, the report entitled 'The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century' proposed two major plans for the improvement of TEFL: one was to use English as an official or working language, and the other was to introduce English in primary school education as part of a strategy to ensure that Japanese youth would be able to use English in the workplace upon completion of their tertiary education. While the former met strong resistance from the public partly because of the absence of definition of 'official language' in the society (see Hashimoto, 2007), the latter has been steadily implemented. The push for the promotion of English from the business sector stems from an understanding that the English competency of individual Japanese is of the utmost importance to enable Japan to be competitive in the international market. This is a strategic shift from the 1980s, when industries committed to supporting their employees undertaking English and other foreign language training not necessarily to improve their language proficiency, but rather to enhance their marketing intelligence (Holden, 1990). In other words, facing the serious negative impact of globalisation on the Japanese economy, the business sector appears to have embraced the notion that English is a language that will improve 'the nation's' well-being. The perception, therefore, differs slightly from the view held outside Japan that the widespread introduction of English in primary schools will lead to the alleviation of poverty, presented in *EL Gazette*, an international newspaper for the English Language Teaching community (October 1999, cited in Pennycook, 2007,

p. 102). Pennycook argues that this perception is a reflection of the myth that English will enhance people's lives.

Plan to improve English and Japanese abilities

In July 2002, the Ministry of Education released a document called 'Developing a Strategic Plan to Cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities' – Plan to Improve English and Japanese Abilities'. Introducing English in primary school education was one of the goals of this 5-year plan, in which language ability was described in terms of 'English conversation activities'. The discrepancy between the main title and the subtitle – the main title is about English and the subtitle is about both the English and the Japanese languages – suggests that, although the plan is to improve Japanese people's English competency, somehow it also involves their Japanese language competency. The subtitle was dropped, however, in the subsequent 'Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities"', announced in March 2003. 'Support for English conversation activities in elementary schools' was one of the objectives of this later plan:

> At elementary schools where English conversation activities take place in the Period for Integrated Study, approximately 1/3 of these sessions will be guided by personnel such as foreign teachers, those who are proficient in English and junior high school English teachers. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003, original English version)

'Period for Integrated Study' had been introduced as a new concept in the curriculum when the previous Courses of Study were implemented in 2002. The concept was part of the strategies to promote 'relaxed' (*yutori*) education as opposed to the more formal system of education based on cramming, which had been seen as a cause of social and educational problems such as bullying and violence at school. The concept was an attempt to create some flexibility in the curriculum in order to maximise the potential of individual children outside the normal framework for academic learning, although it was later considered to be a cause of a decline in academic performance (Tsuneyoshi, 2004).[15] As the term indicates, 'Period for Integrated Study' is not an academic subject, but rather an activities period that does not involve numerical assessment of children's achievement.

This sense of 'activities' rather than serious study also relates to the notion of 'English conversation' ('*eikaiwa*') in Japan. Given the particular nature of the Japanese language – the written language and spoken language are significantly different and Japanese culture values written text over speech – 'English conversation' has become a cultural phenomenon, which Tomioka (1983) called 'Japan's popular culture' in the sense of its being disconnected from actual proficiency, and which Bailey (2006) later described as 'wonderland'.[16] In other words, there is a clear distinction between 'English conversation' and English learned at school. The positioning of 'English conversation' as opposed to English as an academic subject, taught by the traditional teacher-oriented grammar-translation method, can be seen in the elaboration of its objectives in the Action Plan:

> In English conversation activities during the 'Period for Integrated Study', the simple introduction of junior high school English education at an earlier stage as well as teacher-centred methods for cramming knowledge should be avoided. It is important that experiential learning activities that are suitable for elementary school students are carried out, and that the motivation and attitude for children to communicate positively is fostered by providing children with exposure to foreign language conversation in an enjoyable manner, and by familiarising them with foreign culture and way of living. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003, original English version)

The preceding statement about English conversation activities appears to emphasise three points:

(1) separation from teacher-centred and knowledge-based cramming methods;
(2) fostering motivation and a positive attitude to communication; and
(3) familiarisation with foreign culture.

In other words, the purpose of introducing 'English conversation activities' is not only to enhance students' conversational skills in English. In relation to the third point, in the old Course of Study, 'foreign language conversation, etc.' was treated as part of 'international understanding' within the framework of Period for Integrated Study:

> III. TREATMENT OF CONTENTS OF THE PERIOD OF INTERGRATED STUDY
> 6 (5) When foreign language conversation, etc., are conducted as part of study for international understanding, experiential learning suitable for the primary school level should be aimed for, so that pupils can experience a foreign language and be familiar with foreign life and culture, etc., depending on the situation of the school. (Monbu-kagaku-shô, 2006a. Author's translation. Underlining by author)

Because of this connection between 'international understanding' and 'foreign language conversation', Nishigaki (2002) argued that it was wrong to assume that Japanese children's English proficiency would be improved by implementation of the curriculum. Actually, in 2006, the Ministry of Education announced a 'plan to promote international understanding activities, including English activities in primary schools', which eventually led to the proposal for the Total Plan for English Education Reform in 2009. In the document, 'English activities and communication activities with foreigners' are described as part of 'International understanding activities'.[17] In other words, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' insistence that the JET Programme is primarily concerned with international exchange is consistent with the Ministry of Education's strategies.

'International understanding' means an understanding of foreign cultures and societies. The replacement of English with 'foreign language' in the description of the Period of Integrated Study is crucial because it opens the way to introduce Japanese language and culture in opposition to foreign language and culture. This is a critical point in the formulation of the policy: by replacing 'English' with 'foreign language', it was possible to present 'foreign culture and way of living' as a contrast to Japanese culture and to emphasise the difference. By generalising the target language and culture, the specific nature of the Japanese language and culture were highlighted. In the Action Plan, even though the subtitle of the Strategic Plan was dropped, Japanese language was still included as the sixth objective under 'Improvement of Japanese language abilities':

> [Goals]
> In order to cultivate communication abilities in English, the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language, which is the basis of all intellectual activities, will be fostered.
> The acquisition of English is greatly related to students' abilities in their mother tongue, Japanese. It is necessary to foster in students the ability to express appropriately and understand accurately the Japanese language and to enhance communication abilities in Japanese in order to cultivate communication abilities in English.
> Also, in order to foster the Japanese people, rich in humanity with an awareness of society, who will live as members of an international society, it is important to enhance students' thinking ability, foster students' strength of expression and sense of language, deepen their

> interest in the Japanese language, and nurture an attitude of respect for the Japanese language. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003, original English version)

The inclusion of Japan, Japanese language, and Japanese people in the objectives for the improvement of English skills does not simply suggest an emphasis on the importance of the mother nation, but it also means that elements of Japanese language and culture are actually incorporated in the TEFL curriculum. After the completion of the 5-year Action Plan, in March 2008, the Ministry of Education proposed a revision of the Course of Study for primary schools;[18] the new Course of Study clearly stipulates the inclusion of materials on Japan in the curriculum for 'foreign language activities'.

The new Course of Study for '**foreign language activities**'

In August 2008, the Ministry of Education published the new Guideline for the Course of Study for primary schools – foreign language activities.[19] The new curriculum requires 35 class-hours (or one class per week) for one academic year for Grades 5 and 6. It is no longer part of Period for Integrated Study as initially planned because activities in the period are optional and their goals and content are decided by each school. In the revision, the term 'English conversation activities' was altered to 'foreign language activities', and the inclusion of Japanese language and culture appears in the description of the content of the activities:

> II. CONTENTS
> [Grade 5 and Grade 6]
> Instructions should be given on the following items in order to deepen the experiential understanding of the languages and cultures of Japan and foreign countries:
> (1) To become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of the foreign language, to learn its difference from the Japanese language, and to be aware of the interesting aspects of language and its richness.
> (2) To learn the differences in ways of living, customs and events between Japan and foreign countries and to be aware of various points of view and ways of thinking.
> (3) To experience communication with people of different cultures and to deepen the understanding of culture. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009, original English version)

It is striking that all three items relate to the difference between Japan and foreign countries or between Japanese and foreign languages. Given that Japan is one of the largest consumer societies, where almost any material or information from around the world is available, one has to wonder why the Japanese children need to be reminded that foreign languages and cultures are different from Japanese language and culture. The obsession with Japaneseness is not limited to the government; it has become a cultural phenomenon in Japan. A recent survey conducted by a newspaper *Nikkei* asking primary school and junior high school students the question 'What can Japan be proud in the world?' is a case in point (*Nikkei*, 2011). The emphasis on differences can also be observed in Japan's translation culture. Sakai (1997) argues that the emphasis on the differences between Japanese culture and foreign culture is the most significant factor in the process of absorbing foreign cultures in Japan, and that translation has served as a means of understanding and presenting difference.

The emphasis on Japanese language in the new curriculum could also be interpreted as a compromise reflecting a concern for the potential for conflict between foreign language

(English) and national language education in the early years of schooling. When English as a compulsory subject in primary schools was a point of discussion in relation to the revision of the Course of Study in 2006, the then Education Minister Ibuki was reported as commenting that it was not necessary to make English compulsory in primary schools because there was no value in having children learn a foreign language when they had not yet mastered the 'beautiful Japanese language' (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2006b). The nationalistic view of the Japanese language and culture was popular at that time. (For example, then Prime Minister Abe (2006) published a book entitled *To the beautiful country.*) Ibuki's comment contradicts his predecessor, Kosaka's view of the proposal: 'We shouldn't deny opportunities for children who have a flexible mind for tackling English'. Actually, Kosaka's comment was made in response to the statement by Ishihara – the Governor of Tokyo – that primary school children should master the Japanese language before learning a foreign language (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2006a). These different views – one with an emphasis on the priority of mastering the national language, the other with an emphasis on the responsibility to provide children with opportunities to learn English – indicate that there are diverse opinions on the issue within the Ministry of Education.

The '*in principle English*' *rule*

The change in description from 'English conversation' to 'foreign language activities' is not a sudden one, but rather a gradual shift, whose origin can be traced back to the report on TEFL in primary schools released by the Central Council for Education in 2006 (Monbu-kagaku-shô, 2006b). In that report, the term *English conversation activities* was no longer used. Instead, it was replaced with *English activities*, dropping *conversation* in order to encompass both 'activities such as songs and games to be familiar with English' and 'practices of simple English conversations such as greetings and self-introductions'. The Guideline for the new Course of Study provides information about the progress towards the implementation of 'foreign language activities', but does not explain the change in terminology. Regardless of its official description as 'foreign language activities', however, the new Course of Study states that English is the language to be taught in primary schools:

> III. SYLLABUS DESIGN AND TREATMENT OF CONTENTS
> In designing the syllabus, consideration should be given to the following:
>
> (1) In principle, English should be selected for foreign language activities. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009, original English version).

The Guideline provides two reasons for the 'in principle, English' rule: one relating to the status of English in the world, and the other to the importance of continuity between primary school and junior high school:

> The statement 'in principle English should be chosen' among foreign languages is based on the facts that under the current circumstances English is used as a method of communication worldwide and that at junior high schools in principle English is studied as a foreign language subject.'
> In principle' means that schools can choose languages other than English, depending on the purpose of establishment of the school, the circumstance of the community, and the conditions of children.

> In the case of choosing languages other than English, it is necessary to consider the relation to foreign language subjects at junior high schools. Also, in the case of choosing English, in accordance with the objective of 'deepening experiential understanding of language and culture', it is important to arrange for children to have opportunities to have contact with various foreign languages other than English and to deepen their understanding of cultures of the areas other than English-speaking countries. (Monbu-kagaku-shô, 2008. Author's translation)

The two reasons are totally different in nature, and neither explains why it is not 'English' but 'foreign languages' that is referred to. If English should be taught because of its status in the international community, it seems to be reasonable to call it 'English' and provide a sub-clause to allow schools to offer other foreign languages if it suits them. In reality, however, the emphasis on continuity between primary schools and junior high schools leaves primary schools with no choice but to choose English, since only a handful of junior high schools offer foreign languages other than English.[20] Even though the number of schools that offer foreign languages other than English has been increasing, the purpose of offering these languages is to accommodate the needs of the children of migrants or foreign labourers, not to increase the opportunities for Japanese children to learn different languages.

The last paragraph of the previously cited explanation is also puzzling because it states that if English is taught, an effort should be made to allow children to come into contact with the cultures of languages other than English. In other words, regardless of the language chosen for the activities, foreign languages and cultures in general should be covered in the curriculum (i.e. 'foreign language activities' are literally 'activities in foreign languages', not 'activities in any specific language'). This 'multilingual' aspect is reflected in the teaching materials for 'English Notebook', but the actual materials are limited to a relatively small number of languages (i.e. Chinese, Korean, Russian, French or Spanish, depending on the situation), and to a very limited vocabulary, requiring such limited activities as greetings, country names and numbers. In other words, the lexicon consists of token foreign words, making it impossible to 'deepen their [children's] understanding of the areas' where the language is spoken. The ambiguity surrounding the 'in principle, English' rule applies to the proposal to streamline delivery between the primary school and junior high school curricula as well.

Curriculum continuity between primary schools and junior high schools

On the one hand, the Action Plan suggests a discontinuity in the curriculum by stating that 'the simple introduction of junior high school English education should be avoided', but on the other hand the Plan emphasises continuity in terms of personnel: 'these sessions will be guided by personnel such as foreign teachers, those who are proficient in English and junior high school English teachers'. The issue of employing junior high school teachers in primary schools was overcome by changing the relevant regulations. The section on 'Enhancement of teaching abilities and the teaching system' in the Action Plan addresses this issue:

- Promotion of the participation by junior high and senior high school teachers in English conversation activities at elementary schools.
  Due to the Amendment of the Educational Personnel Certification Law in May 2002, personnel who have a teacher's licence for junior or senior high schools can be placed in charge of subjects and the Period for Integrated Study at the elementary school level, which are the responsibility of elementary school teachers. From the viewpoint of promoting links

> between elementary schools and junior high schools, as well as supporting English conversation activities at elementary schools, the use of junior and senior high school teachers for English conversation activities at elementary schools will be promoted. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003, original English version)

Amending a law to allow junior and senior high school teachers to be in charge of 'English conversation activities' in primary schools is a significant development on the part of the government, demonstrating the government's commitment to the new curriculum. In this way, the issue of the employment of junior high school teachers in primary schools was resolved. The question concerning 'foreign teachers' remained, however, because the new Course of Study specifies that foreign language activities should be planned and conducted by teachers but not by ALTs:

> III. SYLLABUS DESIGN AND TREATMENT OF CONTENTS
>
> 1. (4) Homeroom teachers or teachers in charge of foreign language activities should make teaching programmes and conduct lessons. Efforts should be made to get more people involved in lessons by inviting native speakers of the foreign language or by seeking cooperation from local people who are proficient in the foreign language, depending on the circumstances of the local community. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009, original English version. Underlining by author)

The original Japanese is slightly different from this English version provided by the Ministry of Education. The second sentence, which includes the word *native speakers*, should read as follows:

> For class delivery, efforts should be made to enhance teaching by utilising native speakers and by seeking cooperation from local people, who are proficient in the foreign language, depending on the circumstances of the local community. (Monbu-kagaku-shô, 2008. Author's translation)

There are two crucial differences between these versions: first, the expression 'to get more people involved' does not appear in the original Japanese text; and second, the original Japanese refers to 'utilising' rather than 'inviting' native speakers. This is an example of how the instrumental description of native speakers is toned down in the English version. Describing native speakers of English or ALTs as facilities to be utilised is a common practice in both the private and public sectors in Japan. As discussed in relation to the Government Revitalisation Unit screening, the JET Programme has been seen as a key provider of ALTs. But in reality, of the 70% of primary schools in the public system, only 25% 'utilised' ALTs.[21] Because of the lower cost, local boards of education prefer to secure ALTs through private contractors. This has created problems in terms of the quality and reliability of ALTs (*Yomiuri Online News*, 2009); in addition, legal issues in relation to their employment have been raised by the Labour Bureau. Under the regulations concerning contract employment, a local education board is not permitted to instruct ALTs to act as assistants to Japanese teachers (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2010); if ALTs are hired as contract workers through private agents, they must work independently and without direct supervision, a function not permitted by the Course of Study. The expression 'utilising' native speakers of English or ALTs is convenient here because it does not specify the conditions of their involvement, that is, employment status, position in the schools and qualifications.

In this sense, the new Course of Study does not provide further opportunities to employ qualified teachers or native speakers of English in the public education system.

Fostering communication abilities through foreign languages

The concept of continuity between primary schools and junior high schools relates not only to staffing, but also to curriculum design. The new Course of Study for junior high school 'foreign languages' puts it in this way:

> LESSON PLAN DESIGN AND TREATMENT OF CONTENTS
> The syllabus should be designed in an appropriate manner with due heed paid to the connection with Foreign Language Activities at elementary schools. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2010, original English version)

The emphasis on continuity is reflected in the overall objectives of both curricula. Primary school 'foreign language activities' have three aims:

> I. OVERALL OBJECTIVE
> To form the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages, while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude towards communication, and familiarising pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009, original English version)

Strikingly, the ultimate purpose of 'foreign language activities' is not to form a foundation for communication skills 'in' any language, but 'through' foreign languages. In other words, *communication abilities* themselves are the focus, and familiarisation with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages, an activity more likely to form a foundation for junior high school study, is mentioned last in the overall objective. The objective of junior high school 'foreign languages' is only slightly different:

> I. OVERALL OBJECTIVE
> To develop students' basic communication abilities such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, deepening their understanding of language and culture and fostering a positive attitude towards communication through foreign languages. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2010, original English version)

Two points in this junior high school overall objective are almost identical to those for 'foreign language activities' in primary school: to develop/deepen the understanding of languages and cultures, and to form/foster a positive attitude towards communication. This positive attitude towards communication is fostered 'through' foreign languages, and the Ministry of Education appears to be delivering the new curriculum in order to improve general communication skills. 'Communication ability' is an important focus of Japanese education, but it should be noted that the term *communication* is used in the form of an English loanword only in the context of foreign language study in the Course of Study. For example, in the objective of the National Language section, a similar expression is used, but not in the form of a loanword:

> Section 1 Japanese Language
> I. OVERALL OBJECTIVES
> To develop in pupils the ability to properly express and accurately comprehend the Japanese language, to increase the ability to communicate, to develop the ability to think and imagine

> and sense of language, to deepen interest in the Japanese language, and to develop an attitude of respect for the Japanese language. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009, original English version)

In the Japanese original, the term 'the national language' is used in place of 'the Japanese language', and *to communicate* is a Japanese word.[22] This particular sense of *communication* attached to foreign languages seems to be parallel to the concept of *English conversation* as a cultural phenomenon in Japanese society as previously discussed. At the same time, the particular sense of *communication* also connects to 'international understanding'. There is one section in the new Course of Study for 'foreign language activities' where international understanding is mentioned:

> III. SYLLABUS DESIGN AND TREATMENT OF CONTENTS
> 2. (2) B. Activities in Grade 6
> Based on the learning in Grade 5, teachers should encourage pupils in communication activities, focused on interactions with one another, including intercultural exchange activities, in addition to activities related to pupils' daily lives or school lives. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2009, original English version)

The literal translation of the Japanese original would read:

> Based on the learning in Grade 5, encouraging interaction with friends, experiential communication activities, including exchanges related to international understanding should be conducted in addition to pupils' daily and school lives. (Author's translation)

There is no expression in the original that means *intercultural exchange*. Given the context of foreign language activities, the communication is assumed to be with native speakers of English, rather than among learners. ALTs or native speakers need to be utilised because students need parties to *communicate* with. If English is for communication with 'foreigners', who are seen as resources in the TEFL environment, what kind of 'communication' does the Ministry of Education wish to have?

Conclusion

The new curriculum will be fully implemented in 2011, regardless of the recent ministerial budget cuts. The financial problems that Japan has faced in the last 20 years have influenced TEFL in two different ways:

(1) the push by the business sector for the government to find a practical solution to boost Japanese people's overall English proficiency to enable Japan to be competitive in the international market; and
(2) the government's cuts to proposed expenditure in delivering the new curriculum.

The review of ministerial spending by the Government Revitalisation Unit revealed that the combination of language acquisition and international understanding/exchange did not contribute to achieving effective language learning outcomes, if this indeed was the aim of the proposed projects. This article has considered the new curriculum not as a straightforward matter of early education in foreign language acquisition, but as an elaborate scheme to foster a certain attitude towards communication with foreigners, with the emphasis on the differences between foreign languages and cultures and Japanese language and culture in the name of international understanding. This kind of approach certainly does not offer a

simple solution to improve TEFL in Japan, but provides insight into the way particular aspects of the pedagogically compromised curriculum were formulated, which, I believe, leads to improvements in the implementation of the curriculum.

In terms of the relationship between the government and the public, an examination of the policy formulation process reveals that there was a time when the government persuaded people that their policy reflected the majority of public opinion. The rhetoric used in the policy texts, particularly the shift in terminology from English to foreign languages and therefore to foreign cultures, was used to justify the inclusion of the Japanese language and culture in the foreign language curriculum, a critical point in the policy formulation. Although this study has not directly investigated the social inequality that is reproduced or resisted in policy texts, an analysis of the discourses consistently used in policy documents reveals that individual teachers, students, foreigners, English native speakers and ALTs are all defined and categorised to fit the policy framework, not as individual players but as groups. The systematic treatment of native speakers as resources to be utilised prevents ALTs from playing a professional role in the curriculum, and individual students are deprived of the opportunity to acquire skills in and knowledge of foreign languages.

There is not enough space to examine details here, but there are some pedagogical and administrative issues to be addressed including teachers' concerns, class sizes and regional differences in relation to the implementation of the new curriculum. Suda's (2010) field study highlighted teachers' growing resentment of the new curriculum, and reported that its successful delivery was heavily dependent on school governance, in particular on the leadership of school principals. As evidence of ineffective curriculum design, Tajiri (2007) pointed out that the same class sizes are assumed to be appropriate for foreign language activities as for other subjects. These areas could be explored further to provide different perspectives for evaluating the introduction of the curriculum.

One of Japan's modern intellectuals and critics, Kato (2000), argued that introducing English in primary schools would not solve the problems of TEFL, because poor teaching methods and the lack of motivation of students to learn English were the primary issues. He argued that English should not be a compulsory examination subject at any educational level because it was counterproductive to require unmotivated students to study the language. Seven years later, Kato (2007) urged the government to put more effort into Japanese language education from the early stages. Being aware of the negative aspects of globalisation – which Kato considered to be the pressure to use the international language and the consequent undermining of the local language and culture – he argued that in order to maintain cultural diversity in the world, it is important to promote education in the local language (Japanese) and in its culture, rather than to promote the international language and its culture. Kato's argument about the importance of maintaining locality is consistent with Pennycook's (2010) suggestions for 'keeping things culturally local'.

Japan's identity has been carefully constructed within geographical and historical boundaries, and the Japanese government is actively seeking to maintain this identity, or seeking to promote Japanese culture and traditions on Japanese terms, by undermining the position of English and refusing to accept the language as a core part of its identity. The ongoing financial upheaval has contributed to pressure for the government to enhance the nation's well-being, but not in the sense of individual empowerment. After all, English – or, for that matter, any foreign language – has never been a community language in Japan, and this is a reflection of the country's specific and carefully constructed national identity.

Notes

1. The original Japanese is 英語ノート.
2. In Japan, the language for Japanese people is called the national language, *kokugo*, as opposed to the Japanese language for foreigners, *nihongo* (see Gottlieb, 2008, p. 105), but this distinction has become less clear. In fact, in the Course of Study for primary schools, the term *kokugo* is used in the section on the National Language, but *nihongo* is used in the section on 'foreign language activities'.
3. For debates about diversity in Japanese society, see Lee, Murphy-Shigematsu, and Befu (2006) and Weiner (1997).
4. The original Japanese is 事業仕分け. It was also established 'from the people's standpoint' and 'to review the division of roles among the national government, local public authorities, and private companies'. Retrieved from Cabinet Office website: http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/actions/200910/22sassin_e.html.
5. The original Japanese is 英語教育改革総合プラン.
6. The JET Programme is 'aimed at promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations'. The participants come to Japan as one of the following positions: ALT, Coordinator for International Relations or Sports Exchange Advisor. In 2010, the Programme welcomed 4334 participants from 36 countries. See the JET Programme homepage: http://www.jetprogramme.org/e/.
7. See Cabinet Office website: http://www.cao.go.jp/gyouseisasshin/contents/01/shiwake.html
8. Textbooks for compulsory education (primary schools and junior high schools) have been distributed to students without charge. From 2010, the scheme has been extended to high schools, but initially Korean high schools were excluded from this scheme. This indicates that textbooks still play a crucial role for both education and politics (see Horio, 1988).
9. The original document is available at the Ministry of Education website: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kaikei/sassin/1289011.htm.
10. 'English Notebook' used to be available at the Ministry of Education website, but as of 26 January 2011 no materials are available.
11. Some local governments use the income from their lottery business to fund the expense of their overseas offices.
12. It is called 行政事業レビュー, which is similar to the Government Revitalisation Unit screening process, but conducted by each ministry inviting outside experts to the panel. The process and outcomes are open to the public. See Cabinet Office website: http://www.cao.go.jp/sasshin/review/index.html.
13. See Ito and Oshio (2006) about relationships between the demands for early English education and parents' incomes and education backgrounds.
14. 'The Lost Decade' symbolises the difficult period when Japan suffered from various financial, political and social disasters. Because the financial difficulty has continued, the period is now (in 2010) called 'the Lost Two Decades'.
15. In 2007, the Education Minister ordered the review of Courses of Study reflecting criticism of the decline of children's academic achievements, responding to the view that the Period for Integrated Study contributed to the decline (see Kariya, 2002).
16. Bailey (2006) discusses the topic from gender perspectives and argues that the 'English conversation' business has been marketed to take advantage of Japanese women's fantasy for self-realisation. See Funabiki (2010) for his argument on gender in relation to *nihonjinron*.

17. Retrieved from the Ministry of Education website: http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo3/015/siryo/07100309/006/002.htm.
18. The Course of Study has been revised roughly every 10 years since the early 1960s.
19. The Guidelines are published by the Ministry of Education in order to explain and to provide further details about the Course of Study. The Course of Study for 'foreign language activities' is available in English on the Ministry of Education homepage, but the Guidelines and the Course of Study of other subjects are only published in Japanese.
20. In 2006, 42 junior high schools (including both public and private schools) out of 10,906 offered foreign languages other than English; that is, Chinese, Korean and Spanish. The data are available at the Ministry of Education website: http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/19/11/07103102/001.pdf.
21. The data are available at the Ministry of Education website: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/kokusai/gaikokugo/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2010/07/26/1295843_1.pdf
22. The Japanese word is 伝え合う.

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Shaping socialist ideology through language education policy for primary schools in the PRC

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This paper, drawing on the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis, examines the general goals and objectives of the national curriculum reform launched by the Ministry of Education in 2001 for Chinese primary schools. Four policy documents relevant to the curriculum reform are analyzed, including Chinese curriculum and English curriculum for compulsory education, with a focus on education policy for English language instruction in Chinese primary schools. The analysis explores how language works in policy texts in helping to shape and control the ideology of the readers at various levels – an ideology that, in turn, could be transmitted to primary school students. The power relations and equity implications reflected in the policy texts are also explored.

Introduction

Language planning in the People's Republic of China (PRC), as in some other socialist communities, has been characterized as a top-down and politically motivated process[1] (see, e.g. Kaplan & Baldauf, 2011, for a North Korean example and Zhao & Baldauf, 2008, and Zhou, 2004, for examples in the PRC). Foreign language education planning is no exception. A review of the relevant literature shows that foreign language education policy planning, in general, and English as a foreign language (EFL) education, in particular, has been unsystematic but has been inspired mainly by political and economic motivations since the establishment of the PRC in 1949 (Li, 2008). Published studies have focused on secondary schools rather than on primary schools in the PRC, because the teaching of English in primary schools was not compulsory prior to 2001. A limited number of studies specifically concerned with English language education in Chinese primary schools, mostly based on the examination of policies and reviews of the relevant literature, have described the socio-political impetuses for the development of English education policy-making in the PRC at different times (e.g. Hu, 2007; Li, 2007), have examined the challenges to the policy (e.g. Wang, 2002) or the problems in policy-making and policy implementation (e.g. Hu, 2007), and have sought to provide possible solutions to those

problems (e.g. Li, 2010a; Wang, 2002). Other studies of English language education in Chinese schools, primary and secondary, have also revealed the challenges and obstacles in implementing English instruction in Chinese primary schools (e.g. Hu, 2005; Li, 2010a; Li & Baldauf, in press; Nunan, 2003; Shu, 2004). However, the driving ideologies and guiding principles, which might have been important factors causing the problems and obstacles for making policies to promote EFL teaching in Chinese primary schools, have never been explored.

This paper, drawing on key concepts from critical discourse analysis (CDA), analyzes four policy documents for the reform of compulsory education (Grades 1–9) issued in 2001 by the PRC Ministry of Education (MOE). Prior to focusing on the examination of English language instruction in Chinese primary schools, the background policy texts, the directive policy for curriculum reform in basic education and the subsequent new Chinese and English curricula for compulsory education are analyzed. The purpose of this critical policy analysis is to explore how language works in policy texts in helping to shape and control the ideology that readers encounter at various levels – an ideology that, in turn, could be transmitted to the primary school students. The power relations and equity implications reflected in these policy texts also are explored:

> There is always a prior history of significant events, a particular ideological and political climate, a social and economic context – and often, particular individuals as well – which together influence the shape and timing of policies as well as their evolution and their outcome. (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 2002, p. 16)

For a better understanding of the guiding principles of the educational policies being analyzed, a brief introduction to the socio-political situation at the time of their implementation is necessary.

An overview of the socio-political situation for the language education reform for Chinese primary schools

To consolidate the power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) after the establishment of the PRC in 1949 and to build the PRC into a socialist nation, Chairman Mao Zedong adopted Marxist theory as the basic tenet of the CCP and set the USSR as an example to be studied and followed, because it was the only possible ally for the PRC in this undertaking due to its 'more than thirty years' experience building socialism and great, accumulated competence and expertise' (Löfstedt, 1980, p. 61). Mao's 'lean to one side' policy led China to copy Russian models of economic construction as well as educational reform whether or not they were effective or efficient in the Chinese context. After undergoing zigzags in national economic development and surviving the disastrous political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Chinese government launched the four modernizations program and the Open Door policy in the late 1970s. Since then, the PRC has been experiencing a period of readjustment in its economy, and it saw promising growth in its agriculture, industry, foreign trade and domestic commerce in the early 1980s. This growth has assured further reform in its economic system and rapidly developing economy, which, in turn, confirmed the correctness of the policies of reform and the Open Door policy. At the 13th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, held from 25 October to 1 November 1987, Premier Zhao Ziyang pointed out in his political report that the PRC was still in the primary stage of socialism during which the central task was to end poverty and backwardness and to build socialism with Chinese characteristics. A new

theoretical framework for the market-oriented reforms was adopted at the Congress. This Congress 'firmly launched the PRC onto the road of accelerated economic development and greater opening to the outside world' (Hsü, 2000, p. 893), preparing the PRC to enter a new era of internationalization and globalization of the economy and, since the late 1990s, to modify political and educational structures (see, e.g. Hsü, 2000, for more information about the economic and political situation in the PRC). With an increasingly important role to play on the global stage, which, in turn, could drive further reforms in order to allow the PRC to be more involved in the world economy, the Chinese government recognized the crucial role education could play in internationalization and globalization.

Educational reform has always been an important task undertaken by the CCP for socialist construction, and it now continues to be a strategic priority in socialist modernization to meet the demanding needs of professionals in the new science and information age. Measures were taken by education departments at all levels and in schools to fulfill the educational plans and quantitative goals for 1993–2000, highlighted in the 1993 'Outline of the Reform and Development of China's Education',[2] and achievements could be observed in the popularization of compulsory education, the strengthening of secondary education and the improvements in the educational management system (see, e.g. Ding, 2001; Law, 1998). An 'Action Plan for Educational Vitalization Facing the 21st Century' (December 1998) was instituted by the MOE, providing an overall outline for guiding the general operational plans for national educational development in the PRC to meet the challenges of the new era, one of the main emphases of which was quality-oriented education. These policies served as blueprints for carrying out further strategies to rejuvenate the PRC through science and education and through human resource development.

Basic education reform was further stressed so as to promote all-round quality-oriented education, emphasizing the cultivation of students' creativity and ability to utilize new knowledge. To implement 'Decisions on Deepening Education Reform and Fully Promoting Quality Education', issued by the State Council in June 1999, the MOE organized groups of experts to design the compulsory education curricula for the 18 subjects offered in schools. Following the 'Decisions on Reform and Development in Basic Education' (May 2001), issued by the State Council, the MOE launched a new round of reforms in basic education and issued a series of policy documents to guide the implementation of the curricula starting from the autumn semester 2001. Four of these policy documents, forming the basis for this study, are 'Programme for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (Draft)' (MOE, 2001b, hereafter *Programme*), 'Chinese Curriculum for Compulsory Education (Draft)' (MOE, 2001d, hereafter *Chinese Curriculum*), 'English Curriculum for Compulsory Education (Draft)' (MOE, 2001c, hereafter *English Curriculum*) and 'The Ministry of Education Guidelines for Vigorously Promoting English Language Instruction in Primary Schools' (MOE, 2001a, hereafter *Guidelines*).

Given the status of Chinese (Mandarin) as the first language of the nation, Chinese language education has always been one of the most important subjects, along with Mathematics, in Chinese schools. However, attitudes toward foreign language education have fluctuated at various times, affected primarily by the concurrent socio-political context. The selection of Russian in the earlier years of the PRC, particularly in 1950s, and English on a continuing basis since 1964 as the first foreign language for Chinese schools has been motivated mainly by political and economic factors (see, e.g. Adamson, 1998, 2004; Li, 2008). The EFL program in primary schools in the PRC can be traced back to the 1960s when it was offered in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, following instructions from Premier Zhou Enlai, who suggested that it would be important to start foreign language learning at an early age. Since the late

1980s, English instruction has become widespread not only in the major cities mentioned previously, but also in some other economically developed areas and coastal cities (Li, 2007). However, it was not until 2001, when the MOE issued the *Guidelines*, did English become a subject in a wider range of primary schools in the PRC.

Ideological control and discourse

The concept of ideology for van Dijk (1998) is fuzzy and controversial in the fields of social sciences and the humanities (see, e.g. Eagleton, 1991; Larrain, 1979; Thompson, 1984, for the various definitions of ideology). van Dijk (1998), for the purpose of better understanding how ideology relates to discourse, defined ideology as clusters of beliefs in people's minds and as 'the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group' (p. 8). For Chiapello and Fairclough (2002, p. 187), 'an ideology is a system of ideas, values and beliefs oriented to explaining a given political order, legitimizing existing hierarchies and power relations and preserving group identities'. These beliefs, ideas or values held by certain groups of people provide them with criteria about what is right or wrong, what is good or bad, and how the members should act according to these criteria. These beliefs enable some people to dominate the society and disempower others, naturalizing their power. To take the CCP in the PRC as an instance, beliefs in Marxism and socialism with Chinese characteristics are the foremost standards, which the members of CCP and the people ruled by the CCP take as the basic norm of morality. Therefore, it is not surprising to find one of the criteria to evaluate and assess staff members' performance in institutions or students in schools to be articulated as 'to love our socialist motherland and to support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party'.

Ideologies reside in texts (Fairclough, 2010), and texts and talk play an important role in (re)producing ideologies, or as van Dijk (1998) has pointed out, ideological socialization largely takes place through discourse. Discourse has various denotations for researchers with different theoretical and disciplinary points of view. Among a rich profusion of conflicting and overlapping definitions and conceptualizations, linguists define discourse as text, simply referring to spoken or written language (see, e.g. van Dijk, 1985, for some examples). For social theorists, such as Foucault, discourse is a domain within which language is used in a particular way to represent and construct social entities and relations through social practices. Foucault's (1972) three-dimensional definition of discourse relates discourse to all actual talk or texts and to socio-political structures that help control particular talk or texts in a specific field such as in education. However discourse is defined, it involves language in the form of texts, ranging from legislative and policy documents to curriculum texts or to informal talk (Luke, 1995–1996).

Influenced by Foucault's insights into discourse, Fairclough (1992) had developed a social theory, situating discourse in a context of social relations and combining textually, linguistically oriented analysis of discourse with the study of political and ideological significance. Subsequently, Fairclough (2001) had argued that the relationship between discourse and society can be opaque. This opacity is much more socially important than it may, on the face of it, seem to be, because in discourse people can be legitimizing (or delegitimizing) particular power relations without being conscious of doing so. One reason for people not being aware of, or are unconscious of, what they are doing is that they take things for granted, or in Preece's (2001, p. 203) words, they 'can be so embedded in their societal belief systems that they neither question the dominant values nor realize how much they themselves are naturalized into them'. For example, take the deep-rooted

hierarchical social system in the PRC. Under this very top-down system, people at the lowest level have no say in educational policy-making, which means that they do what their superiors tell them to do. This has helped with the development of their ideology of conformity. They take it for granted that issues related to policy-making have nothing to do with them, but should be the responsibility of leaders, and that their duty is to obey their superiors and to implement policies made by leaders at higher levels and by experts appointed by those leaders (Li, 2008). What they may not be aware of is the fact that the political elites have always used language to exercise their ideological power – that is, the power to project one's practices as universal and as demonstrating 'common sense' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 27).

Fairclough (2001) called this kind of ideological common sense as 'common sense in the service of power – how ideologies are embedded in features of discourse which are taken for granted as matters of common sense' (p. 64) or 'common sense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power' (p. 70). These common-sense assumptions may, to varying degrees, contribute to sustaining unequal power relations or to helping to establish and consolidate solidarity relations among members of a particular social grouping. Therefore, those people who have power make a constant effort to try to impose an ideological common sense that holds for everyone.

Ideology control is no doubt important for any dominant class or for any social institutions in order to sustain their dominant position. One important way for those who have power to exercise their ideological control and to maintain it is through the use of language designed to win others' consent to their possession and exercise of power or, in van Dijk's (1993) words, to control (members of) other groups by trying to influence their minds. 'It is at this crucial point where discourse and critical discourse analysis come in: managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk' (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). In the following section, an analytical framework for CDA is discussed in order to examine how the people who have power exercise it through the use of language in policy texts designed to impose their ideologies on others who are targeted to read the texts.

An analytical framework: CDA

Discourse can be viewed as a means for the naturalization and disguise of power relations that are tied to inequalities in the social production and distribution of symbolic and materials resources (Luke, 1995–1996, p. 12). When an analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power, it is called CDA (Janks, 1997). CDA stems from a critical theory of language that sees the use of language as social practice, with its emphasis on 'how power, identity and social relations are negotiated, are legitimated, and are contested toward political ends' (Apple, 1996, p. 130). It examines how the social power and dominance of certain groups of people contribute to social inequality (van Dijk, 1993). Furthermore, it aims to investigate how discursive practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135).

The strength of CDA lies in its capacity to show how policy texts construct and sustain power relations ideologically and what values are articulated in them and through them. CDA is useful for this present study in that it can 'explore particular policies in their historical context', and it is also useful in 'highlighting how policies come to be framed in certain ways – reflecting how economic, social, political and cultural contexts shape both the content and language of policy documents' (Taylor, 1997, p. 28).

While there are a number of approaches to CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 1992, 2003; Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979; van Leeuwen, 1993; Lemke, 1995), Fairclough's (2001) framework for CDA is used to explore the four policy texts in order to understand the power relations and ideological processes embedded in their discourse and the ideological effects that these texts may have on shaping other people's beliefs.

Fairclough (2001, pp. 92–93) distinguished three types of values that formal features may have in a specific text – that is, experiential, relational and expressive values. However, in the present study, the experiential and relational values of vocabulary in the policy texts provide the basis for their analysis. These values will, respectively, reveal:

(1) what beliefs the text producer(s) has/have enabled the words in the policy texts to represent; and
(2) what relations and social relationships are enacted through using certain lexicon in the policy texts.

In terms of the power relations, this paper examines;

- how the text is positioned;
- whose interests are served;
- whose interests are negated by this positioning; and
- what the consequences of this positioning are (Janks, 1997).

Setting the ideological agenda

The *Programme* is a directive policy for guiding the curriculum reform for basic education. Based on this *Programme*, the MOE designed the curricula for each subject in basic education, including Chinese and English, and the curricula were published and forwarded to every province, municipality and autonomous region for implementation, starting from the autumn semester 2001. The genre of the three policy texts is hybrid; that is, it is a policy genre interwoven with political material. As the global structuring of the texts is a significant way of imposing higher levels of routine on social practice to set ideological agendas (Fairclough, 2001), initially the text structure of the three policy documents – *Programme*, *Chinese Curriculum* and *English Curriculum* – is analyzed to show the ideological agenda that is set for the target population. Extracts of the texts used for analysis from these policy documents are presented in the appendix.

The *Programme* policy text follows the 'problem–solution' pattern. This *Programme*, as the general policy guideline, points out the problems existing in basic education and provides advice on solutions for those problems by outlining the areas in which each school subject should be reformed. Extracts 1 and 2 (see the appendix) from the *Programme* could be regarded as setting the ideological agenda for subject curriculum reform in basic education, which serves to determine the structure and the major themes of the texts of the *Chinese Curriculum* and *English Curriculum*.

The structures of the Chinese and English curriculum texts

The *Chinese Curriculum* and *English Curriculum* have the same 'problem–solution' format as the *Programme*. The ordering of the two *Curriculum* texts opens with a paragraph

indicating the purpose of the reform in Chinese and English education and then follows with the goals of the reform and guidelines for its implementation, making the overall structure of these two *Curriculum* texts appear identical with exactly the same subheadings:

1.
- Nature of the Subject (Chinese/English);
- Objectives of the Curriculum; and
- Implementation Advice (including material development, planning and selection; detailed suggestions for teachers about teaching methods and evaluation of students' performance; creation, development and employment of resources).

It cannot be determined whether the curriculum writers/editors have been instructed to write the curricular documents following the same or similar structure and format, but it is obvious that the *Programme* as a directive policy document determines the format, on the one hand, and the main objectives of the curriculum reform, on the other hand (see descriptions of the *Programme* in the previous section). An interview, wherein EFL teachers discussed the excellence of the design but not the practical objectives of the English curriculum, illustrates how the English curriculum reform has followed the directions set out in the *Programme* (Li, 2010a, p. 446):

> The objectives – described in the 2001 English curriculum – are in line with the general goals for our national course reform. Big wigs in each subject area were called together and were required to design the objectives for each subject on the basis of the general goals – Three Dimension Goals (*San Wei Mubiao*)! The first is about knowledge, the second is about process and methodology, and the third is about affective attitude and value embodiment. Whatever the subject, these 'Three Dimensions' would have to be followed!

However, having the same or a similar structure is not the main issue. What is pivotal is the driving force for the MOE's reform of basic education, which has made the general goals in the *Programme* be followed in the design and writing of both the Chinese and English subject curricula. This can be seen from the initial paragraph of Extract 1, indicating that the policies deriving from the State Council, the supreme political entity, must be implemented. The MOE has accepted the authoritative status of the State Council and followed its directions in making educational policies. The MOE, in turn, has imposed its ideology on writers who produced the curriculum texts and has required them to follow the 'official' ideas and beliefs about what should be reformed without reference to other input. This political directive implies that the curriculum reform is not based on research or empirical studies in basic education; rather it follows the State Council's policies as required by the state. The following section examines in detail what ideas, values and beliefs are embedded in the texts.

Ideologies embedded in the policy texts: the major themes

The major themes that emerge from these three policy texts are 'reform' and 'what and how to reform'. The reason for the reform in basic education as stated in the *Programme* is that the current practice in basic education *cannot meet the demand of current social development* in the PRC (Extract 1), which is echoed in the introduction to the *Chinese* and *English Curriculum* documents (see Extracts 3 and 4 in the appendix). To meet the needs of the contemporary age, basic education should be reformed to produce a future generation that will become modern Socialist Men (sic).

The ideology that 'education must serve socialist construction' has long been embedded in peoples' minds, indeed, since the CCP had established its regime in 1949, starting with Mao's indoctrination of the populace to create the New Socialist Man (Hsü, 2000).

The socialist ideologies are evident in all the three texts when 'how to reform' is suggested:

> Extract 2: *The curriculum reform … should be guided by Comrade Deng Xiaoping's directive of 'Education should be oriented towards modernization, towards the world and towards the future' and by Comrade Jiang Zemin's important thoughts of 'Three Representations'.*[3] *The Party's educational policies should be comprehensively implemented to fully promote quality education….*

> Extract 3: *Chinese language education reform … should adopt Marxist and scientific educational theories as guidance….*

> Extract 4: (*English language education is not meeting) the needs of economic and social development of our country….*

The development of socialist ideology has always been an important task for the CCP. The soul of the Chinese socialist ideology is Marxism, regarded as the fundamental guiding principle for the consolidation of the CCP and the development of the country. The main theme of the Chinese socialist ideology is socialism with Chinese characteristics – a definition which means the consolidation and perfection of the socialist system under the leadership of the CCP, based on existing national conditions and taking economic construction as the central task: that is, to uphold the Four Cardinal Principles (the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, Marxism–Leninism and Mao Zedong's Thought, and the leadership of the CCP); to continue with the reform and Open Door policy; to emancipate and develop social productive forces; and to develop socialist market economy, socialist democracy and politics, socialist advanced culture and socialist harmonious society.

The essence of current socialist ideologies is the national spirit centering on patriotism and the spirit of the age centering on reform and innovation (Yuan, 2008).

The guiding ideologies of the CCP have been expanded from Marxism–Leninism and Mao Zedong's Thought to include Deng Xiaoping's Theories and Jiang Zemin's 'Three Representations'. This shows that the CCP – represented by certain top leaders at different times (Mao, Deng and Jiang consecutively) since it established its power in the country – has been diligently working to maintain its ideologies by shaping policies that encourage people to believe that upholding these ideologies is for the benefit of national social development.

The driving ideology shown in these three educational policy texts is the socialist ideology, that is, to follow the CCP's guiding principles to develop socialist construction. The successful ideological control of the CCP is explicitly shown in the language used in the three policy texts. The beliefs in the CCP leadership, the ideas of education for socialist construction and the values of patriotism are clearly embedded in the texts:

> Extract 2: *Students should be educated to have the spirit of patriotism and collectivism, to love socialism, to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditions of the Chinese nation and evolutionary tradition; to have an awareness of socialist democracy and the legal system….*

> Extract 3: *Chinese language education can and should play an important role in raising the new generation as required by modern society, …, should adopt Marxist theory as guidance, …, play its proper role in students' ideological and moral quality development.*

Extract 4: (*English language education is not meeting) the needs of economic and social development of our country.*

Whatever academic areas are to be reformed in basic education, in general, and in Chinese/English compulsory education, in particular, one principle is not changeable: that is, to educate students to *build up their correct outlook on the world, life and value* (Extract 2) to conform to socialist standards for Chinese social development and to be required to become citizens *equipped with good humanistic and scientific qualities* (Extract 3). More importantly, students from a very early age, starting in Grade 1 at the age of about 6 or 7 (maybe even earlier for preschool children), are inculcated with socialist ideology through the entire 9 years of compulsory education and throughout the remainder of their school and university lives. The extent to which the CCP attempts to exercise its ideological control of the students is overwhelming. In the following section, the *Guidelines* text is analyzed, examining what experiential and relational values the words have and exploring how the policy-makers' ideology has been influenced, by what guiding principles, and what power relations are represented and legitimized.

The *Guidelines*: promoting English education in Chinese primary schools

The *English Curriculum*, previously analyzed applies to compulsory education in Chinese schools (Grades 1–9). To promote English language education specifically in primary schools, the MOE issued the *Guidelines* in which requirements were listed under five subheadings, and the 'Basic Requirement for Primary School English (Draft)' (hereafter *Basic Requirement*) was attached outlining the basic objectives of English instruction, time allocated each week, detailed descriptions of the language skills to be attained, recommended teaching approaches, suggestions about teaching material development and selection, and criteria for assessment (see e.g. Wang, 2002, 2007 for detailed descriptions of the *Basic Requirement*). Given the length of the present paper, detailed contents under each subheading except the first one are not presented in the extract (see Extract 5 in the appendix), but some sentences will be examined in terms of the experiential and relational values found in the vocabulary.

The experiential value of words

As Extract 5 shows, the reason for promoting EFL instruction in Chinese primary schools is to *implement the policies made at The Fifth Plenum of the Fifteenth CCP Central Committee and the Third National Conference on Education, and to further implement the strategic guideline of 'Education should be oriented towards modernization, towards the world and towards the future*' set out previously by Deng Xiaoping. The Fifth Plenum of the Fifteenth CCP Central Committee was held in October 2000. The main theme was to enhance social development in the national economy and in education in order to train high-quality talented people to meet the demands resulting from economic globalization and advanced technology. The Third National Conference on Education was convened by the CCP Central Committee and the State Council in June 1999, aiming to mobilize all Party members and the Chinese people to make their best efforts for the modernization of socialist construction. The central tasks were to improve the capability of the people and their ability to innovate, to deepen educational reform in the national system and its structure, to promote all-round quality education comprehensively and to implement the strategy of developing the country through science and education. However, by only mentioning the

implementation of the policies articulated at the *Plenum* and the *Conference* but not elaborating what the policies are about, the MOE may have assumed that the target *Guidelines* readers already had the relevant knowledge. Such an assumption could suggest ideological propaganda on the CCP's part subsequent to the issuing of the policies.

The lexical choices explicitly place the text in the socialist ideological framework. The policy-makers in the MOE believe that it is of paramount importance for educational policies, the policy of EFL teaching and learning in Chinese primary schools specifically, to be in line with the CCP's guiding principles and to be in harmony with the socialist ideologies imposed on the CCP by the most senior authorities. To offer English instruction in primary schools is to implement CCP's policies: that is, to train students for Chinese socialist construction and development. The repetition of *strengthening* in this text stresses repeatedly the importance of the improvement in teaching materials, teacher training and leadership to ensure smooth implementation of the *Guideline*s policy, because, as was pointed out in the previous *English Curriculum* and similarly in the *Programme*, *the current outcome of English language education is not meeting the needs of economic and social development of our country*. Again, the repetition shows the 'preoccupation with some aspect of reality – which may indicate that it is a focus of ideological struggle' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 96), endeavoring to persuade policy implementers to accept that meeting the social demands of China is pivotal for the success of English teaching in primary schools.

It may help better understand how the lexical choices make the policy text ideologically significant if the focus is shifted to the discourse type that the *Guidelines* text itself is drawing upon. The discourse type of the *Guidelines* text is the policy document amended by political and promotional materials. The text structure and the content with political references are typically the discourse type with Chinese characteristics. According to Fairclough (2001, pp. 24–25), this text is constrained not by the independent types of discourse and practice, but by the interdependent networks of orders of discourse and social orders. The actual discourse is determined by the orders of discourse or discourse conventions that embody particular ideologies, and the way discourses are structured in a given order of discourse is determined by the changing relationships of power at the level of the social institution or of the society. In a pyramidally structured society like that in the PRC, the authority at the top of the CCP holds absolute power to decide the directives for ideology, which can be shown in CCP's policy documents in terms of structure and contents for the whole nation to follow, which then are reflected in policy documents written by lower level authorities. This kind of social practice, the exercise of power and ideological control at sequential levels, is meant to ensure that the 'orders of discourse are ideologically harmonized internally or (at the society level) with each other' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 25).

The relational value of words

Power relations are not only behind the discourse type, but are also represented by word choices. 'A text's choice of wordings depends on, and helps create, social relationships between participants' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 97). This is explicitly shown in the short extract from the *Guidelines*.

To implement the policies and guidelines from the highest authority has placed the CCP and the State Council in a decisive position controlling the development of the orientation of English teaching and learning in primary schools. Furthermore, by using the address *To the Education Department in every province* to forward policy documents to lower levels for implementation, by *deciding to offer English* and providing *the suggestions about the English teaching* for *implementation* also serve to position the MOE as the authoritative

agency to guide educational practice in the PRC. These lexical choices function as a declaration of the unquestioning acceptance of the CCP's dominance and consequently of the claim of the MOE's power over the educational departments in the whole country. The omission of the needs of the students – the target population of the *Guidelines* – further implies that the *Guidelines* is not intended to serve the EFL learners in primary schools, but rather is intended to show the CCP the MOE's support for their ideologies and political principles, by taking EFL promotion in primary schools as *an important task* to be accomplished.

Note the lexical choices in Section 1 of the *Guidelines* following the opening paragraph where inequality in the access to English education in primary schools has been created by using *gradually* from cities to towns and villages. It is assumed that the MOE is aware of the regional differences in the availability of teachers and teaching resources, but still decided to promote English in primary schools nationwide, thereby creating an increasingly large gap between urban, suburban and rural areas in terms of equal education.

The relationship between the dominators and dominates can also be seen in the *Guidelines* from the use of modality, to be more specific, the use of modal auxiliaries, which Halliday (1994) called modal operators. Modality means the speaker's judgment of the obligations involved in what she/he is saying, and in a statement, the modality is an expression of the speaker's opinion (Halliday, 1994). It concerns judgments as to 'whether one should, ought, or must do something (or alternatively whether s/he may do something)' (Barker & Galasiński, 2001, p. 78). Halliday (1994, pp. 358, 362) has suggested that three values are attached to the modal judgment (high, median or low), and within each of them, the following modal operators could express the speaker's judgment of the obligation to various extents:

high (required): must, ought to, need, has to, is to;
median (supposed): will, would, shall, should; and
low (allowed): may, might, can, could.

When applied to the *Guidelines*, these different modal auxiliaries are used in its text to express the MOE's attitude toward the degrees of the obligation and responsibility they require of its readers, including Education Departments at lower levels, EFL teachers and students in primary schools.

Given the nature of the *Guidelines* that set out suggestions and requirements for its readers, most of the sentences in this document are expressed using demand or command tones, but at various levels of obligation, they are represented by what is allowed (may/can), what is supposed to be done (should/will) and what is required (need/must not). Here are some example sentences[4] that use modal verbs included in the contents under the subheadings 2–5:

2.

- the Basic Requirement for Primary School English (Draft) *should* be the basis for (teaching, learning, and evaluating students' performance …);
- students' performance *need* to be evaluated based on …;
- students' test results *must not* be listed and ordered; and
- minimum four teaching activities per week *should* be guaranteed, but it *can* be flexible at different local schools.

3.
- teaching materials not in the (approved) list *will* not be in use; and
- newly developed textbooks *need* to be applied for the approval from the MOE.

4.
- in-service teachers teaching other subject *can* be transferred to teaching English after successful training; and
- Teaching and Research Department at all levels *should* be guided by their local educational administrative department to undertake in-service primary school teacher training.

5.
- Education Department at various level *should* fully understand the importance of English instruction promotion in primary schools; and
- the MOE *will* establish a national committee supervising English teaching and learning in primary schools.

The use of these modal operators with various levels of obligation has shown that the MOE, by issuing this policy, has put itself in an authoritative position, empowering it to decide who teaches English in primary schools to which grade of students in what ways using what materials for achieving what objectives and deciding how to assess students' performance. It assigns responsibilities or obligations to the Education Departments at lower levels and to the schools, thus placing a greater or lesser degree of pressure on others to carry out its commands (Thompson, 1996).

The reality of English teaching and learning in Chinese primary schools

Relevant research findings

With the promotion of the *Guidelines* for EFL instruction in primary schools in the whole nation, measures have been taken – for example, in the context of teacher training – to ensure their successful implementation in Chinese primary schools (Wang, 2002). However, English teaching and learning under the new program have not been as effective as they were expected to be. Some researchers, including the present author (see Li, 2008), have suggested a number of major reasons to explain why English teaching and learning have failed to meet the expectations set in the *Guidelines*.

First, as the CDA document study suggests, the formation of the policy to promote EFL education in primary schools in the PRC was based on a top-down procedure without sufficient empirical studies on the ground and without sufficient needs analysis to prepare the primary schools for offering English language, making the policy impractical and hard to implement in varieties of contexts (Hu, 2007; Li, 2008). Another major factor contributing to the less-than-successful implementation is that the top-down policy-making process precluded the involvement of classroom teachers who could have provided valuable first-hand data about English teaching and learning in actual situations for policy-makers to consider (Li, 2010a).

Second, in terms of quality and quantity, EFL teachers are simply not available (Hu, 2007; Li, 2008; Nunan, 2003; Shu, 2004; Wang, 2002). Some primary schools have to offer English because the national policy requires it, but the expansion of EFL instruction in primary schools without the consequential and sufficient teacher training has undoubtedly made it even more difficult to manage the teaching in reality. The language competence and skills of EFL teachers and their understanding of the English curriculum – especially those in

suburban and rural areas – show that EFL teachers are not ready or available for primary English language instruction nationwide in the PRC (Li, 2008).

Third, learning situations and individual differences constitute another contextual factor making EFL teaching and learning in primary schools difficult. The basic objective is to develop students' basic ability to use English for daily communication through an activity-based approach. However, large classes (average 60–80 students, except for some first-rate schools) in many primary schools and individual differences between students, especially in such large classes, make it extremely difficult for teachers to attend to every individual, let alone to organize effective activities. In addition, a significant gap exists between urban schools and those in suburban and rural areas in terms of teacher recruitment (quantity and quality), government financial support, and teaching and learning resources – all crucial factors influencing English teaching and learning in primary schools (Li, 2008). Based on Li's (2008) findings, English language teaching and learning might be successful in some primary schools, but most primary schools are not yet prepared to offer effective EFL instruction.

Finally, another factor hindering English teaching and learning is the government's strong rhetoric about the importance of English in contrast with the low status of English in primary schools. Many EFL teachers resist the promotion of English instruction in primary schools, since they think that students are in the initial stages of leaning or enhancing Chinese *Pinyin* and that their Chinese language knowledge as well as their competence is not securely enough established. Starting a foreign language at such an early age could cause confusion between Chinese and English (Li, 2008). Furthermore, when compared with the two other major subjects – Chinese and Mathematics – English is not a compulsory examination subject for primary school students entering junior high schools, as are the other two subjects. Therefore, both primary teachers and students do not have the examination pressure when learning English as high school students do (Li & Baldauf, in press). What often happens in primary schools (except perhaps in some first-rate primary schools) is that the time allocated for English teaching and learning is 'lent' to the study of Chinese or Mathematics. Lack of sufficient teaching time has made providing adequate teaching and learning activities impossible. According to some junior secondary school teachers, English instruction in primary schools is a waste of time and resources anyway. Junior secondary school teachers believe that they will have to start teaching their students from the very beginning, because it seems to them that their students did not learn anything in primary school. To make matters worse, the lack of qualified English teachers in primary schools has meant that secondary school teachers have to correct students' errors in the English language they may have picked up in primary schools (Li, 2008).

The research findings may suggest that the MOE planners have considered English language instruction as an isolated entity and consequently have not thought about what comes before and what follows primary school English language instruction. Policies have been developed around the socialist ideals of the CCP government, rather than a practical curriculum being designed to enhance teaching and learning.

People's concerns

As the *Guidelines* notes, not every primary school will offer English; thus, not every primary school student will have access to classroom English instruction. The policy has created unequal rights for students to English education (see also, Hu, 2007). Given that English is compulsory in high schools and for entry into tertiary institutions, and given that the tertiary admission criterion consists of the entrance examination marks of subjects

that students undertake including English, which is compulsory, some students will have to work harder to get high marks, since they enter junior high school (Li & Baldauf, in press) without adequate primary English studies. To lay some foundation for junior high school studies, rich families will try to send their children to primary schools where English is offered or to English evening/weekend schools or to expensive private tutors. However, in a great number of underdeveloped regions and remote areas where English is simply not offered in primary schools and where people cannot afford private English education for their children, students will have to compete with those who are already English literate, a situation which is inequitable for some students. Being an EFL educator in the PRC for over 17 years, I have heard many parents' comments in relation to this concern and have met a great number of students, including some of my own classmates in senior secondary school, who have missed opportunities for tertiary education or perhaps for tertiary education in one of the higher ranked universities due to their comparatively low English scores in the university entrance examinations.

Summary: the nurture of the dominance of ideology over language education

The analysis and discussion up to this point have revealed the relationships between discourse and ideology represented by lexical choices in and structures of the four policy texts examined. Based on these MOE policy documents, it appears that education reform in the PRC must be in line with the policies of the CCP and the State Council and that socialist ideology must be firmly implanted in students' minds from their earlier years through Chinese language and English language learning. An analysis of the lexical choices shows that one of the MOE's responsibilities is to transmit the government's ideology and standards to teachers and students in schools and to encourage them to accept the CCP's views. Such an analysis also reveals that the MOE is the high-level agency that functions as a tool of the CCP government to exercise ideological control.

The struggle over ideological control is one aspect of the struggle over political power, and the policy texts represent the outcome of political struggles over meaning. As Codd (1988, p. 237) pointed out:

> policy documents are generally interpreted as expressions of political purpose, …. [Policy documents] can be said to constitute the official discourse of the state. Thus policies produced by and for the state are obvious instances in which language serves a political purpose. … In this way, policy documents produce real social effects through the production and maintenance of consent.

Ideological struggle not only 'pre-eminently takes place *in* language in the obvious sense that it takes place in discourse and is evidenced in language texts, but also *over* language. It is over language in the sense that language itself is a *stake* in social struggle as well as a *site* of social struggle' (Fairclough, 2001, p. 73). Having the power to determine such things as what social standards are legitimate or good and which linguistic norms are correct or appropriate is an important aspect of social and ideological power. By transmitting the government's beliefs through the educational policy texts examined in this paper, the *Chinese Curriculum, English Curriculum* and *Guidelines*, the MOE is also imposing these educational ideologies on the target, primary school students and their teachers.

It is not the intension of this paper to discuss theories of curriculum design and organization in terms of the process or the contents. However, it is the intent to point out that the language used in policy documents by policy-makers can influence the way in which

teachers perceive language education. The preceding analysis and discussion of English instruction in Chinese primary schools have shown that the policy document is an ideological text, legitimating unequal access to different groups of primary school students and initiating practices privileging certain schools and students. Li (2008) interviewed some primary school EFL teachers and members from Teaching and Research Department in charge of English teaching and learning in schools in one province in the PRC. Her findings show that in spite of some resistance to the policy for promoting English teaching in primary schools nationwide, there is also broad agreement with this policy. EFL teachers and individuals from the Teaching and Research Department think that this policy could benefit people more than it harms them: for example:

> Some parents also think that it is good to start English in primary schools.
> I think, if conditions permit, English can be offered from Primary One or Three in some schools. If not, then just forget it!

It appears that those parents and the teachers who made these remarks were not aware of the unequal opportunities provided to different group of students nor did they grasp the concept that the inequalities were created by the national policy. This example provides a typical illustration of successful ideological control by the people who have power over those who do not.

The exercise of ideology control is by its very nature an exercise of the use of the political power of the CCP in the PRC. The educational policy documents and the language curriculum texts for primary schools were all formulated by the MOE to help maintaining the power of the CCP government and, at the same time, to meet the needs of certain social groups (i.e. those who could afford English language education at the primary school level). These policy texts can be said to play a role in distributing aspects of social norms and dispositions that are required to make inequality seem natural so that people could unconsciously accept them (Apple, 1982; Fairclough, 2001).

From the analysis presented here, it can be seen that the promotion of EFL education in Chinese primary schools is directed by the CCP's policies. The CCP and the State Council, as policy-makers at the highest level, decide the directives, orienting policy construction in particular areas, including language education policy planning (Li, 2010b),[5] imposing the socialist ideologies in which they believe on lower level policy-makers. The basic motives for promoting EFL education in Chinese primary schools are the same as those for other educational policies: that is, to ameliorate political, economic and educational issues as perceived from a Socialist perspective. The curriculum reform and the promotion of the EFL teaching in Chinese primary schools have as their aim social development that, in turn, will serve the interests of the CCP and of the MOE by maintaining political stability and central power over the Chinese people. However, as no mention of Chinese students' needs in foreign language education occurs, there is the implication that policy-makers are ignoring students' interests and as a consequence putting students, as well as their teachers, in a powerless position. The lack of consideration of on the ground needs and contexts provides another possible reason for the new English curriculum being found in Li's (2010a) study to be not applicable to Chinese schools and for not being able to be implemented in those schools. This instance also provides another good example of the political nature of language policy planning (see, e.g. Ager, 2001; Grabe, 1994; Hailemariam, Kroon, & Walters, 1999). As Baldauf and Kaplan (2003, pp. 20–21) pointed out, 'the underlying motivation of language policy is almost invariably political rather than linguistic. As a consequence,

various categories of applied linguists involved in language planning (where they are involved at all) normally serve merely as the tools of political actors'.

Education is destined to fulfill the government's political agenda, but education also has as its *raison d'etre* to serve the needs of the people who can then drive the society forward. Ideological construction and control are important for the governing bodies, fulfilling their obligation to benefit the governed, but they are equally pivotal to maintain the power of the governing bodies. However, this need could be met through making educational policies (e.g. like the English and Chinese curriculum for Chinese schools in this study) more responsive to students' interests and needs and through taking better advantage of teachers' abilities and knowledge.

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Notes

1. The leaders of a number of socialist states accepted the one nation/one language myth without question. The charismatic leaders of socialist states – usually early in the organization of such states – often undertook to shape the language spoken in their polities so that it might be used in the building of the socialist state and in promoting the socialist message (semi-quotation from Kaplan & Baldauf, 2011).
2. All the titles and contents of the MOE documents discussed in this paper were originally written in Chinese. They were either translated into English by the MOE translating service or by researchers including the author of this paper in the published literature.
3. 'Three Representations' was proposed by Jiang Zemin and was passed in November 2002 at the 16th National Congress of the CCP. It was regarded as the crystallization of the CCP's collective wisdom and added to become part of the guiding ideology that the Party (CCP) must follow. The 'Three Representations' means that the Party must always represent (a) the development trend of China's advanced productive forces, (b) the orientation of China's advanced culture and (c) the fundamental interests of the Chinese people.
4. Due to space constraints, detailed contents in the *Guidelines* under the subheadings 2–6 are not presented in Extract 5 in the appendix in this paper. For the purpose of this analysis, relevant sentences using modal verbs have been translated into English by the author of this paper and discussed.
5. For information about actors in language education planning, see, for example, Baldauf and Kaplan (2003), Ricento and Hornberger (1996), Spolsky and Shohamy (2000), van Els (2005) and Zhao (2011).

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Appendix: Extracts from the policy documents analyzed in this study

All the following extracts from the MOE policy documents have been translated into English by the author of this paper. To check the validity of the translation, the back-translation procedure suggested by Weber (1990) was used, with the text in English being translated back into Chinese and then compared with the original. Given the nature of the language used in these texts, there may be expressions which do not represent the exact meaning of the original expressions, as translation equivalents were difficult to find.

Extract 1 (beginning paragraph of *Programme)*

> The achievements in basic education as well as in the curriculum development in our country have been remarkable since the reform and the opening up to the outside world. However, the level of basic education in general is not very high, and the subjects offered cannot meet the demand of current social development. To implement the 'Decisions on Deepening Education Reform and Fully Promoting Quality Education' and the 'Decisions on Reform and Development in Basic Education' issued by the State Council, the Ministry of Education has decided to make a vigorous effort in promoting the basic education reform, adjusting and innovating in basic education the curriculum system, structure and contents to meet the requirements of quality education.

Extract 2 (Section I Goal of the Curriculum Reform, from Programme*)*

> 1. The curriculum reform for basic education should be guided by Comrade Deng Xiaoping's directive of 'Education should be oriented towards modernization, towards the world and towards the future' and by Comrade Jiang Zemin's important thoughts of 'Three Representations' (see Note 3). The Party's educational policies should be comprehensively implemented to fully promote quality education.
>
> The goals of the new curricula should reflect the needs of this age. Students should be educated to have the spirit of patriotism and collectivism, to love socialism, to inherit and carry forward the excellent traditions of the Chinese nation and evolutionary tradition; to have an awareness of socialist democracy and the legal system, and to abide by the state laws and observe social ethics; to build up their correct outlook on the world, life and value; to have a sense of social responsibility and of working hard to serve the people; to build up their basic innovative spirit, practical competence, scientific and humanistic qualities, and consciousness of environmental protection; to achieve the basic knowledge, skills and techniques for life-long learning; to build strong physique and psychological quality, to form a healthy aesthetic taste and life style, and to become a new generation with ideals, morality, knowledge and discipline.
>
> 2. Detailed objectives of the curriculum reform in basic education.

Due to the length of the material involved, details of Section 2 from the *Programme* text will not be presented in their original form, but some relevant information is necessary. The main objectives of this reform were to change the over-emphasis in subject knowledge instruction, to improve the excessively difficult, complicated, obscure and outdated contents in the teaching materials, to reform the teaching methodologies in order to enhance students' problem-solving abilities and skills for lifelong learning, to put in place methods of evaluation that motivate students' learning based on their interests and to increase the formation of active learning attitudes. The description of the main objectives of the curricular reform is then followed by detailed requirements in the areas of curriculum design, teaching process and teacher requirements, material development and management, subject evaluation and issues related to the organization of the reform and its implementation.

Extract 3 (beginning paragraph from *Chinese Curriculum)*

> The modern society requires its citizens to be equipped with good humanistic and scientific qualities, with innovative spirit, cooperation, awareness and a wide view, with many

fundamental competences and skills including those in reading comprehension and communication and in applying advanced technology in information collection and analysis. Chinese language education can and should play an important role in raising the new generation as required by modern society. To meet the needs of social development, Chinese language education must be reformed systematically in such areas as the objectives and contents, concepts in teaching and learning, learning styles and purpose for and methods in evaluation.

Chinese language education reform for compulsory education should adopt Marxist and scientific educational theories as guidance. Great effort should be made, on the basis of the analysis of the previous failures and successes in Chinese language education, and by drawing on the experience of reforming first language education in other countries and following the rules in first language education, to endeavour to construct the Chinese subject so as to befit the development of modern society. Chinese language education should also play its proper role in students' ideological and moral quality development.

Extract 4 (beginning paragraph from *English Curriculum)*

English language education in our country since the reform and the opening up to the outside world has been expanding and the achievements in teaching and learning have been remarkable. However, the current outcome of English language education is not meeting the needs of economic and social development of our country. The main objectives of the English curriculum reform are to change from the excessive emphasis on grammar and vocabulary and the neglect of students' ability in language use to the development of students' overall ability in using the English language. The consideration of students' interests in learning, their life experiences and cognitive development are stressed. Experience, practice, participation, cooperation and communication in learning are advocated and task-based teaching is recommended. The language learning process should become one during which students will form positive affective attitudes, develop creative thinking, carry out courageous practice, increase cross-cultural awareness, and enhance autonomous learning ability.

Extract 5 (beginning paragraphs from the *Guidelines)*

To the Education Department in every province, autonomous region and municipality, to the Education Committee of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps:

To implement the policies made at The Fifth Plenum of the Fifteenth CCP Central Committee and the Third National Conference on Education, and to further implement the strategic guideline of 'Education should be oriented towards modernization, towards the world and towards the future', the Ministry of Education has decided that to offer English in primary schools will be an important task of the curriculum reform in basic education in the 21st century. The suggestions about the English teaching and learning in primary schools are as follows:

1. Vigorously promoting English instruction in primary schools
   The fundamental goal of promoting English instruction in primary schools is: starting from the autumn term 2001 English will be offered gradually in primary schools in cities; and starting from the autumn term 2002 English will be offered gradually in primary schools in towns and villages. The starting grade is, on a general basis, Grade Three. Each education department in provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities can set the objectives and implementation steps based on local conditions.
2. Basic requirements for the English instruction in primary schools
3. Strengthening the teaching material management
4. Strengthening teacher training and professional development
5. Strengthening the leadership to the implementation of English instruction in primary schools
6. Attachment: Basic Requirement for Primary School English (Draft).

Parents' perspectives on the effects of the primary EFL education policy in Taiwan

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It has been almost a decade since the introduction of the primary EFL education policy in Taiwan. Many controversial issues and problems have emerged from this implementation that continue to constitute great challenges for the Taiwanese government in reforming current policies and practices related to English language teaching at the primary level. The purpose of this study was to explore these implementation problems and issues that have arisen through an investigation of Grade 5 parents' perspectives on the effects of the primary EFL education policy using questionnaires and follow-up interviews. The results of the study show that parents place an overemphasis on English education policy, reflecting their worries and insecurities that derive from the government's stress on international competitiveness, and that this in turn has resulted in parents putting even greater pressure on policy-makers to reform English language education in Taiwan. As a consequence, problems and controversies have arisen related to inconsistencies that exist between the macro- and micro-level implementation forces. The study includes a discussion of and implications for the possible reforms of primary EFL education policy that aim to improve implementation in order to better serve the EFL learning needs of students in Taiwan.

1. Background to primary EFL education policy in Taiwan

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Taiwan has been undergoing a political and economic transformation with the aim of upgrading its international competitiveness. Evidence for this can be found in the government's active participation in various international organizations like the Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Center and the World Trade Organization. Since English is seen as the language that provides access to the world (Government Information Office, 2002), its importance is indisputable if Taiwan is to be competitive in the international arena. For example, in the *Taiwan Six-Year National Development Plan* (2002–2008), the English language has been placed at the center of the government's first investment project for cultivating manpower in order to meet the challenges of globalization and internationalization (Government Information Office, 2002):

> This project emphasizes the ability to master foreign languages, especially English, and the use of [the] Internet. Since English is the language that links the world, the government should designate English as a quasi-official language and actively expand the use of English as part of daily life.

English is correlated with globalization and internationalization and thus English ability is regarded by the Taiwanese government as an imperative for manpower development in Taiwan. The government's efforts to promote citizens' English competitiveness has fostered the belief in Taiwanese society that English is the most important medium for access to power and resources, i.e. English competitiveness has been closely linked to national economic capability in the international arena at the macro-level as well as at the level of the citizens' individual instrumental success in society at the micro level. As a result, 'English fever' (Krashen, 2003) has prevailed around the country, and English learning has been regarded as a 'whole nation movement' (Chern, 2002). A growing number of parents have begun sending their primary school children to private language institutions in order to give them a head start in their English language learning (Wang, 2002), and thus to prepare them for higher social and economic status in the future. English competitiveness is perceived by the government and by citizens as an important requirement in the workforce and for individual development. As Bruthiaux (2002) indicated, the role of English in the employment market has pushed parents in all societies to demand provision for learning and to demand that state education systems respond.

Under both the top-down pressure of globalization and the bottom-up pressure of the public's expectations, the Ministry of Education launched a reformulation of English language-in-education policy in 2001, moving English instruction from the secondary school level to the primary level. In addition, the implementation of the new primary English education policy has also reflected the desire to reform the system by the new government – i.e. the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which won the national election and in 2000 started a new political era after more than 50 years' rule by the Kuomintang (KMT) government.

Consequently, the English language, which has long been a subject in the secondary school curriculum, was introduced at Grade 5 in the elementary school curriculum in 2001. The Ministry of Education stated that the rationale for implementing primary English language education was to:

(1) instill students with an international perspective;
(2) utilize students' 'critical period' in language learning most effectively;
(3) optimize the timing of the implementation of the new curriculum; and
(4) follow the trends of the new era and to fulfill parents' expectations (Ministry of Education, 1998; also see Tsao, 2008).

Given this rationale, it can be seen that the process of policy-making was influenced by a number of forces and facets of concern, including the need for internationalization, the effectiveness of English language learning, educational reform in Taiwan, and the expectations from the public. In particular, the parental expectations that are included in the fourth rationale may suggest the important role that the community can play in education policy decision-making. However, as Tsao (2008) pointed out, parental expectations in the Taiwanese context can be seen as a double-edged sword which on the one hand might accelerate the policy-making process, and on the other hand might also pressure the government to act too rashly.

In September 2001, at the same time as the primary English curriculum reform was initiated, the Nine-year Joint Curriculum Plan – which integrated school subjects into seven major areas of study – was launched. English was combined with Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese and other local language varieties into a curriculum area called Language Arts. The current English language education curriculum guidelines state the goals of primary EFL education as being:

(1) to develop student's basic communicative abilities;
(2) to cultivate students' interests as well as better ways of learning English; and
(3) to promote students' awareness of local and foreign cultures and customs (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The English education curriculum also identifies two stages of English instruction: the primary school stage, that places greater emphasis on students' oral abilities (listening and speaking), and the junior high school stage developing the reading and writing language skills in addition to the oral communication. Furthermore, primary English education is intended to prepare students' for EFL learning at the junior high school level in order to comply with the goal of the nine-year Joint Curricula (Ministry of Education, 2000). In addition, the guidelines also suggest that teaching methods should emphasize meaningful communication rather than rote memorization by providing an enjoyable English learning environment.

However, just two years later, the 2001 primary English education policy was changed, lowering the point of the introduction of English education to Grade 3. Changing the policy so rashly has been criticized as a case of bad planning (Hung, 2003; Tsao, 2008). Although the government's implementation of primary English education seems to be a case of top-down policy-making (Su, 2006), some researchers considered it to be the result of a bottom-up decision-making process – i.e. resulting from the pressure brought to bear by parents and local school bureaus on the government (Hung, 2003). In the decade since the implementation of primary English education in 2001, a number of persistent policy-related problems and issues have emerged as a result of these major changes. In the following sections, five issues related to different aspects of language-in-education policy are briefly analyzed (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). They include: (1) the inconsistency in starting grade levels for English education (access policy); (2) the shortage of qualified English teachers (personnel policy); (3) the divergence of textbooks being used (materials policy); (4) large classes made up of students with mixed proficiency (access policy); and (5) the effects of EFL education on the learning of other languages (curriculum policy).

1.1 *Inconsistency in starting grade levels of the EFL program*

Since the 1987 lifting of Martial Law in Taiwan, the central and local governments have started to support a multi-faceted language policy; consequently, there has been a movement away from centralized and standardized English curricula to decentralized ones. While the adoption of a decentralized planning model in primary EFL education policy has granted more autonomy to district schools and teachers (Chern, 2002), it has caused inconsistencies in access policy provisions for English education among primary schools in different districts; i.e. the starting grade levels for EFL education are different in local governments districts. Although the Ministry of Education has mandated that primary EFL education should start at Grade 3, major districts such as those in the cities of Taipei, Hsinchu, Taichung and Tainan have started their EFL programs in Grade 1. As a

consequence, other local governments have attempted to include the early introduction of primary English education as an important policy in their political agenda in order to attract the support of their electorates. This has in turn brought about some inequities in educational opportunities for primary school students in other districts (Chang, 2008) and has created inconsistencies when students have had to accommodate to their parents' move from one city to another (Cheng, 2005).

1.2 *The shortage of qualified English teachers*

Another problem related to the lowering of the grade level at which English is introduced is the increasing demand for English teachers. In Taiwan, primary English teachers have varying qualifications and levels of training. For example:

- some English teachers were certified under a nation-wide training scheme in 1999;
- other primary teachers who have passed the international TOFEL examination with a score of 213 or better can achieve an equivalent certification; and
- still others achieve a certification by completing university-level English-related majors and receive additional training (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education's (MOE) personnel policy has allowed multiple criteria to qualify as a primary English teacher, the nation has still encountered a shortage of qualified teachers.

In view of this, the MOE announced the initiation of the Foreign English Teacher Recruitment Project in 2003. Under the auspices of this project, contracted Native English Speaker teachers (NESTs) are expected to teach English along side Taiwanese English teachers in public primary schools, particularly in remote areas. However, due to implementation problems and ineffective results – i.e. foreign English teachers may find it problematic to stay in remote areas when they are newly arrived in the country – this project was terminated after a few years because it failed to solve the problem of the shortage of qualified English teachers.

As a result, in many district primary schools, there are frequent instances of homeroom teachers or substitute teachers who lack certificates but who are teaching English. In addition, the types and amounts of in-service training available to teachers seeking certification also vary among different local boards of education. This problem is most serious in rural areas; in some cases, the students are given videos to watch in their English classes since their teachers are not sufficiently confident to teach English (Cheng, 2005). Hence, there are serious problems arising from regional discrepancies in recruiting English teachers; furthermore, there are major differences in the quality and quantity of teaching resources between urban and rural schools.

1.3 *Divergence of textbooks*

A third major issue in the current primary EFL program is related to materials policy and to the openness of the textbook market. Textbooks are developed by various private publishers and then reviewed by the National Institute of Compilation and Translation. Primary English teachers are allowed to choose from among the textbooks approved by the National Institute. However, it is often the case that different sets of textbooks are used at different primary schools or even at different grade levels in the same school. Although many of these textbooks were developed following the new English curriculum guidelines and

approved by the Ministry of Education, there is very little compatibility among these different textbooks (Chang, 2004). As a result, there is content inconsistency from one school to another and discontinuity from one grade level to another; such differences have created curriculum continuity problems for teachers and students.

1.4 *Large classes of students with mixed proficiency*

The Ministry of Education changed its access policy and lowered the introduction of EFL programs to Grade 3 with the aim of ensuring equal educational opportunities for all children. However, the new approach has had very little effect in decreasing the number of students attending private institutions. On the contrary, the number of younger children enrolling in bilingual kindergartens has increased (Chen, 2003) despite a governmental ban on such programs. This policy banning such programs has not been effective in regulating the age at which students start to learn English (Chang, 2008); rather the policy has simply augmented the anxieties that parents have, creating a rush to start their children's learning of English language at an earlier age. As a result, teachers have reported that a large number of their students have learned English outside of school. Thus, some children have started studying English in kindergarten, in Grade 1 or in Grade 2, while some neophyte learners, most of whom come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, have only just begun to learn the alphabet through their formal schooling in Grade 3 (Su, 2006). This problem has in turn created difficulties for teachers when dealing with large classes of students with quite varied levels of proficiency in learning English. The gap between some students' proficiency levels and their relationship to their socio-economic backgrounds and their ability to access additional English instruction has also become even more obvious.

1.5 *The threat to other languages*

The overemphasis on the global status of English combined with the widespread obsession with English across the nation seems to pose a threat to the learning of the official language Mandarin Chinese as well as to other government policies intended to promote the learning of local languages.

First, the introduction of English in primary schools has meant a change in curriculum policy since two 40 min periods of EFL instruction have been incorporated into the official curriculum, decreasing the amount of time allocated to Mandarin Chinese instruction. In addition, since the two languages have completely different grammatical and phonological structures, and writing systems, when combined with less instructional time, EFL learning at the primary level may have negative effects on children's full and effective development of Mandarin competence, and some children may fail to develop the competence required in either language (Hung, 2004).

Second, in addition to the EFL education policy developed in response to the challenge of internationalization, the Taiwanese government also has stipulated localization, i.e. the introduction of the local language-in-education policy at the primary school level. The introduction of the local language education policy has been regarded as a remarkable movement against the strict imposition of the Mandarin Policy of the past (Chen, 2003), and has encouraged bilingualism or multiculturism in the country. However, when it is compared with the English education policy, it is often the case that the government, the school administrators and the general public have exhibited a strong bias in favor of using the current limited resources available to support English education policy (Chen, 2003;

Tsao, 2008). For example, although the current primary school curriculum has a subject called 'Homeland Studies' that introduces local dialects and cultures, it is only taught for one 40 min period per week. There are only a very limited number of qualified teachers, and the teaching materials and facilities available are far less adequate than the resources available for the teaching of English. Consequently, most students and parents pay very little attention to Homeland Studies (Crawford, 2003; Su, 2006). In this climate, there is a struggle for Taiwanese local languages and cultures to be seen as a priority by the public, and therefore the influence of the language policy is undermined. Crystal (2000), among others, has argued that the global spread of English might have a negative impact on other language instruction and might lead to the demise of minority languages. In Taiwan a number of researchers and educators (Liao, 2004; Liu, 2004) also have raised concerns about the impact of primary EFL education marginalizing Taiwanese local languages, cultures or even Chinese identities (Chen, 2003).

2. Community input to language policy

Although a number of studies have discussed aspects of these five issues (Cheng, 2005; Chern, 2002; Hung, 2003), the majority of such studies have examined them from a teacher's perspective (Butler, 2004; Crawford, 2003; Liang, 2005; Su, 2006). There is, however, alternative perspective – that of parents – one that remains largely unexplored. Since parents play a crucial role in decisions about their children's EFL learning, the perspectives of parents – community policy – should also be taken into consideration when formulating reforms in EFL education policy. Furthermore, the government has stated that one of the rationales for implementing EFL education policy was to fulfill parents' expectations, but most policy changes have been made by political and academic authorities without considering the perspectives of the majority of stakeholders, i.e. students and their parents. Successful policy implementation requires the translation of top-down policy decisions not only to schools, but also to the consumers – if it is successful to address the concerns of the citizens affected by language policies (Chua & Baldauf, 2011). For this to occur, there is a need for the government to take into account the community's perspectives regarding reforms to EFL education policy as the first step toward achieving the goal of successful implementation of EFL education that benefits all its citizens.

Taking this into account, this study investigates the issue of community policy input – i.e. the input of Taiwanese parents' opinions regarding the issues raised by primary EFL education policy. In particular, the five issues previously reviewed are addressed, i.e. what parents think about:

(1) the different starting points for primary English education;
(2) mixed-level classes;
(3) the shortage of qualified English teachers;
(4) the divergence of textbooks; and finally
(5) the threat of English to other languages.

3. Methods

The participants in this study were parents of Grade 5 primary school students in Miaoli County in the central part of Taiwan, an area which provides average resourcing for education compared with other districts in Taiwan and, more importantly, one which follows

the central government's primary starting age for English education – Grade 3. A total of 18 Grade 5 classes from different schools were sampled. Parents of fifth graders were selected because their children have experienced the EFL program. It was assumed that they might have a better understanding of the issues involved than parents of third or fourth graders, and might have unfulfilled expectations compared with sixth graders who were going to graduate in a few months. Parents were asked to complete questionnaires that were distributed to and returned to the school by their children. The questionnaire contained two parts:

- Part I elicited participants' demographic information and their children's out-of-school English learning situation; and
- Part II focused on parents' attitudes toward the current practices of the primary EFL education and their perspectives on the emergent problems arising from the implementation of primary EFL education policy, in relation to different starting grades, English teaching personnel, mixed-level classes, the use of textbooks, and the learning of other languages.

In total, 550 questionnaires were distributed, and 436 valid questionnaires were returned and analyzed. In addition, one parent, who was randomly selected from each of the 18 classes sampled, was invited to be interviewed for further in-depth exploration of the issues. All 18 of the patents invited accepted the invitations. The interview questions were semi-structured and were used to follow-up and explore the relevant issues raised in the questionnaire. The questionnaires and interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, and the parents' responses to the questionnaires and their interview comments were translated into English by the author.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 *Participants' demographic information*

Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' demographic information. Among the participants, 31.4% were males, while 68.6% were females. The majority of participants were aged between 40 and 49 years old (50.7%), followed by those aged between 30 and 39 (26.1%) and between 50 and 59 (15.4%), while a small proportion of the participants were either aged between 60 and 69 (7.1%) or between 20 and 29 (0.7%). As for participants' educational attainment, most had senior high school degrees (42.9%), bachelors degrees (33.5%) followed by junior high school degrees (11.7%), while smaller proportions

Table 1. Demographics of participants.

Participants: Male: 137 (31.4%) Female: 299 (68.6%) ($N = 436$)

Age			Educational degree			Primary language spoken at home		
20–29	3	0.7%	Elementary	12	2.7%	Mandarin	156	35.8%
30–39	114	26.1%	Junior high	51	11.7%	Taiwanese	61	14.0%
40–49	221	50.7%	Senior high	187	42.9%	Hakka	45	10.3%
50–59	67	15.4%	Bachelor	146	33.5%	Both Mandarin and Taiwanese	96	22.0%
60–69	31	7.1%	Master and above	40	9.2%	Both Mandarin and Hakka	78	17.9%
Total	436	100.0%	Total	436	100.0%	Total	436	100.0%

of participants had their masters and higher qualifications (9.2%) or elementary school degrees (2.7%). Regarding the primary language spoken at home, most of the families reported speaking Mandarin (75.7%), either as the sole language (35.8%), or in combination with local languages, Taiwanese (22%) or Hakka (17.9%), while others reported speaking only Taiwanese (14%) or only Hakka (10.3%).

4.2 *Children's EFL learning in private language institutions*

With respect to children's out-of-school EFL learning in private language institutions, Table 2 indicates that even with primary EFL education starting at Grade 3, nearly three-quarters of participants (73.2%) also enroll their children in private language instruction. While the largest group of children commenced of out-of-school EFL learning at Grade 3 (32.3%), nearly half (49.8%) began their study of English earlier. The results would seem to support Crawford's (2003) contention that the policy of starting English education at the Grade 3 level did not help to reduce the number of students attending private institutions, but simply lowered their age of beginning out-of-school EFL learning.

As to the reasons for sending their children to private language institutions (Table 3), 163 out of the 436 participants responded that they wanted their children to spend more time learning EFL outside the school. The interviews indicated that some would like their children to take a more advanced EFL program, while others were worried about their children's falling behind in primary schools. However, some indicated that they were simply following the fashion of sending their children to learn EFL outside of school. It seemed that both parents of higher- and lower-achieving students would like their children to spend more time engaged in EFL learning, which reveals parents' high expectations for their children and possibly their anxiety about the implementation of primary EFL education. Some typical interview responses included:

Table 2. Children learn EFL in private language institutions ($N = 436$).

	N	%	Commencement of out-of-school EFL learning		
Yes	319	73.2%	Pre-school	53	16.6%
			Grade 1	64	20.1%
			Grade 2	42	13.2%
			Grade 3	103	32.3%
			Grade 4	36	11.3%
			Grade 5	21	6.6%
			Total	319	100.0%
No	117	26.8%			

Table 3. Reasons for enrolling children in private language institutions ($N = 436$).

Reasons (multiple choices are possible)	*N*
Allow children to spend more time on EFL learning outside school	163
Allow children to learn EFL earlier, to meet the critical period for learning languages	96
Private language institutions offer more systematic EFL programs than the primary school	122
Private language institutions have native English speakers as teachers	87

> Because he started learning English since kindergarten, and we just want him to continue the advanced level of English. Besides, what the school taught is too easy for him, he cannot progress. (Parent 6)

> My child's grades and performance in English are far behind their classmates, so I decide to send them to cram school. (Parent 9)

> Because almost all of her classmates learn English outside school, she also wants to go to the private language institution. (Parent 17)

Around 96 participants indicated that they thought there was a critical period for learning languages (Penfield & Roberts, 1959), i.e. when learning foreign languages is easier, thereby justifying the claim 'the earlier, the better'. This concept of critical period in language learning is also stressed by the government and is included as one of the rationales for the primary EFL education policy (see Ministry of Education, 1998). Consequently, it has been used as a commercial slogan for attracting parents to send their children to private language institutions in Taiwan. However, a number of studies (Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000; Nunan, 1999) claim that the assumption that 'earlier is better' is not supported by empirical evidence in the EFL setting, and that age is not the determining factor. Instead, it is high-quality teaching, and well-planned and resourced instructional environments that account for successful foreign language learning.

In addition, parents also considered the more systematic EFL program offered by the private language institutions, and more importantly, the fact that they usually hire Native English Speakers as teachers as key considerations. For example, one father said:

> Although I am an English teacher in senior high school, I also enrolled my son in the private language school. I want my son to learn better English pronunciation from the Native-English-speaking teachers. (Parent 11)

The results also indicate that from the perspective of many parents, the native-English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are more desirable than the local English teachers. This is probably because of the overemphasis on speaking 'Standard English' in the country, and on parents' beliefs that NESTs are able to speak correct English regardless of their professional TESOL qualifications. Oladejo's (2006) findings also suggest that parents' judgment of good English teachers perhaps also is influenced by the color of their skin. As a result, in order to please parents and secure their children's enrollment, many private institutions employ NESTs, most of who have neither teaching qualifications nor relevant educational backgrounds. On this basis, the quality of teaching in such private language institutions may also be questionable (Chang, 2007).

4.3 *Parents' perspectives on when primary English education should begin*

The second part of the questionnaire dealt with parents' views on current practices in the primary EFL program and their impact on the five issues previously raised.

In response to a question on parents' views on the most appropriate grade for starting a primary EFL education, almost half of the participants (46.6%) believed that Grade 1 would be the most appropriate level to start, followed by Grade 3 (35.6%) and then Grade 2 (16.5%) (Table 4). These results are in contrast with the English teachers' views; e.g. in Liang's (2005) study, where the majority of the teachers supported the government's policy of starting at Grade 3, followed by Grade 1 as an alternate starting point. Parental

Table 4. Parental opinions on the most appropriate grade to start English.

Grade	*N*	%	ranking
1st grade	203	46.6%	1
Second grade	72	16.5%	3
Third grade	155	35.6%	2
Fourth grade	4	0.9%	
Fifth grade	2	0.4%	
Sixth grade	0	0.0%	
Total	436	100.0%	

preferences for beginning the instruction earlier may to some extent reflect their anxieties about the myth that 'earlier is better'. In addition, due to the neighboring cities' starting at Grade 1, the parents in Miaoli County, which follows the government's policy of starting at Grade 3, may feel they receive inequitable access to educational resources. For example, two parents stated:

> It's unfair that Hsinchu City started from the first grade and they even have foreign English teachers as major teachers. (Parent 12)

> Many of my colleagues transfer their children to Hsinchu City. Besides, Taichung City and County also start primary EFL program from first grade, our neighbor cities and counties all can do that, why is Miaoli County so far behind? (Parent 14)

However, over one-third of the total sample still supported the government's policy of starting in Grade 3; for example:

> I think the 3rd grade as starting grade is most suitable, because students just start to learn Mandarin spelling when they enter the primary schools, if they also need to learn English, they might get confused and in addition, it will be too much pressure for first graders. (Parent 7)

From the parents' points of view, the differences between districts related to the access policy for starting English instruction have caused a major problem and debate. As Chang (2008) indicated, the inconsistency in the beginning grade levels for the primary EFL program among different districts may increase the concerns and anxiety levels of parents' that their children might fall behind in learning English, especially when their children's school begins EFL education later than other schools. These parents might see enrolling their children in private institutions as a solution that gives their children a head start in learning English. However, children from low economic status families may not be able to afford such tuition, and that could mean that their English learning and performance could fall behind when they start to learn at primary schools, and in turn, this could undermine their confidence in their future EFL learning.

The data suggest that the current primary English education access policy does not work as a common regulatory mechanism for all districts in the country. There is a mismatch between the community policy, i.e. when parents begin English education for their children, and the regulations found in government policy, leading to a waste of educational resources. As a consequence, there are inequalities in both access and quality of access around the country, e.g. problems such as the huge gap in primary EFL education between urban and rural areas, the inequality of educational opportunities among students, as well as heterogeneous EFL proficiency levels among students in the same class. Such inequalities

suggest it is highly desirable that the government should strictly enforce the starting grade level for EFL education in all primary schools so as to ensure more equal educational opportunities across the polity.

4.4 *Parental opinions on the mixed-level classes*

With respect to the issue of students with heterogeneous proficiency levels in the same class, the data in Table 5 show that a large portion of parents agreed (68.4% agreed or strongly agreed) that a mixed-level class can negatively affect the EFL teaching and learning, while a smaller portion (21.1%) disagreed with this proposition or expressed uncertain opinions (10.6%). When participants were then asked if they supported the school streaming the classes according to students' English proficiency levels, their responses were more varied. About half of the participants (49.3%) disagreed with dividing classes by proficiency levels, while 37.8% agreed and 12.8% were uncertain. These results suggest that although parents were aware of the gap in English proficiency levels among students in the same class, in general the respondents in this study may still want their children to remain in the same class, rather than having children labeled as low-achieving students. These results contrast with the findings in Liang's (2005) study that showed that most teachers supported dividing classes by proficiency levels.

Reasons for parents' disagreement with streaming classes were mostly concerned with children being labeled, for example:

> It is not practical to divide the class by English proficiency levels. Moreover, students will be labeled and even lose confidence and interests in learning English if they were placed at the low level class. (Parent 15)

Moreover, some parents of higher proficiency level students also expressed their disagreement with the placement classes; for instance:

> Although what the school taught is very easy for him, he is very excited in English classes at school. The teacher usually assigns him as a tutor to teach his classmates. He is very proud of and enjoys doing this. (Parent 10)

Some parents gave reasons for streaming students by proficiency levels; for example:

> Teachers can teach and students can learn more effectively according to their proficiency levels. Otherwise, both the higher and lower achieving students cannot learn what they want, and the teaching is simply wasting time. Since there are only two sessions of English class per week, the school should make best use of the class time and divide the class according to students' levels, so as to achieve more effective teaching and learning. (Parent 13)

Table 5. Parental opinions on mixed-level classes.

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
A mixed-level class can negatively affect the EFL teaching and learning	6.7%	14.4%	10.6%	52.8%	15.6%
The school should streamline the classes according to students' English proficiency levels	16.7%	32.6%	12.8%	22.2%	15.6%

Notes: $N = 436$. SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree.

In view of the large gap in students' proficiency levels among students in the same class, a growing number of teachers and parents are arguing for the streaming of students by proficiency levels to bring about more effective teaching and learning. However, it should be noted that such heterogeneous levels in the same class were mainly the result of differences in children's socio-economic backgrounds. While some students of high socio-economic families have learned English for years before formal primary English begins, many children from low socio-economic families may not have had that opportunity. Furthermore, those who start learning English later are not necessarily slower learners than their counterparts. Therefore, entry level English proficiency testing has the potential to lead to inappropriate placement that could negatively affect students' motivation for, and interest in, learning English and, in turn, hinder their progress and EFL performance.

In general, the majority of parents in this study seemed to be aware of the potential problems (e.g. such labeling and depriving children of their potential to learn English in the future) that streaming classes could create for their children. This observation suggests that teachers need to incorporate effective teaching strategies such as cooperative learning to deal with mixed-level classes in order to provide students with different levels of support and challenges in their learning. More EFL teaching strategies in relation to mixed-level teaching (Bowler & Parminter, 2002) should be systematically provided by the government in regular teacher training programs to help teachers to deal effectively with mixed-level classes. In addition, there is also an urgent need to take some measures to assist students – e.g. providing free after-school programs for lower-achieving EFL students, as well as setting up English clubs for higher-achieving EFL students to allow them to enhance their English proficiency.

4.5 *Parents' perceptions of primary English teaching personnel*

In the second question, when parents' were asked about their attitude toward the teaching performance of their children's primary school English teachers, less than half of the participants (49.6%) agreed they were satisfied (42% agreed and 7.6% strongly agreed), while more than one-third of the participants (35%) were not satisfied (disagree and strongly disagree), and 15.4% were not sure about the English teachers' EFL teaching performance (Table 6). Reasons for being satisfied were concerned with the English teachers' good English education background, high level of English proficiency and enthusiasm in teaching English, while reasons for dissatisfaction were predominantly focused on the EFL teachers' English oral proficiency. For example:

> The teacher's English pronunciation is not very good, and she speaks with very strong Taiwanese accent. (Parent 18)

> As I know, my daughter's homeroom teacher also teaches them English. Although the teacher said that she is qualified because she has passed the English proficiency test and taken some credits, I still feel that her English is not very good. The school should hire one professional English teacher rather than simply select from their homeroom teachers. (Parent 3)

Table 6. Parents' attitude toward the teaching of primary school English teachers.

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
I am satisfied with the teaching of my child's primary school English teacher	9.2%	25.8%	15.4%	42.0%	7.6%

Notes: $N = 436$. SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree.

The way some parents judge a good English teacher is simply based on whether s/he speaks fluent English or not, irrespective of other aspects of teaching performance such as effective teaching methods and classroom management. Thus, these parents' opinions arose in part due to their lack of ability to judge the quality of teachers, and in part seemed to be a reaction to the primary EFL education policy that emphasizes the development of students' oral English skills. Moreover, from an English teachers' perspective, for example, as indicated in Butler's (2004) study, the majority of the elementary English teachers sampled in Taiwan perceived their proficiency levels to be lower than the minimum levels necessary to teach English under the current primary English education policy implying that most teachers may not feel confident or well-prepared to implement the government's policy that emphasizes communicative English instruction. Teachers' lack of confidence in their English skills may affect various aspects of their English teaching and ultimately influence students' success in acquiring English.

From a policy-planning perspective, it may be easy to use policy to set aspirations for a communicative focus in primary English education, but the government has failed to take into consideration the difficulties in the policy's actual implementation, given the limited resources currently available, e.g. shortage of qualified English teachers to conduct effective English instruction. Consequently, the policy can be said to provide an example of idealistic planning as the training and resources are not available to put it into practice, and it may therefore create misleading expectations for the public about the quality of English language teaching.

As illustrated in Table 7, parents were asked to rate four solutions to the shortage of qualified English teachers with the highest percentage of parents (73.4%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with employing more NESTs. The second highest percentage (60.6%) was to recruit substitute teachers with professional TEFL backgrounds, followed by cultivating future professional TEFL teachers (56.7%). The lowest percentage of agreement (48.2%) was to encourage in-service homeroom teachers to attend TEFL training programs.

Based on the extant literature, it is not surprising that the employment of NESTs was the preferred solution for most Taiwanese parents because of the predominant belief in the importance of 'Standard English' (Quirk, 1990), and that the native English-speaking teachers can teach English better than the local English teachers, regardless of their professional backgrounds, e.g. some parents stated:

> It is not fair that the government hired native English-speaking teachers to teach at the remote areas, and we only have Taiwanese teachers here. (Parent 6)

> The government should hire native English-speaking teachers to teach children English in order to have a good pronunciation. (Parent 11)

Table 7. Parents' opinions about solutions to the shortage of qualified English teachers.

Solutions	SD	D	U	A	SA
Recruit more Native English speakers (NESTs) as teachers	3.7%	13.1%	9.9%	47.0%	26.4%
Encourage in-service homeroom teachers to attend TEFL training programs	10.6%	29.8%	11.5%	44.3%	3.9%
Employ substitute teachers with professional TEFL backgrounds	8.9%	19.7%	10.8%	54.6%	6.0%
Cultivate future professional TEFL teachers	11.7%	20.6%	11.0%	48.9%	7.8%

Notes: $N = 436$. SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree.

Despite the public being in favor of hiring NESTs, both the central and the local governments, (with the possible exception of a few rich local governments) may not be able to afford the large investment required to recruit NESTs for every primary school. In addition, the central government's project of recruiting native English-speaking teachers for remote areas had to be abandoned because the project did not produce the results expected.

While recruiting NESTs for team teaching with local English teachers has advantages such as promoting cultural interaction, increasing students' English proficiency, or providing different teaching styles for students, it has raised controversial issues such as job competition, power relationships, duty distributions and cultural identities between the NESTs and the local English teachers (Buckley, 2000). Moreover, from experience in Japan, where NESTs were introduced through a national education policy, it has been found that team teaching is difficult to put into effect due to the model's complexity and the lack of sufficient training for both foreign and local background teachers (McConnell, 2000).

Although the need for the introduction of NESTs may seem logical from the parents' points of view, it is suggested that the government should think carefully about resourcing and planning issues before shaping its formal policy of recruiting NESTs, otherwise the results may only waste resources.

The issue of NESTs aside, most parents believed that teachers' professional background in TEFL was more important than their primary teaching experience. The survey results indicated that, from the parents' perspectives, having homeroom teachers complete in-service TEFL training programs constituted the least preferred approach to improving the teaching of English in primary schools. In contrast, in Liang's (2005) study, in-service teachers' believed that the government should initially focus on providing homeroom teachers with TEFL training programs in order to ameliorate the shortage of qualified English teachers.

In addition, given the decreasing birth rate in Taiwan there are likely to be fewer classes to teach every year; as a result, many in-service homeroom teachers are likely to encounter problems in retaining their teaching positions. English teaching vacancies are commonly taken up by homeroom teachers or by substitute teachers (based on seniority), and there are likely to be few vacancies for new applicants with TEFL professional qualifications, although there is an obvious need for more English teachers. For example, in 2006, less than 1% of the certificated applicants were recruited to teach English in primary schools (The China Post, 2006, August 2). This reality, in turn, has exacerbated an already serious problem of an under supply of qualified professional English teachers and has created a threat to the quality of teaching English. While untrained or poorly trained homeroom teachers, many with limited English proficiency, are given priority for English teaching positions based on seniority, it will be hard to improve the quality of English programs.

Therefore, it is suggested that the government needs to re-evaluate the policy of certificating primary English teachers to emphasize their English proficiency level, their professional English training, as well as primary school teacher training. A national-standard for certificating English teachers should be enacted and strictly enforced, and the professional training programs should be upgraded to a national-standard.

4.6 *Parents' opinions about the use of primary EFL textbooks*

As Table 8 indicates, 61.3% of participants were satisfied with their children's primary English textbooks, 12.1% were uncertain about the textbooks, and 28.9% expressed dissatisfaction. The interviews indicated that judgments of parents' satisfaction relied largely on the content themes included in the book and the level of difficulty, followed by the design

Table 8. Parents' degree of satisfaction with their children's current English textbook.

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
I am satisfied with my child's current English textbook	7.3%	21.6%	9.9%	50.7%	10.6%

Notes: $N = 436$. SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree.

and illustrations. The reasons for parents' satisfaction were, e.g. 'the content is useful for daily-life conversations' (Parent 16). Parent 5 mentioned that 'the design and illustrations are beautiful', and finally, parent 1 stated, 'the level is suitable for my daughter'.

On the other hand, the reasons for parents' dissatisfaction with the textbooks were that: 1) the level of the textbook (i.e. either too difficult or too easy) was not appropriate for their children, and 2) the language and the contents were not sequentially arranged. In particular, one parent pointed out that the textbook her child used lacked elements of local culture; she stated:

> The English textbook should not only introduce western culture, like American food and holidays. They should also include our own food, culture and festivals that are closely related to our daily lives, so that children can easily relate English to everyday communication. (Parent 17)

With regard to parents' opinions about resources (Table 9), 65.1% of the participants supported teachers being able to choose their own textbooks, while 35.6% thought that the government should unify all primary schools textbooks. Only 26.6% agreed that teachers should make their own teaching materials. With regard to the issue of whether the government should unify the textbooks, parents' responses in this study tend to be relatively controversial. Over one-third (35.6%) of parents show support for the uniformity of textbooks, while more than half of the parents (56%) objected to the MOE designing one set of English textbooks. Supporters suggested that uniformity of the textbooks used could ensure consistency and sequence in the learning English for students across the country, e.g. one parent stated:

> The MOE should at least unify the content of all textbook series; otherwise, the EFL learning is not systematic and sequential, and may even be chaotic for students, which may be detrimental for their learning progress in EFL. (Parent 3)

On the other hand, more parents in this study were opposed to uniformity of textbook use, arguing that the openness of textbooks is the trend in modern society, and it is inappropriate to go back to one unified set of English textbooks. As one parent stated:

Table 9. Parents' preferences related to the use of English textbooks.

Resources	SD	D	U	A	SA
Teachers make their own teaching materials	14.7%	51.1%	7.6%	22.0%	4.6%
Allow each teacher to choose one from among the approved textbooks	8.5%	20.4%	6.0%	43.3%	21.8%
The MOE should design or unify one set of English textbooks at primary schools	11.5%	44.5%	8.5%	30.3%	5.3%

Notes: $N = 436$. SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree.

> The textbook use should be open to market, so that the most competitive textbooks can be produced. In the long run, probably only a few sets of most competitive textbooks can survive and be popular among primary schools. (Parent 8)

The problem of the divergence of the textbooks used at primary schools has been pointed out in several studies (Chang, 2008; Liang, 2005). Chang (2008), for example, reported that the majority of parents agreed that the primary English textbooks should be uniform. However, most parents in this study did not see the lack of uniformity as a major problem; on the contrary, they saw the uniformity as a step backwards. In addition, they tended to support teachers being able to select textbooks for their students.

This raises the question of who should be involved and what expertise they bring to textbook evaluation. Community involvement might lead to decisions based on power relationships rather than on professional criteria. However, many teachers or administrators have no training on the basis of which they can select an appropriate textbook and might be influenced in their choice by materials from well-known publishers. In both cases, suitable texts might not be selected. Therefore, there is an urgent need to provide the skills of textbook evaluation in teachers' professional training.

Another problem that needs to be addressed is that the curriculum-related guidelines for textbook content provided by the MOE may not be specific enough. As a result, the content of textbooks varies dramatically across the wide range of approved textbooks available in the market (Chang, 2004). Hence, it is suggested that there should be additional guidelines that provide more specific learning goals and that content at each grade level should be also systematically stipulated so as to ensure there is sequential and systematic progress in EFL learning.

4.7 *Parents' attitudes toward the effect of primary EFL education on the learning of other languages*

Table 10 presents parents' responses to the question about the effects of EFL education on students' learning of Mandarin Chinese and the local dialects. Regarding its effect on the learning of Mandarin, the majority of participants disagreed (63.7%) that primary EFL education would have a negative effect on the learning of Mandarin, while relatively few participants (22.7%) agreed that it was having negative effects on learning Mandarin and only 13.5% were uncertain. Typical of the responses of interviewees who disagreed were comments like:

> We speak Mandarin everywhere, and that only two classes of English every week at school won't have any effects. (Parent 2)

> I even send my son to all-English language school, but he always speaks Mandarin no matter how hard we try to encourage him to speak English. He only speaks a little English to his foreign teacher, and he usually speaks Mandarin because we use the language all the time. So I don't think learning English can decrease his use of Mandarin. (Parent 14)

Most parents felt that English learning is not harmful but rather only produces benefits. They had a tendency not to see children's EFL learning as a threat to the learning of Mandarin Chinese as it is the predominant language used in the country. The results provide another example that suggests that the learning of English generally holds a prestigious status in Taiwanese society. However, some empirical studies have indicated that the early exposure to English learning has negative effects on young children's learning of Mandarin (Hung, 2004), leading to children who may become less competent in both

Table 10. Parents' attitudes toward the effect of the primary EFL program on the learning of other languages.

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
Primary EFL programs have negative effects on students' learning of Mandarin Chinese	12.8%	50.9%	13.5%	14.9%	7.8%
The subject of English language is more important than the subject of local dialects in primary schools	5.0%	17.9%	8.7%	54.4%	14.0%

Notes: $N = 436$. SD, strongly disagree; D, disagree; U, uncertain; A, agree; SA, strongly agree.

languages. Hence, there is a need to provide more help to parents to develop a better concept of the effects of learning different languages on young children, so they can appropriately guide and monitor their children's language learning and use.

In addition, when comparing the importance of learning English with that of learning local dialects, a very high percentage of parents (68.4) agreed with the view that the English language subject is more important than learning local dialects, and only a few (22.9%) disagreed with this proposition, while 8.7% expressed uncertainty. Most parents indicated that:

> We can teach children to speak Taiwanese at home, but we can't teach English. The school should teach students more English rather than other languages. Besides, it is meaningless to teach only one class of local dialect per week, the school should use this class to teach English. (Parent 4)

> All kinds of entrance exams have English tests, but no tests for local dialects. So English is very important. If your English is not good, you probably cannot get into a good school or find a better job. (Parent 10)

The results indicated that the majority of parents hold highly favorable attitudes toward English language study – perhaps as a result of the spread of English for global communication and to meet the instrumental demands that are pervasive in the country. Consequently, most Taiwanese parents expressed attitudes that marginalized the use of Taiwanese local languages. Such attitudes have the potential to change the language ecology in Taiwan.

Furthermore, from the perspective of language planning at the macro-level, the simultaneous implementation of both the English education policy and the local language education policy, while making the Taiwanese government's ambition for languages clear, but have made it difficult to carry out both language policies effectively (Tsao, 2008). The English education policy has aroused much more attention from the public as well as from the government itself, and the available funding and resources predominantly have been devoted to supporting the English education policy at the expense of the implementation of the local language education policy. Consequently, the local language policy has been largely ignored by the parents and has remained under-developed by the government.

In short, the issue of the effects of EFL learning on other languages is a controversial topic that is frequently discussed nationally. For example, while some research has raised concerns that an over emphasis on English learning has marginalized the learning of local languages (Chang, 2007; Chen, 2003; Crawford, 2003; Su, 2006), other studies have argued that the emphasis on learning English does not mean ignoring the learning of the languages of Taiwan, that it is not an either-or proposition (Liao, 2004). The

effects of primary EFL education continue to create debate and controversy in the country. Nevertheless, an over emphasis on English education affects curriculum design and the distribution of resources, so care is needed if Taiwanese languages are not to be marginalized.

5. Conclusion

This study examines community language policy; i.e. parents' perspectives on the effects of primary English-in-education policy in Taiwan. The results show a mismatch between the community's perspectives on policy and the government's language-planning policy, as well as a lack of collaboration and communication between policy implementation levels. As a result, problems and controversies have emerged due to the inconsistency between the two confronting language implementation forces at the micro- and macro-level.

From the community's micro-level perspective, derived from the nationwide stress on the importance of English for global and individual success, Taiwanese parents perceived their children's learning of English from a much more ideological orientation than from a pragmatic one. As the results of this study suggest, the spread of English has penetrated into the community – e.g. parents' overemphasis on their children's learning of English both in and out of classrooms, the myth that earlier English learning is better, their preference for NESTs rather than the local English teachers, as well as their stress on English education rather than local language education. These signs indicated that parents' lack of reflection on local English education policy might eventually result in a cultural crisis that marginalizes local identities, local cultures and local languages. While positive parental support for the language-planning process plays a critical role in the success of the language planning (Breen, 2002), too much pressure and too high expectations from Taiwanese parents can be an obstacle to good primary English language planning (Su, 2006). Furthermore, these signs of parents' overemphasis on their children's English education also imply their worries and insecurities that derive from the government's stress on international competitiveness, and this in turn has caused parents to put even greater pressure on the government for the reform of English education in Taiwan.

From the perspective of national macro-language planning, primary English education in Taiwan can be regarded as a top-down policy emanating from global-structural pressures and as a response to, and solution for, the bottom-up internal pressures of public expectations. In addition, the new government's (Democratic Progressive Party) enthusiasm and ambition, at the time it came to power in 1990, to reform education also partly accelerated the policy of primary English education. However, a policy of acting too quickly with too high expectations from the society and without adequate research-based planning inevitably leads to problems and draws criticism (Crombie, 2006) as the case of Taiwanese primary English education policy illustrates. In addition, the problems and controversies discussed in this study also are manifested in the confrontation of forces at the macro- and micro-level. As a result, to some extent, the primary English education policy has led to the waste of valuable resources and is an example of unrealistic planning.

In short, Taiwanese primary English education policy is currently an inter-tangling of both top-down and bottom up policy-making issues. The results of this study indicate that there are concerns that the Taiwanese government needs to re-examine the area of primary English education policy and related curricular initiatives.

First, although government's English-in-education language planning sounds well-intended and is well-stated with clear goals, it has failed to look thoroughly at the micro-level planning processes required for successful implementation. In addition, while it sounds democratic to adopt a decentralized model in the planning of primary

English-in-education, inconsistencies and controversies have emerged in macro- to micro-translation processes, and as a result there have been negative impacts on educational equality that have been criticized in various micro-level situations. Hence, it is suggested that some regulations are required to complement this decentralized model.

Second, the debate and conflict between internationalization and localization within Taiwanese society continues. The government should make an effort to ensure that there is a balance in developing the two perspectives within communities. Parents of young children in particular play a central role in shaping these concepts for their children. The development of primary English education at the expense of other cultures, languages, skills, and qualities of Taiwanese students is highly undesirable.

Finally, constant collaboration and communication among all policy levels in policy implementation are urgently required for a successful primary English-in-education policy to be achieved. Hence, it is suggested that the government should develop a clear process of public participation and consultation at all levels in the planning of educational and language policies, prior to the implementation of such reforms through the education process.

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Primary English language education policy in Vietnam: insights from implementation

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The introduction of English in primary education curricula is a phenomenon occurring in many non-English-speaking countries in Asia, including Vietnam. Recently, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Vietnam issued guidelines for the piloting of an English as a foreign language (EFL) primary curriculum in which English is taught as a compulsory subject from Grade 3; however, there is limited research on the practices required to successfully implement this policy. This paper reports on a study that looked at the implementation of the primary English language policy in terms of the policy goals in two primary schools, one private and the other public, in Hanoi to shed light on the practice of EFL teaching at the primary level in Vietnam. The research was conducted as an exploratory case study with data collected from multiple sources, including classroom observations and interviews with different stakeholders. The results revealed variation in the implementation of primary English education between the two schools, with the private school providing better outcomes. The language planning issues discussed in this study, including teacher supply, training and professional development, resourcing, teaching methods, and materials, have been raised in previous educational research in Vietnam. However, despite being a new start to primary English, the 2010 programme seems to have done little to improve policy implementation in these areas, hindering the effectiveness of teaching English in schools. This study suggests a number of ways the current situation might be improved.

Introduction

The emergence of English as a global language has had a considerable impact on language planning policy in many non-English-speaking countries, including Vietnam, leading to more English teaching in primary schools. As English has become increasingly prominent, there has been an urgent need to keep proficiency in this foreign language high to enhance Vietnam's competitive position in the international economic and political arena. This need has resulted in innovations in language-in-education planning to encourage and improve the acquisition of English among Vietnamese people. Since the 1990s, in large cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, English for primary pupils has been taught at language

centres and in some private primary schools. In 1996, English was introduced as an elective subject starting from Grade 3 (children approximately 8 years of age) with two 40 min periods per week in provinces that had adequate resources to do so. The policy received widespread support throughout the country from primary schools and parents. Consequently, in 2010–2011, a pilot English (as a compulsory subject) primary programme was implemented with four 40 min periods per week starting from Grade 3. The major motivating forces underlying the government's policy to introduce English into primary education across Vietnam were:

- to recognise the role that English plays as a means of international communication;
- to enhance Vietnam's economic and political strategic policy;
- to serve the nation's desire to keep up with other countries; and
- to enhance the language proficiency of Vietnamese learners.

However, the decision to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) at a young age is a phenomenon that needs careful and serious consideration. The question to be asked is whether the newly introduced English language teaching (ELT) and learning policy for the primary level is as effective as might be expected. While the policy may bring about the desired changes in ELT and learning in Vietnam, there is widespread concern that the implementation efforts may be haphazard and may not lead to the expected increases in proficiency levels.

Language policy implementation for English at the primary school level has been studied in a variety of contexts (e.g. Butler, 2007, Japan; Kırkgöz, 2008, Turkey; Li, 2007, PRC; and Moon, 2005, Vietnam). Most of these studies have looked at:

- how language education policy is perceived and implemented;
- how a given reform or policy proposal impacted or did not impact on schools;
- how teachers have or have not implemented a particular policy; or
- how other factors may affect successful policy implementation.

However, there is still little evidence about foreign language-in-education and English language curriculum policy at the primary level in Vietnam from the perspective of teachers and managers, who implement the policy in schools. By bringing together the literature concerning foreign language policy and planning, and drawing on the theoretical framework for language-in-education planning and the seven policy goals suggested by Kaplan and Baldauf (2003, 2005), this study explores these policy goals in a general context and through an examination of the implementation of the new primary English programme in Vietnam.

Language-in-education policy goals

Several researchers (Fullan, 1991; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2008; McLachlan, 2009) have suggested a number of issues that need to be examined in any educational policy-based implementation of programmes. For example, Hoy's (1976, as cited in McLachlan, 2009) conditions for successful policy implementation, including clarity of long-term aims and short-term objectives, financial support, teacher supply, teacher-support services, and co-ordination of modern language teaching with the rest of the primary curriculum, have been widely examined in a number of studies on policy implementation. Using this framework, McLachlan (2009) shed light on the critical

issues facing the implementation of modern language policy in the primary curriculum in England and argued that there was a need for changes to the current situation there. Fullan (1991) also agrees with some of these conditions for successful policy implementation when he points out at least three dimensions that need to be raised and considered for any new educational policy: (1) the introduction of new or revised materials; (2) the possible introduction of new teaching approaches; and (3) the possible attempted alteration of beliefs. In addition, the role of teachers in the implementation process has been raised by a number of researchers (e.g. Li, 2007; Moon, 2009). These conditions are among the most frequently examined topics in research on the implementation of language programmes in different contexts.

As the language policy and planning literature shows, there are a variety of specific issues related to conditions for successful language policy and planning implementation. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2005) proposed a comprehensive framework (Table 1) for language-in-education planning that includes seven implementation goals that have been suggested in the literature: access policy, personnel policy, curriculum policy, methods and material policy, resourcing policy, community policy, and evaluation policy. The framework provides the basis for understanding language-in-education policy and issues associated with its implementation, many of which are related to the more general educational conditions for general policy implementation discussed previously. Addressing these seven policy goals is necessary because they represent factors that impact on specific educational actions that need to be taken. Each is examined in the following sections, drawing on examples from the literature on language planning related to a number of polities, with a particular focus on Vietnam, to provide the basis for examining the extent to which the most recent English language policy for primary education in Vietnam is being implemented in terms of those policy goals.

Access policy

Access policy designates who learns what languages at what age or at what level. This is important as it provides guidelines to the design and development of school-based language programmes to achieve the social, economic, and political needs, in particular, polities. Access policy indicates when learners are to be exposed to English through instruction. For instance, in Turkey in 1997, to meet the political, social, and economic needs for

Table 1. Language-in-education goals (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005, p. 1014).

Language-in-education planning goals	Explanations
Access policy	Who learns what when?
Personnel policy	Where do teachers come from and how are they trained?
Curriculum policy	What is the objective in language teaching/learning?
Methods and material policy	What methodology and what materials are employed over what duration?
Resourcing policy	How is everything paid for?
Community policy	Who is consulted/involved?
Evaluation policy	What is the connection between assessment, on the one hand, and methods and materials that define the educational objectives, on the other?

increased English language competence, English was introduced as a compulsory subject from Grades 4 and 5 at the primary level, and students then continued English studies into tertiary education (Kırkgöz, 2008). In Bangladesh, English became a compulsory subject in Grade 1 in 1992 as there was a need to increase the levels of English nationally to support the national development agenda in an age of globalisation (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

In Vietnam, in the post-1954 period, there were four foreign languages taught in schools: English, Russian, Chinese, and French. From 1954 to 1975, the North of Vietnam received significant military and civilian aid from China and Russia. Thus, French was replaced by Chinese and Russian at secondary and tertiary colleges in the North as these two languages were then more important than English and French. Russian was taught from Grades 6 to 12 and continued at a tertiary level. During this period, English was not given much attention in the North. However, ELT in Vietnam had a revival in the post-1986 period when the Vietnamese government decided to change political direction in order to facilitate its ability to attract foreign investment. Particularly in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and other large cities, the demand for the use of English as a means of communication increased, as did its status with the arrival of more foreigners, as English was being more widely used for international communication. During the past decade, English teaching has been part of an energetic, nationwide programme in language teaching. At present, English is taught at all levels of education and is widely used for international communication. Vietnam's trade, business, educational, and political relations with other countries have led to an increasing role for English. Of the four major foreign languages (i.e. Chinese, English, French, and Russian) taught in the education system, the Vietnamese government has emphasised the role of English as part of Vietnam's socio-economic development. As a result, English has become the preferred foreign language in Vietnam (Bui, 2005; Denham, 1992; Do, 2006; Nguyen, 2003; Nguyen, 2009; Wright, 2002), especially in light of English recently becoming a compulsory school subject at all levels.

Since the 1990s, English for primary pupils has been taught in a pilot programme at language centres and also at some primary schools in the larger cities in Vietnam, such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. In response to societal demands, the MOET issued Decision No. 6627/TH, dated 18 September 1996, which provided guidance on foreign language teaching in primary schools. English was introduced as an elective subject nationwide starting from the second semester of Grade 3, with two 40 min periods per week in schools where teaching conditions permitted and where there was sufficient demand from parents. Some private schools in the larger cities offer English from Grade 1; at some schools, English accounts for 12 periods per week. The practice of English language primary education varies across different regions of the country. Data from a survey showed that 99.1% of all the junior secondary schools offer instruction in English, while only 0.6% offer French, 0.2% offer Russian, and 0.1% offer Chinese (Loc, 2005), indicating the central role that English language education now plays in Vietnam. In 2010, a pilot English (as a compulsory subject) primary programme was implemented with four 40 min periods per week starting from Grade 3.

Personnel policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) believe that when a new language policy is introduced, the authorities need to consider the issues of teacher selection, supply, and training and the rewards available to the teachers. The role of language teachers is undoubtedly critical in

implementing a new language curriculum programme (Crichton & Templeton, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Gorsuch, 2000; Li, 2010; Moon, 2009; Smit, 2005). Research on new educational innovations demonstrates that teachers have a large impact on the success of implementation of new policies. As Fullan (1993, p. 4) has explained, '[i]t is the teachers who are responsible for passing on the changes through their teaching to their students'. A number of researchers (e.g. Chua & Baldauf, 2011; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005; Spolsky & Shohamy, 2000) agree that if the policy does not deal with issues related to teachers effectively, failure to achieve policy goals is inevitable.

Although the issues of teacher selection and training are always mentioned in policy documents, the reality is often quite different. Most of the policy documents require English teachers in primary education to have a certain level of language proficiency and a teaching certificate. A number of studies (e.g. Baldauf et al., 2007; Hamid, 2010; Hayes, 2008a; Li, 2007, 2010; McLachlan, 2009; Moon, 2005; Nunan, 2003) show that in many non-English-speaking polities in which English was initially introduced at the primary level, the quantity and quality of teachers required to implement this policy have not been met; there has been a tendency to 'use untrained and limited competence teachers as a stop-gap measure' (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 130). Research indicates that there is an urgent need for competent teachers (Butler, 2004; Li, 2007; Tsao, 2008) as teachers commonly found in Asian EFL contexts demonstrate limited proficiency and a lack of understanding of teaching methodology (Carless, 2004; Fung & Norton, 2002; Hayes, 2008a; Kang, 2008).

In Vietnam, the quality and quantity of language teachers for language policy implementation have long been a concern. Since 1986 when the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam initiated the policy of 'Doi moi', Vietnam has begun to 'open up' its economy and its relationships with the West. By the 1990s, there was a growing realisation that foreign languages were a key factor in facilitation of such change. The rapidly increasing demand for English, coupled with the overemphasis on Russian language development and the neglect of other foreign languages, led to unbalanced foreign language education in Vietnamese schools. This has resulted in a shortage of teachers capable of teaching language, particularly English. To meet this need, many short-time training courses were set up to train English teachers and retrain Russian teachers to teach English but 'were not properly delivered' (Le, 2007, p. 172), resulting in poor-quality English education.

At the primary level, the shortage of primary English teachers is an even more serious problem. Few teachers have been formally trained to teach English at the primary level. Thus, the demand outpaces the availability of well-trained and competent teachers. According to Dr Nguyen Loc, Deputy-Director of the National Institute of Educational Strategy and Curriculum, in 2010, at least 1700 English primary teachers were needed. The shortage of English teachers at the primary level forces the continued recruitment of teachers with inadequate linguistic and teaching competencies. In addition, as there is no staffing quota for primary teachers of English at primary schools, most primary schools hire English teachers on contract (Moon, 2009). The pay for these teachers is low, so they are not committed to the school; low status and motivation of primary English teachers are obstacles to improving the practice of EFL teaching and learning. In addition, the teachers' proficiency and teaching capacity are far from satisfactory (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007; Thuy Anh, 2007). In a recent study on teacher preparation for primary education in one province in Vietnam, Le and Do (in press) found that the primary English teachers in that province showed weaknesses in pedagogical skills, oral skills, vocabulary knowledge, and pronunciation.

There was no legislative policy governing credentialing for primary English foreign language teachers (PEFLTs) until the recent requirements set out in the Directive on Primary English Education, issued in August 2010. The new National Primary English Curriculum in Vietnam specifies that PEFLTs should have a degree from a university or college for training EFL teachers, their language proficiency should be equivalent to Level B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF), and PEFLTs must have opportunities to attend professional activities in their school or school clusters. Teachers and managerial staff must participate in training workshops on the curriculum, teaching materials, and teaching methodology. However, despite these policy directives, changes are not evident and there remains a shortage of English teachers in primary and secondary schools, and for many of those employed, their proficiency is inadequate (Le & Do, in press). These unsatisfactory teacher standards are related to teachers' low status, insufficient teacher training, lack of professional support from colleagues, and lack of quality in-service professional development. The impact of the new 2010 English language curriculum on personnel policy is discussed in detail in a later section.

Curriculum policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2005) have claimed that once the language(s) to be taught have been determined, a whole range of curricular issues need to be taken into consideration, such as clarifying:

- the objectives of teaching and learning the relevant language;
- the space in the curriculum allocated to language instruction;
- the duration of teaching and learning; and
- the class contact time.

In non-English-speaking countries in Asia, including China, Malaysia, and Vietnam, the national curriculum has been centrally developed and dictated, meaning that '[t]he system is very top-down, and the community has little input into policy' (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005, p. 1017). For example, the Chinese National English Curriculum for primary and secondary schools was launched in 2001 (Li, 2011) and is focussed on five major areas that aim to integrate students' language ability to use:

- language skills;
- linguistic knowledge;
- attitude and motivation;
- learning strategies; and
- culture awareness.

The objectives state that students are expected to have mastery of 1500 words by the end of junior middle school and of 3300–3500 words, basic grammar structures, 350 phrases, and basic mastery of four of the five skills by the end of senior high school (Luo, Fang, & Zhang, 2008).

In Vietnam, in the 2003–2004 school year, responding to the need for a more systematic introduction of English at the primary level, the MOET introduced an English curriculum for primary schools emphasising the development of the four macro-skills, with speaking and listening being initially stressed. According to Decision No. 50/2003 QD-BGD&DT, dated 30 October 2003, from 2003, pupils in primary school were required to study a foreign language

as an elective subject from Grades 3 to 5 for two 40 min periods per week. Teaching English as an elective subject in primary schools was meant to serve the following purposes:

- Inculcating basic English communicative skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing to enable students to communicate in English at school, at home, and in familiar social environments.
- Providing students with a fundamental knowledge of English to enable them to gain primary understanding of the country, the people, and the culture of some English-speaking countries.
- Building positive attitudes towards English and a better understanding and love for Vietnamese through learning English.

Furthermore, during the 3 years from Grades 3 to 5, students' intelligence, personality, and learning methods will have been gradually developed (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2003); however, achieving these aims seems ambitious in a 3-year period (Moon, 2009).

In 2008, Decision 1400 on the improvement of foreign language teaching and learning in the national education system for the 2008–2020 period was issued to enable the widespread introduction of English at Grade 3 throughout the country. However, no new curriculum was issued at the time, leaving the 2003 curriculum in place. In response to the call for quality English education, in the school year 2010–2011, another regulation concerning the pilot English (as a compulsory subject) primary curriculum was issued. The latest MOET directive, issued in August 2010, provided guidance for the implementation of pilot English language programmes at the primary level. At the policy level, the curriculum document encompasses guidelines describing:

- the need for teaching English at primary levels;
- the principles for developing the curriculum;
- the objectives, teaching contents, recommended methodology, evaluation, and prerequisite requirements for the implementation; and
- specific directions for teaching contents for each grade.

According to the Directive, English is to be taught as a compulsory subject from Grades 3 to 5 for a total of 420 periods (140 periods in each grade). The MOET has expressed a desire for primary children to reach Level A1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. This is a significant change in language policy as switching from two optional periods of English a week to four compulsory periods of English a week in the primary schools means, according to Deputy-Director General Dr Nguyen Loc, that '[t]his is the first-ever curriculum which has been developed to an international standard. We'll use this as an exemplar for developing curriculum of other subjects as part of our Curriculum Innovations project' (British Council, 2010, http://www.britishcouncil.org/accessenglish-news-vietnam-new-primary-english-curriculum-gets-top-marks.htm).

Methods and material policy

Methods and material policy, which are often specified in curriculum policy, are two important areas in the curriculum implementation process (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, 2003, 2005). More specifically, these policy goals need to answer two questions:

- What content will be used for language teaching?
- What methodology will be used for language instruction?

Most of the recent English language curricula developed in South East Asian polities specify communicative language teaching (CLT) as the expected methodology. In East Asian countries, reforms of English education have been centred on how to raise students' communication skills in English. However, a number of studies (e.g. Li, 2010; Moon, 2005, 2009; Smit, 2005) have claimed that teachers' actual practices in classrooms often differ from these expectations. This finding supports the claims made by Samoff (1999, p. 417), who believes the 'official statements that may or may not be implemented and certainly do not guide what people actually do. Stated policy may thus be very different from policy in practice'.

This is true in the context of Vietnam where recently, at secondary level, the MOET has produced an action plan for increasing the vitality of English language education in the twenty-first century. One of the key components of this plan, which is expected to make dramatic changes in English language education, addresses the urgent need for retraining programmes as part of EFL in-service teacher education in conjunction with the introduction of new textbooks. The new series of textbooks, *New Tieng Anh* (English), are described as adopting a learner-centred and communicative approach, with task-based teaching being the central teaching method (Hoang, Nguyen, & Hoang, 2006). These textbooks are written by Vietnamese authors and are officially used for lower and upper secondary students throughout the country with the aim of equipping 'students with communicative ability and competence to perform basic language functions receptively and productively, using correct language forms and structures' (Le, 2007, p. 4). However, the reality of teaching English at the secondary level has remained problematic. Although a number of changes that tried to implement CLT have occurred, the usage of which has increased somewhat in Vietnam, it has been observed that classroom teaching remains:

> grammar-focused, textbook-bound, and teacher-centred on account of teachers' inadequacy of required proficiency in English and teaching skills as well as of the traditional image of the teacher as a type of omniscient authority figure and a holder of all knowledge. (Le, 2007, p. 174)

At the primary school level, the introduction of English in 1996 has prompted the need for textbooks. Since then, a number of sets of officially approved books, such as *Let's go* (Oxford University Press), *Let's learn English* (Education Publisher), and *English 1–5* (Center for Educational Technology), have been produced. However, the specific syllabus and the choice of textbook are entirely the responsibility of local schools. Textbooks are still the primary source of teaching materials in Vietnam as there is a lack of expertise in English primary education and primary English teachers generally do not have the knowledge and skills to develop materials themselves. An examination of the textbooks used showed that they are not fully suited to children's needs in terms of their focus (grammar rather than communication), types of input, and activities (Moon, 2005). The books contain simple language and use coloured illustrations with minimal text, suggesting that there is a 'need to develop new textbooks and supporting materials which are grounded in an understanding of children's learning and language learning' (Moon, 2005, p. 53). Teachers also need to be provided with clear guidelines on how to use textbooks, and the curriculum needs to be communicated to principals and to teachers in primary schools to avoid the situation in which teachers consider the textbooks to be the curriculum. This perception reflects the fact that teachers are not clear about the aims or goals or about the pedagogical directions of English language education at the primary level.

Since 2005, there have been attempts made to produce textbooks in line with the curriculum. A new series, *Let's learn English*, has been published as a result of cooperation between the Educational Publishing House of Vietnam, Panpac Education, Singapore, and the British Council in Vietnam. There has been strong criticism of this textbook. Grassick (2006) reported that there were no major changes in teaching approach when teachers used the new textbook. This was confirmed by Jarvis (2007), who claimed that the underlying approach of the new textbook has not really changed, even though the book appeared to be more child friendly. The *Let's go* textbook is still more popular at private schools than the *Let's learn English* series of textbooks as it provides more visual aids and colourful materials and has a greater variety of activities (Moon, 2009). The selection of textbooks for primary English education is intended to provide flexibility in implementing policy in schools, but it may cause inconsistencies in content as some of these books are not aligned with the National Curriculum (e.g. *Let's go*) and there is little compatibility among the textbooks used.

Regarding teaching methodology at the primary level, the 2003 curriculum states that 'the optional English Curriculum is designed in accordance with the communicative approach to language teaching' and 'the topic selected should be communicative'. However, in reality, the teaching methods are adult oriented (Moon, 2005), overemphasise linguistic forms, and overuse choral repetition drills for vocabulary teaching (Le & Do, in press). In a recent study, Moon (2009) observed 22 primary teachers' lessons and revealed that most of them used general approaches to teaching children, including a focus on form, teacher-fronted teaching, overuse of choral drilling and repetition, and limited use of pair/group activities. This type of adult-oriented approach is attributed to the influence of pre-service teachers' education programmes (Hayes, 2008c; Moon, 2009; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007) and form-focussed examinations (Le & Do, in press). Whether these approaches have changed with the introduction of the new 2010 English language curriculum is discussed in the case study in a subsequent section.

Resourcing policy

Resourcing policy specifies the allocation of resources, especially financial resources, provided for language-in-education programmes. This is one of the critical factors that determine the extent to which the goal may be attained. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), after the first stage of cost–benefit analysis, substantial investment should be made on different aspects of language development, for instance, in new/revised materials, teacher training, and teaching facilities. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, p. 139) emphasised that 'language change in one direction can easily revert to the other if adequate resources are not available to sustain and promote linguistics development'. The literature has shown that this area is not always dealt with effectively in a number of polities in South and East Asia. For example, in China, it seems that no information is available about the financial support for foreign language programmes in primary schools (Li, 2007), while in Bangladesh, the per capita funding per student for English language education is inadequate even to meet basic needs (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

In Vietnam, education is mainly subsidised by the government, although private schools at all levels are blooming and increasing their tuition. At the primary level, the learning situation is one of the determinants of the success of policy implementation. However, even in those provinces that claim to have adequate conditions for primary English learning and teaching, organisation and class size in many classrooms are not suitable for activity-oriented teaching methodology. In addition, many public schools lack adequate resources, tape recorders, video, DVD players, and other supplementary aids that are necessary to

motivate learning in young pupils. Although the resources are seen to be better at private schools, in general, more investment needs to be made to increase the physical resources available in all primary schools to enhance the quality of ELT (Hayes, 2008b; Moon, 2005; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007).

Community policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2005) emphasise the importance of the attitudes of the community towards language teaching and its effects on policy success. These attitudes are conveyed through community policy that concerns who is and who is not consulted or involved in the decision-making process for language-in-education policy. In some polities, language policy has normally been centralised and is not consultative (Baldauf et al., 2007; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005), with national educational policies often being made by governments in a top-down manner. In some countries, including China and Vietnam, centralised planning means that there is little opportunity for community consultation or discussion, meaning that new English education curricula are very top-down with little participation from other stakeholders such as parents, teachers, administrators, or students. However, this does not mean that the demand for English by the community at the primary level can be ignored.

Evaluation policy

Evaluation policy, according to Kaplan and Baldauf (2005, p. 1014), is concerned with the answer to the question 'What is the connection between assessment on the one hand and methods and materials that define the educational objectives on the other?' Consistency between these two aspects is one of the critical factors in the success of policy implementation (Cumming, 2009). Research on the implementation of curriculum policies, however, has exposed a number of dilemmas, including inconsistency between what is specified in the curriculum policy and in practice. In turn, evaluation policy defines the resources for teachers' professional development since evaluation policy has a direct connection to teaching methodology (Cumming, 2009; Ross, 2008).

Recently, the MOET has expressed a desire for primary children to reach Level A1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A general description of ALTE Level 1 is as follows:

> At this level, users are acquiring a general basic ability to communicate in a limited number of the most familiar situations in which language is used in everyday life. Users at this level need to be able to understand the main points of simple texts, many of which are of the kind needed for survival when travelling or going about in public in a foreign country. At this level, they are using language for survival and to gain basic points of information. (as cited in MOET, 2010, p. 27)

Specifications for ALTE Level 1 'Overall General Ability' are

Level	Listening/speaking	Reading	Writing
CE 2/ALTE 1	CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context	CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters	CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information

Regarding this objective, Hayes (2008b, 2008c), who conducted a comprehensive study of ELT for primary education, claimed that, based on the information gathered, teaching and learning conditions and time allocation at the time of the study were not viable to allow this to occur. In a recent study, Le and Do (in press) reported that most of the teachers in their study did not appear to be optimistic about the achievement of the objectives in the curriculum. In the 2010 Primary English Curriculum, it was suggested that evaluation should be based on the general objectives and requirements at the respective levels proposed in the curriculum, focussing on students' communicative competence in language use including four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It suggested alternate evaluation techniques such as teachers' observation and feedback through the study year. Assessment should be varied, including both oral and written tests.

Language-in-education policy summary

This brief overview of the seven policy areas that comprise Kaplan and Baldauf's (2003) language-in-education framework illustrates the role that English plays in Vietnamese education and raises a number of implementation issues that have arisen in primary schools over the past few years in this context. In the next section, key elements of these issues are explored in a case study of the implementation of the new English curriculum in two schools in Hanoi.

The new directive for primary school English that was issued in August 2010 has not yet been studied to document the process of its implementation in different contexts. Kaplan and Baldauf (2005, p. 1014) have argued that language policy success 'depend[s] largely on policy decisions related to the teachers, the course of study, and the materials and the resources to be made available'. As a consequence, the focus of this study is on issues relating to these aspects of the policy goals using data from two Hanoi primary schools, one private and the other public, as a way of shedding light on the current EFL teaching practices at the primary school level.

Research design

The research was conducted as an exploratory case study on the August 2010 pilot EFL policy as implemented in two primary schools located in Hanoi. One private school and one public school were chosen for investigation as they have different approaches to the implementation of the new curriculum policy. School A is a private school established in 2006, enrolling 2000 students. The school teaches English from Grades 1 to 5. The school has a special EFL advisor, who is a senior lecturer in TESOL, supervising all the professional activities of the teachers and providing advice to the school principal. School B is a long-established public school that teaches English starting in Grade 3. This school is committed to implementing the Pilot Curriculum Policy 2010. The principal is in charge of all the professional activities of the teachers. A qualitative research approach was selected to explore and describe EFL teachers' and supervisors' experiences and perceptions (Cresswell, 2003) as they implemented this new language policy, drawing on Kaplan and Baldauf's (2003, 2005) framework and description of language-in-education planning policy goals discussed in the previous sections.

Data were collected from multiple sources to provide triangulation, including classroom observations and four 45 min focus group interviews that were conducted with English

teachers (two focus group interviews at each of the two Hanoi schools, each group consisting of three to five participants) as well as two individual interviews with the principal (public school) and the EFL advisor (private school) on how they implemented the EFL policy for English primary education. The participants were involved in the data collection process on a voluntary basis. The researcher also observed, took notes on the main features, and video recorded 16 lessons (eight 40 min lessons at the private school and eight 40 min lessons at the public school).

Data analysis followed an iterative process employed in qualitative research where data collection and analysis are continuously revised and refocussed based on emergent themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Relevant sections were identified during the evaluation of text, the contents were sorted into categories based on the research categories, and the emergent issues were further defined within each category.

Findings

The interviews were designed to obtain information on how the participants perceived the implementation of the English language education policy in their schools. The following themes emerged from the interviews with the teachers and the principal/advisor and from the lesson observations. In general, these have been structured around the issues of language policy implementation discussed previously in this paper.

Desire for teaching English at primary education

All the participants interviewed, teachers and managers, agreed on the necessity and the importance of teaching English at primary schools. Some of them further stated the reasons for this, which included demand from parents, the benefits of learning English at a younger age, and building up motivation for pupils to communicate with foreigners. The following quotes illustrate some of the popular themes suggested by the participants:

> I think it is necessary and important to be teaching English at primary schools.
> English is important language for communication with foreigners.
> Pupils can communicate better and pronounce English better if they learn earlier.

One teacher, with whom other teachers at the private school agreed, claimed that most of the parents at their school might want their children to study abroad in the future. Thus, there is a strong demand from parents to teach their children a high standard of English. At their school, English is introduced from Grade 1 (Grades 1 and 2 have six periods per week and Grades 3–5 have seven periods per week for a 35-week school year). Regarding this issue, the principal in the public school stated that they wanted to teach English from Grade 1, as he said that it benefited the students and there was demand from parents, but they could not afford it and there was little government encouragement of and support for the teaching of English in primary schools.

Teacher supply

All the teachers at the private school had satisfied the requirements for the teaching degrees required by the MOET for primary EFL teachers. The advisor added that her school set a high standard for their teachers. She said:

> We recruited only qualified teachers … only those who had a degree in EFL teaching with good results. We had several rounds for recruitment. First, we examined their degree; then we listened to their pronunciation. We think their pronunciation is very important and then we observed their lessons. I believe that they are competent teachers. We employed them on full-time contracts.

Many of the teachers interviewed were recent graduates from university or teacher training colleges with qualifications in English pedagogy. Many of them said that they enjoyed their jobs here even though they were not trained to teach English at a primary level. As one of them explained:

> At first, I did not apply for the job here. I applied at the secondary school. But when the recruitment committee observed my lessons, they suggested I teach here. I don't know why; maybe, they think my teaching methods are more suitable for teaching younger children. Now I think it was the right decision. I love my job here.

This statement presents interesting evidence of the teacher's passion for teaching English and her strong commitment to her school. Other teachers in the group also showed their agreement by nodding their heads and added further insights. Other private school teachers gave other reasons for teaching, including their love for children, the reasonable salary, their supportive and professional working environment, and their opportunities to interact with foreigners. Regarding the employment of native English teachers, the manager at the private school explained:

> We had some volunteer teachers; all of them have certificates in Education. They not only help us partly fill the shortage [of teachers], but also attract more parents who prefer that their children are taught by native speakers. These teachers were always assigned to teach phonetics, and the kids enjoyed it. At first, we observed their lessons and gave feedback on how to teach kids at our school. They were very cooperative and friendly. At the moment, we have four native English teachers.

With regard to teacher selection at the public school, most of the teachers interviewed were on casual contracts; only one had a permanent position. Since all of them had the required degree in EFL pedagogy, they also were able to teach English at different levels at other schools or centres. Most of them said that the pay was low in comparison with that at other language centres. Regarding the issue of recruiting teachers, the principal said:

> It is a problem for us. We can employ only one teacher on permanent contract while we have more than 35 classes. We need to employ more teachers, but we are sometimes unable to pay them at an appropriate level. We really want them to be committed to their job at our school, but it is really difficult, as we cannot pay them at the expected level.

The principal also reported that the teachers at his school had degrees in teaching English from a university or teacher training college; however, he did not examine whether their language proficiency met the requirement set by the MOET, which is equivalent to Level B2 of the CEF.

In-service education for teachers training

When asked about how they were prepared or trained to teach English at a primary level, all of the teachers at both schools agreed that they were not trained to be PEFLTs. They were

trained to teach English at secondary schools. Moreover, there was no subject on teaching primary English in their undergraduate programmes. Only a few of them who had graduated from the teacher training college said that they had studied related subjects such as psychology for primary students or methodology for teaching children. Even so, they reported that these subjects were general and not specific to the teaching of English. The teachers in all four focus groups agreed that they had learned how to teach English to primary students by themselves and from their colleagues. Some of the representative comments concerning their self-learning are as follows:

> I did not learn how to teach English to children at the university. I don't have any ideas on this. When coming to teach here, I had to study it by myself and go to the web to look for some ideas.
> Me, too. At first, I used the methodology used to teach adults. Later, I realised that it did not work well with the kids. They needed more motivation, games, and songs. I improved my teaching gradually.
> I learned from observing my colleagues' classes. They all had good ideas.

Overall, the feelings expressed by the teachers at both schools regarding opportunities for in-service teacher education, training, and/or development (in-service education for teachers (INSET)) reveal that they needed more opportunities to attend methodology workshops. Two of the teachers at the public school were sent to attend the workshop organised by the MOET, but they said that they did not have time to attend it regularly and did not feel motivated to do so, especially as the workshops were sometimes 'not well-organised and not context specific'. This view was supported by other teachers at the public school, some of whom described the training as 'a waste of time' and of 'little benefit'. Some teachers were reluctant to attend the training sessions as the timetable did not suit them or because they did not have time to attend. One of them said 'One day, I came to the place where the training workshop is supposed to be, but no one was there, and I lost my motivation.' They were not able to observe their colleagues teaching, and there was no training or any kind of INSET opportunities for them at their school. The public school teachers agreed with one teacher who said 'No, we don't have any opportunities to attend any workshops at school or receive any comments from experts in this area. We just teach what we think is right for the kids and strictly follow the textbook'. Referring to this issue, the public school principal elaborated:

> We always inform our teachers about the MOET workshops or any activities organised by the MOET, but we cannot force them to attend it. At school, we do not offer them any training opportunities, partly because we do not have any financial support to do so. I know that we should support them, but it is again very hard for us.

The INSET opportunities were more frequent and better organised in the private school. The teachers mentioned that they had had a chance to attend a 1-day orientation workshop organised by Oxford University Press to teach *Let's go*, the textbook used at the private school, but 'it is short and focussed on the use of the teaching materials'. Most of the private school teachers mentioned that they did not attend any workshops organised by the MOET or the British Council. However, they reported that they had opportunities to participate in workshops organised by their school on phonetics and grammar as well as to attend other conferences. In addition, they stated that their advisor, an expert in TESOL, sometimes observed and commented on their lessons and that they also

participated in weekly meetings with other teachers in the same group. The participating teachers said that they always observed other colleagues, shared their teaching experiences with one another, and had group meetings every week. Some were even sent abroad for some study tours and study exchanges. All of the private school teachers said that they valued the peer observation, sharing, and supportive environment at their school and the recognition of their work from the school and the parents. Some of them said:

> I think I can improve my teaching by constantly exchanging our ideas with our colleagues at the regular meetings.
> We have a sample lesson every month, and all teachers in that group work together to write the lesson plan. One teacher is assigned to teach that lesson while all of us (about 20 teachers) observe and then discuss the success of the lesson. I think it is very beneficial.

They had more opportunities to communicate with foreigners because their school employed some native English teachers from whom they learned a lot. There was significant evidence of regular peer observation. However, some of them said that they needed more professional development activities such as phonetics training and teaching methodology. Regarding this, the advisor at the private school, who is also their professional supervisor/advisor, added that she attended a lesson by each teacher every semester and provided feedback; she was thinking of organising more workshops in teaching methodology for them. The teachers reported that no incentives were offered to the PEFLTs by the government; this was especially true for the private school teachers.

Methods

All four groups commented on the methods they used to teach English to children, with differences between the public and private schools being evident in the types of comments made. Most of their comments were supported by the findings gleaned from the analysis of their lessons that were observed.

Regarding the methods used in class, all the private teachers used terminology such as ‘games, using visual aids, using the internet, interactive, communicative, facilitator, using songs, pair work, group work, learner-centred’. They reported that they tried to motivate the children to learn English and to build up the children’s confidence in communicating in English. They claimed that they focussed on oral and listening skills rather than on reading and writing. The teachers from the public school said that they tried to use a communicative approach, but they did not have enough time and the class was too crowded. They reported that they used visual aids and games to motivate their students.

In general, their classroom practices were reflected in what they said in the interviews, but with some contradictions. Teacher observations revealed that many of the teachers still used the traditional EFL audio-lingual methodology and followed the PPP (present–practise–produce) model, which, to some extent, limits the students’ interaction and communication as they have little chance to be exposed to more authentic situations (Table 2). However, the classroom atmosphere at the private school was very exciting, and the students were keen on learning when they participated in games and songs, which demonstrated the benefits of using these methods in teaching English to young children. The methodology at the public school revealed more problems in providing children with opportunities for more authentic communication (Table 1). In most of the lessons, the

teachers at the public school emphasised mastery of sentence patterns and words rather than simulating creative or real-world communicative use of language. In addition, student participation was not high as a result of infrequent use of some motivational techniques for teaching language to children, which, it should be noted, were being effectively explored by the private school teachers.

Materials

The two schools used different textbooks for teaching English. The private school used *Let's go*, while the public school used *Let's learn English*. All the teachers agreed that the textbooks currently being used at their school were suitable for teaching English and motivated students to learn English. The teachers at the public school stated that they followed the book strictly, while those at the private school indicated that they might use other supporting materials as well, such as materials from the school library or from the internet. However, the teachers at both the private and the public schools said that they believed that the textbook used at their school was their primary resource for teaching English. They did not have much say in the choice of textbook or other teaching materials, as revealed in the following teacher statements:

> I teach whatever I am assigned to teach. Of course, we don't have a choice when it comes to the textbook. This book has been used for a long time.
> Yes, we just teach it. I don't really care much about other available textbooks on the market. I teach English here; I have to use this book. I think it is a good book.
> I think the school made the right decision. This book is good although it is expensive.

Regarding the reasons for the choice of textbooks at the schools, the interview with the advisor at the private school revealed that the private school chose *Let's go!* because 'it is popularly used in the region and has a variety of supporting teaching aids for teachers'. In contrast, the public school chose the new book *Let's learn English* because their school was committed to pilot the Primary English Curriculum issued by the MOET in 2010. The principal at the public school added that the cost of the book was reasonable and recommended by the MOET.

The book *Let's go!* was valued by the teachers at the private school. They agreed that although there are some difficult sections for their pupils, the textbook *Let's go!* was child friendly, motivational, and easy to follow. Some of the representative quotes are as follows:

> *Let's go!* is a very good resource as it has teaching aids like flashcards, pictures, and posters. The book is motivating to children with colourful pictures and simple language. It is well-structured with clear instructions in each section, covering vocabulary, sentences, and drills to name a few. I used different English resources at other language centres, but this book includes everything in one lesson.
> I am happy with this set of books as its themes are simple and it offers a wide range of activities for kids.
> It is a good book, but there are some parts which are difficult, so we have to adapt it in accordance with our students' levels. All the teachers in our group work together to decide what should be changed and how to change it.

The teachers at the public school reported that *Let's learn English* was better than previous books, but that the teaching content was still difficult and they could not finish all the lessons within the allotted time. All of the teachers reported that it took them time and effort to conduct the lesson using this textbook. Some comments about this are as follows:

Table 2. Major features[a] of primary lessons observed in private and public schools.

Major features	Teachers' lessons at the private school	Teachers' lessons at the public school
Language use in the class	Both English and Vietnamese. Active use of English in giving instructions. Most of the pupils understood the English instruction	Classes were largely taught in Vietnamese, with little use of the target language
Teachers' pronunciation	Most of the teachers have good pronunciation	Few teachers have good pronunciation
Teachers' role in the class	*Teacher is the authority in class and provides modelling and controls direction and pace* *Teacher translated all new words and encouraged students to provide Vietnamese equivalent*	*Teacher is the authority in class and provides modelling*; *teacher controls direction and pace* *Teacher translated all new words and encouraged students to provide Vietnamese equivalent*
Classroom organisation	*Teacher-fronted class, no changes in class organisation. Children sit in rows facing the teachers*	*Teacher-fronted class, no changes in class organisation. Children sit in rows facing the teachers*
Student participation	Students were active in participating in activities. Students had the opportunity to engage in communication, involving processes such as guessing words in context and information sharing Strong student participation, especially in games. They know all the instructions in English and are motivated to participate in the games (such as Rock, Paper, Scissors)	Students had little or no chance to engage in communication. Most of the students were passive in participating in class activities Good student participation for some students; uneven class participation overall
Classroom environment	Motivating	Less motivating

(*Continued*)

Table 2. Continued.

Major features	Teachers' lessons at the private school	Teachers' lessons at the public school
Use of activities	Extensive use of games and songs. Varied activities: pair work, group work, demonstrations	Little use of games, songs. Few pair work activities, no group work
	Frequent use of choral and whole class drilling	*Drilling is a central technique. Drills for mimicry and memorisation are used*
	An emphasis on accurate pronunciation	*An emphasis on accurate pronunciation*
	Frequent mechanical practice and little meaningful practice and communicative practice. For example, repetition drills and substitution drills designed to practise use of particular items were used, while there was little communicative practice (e.g. asking about what they like or dislike).	Mechanical practice, very little meaningful practice, almost no communicative practice
	Few links made between textbook language and real-life language use. Students sometimes had chances to make their own sentences	No links made between textbook language and real-life language use. Students had almost no chance to use the pattern freely
Giving feedback	*Mistakes were not tolerated*; *the teachers always corrected mistakes immediately*	*Mistakes were not tolerated*; *the teachers always corrected mistakes immediately*
Focus on forms	*Explicit attention to language patterns*	*Explicit attention to language patterns*
	Structural patterns are mostly taught using repetitive drills	*Structural patterns are mostly taught using repetitive drills*
Teaching aids	There is much use of tapes and visual aids	Tapes were used, but most of the time, the students listened to the teacher and repeated what was said. Visuals aids were sometimes used
	Students could use computers and access internet	

[a]Italics show the common features across the two schools.

> It took me a lot of time to prepare the lesson. You know, we have a lot of students in the class. Sometimes, we could not finish the lesson if I followed the suggested activities in the book. There are some difficult sections. I don't think the children understand as well at our school, as they do not start learning English until Year 3.

Discussion

The MOET documents and decisions about the curriculum provide the social, economic, and educational rational for teaching English in primary schools in Vietnam, while the findings from interviews show that the implementers of the policy, namely the teachers and managers who understand language learning, have reached a consensus that the early introduction of English at the primary school level is necessary. Consistent with trends and practices in other countries in Asia, and with previous findings (Hayes, 2008c; Moon, 2005) on the demand from community for the introduction of English at the primary level in urban areas, the study's findings confirm the widespread support for the introduction of English into primary schools in Vietnam. Moreover, more privileged families who send their children to private schools like the one in this study contribute to the continuing spread of early English education in the society as they believe that their needs are being met through private schools where the teachers see the importance of quality English education provision. Thus, the attitudes and actions of community members bring about changes in practice. However, such changes cause inconsistencies in the provision of English education throughout the country and may lead to inequalities in education as pupils from public schools or from more rural areas may not have opportunity to access English education. This finding is consistent with other studies (e.g. Chen, 2011; Li, 2007) in the region that show that there is great desire from the members of society for early English instruction through the educational system despite insufficient conditions for success.

The introduction of English teaching to primary pupils has always been problematic due to a shortage of teachers with appropriate skills (Cameron, 2003) and lack of opportunities for those teachers to receive professional development (McLachlan, 2009; Moon, 2009). The shortage of qualified primary English teachers is a serious problem in many Asian countries, including at least Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and Vietnam is no exception. As the findings from this case study show, teacher supply is a major challenge for public schools working with limited quotas for permanent teachers, not to mention limited resources and a reward system that makes retaining teachers difficult. The findings from the interviews with teachers and principals provide a partial explanation for this issue. It was reported that there was only a limited funding quota for English teachers at primary schools; thus, the public primary school had to hire English teachers on contract. This meant that their pay and motivation were low, and they were not committed to the school creating an obstacle to improving the practice of EFL teaching and learning. The need for an adequate teacher supply to meet new language policies is supported by other studies both in Vietnam (Hayes, 2008b; Moon, 2005) and in other polities (e.g. Chodijah, 2008; Hamid, 2010; Li, 2010; McLachlan, 2009).

The situation seems to be better at the private school where the school has the financial resources to employ and adequately pay qualified teachers who are committed to their jobs. The findings also revealed a positive change in teacher recruitment. At least in the two public and private schools studied, all the teachers satisfied the MOET requirements for certification, although the standard of language skills and the need for primary-focussed teaching practice were problems for public school teachers. The differences in teacher

recruitment and supply at the two schools showed how important adequate financial resources are for language-in-education programmes and their management mechanisms. Sufficient funding has been shown to be one of the largest influences on whether, or to what degree, the objectives of the new policy are attained.

In addition, the findings show that quality INSET training opportunities are needed at both private and public schools. While the private school was aware of this issue and demonstrated a willingness to invest in organising INSET training for teachers, the public school was largely dependent on MOET provision. Moon (2009) argued that this situation might change when the MOET issued a new curriculum policy, and yet when the pilot English curriculum policy was issued in August 2010, the teachers still reported that they lacked opportunities to attend training sessions. Although the situation of INSET at the private school is more promising, the findings emphasise the need for the MOET to provide more high-quality, well-structured INSET opportunities related to primary English education. Once again, the findings stress that the teachers, who are the implementers of the policy, were not prepared for the changes in language policy. This is a dilemma seen in most countries introducing English at the primary school level (Baldauf et al., 2010).

A contrasting picture of teacher professional development activities emerges from the findings. Although teachers at both schools desired more INSET training, the notion of organising in-service development in the form of class observations, seminars, workshops, or even informal talks to give colleagues from the same working environment the opportunity to exchange ideas, share experiences, and innovations was lacking at the public school. This observation supports Pham's (2001) argument that EFL teachers in Vietnam tend not to develop and practise habits of collegiality. The idea of learning from colleagues through professional development activities such as sharing, reflection, and collaboration among peers is missing from the lives of most EFL teachers who seem to work in isolation from one another (Ha, 2003; Le, 2007; Le & Do, in press). According to Gemmell (2003), 'teachers who work in isolation often resort to familiar methods rather than approaching concerns from a problem-solving perspective in attempting to meet the diverse instructional needs of today's students' (p. 10). In contrast, the working environment at the private school was reported to be collaborative and supportive. The teachers had opportunities to observe their colleagues and engage in professional development activities, many of which were developed using in-house resources.

Findings from the study reveal that the teaching methods at the private school seem to be more motivational than those at the public school. The teachers at the private school used varied activities and encouraged strong participation from the students, thereby creating a motivating environment and increasing students' confidence in using English. This environment also can be attributed to teachers' collaborative INSET activities as well as to the school's investment in teaching and learning facilities. While there were differences between the two types of schools regarding their teaching practices, the main features of the classes observed at both schools reflected traditional approaches to teaching English to adults rather than to children and a lack of communicative activities. This finding is consistent with a number of previous studies (e.g. Hayes, 2008c; Le & Do, in press; Moon, 2009), which indicate that since the introduction of English teaching at the primary level in the 1990s, primary teaching methodology, characterised by dominant teacher-fronted classes, rote learning, and whole class drills, has not changed. Thus, teaching practices in schools are still in sharp contrast to the suggested methodology found in the new curriculum policy (2010). This outcome is partially a result of the lack of changes in teacher training and teachers' beliefs in teaching English to children since Decision No. 50/2003 QD-BGD

& DT has been issued on 30 October 2003. Most primary English teachers continue to receive secondary level English training. Moon (2009, p. 328) claims that 'the long term impact of secondary language specialists teaching primary English has not been formally researched, but it may well affect children's future motivation and attitudes to English'. Moreover, teachers seem to associate effective teaching methods for children with the use of games and songs, but these do not provide the right conditions 'to develop children's ability to communicate and to produce novel utterances rather than just reproducing memorised chunks' (Moon, 2009, p. 316). Apart from proficiency in English, Moon (2009) argues that the teachers' ability to use appropriate methods for teaching and knowledge of children's mental development and language development are also critical in successfully implementing the language policy. Thus, together with language proficiency enhancement, changing teachers' beliefs that underpin their practice and improving teachers' knowledge are important in implementing a new policy or an education innovation (Fullan, 2007; Wang, 2002).

In addition to the issues of teachers and teaching methodology, teaching material, particularly the textbook they are using, is one of the critical factors that influence the way teachers at the public and the private school teach. The pilot English curriculum issued in August 2010 indicates that apart from the textbook (students' book, teachers' book, and cassette/CD), teachers are encouraged to use other approved materials. According to the public school principal in this study, the textbook *Let's learn English* is currently being used by most of the public primary schools. Although participants recognised the innovations found in the new textbook, they claimed that it is overloaded with too many new initiatives that are introduced in too short a time, making it difficult for teachers to cover everything in the text. Thus, the text does not contribute to improving teaching practice at the primary school level, confirming the opinions of several researchers that the textbook's underlying approach to teaching has not really changed (Grassick, 2006; Jarvis, 2007; Moon, 2009). The findings of this research tend to suggest that the adult-oriented teaching methods for primary students found at the public school were influenced by the current textbook. Methods that were more suited to early language learning at the private school could be attributed in part to the use of the textbook *Let's go* that is reported to be more child friendly but very expensive and not specifically related to the Vietnamese context (Grassick, 2006; Moon, 2005). Regarding this issue, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, p. 134) argue that 'language-in-education planning must guarantee that the materials to be used are consonant with the methodology, provide authentic language, and are also consonant with the expectations of teachers'. The teaching materials, which tend to serve as a syllabus, need to be further evaluated as there seems to have been little change to the teaching methodology in primary EFL education, especially in public school where the investment of both physical and human resources is limited.

Conclusions

Beyond the variation found in the implementation of English education at two types of primary schools, this exploratory case study suggests that a number of the language planning issues that have been raised previously (Hayes, 2008b; Moon, 2005; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2007), that is, those of teacher supply, methods, materials, training, and professional development, remain largely unresolved, thereby hindering the effectiveness of the English language policy implementation.

The findings reveal discrepancies between government policies and what happens in practice. This is especially apparent at the public school where teacher supply appears to

be inadequate. Moreover, the responsibility for teaching English is often perceived as a school responsibility rather than as a problem to be solved by the system. The research reiterates the need for an increase in the number of institutions offering teacher education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels with a specialisation in primary English teaching. Governments should be prepared to offer incentives to the PEFLTs. In terms of teacher supply, apart from a more rewarding system for primary teachers, the strategy to recruit volunteer native speaking teachers could be one solution to improve the quality of English teaching at the primary level, as is the case at the private school investigated in this study.

In terms of possible solutions to the issues discussed in this paper, a greater emphasis on and funding for training are required at the government level, in universities, and in schools. Educational systems need to provide, in addition to subsidised pre-service training and adequate financial rewards, high-quality in-service training to permit teachers to develop and maintain their level of proficiency. INSET training needs to be designed to upgrade teachers' skills and to acclimatise them to their surrounding teaching environment. More quality structured training is needed, encompassing both language skills and language teaching methodology appropriate to individual year groups. Furthermore, teachers should not be expected to undergo intensive training of their own volition. Time off and funding for training are necessary to ensure the teachers' motivation to attend training workshops, and in-service opportunities could include travel to areas where the target language is natively spoken to permit teachers to retool their skills. Identifying, training, and maintaining a cadre of skilled language teachers are the major objectives in language-in-education planning. To ensure that this occurs, each school should be expected to organise its own professional development activities, making use of its own in-house learning resources. Peer observation and regular professional meetings can be seen as appropriate strategies to utilise the in-house resources for teacher development.

The need to improve the quality of in-service and pre-service training for PEFLTS is a critical factor in improving the current teaching and learning situation in Vietnam and in permitting the flexibility to use a variety of textbooks and teaching materials. As Spolsky (2004) has argued, '[e]ven where there is a formal, written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed nor consistent' (p. 8). Thus, it remains to be seen whether sufficient quality can be developed within the Vietnamese educational system to ensure the positive impact of the new English language implementation. There need to be adequate training, funding, and resources to make this policy a reality.

Much work is needed to improve the current situation, as revealed by the study, even though the study is limited to an examination of the implementation of English language policy in two primary schools in one location in Vietnam. The issues of teachers and resources seem to be critical in improving the situation. Currently, the MOET has made a significant investment in changing the educational system including changes to the curriculum and designing new textbooks; yet the issues of teachers and teacher training and resource provision should be given more emphasis as the research indicates that the inconsistencies in the implementation of the policy between the two types of schools are largely the result of training and resource provision.

The extent to which this study represents the issues needing attention in primary English education is not clear and so a wider scale would be necessary for a full understanding of the primary EFL education situation throughout the country. The practice of language policy implementation in Vietnam still appears to be more likely to be based on opinion than on reliable research evidence. The study suggests that more implementation action is needed in Vietnam and in other South East and East Asia where most of the polities 'are investing considerable resources in providing English, often at the expense of other

aspects of the curriculum, but the evidence suggests that these resources are not achieving the instructional goals desired' (Qi, 2009, p. 119).

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Linguistic capital: continuity and change in educational language polices for South Asians in Hong Kong primary schools

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Language-in-education policies within post-colonization, nationalism, and globalization are currently key concerns of the sociology of language as they impact language teaching and learning in multilingual contexts. Despite these concerns, studies of educational language policies for ethnic minorities, in this case, those of South Asians in Hong Kong, are rare. This paper looks at colonial and post-colonial language policies in education with an eye to shedding light on continuity and change of linguistic capital for this group. Given the complexity, contextuality, complicity, complementarity, and continuity of the approach, the research analyzes the influences of educational language policies concerning South Asians, especially at primary school level, in pre- and post-colonial times. It argues that while English linguistic capital predominates during both pre- and post-colonial periods, this predominant status has begun to be shared by Cantonese, which has emerged as the 'high' language in post-handover Hong Kong and forms the main barrier for South Asians to learn Chinese as a second language to enable upward mobility in Hong Kong society.

Introduction

Equity of education for South Asian minorities in Hong Kong has become increasingly salient due to the enactment of the Hong Kong Race Discrimination Ordinance in July 2008 and new educational language policies that have impacted these ethnic minority groups disproportionately. Post-colonial Hong Kong is faced with a highly multilingual and ethnically diverse population. In the 2006 census, the population of Hong Kong was 6,864,346 people, 95% of whom were ethnic Chinese. Of the 5% of non-Chinese, significant numbers are South Asians, including 112,453 Filipinos (1.64% of the population), 87,840 Indonesians (1.28%), 20,444 Indians (0.3%), 15,950 Nepalese (0.23%), 11,900 Thais (0.17%), 11,111 Pakistanis (0.16%), and people from other South Asian countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. These population figures indicate that language policy in Hong Kong is moving swiftly from diglossic bilingualism to 'biliteracy and trilingualism' (Hu, 2007; Poon, 2004, 2010). In the colonial period of British rule, language policy was diglossic, with English being treated as the

'high' language, while Cantonese, the widely spoken local language in Hong Kong, was a low-status subordinate language. Up until 1998, the majority of schools in Hong Kong used English as the medium of instruction. One of the major changes after the handover of sovereignty to China in 1997 was the biliterate and trilingual (*liangwen sanyu*) language policy which aimed to balance the status of English, Cantonese, and Putonghua (the national spoken language in China) (Hu, 2007, p. 85). This policy change is in accordance with the 'mother tongue' education policy, which wrongly assumes that Hong Kong students all share the same mother tongue (Cantonese). The shift has inadvertently impacted South Asian ethnic minorities, whose limited mastery of Chinese language (Cantonese as the spoken form and traditional Chinese characters for the written form) prevents them from obtaining academic advancement and upward social mobility (Gao & Shum, 2010).

Language policy usually has 'a social, political, and/or economic orientation' (Poon, 2000, p. 116). This analysis of educational language policies examines certain politically and economically driven language policy practices in pre- and post-colonial Hong Kong. The aim of the analysis is to explore how politics and economics shape language-in-education policies in Hong Kong and how and why certain types of linguistic capital continue or change over time, especially those influencing language-in-education policies and planning for South Asian primary school students during the transition of political power in Hong Kong.

Language as symbolic capital: complexity, contextuality, complicity, complementarity, and continuity

Language as a type of capital symbolizes 'the underlying social, economic, and political struggles' (Tollefson, 2002, p. 5) occurring in a polity. The definition of language as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991) has as its basis three basic assumptions. First, capital is defined as a range of 'scarce goods and resources which lie at the heart of social relations' (Connolly, 1998, p. 106). Second, symbolic capital is attained and made legitimate through the acquisition of economic, cultural, and/or social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Third, social stratification and transformation dynamically occur through the struggle to attain such capital. According to Bourdieu (1991), the language of the dominant group defines the linguistic habitus which is embodied in the educational system, thereby preventing other languages from gaining legitimacy. Althusser (2006, p. 97) argued that the apparatus of the state functions most typically through schooling since no other state apparatus 'has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven'. Schooling is never socially and politically neutral. Language is power and language education is both the medium and the message (Fairclough, 1989), and together they contribute to the system of societal stratification beyond linguistic and cultural differences. It is on the basis of the political, cultural, and ideological contexts that language-in-education policy impacts the school and classroom language practice. Linguistic capital is gauged based on linguistic competency, that is, the ability to use a language that is likely to have attention paid to it and is recognized as acceptable. This implies that those with insufficient competency will be sidelined when it comes to social stratification and social mobility (Bourdieu, 1991). The possession of linguistic capital is associated with the acquisition and use of other forms of capital and eventually this empowers people possessing such capital in the struggle for social status and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991).

While observing language as a kind of symbolic capital, the interests of the dominant group are always served by different language policies. To unpack the nature of these

language policies, several important factors related to complexity, contextuality, complicity, complementarity, and continuity of linguistic capital need to be understood (Pennycook, 2000, p. 50). First, language policies ought to be understood in the light of the complexity of linguistic capital. Language is a type of capital that is deeply embedded in complex social, cultural, economic, and political contexts and is driven by an array of competing demands. Second, language policies exist in a particular context, so it is impossible to understand why language policies have been constructed in particular ways unless the possible implications of contextual attributes in the formation of linguistic capital are examined. Third, some aspects of linguistic capital embodied in language policies may, to a certain degree, be complementary with each other but complicit with the other forms of cultural and economic capital. And fourth, the formation of linguistic capital in the past has powerful carry-over effects on present capital formation, that is, there is a need to view current language policies within their historical contexts. In the following section, the continuity and transformation of language policies in the pre- and post-handover periods in Hong Kong are reviewed, especially as they relate to the South Asians residing there.

Transition of language policies for South Asians in Hong Kong

Language policy connected with linguistic capital signals the power of the dominant group. Prior to the handover in 1997, Hong Kong's language situation was accurately described as consisting of diglossic (Fishman, 1971) and superposed bilingualism (So, 1989). There was a hierarchy of language status, where English was universally seen as the prestige language in schools and in the work place, even though communication in society was mainly in Cantonese. During the 155-year period of British hegemonic government, English served as the main medium of instruction in education within the asymmetry of interaction situation and was used solely 'in executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government' (Hu, 2007, p. 86) from 1842 until 1974. In contrast, Cantonese was positioned as an inferior language and was never used in official domains. It was only in 1974 that Cantonese was made a co-official language. In colonial times, Hong Kong students were forced to learn through English from secondary education. English schools represented social and economic capital, while Chinese schools were 'prejudiced against as of low status' (Hu, 2007, p. 90). Prior to the 1970s, English was compulsory in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) taken at the end of secondary education. It mattered for people who wanted to work in the civil service (Poon, 2010).

The diglossic status of English as the high language produced the dynamics of cultural assimilation and facilitated British colonial governance (Schjerve, 2003, p. 5), within which, South Asians had the social status of British subjects. South Asians had begun to immigrate to Hong Kong in the 1840s when most of the Indian subcontinent was still under British colonial rule. First-generation South Asians were engaged mostly in police and British army-related jobs. They enjoyed a certain degree of social mobility in terms of work-related English. The shift in language policy to biliteracy and trilingualism has disproportionately affected them. Since the early 1990s, the economic, social, and political developments in Hong Kong have impacted the diglossia model. English still occupied a superior status with its increasing importance in international trade and commerce; however, it was no longer perceived as a colonial language but as an international language once Cantonese and Putonghua began to share the linguistic capital valued in this region.

The transition of political power in 1997 brought about a subsequent redistribution of linguistic capital, changing the status of Cantonese and Putonghua, while continuing the legitimacy of English. The dramatic change in language policies after the handover was

the initiation of a compulsory Chinese-medium instruction policy and a biliterate trilingual policy, both of which had a broadening impact in the field of not only education but also the working place (Poon, 2010, p. 45). The Firm Guidance issued by the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) government in April 2007 proposed a compulsory Chinese-medium instruction policy that is equally complicit with the system of domination. The Basic Law (Article 9) and the Official Languages Ordinance (Chapter 5) stipulated that English and Cantonese were both official languages of Hong Kong. The biliterate trilingual policy is focused on training Hong Kong students to be biliterate in Chinese and English and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua, and English. The changing language policies and the resultant language planning create changes in symbols of power that put people with trilingual skills in an advantageous position (Lai & Byram, 2003). Cantonese is closely associated with Hong Kong culture and identity. Given the growing contacts with market-economics-driven China, Putonghua has acquired instrumental and integrative value in many sectors of the society. Thus, the trilingual language policy is characterized as pragmatic, representing the features of the global, post-colonialized, and internationalized regions (Hu, 2007). Officially, English, Cantonese, and Putonghua are all legal languages, but the status of the languages' use in official matters has shifted. English has been 'stripped as the language of the ruling class', while Cantonese has replaced English 'as the regular and formal language in civic matters' (Hu, 2007, p. 88).

The politically and economically driven language policy has extended into every aspect of the society, which has created socio-economic costs for South Asians. The local working place has been segmented by the requirements for the use of the three languages. Fluent English, Cantonese, and Putonghua are all required for people in the civil service. Due to their deficiency in Cantonese and Putonghua, second- and third-generation South Asians under China's sovereignty have now lost access to civil service jobs that their predecessors had (Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005). A survey of Hong Kong's ethnic minorities commissioned by the Home Affairs Bureau (2000) shows that only an average of 49.9% of ethnic minorities claimed to be able to speak Cantonese, while an average of 87.9% were able to speak English. Although English is still required for highly valued occupations such as business, school teaching, and the law, contemporary South Asians are over-represented in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations such as construction and security, where basic Cantonese rather than English is a requirement. In a research report by City University of Hong Kong in 2003 on the employment situation of South Asians, it was observed that many South Asians worked in low-skilled or elementary occupations. Among the 402 South Asians aged between 21 and 40 years surveyed, only 40% worked full time, and approximately 40% were unemployed for nearly 8 months. These figures suggest that being adaptive to the mainstream society and acquiring upward mobility have become more difficult for contemporary South Asians (Shum, Gao, Tsung, & Ki, 2011).

Teaching Chinese as a second language in the primary education sector

Some 90.8% of the population in post-handover Hong Kong use Cantonese as their mother language, which creates the core difficulty for South Asian ethnic minorities from which all other difficulties follow (ICESCR Second Report, 2003). In a study with 200 Filipino, Indian, Nepalese, and Pakistani secondary school students, Ku et al. (2005) found that more than half of the students consider their future in Hong Kong not to be comparable with that of their local Chinese counterparts. Bourdieu (1991, p. 62) stated that all speakers will recognize the authorized and prestigious language but will have 'very unequal

knowledge of its usage'. Whether South Asians can acquire the necessary linguistic capital needed for advancement is, to a large extent, dependent upon Chinese language education, which poses challenges to second language acquisition for South Asian learners.

Admission and school provision

Hong Kong's education system has provided 9 years of free basic education at the primary and junior secondary levels since 1978, and since the 2008–2009 school year, free education has been extended to include senior secondary level to all eligible children, irrespective of their ethnic origin, sex, religion, socio-economic status, and ability (Education Bureau, 2010). Nevertheless, school choice for students from South Asian backgrounds is very limited (Gao & Shum, 2010). Almost all primary schools in the public sector (473 in total) use Chinese as the medium of instruction. The compulsory Chinese medium of instruction policy also raised the proportion of Chinese-medium secondary schools from 12% to 38% in 1994 and to 70% in 1998, leading to public protests by South Asians. On 3 June 2007, a small group of South Asian protesters marched demanding more schooling in English. This protest led to designated schools using English as the medium of instruction that provide special education resources to cater for the needs of South Asian children. In the 2010–2011 school year, there are 19 designated primary schools and 9 secondary schools. Most of the designated schools are lower band schools (schools in Hong Kong are banded from one to three, with three being the lowest in quality), confronting South Asian ethnic minorities with the problems of a low quality of education (Ku, Chan, Chan, & Lee, 2003). South Asian children's participation in these schools helps to compensate for the low student intake owing to the declining birth rate. This situation raises the question of how teaching quality and educational resources can be guaranteed in such schools (Gao, Park, Ki, & Tsung, 2011).

In order to overcome language barriers and to promote stronger social integration, the Hong Kong SAR government currently has suggested early incorporation of South Asian children into mainstream Chinese-medium schooling (Education Bureau, 2008). The Primary One Admission (POA) system, started in September 2004, allows South Asian children to choose mainstream primary schools in addition to designated schools. The new POA system assumes that South Asian children will enjoy the same right to be enrolled in mainstream primary schools as their Chinese counterparts. However, their participation in mainstream schools is less desirable on both the supply side and demand side. On the one hand, fewer South Asian children have attended kindergarten (86% compared with 94.7% of the population as a whole) (Society for Community Organization, 2004) and, when they have, it is mainly through English. Thus, they might not have been able to pick up Chinese so that they face various difficulties in adjusting to mainstream schools, most of which have limited experience in teaching non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students. On the other hand, South Asian parents are hesitant to opt for mainstream primary schools since under the central Chinese curriculum framework, there is no special support provided for South Asian students. As a result, in the 2004–2005 school year, there were 520 South Asian students enrolled in primary schools; of whom, only about 70 entered mainstream primary schools, and the figure dropped to less than 40 in the following year (Hong Kong Unison, 2006, p. 1).

Very few private schools have been established by South Asian ethnic associations in response to the shortage of school places for South Asian children (e.g. Umah International Primary School sponsored by the United Muslim Association of Hong Kong and Poinsettia Primary School with the support of the Hong Kong Gurkhas Association). The ethnic

schools, however, lack necessary classroom equipment and facilities and teach in English with Chinese only being treated as an additional language (Ku et al., 2005). For those South Asian students of higher social status, international schools provide an alternative which costs at least HK$70,000 (US$9300) a year per child (Chan, 2005; Hong Kong Unison, 2009). Undoubtedly, these fees would be too expensive for working-class families. The government implicitly pushes fee-paying South Asian children to international schools as part of an exclusion policy which assumes that the students would eventually return to their home countries for further education (Education Bureau, 2010). In fact, this is not the case for most third-generation South Asians in Hong Kong. This exclusion from admission has restricted their chances of going to higher band secondary schools and advancing to tertiary education (Ming Pao Weekly, 2003), eventually forcing many South Asian teenagers to enter the labor market early, where they mostly rely on the help of relatives and friends from their own country to find a job (White, 1994).

Chinese language curriculum

In primary education in Hong Kong, Chinese is a core subject along with English, Mathematics, and General Studies. In response to doubts about the appropriateness of the central Chinese language curriculum for NCS students, the Curriculum Development Council in November 2008 produced a supplementary guide recommending four approaches to delivering the Chinese curriculum applicable at both primary and secondary levels (Curriculum Development Council, 2008). The four approaches include: (1) immersion in Chinese lessons; (2) bridging/transitions; (3) learning Chinese as a second language (CSL); and (4) integrated use of the first three approaches. In the immersion approach, South Asian students are presumed to study together with Chinese-speaking students in schools, where remedial teaching programs are provided outside formal lessons in order to facilitate immersion in Chinese. However, it seems like Chinese language lessons for South Asian students in the designated English schools with an overwhelming number of students of South Asian origin cannot be regarded as immersion lessons since a rich Chinese language environment, as suggested by the approach, cannot be achieved. South Asian students in their daily school lives use either English as a lingua franca or else their mother languages. Even though South Asian students and local Chinese students are enrolled in the same schools, they are often streamed into different classrooms. In research by Ku et al. (2005), of 200 South Asian students, 43% seldom had communication with Chinese schoolmates, and around one-fifth (20.5%) felt that their Chinese schoolmates disliked them because of their race or ethnic origin. There is still visible racial segregation which causes a form of apartheid, in which, inter-group communication and interaction in the public space hardly happen. In addition, the small numbers of South Asian students enrolled in mainstream schools suffer because remedial programs do not always exist in those schools.

Chinese language learning in the designated schools, according to the supplementary guide, may be categorized as CSL (i.e. approach 3), and South Asian students are grouped with other CSL classmates who are learning Chinese at about the same level (Gao et al., 2011). Designated primary schools generally develop a school-based CSL curriculum oriented toward the acquisition of ‘Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills’ (Cummins, 1981), while academic acquisition in Chinese language, namely ‘Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency’, is not taught. This approach to CSL assumes that South Asian students are transient residents and do not aspire to stay in Hong Kong in the future. This is not applicable to most of the South Asian school students who were born in Hong Kong and demand the right to be educated and to work in their birthplace

(Loper, 2004). Thus, the question of how to guarantee quality, standardization, and consistency in the Chinese curriculum across the designated schools remains.

Since 2002, free 'Induction Programs' of up to 60 h have been offered by non-government organizations (NGOs) to those newly arrived NCS children who choose to enter mainstream schools directly. A full-time 6-month Initiation Program is provided by the Education Bureau for other children before they are formally placed into local schools. Nevertheless, the provisions were originally only for newly arrived children from Mainland China, whereas NCS South Asian children have restricted access. For example, in 2008, there was only one NGO – Christian Action – running two Induction Program centers for South Asian children, compared with nearly 50 centers run by a variety of NGOs for Mainland children (Education Bureau, 2010). Schools have also operated school-based bridging programs for South Asian children (approach 2), funded by a government School-based Support Scheme. Since 2004, some primary schools have begun to run a 4-week Summer Bridging Program for Primary 1 NCS entrants, and the summer program has been extended since 2007 to include NCS students proceeding to Primary 2, Primary 3, and Primary 4. It has been observed that the bridging/transition classes provided are apparently not successful. According to the Education Bureau (2008), only 32% of Primary 1 South Asian students participated in the summer transition course in 2004. Rather than simply blaming South Asian parents for their lack of motivation to send their children to bridging courses, however, more time and effort should perhaps be spent on securing the quality of courses or making full information accessible to South Asian families with a deficiency in Chinese (Loper, 2004).

Assessment and educational attainment

Examinations have a long history in the education system of Hong Kong, where many still regard testing as a necessary component of school education. A new 6-3-3-4 education structure, implemented in September 2009, introduced a system consisting of 6 years of primary, 3 years of junior secondary, 3 years senior secondary, and 4 years of university education (compared with the traditional 6 years of primary, 5 years of secondary, 2 years of university preparation, and 3 years of university system). In this new system, students in Primary 5 and Primary 6 or Senior Secondary 3 take territory-wide examinations to determine placement in higher levels of education. South Asian students studying in the designated primary schools generally have restricted chances of going to higher band secondary schools when sitting internal school assessments in Primary 5 and Primary 6. Many of them are directly promoted to the designated secondary schools under the 'through-train' model, in which, primary and secondary schools that have consistent pedagogy and curricula are linked (Shum et al., 2011).

South Asian students studying in mainstream Chinese-medium schools for more than 7 years are required to take the local examinations, the HKCEE and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination or the new Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) in Chinese on the completion of their secondary schooling (Education Bureau, 2010). These examinations assume that their target population has native-level command of Chinese and a high level of knowledge about Chinese language and culture. South Asian students are at a considerable disadvantage as the examination system cannot but be blind to the intricacies of culture and ethnicity (Gao et al., 2011). For those South Asians who went through their education in designated schools, the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) changed the Chinese examination syllabus in 2007 to allow students to sit for foreign Chinese examinations such as the General

Certificate in Education (GCE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). The GCSE (Chinese) examination has been administered by HKEAA since 2007 for NCS students who prefer to attain alternative qualifications in Chinese (Education Bureau, 2010). GCSE Chinese along with GCE and IGCSE has been accepted for consideration in admission to the local university institutions since 2008. These examinations instead of local Chinese examinations could appear as an easier option since they are regarded as relatively easier (Chinese is treated as a foreign language). However, foreign Chinese passing grades neither help nor ensure South Asian students' success in other HKCEE subjects (Gao et al., 2011). In the new 6-3-3-4 curriculum framework, Chinese becomes a core subject for all students, who will be required to take the new HKDSE public examination in 2012. It is hard to imagine that South Asian students would have the same Chinese language proficiency as their local counterparts in the examination and the transfer from the foreign Chinese examinations to the HKDSE examination is still under discussion. Less than 10% of Form 5 South Asian students are able to advance to Form 6, which provides the matriculation course (Hong Kong Unison, 2006). The 2001 Population Census showed that only 13.4% of ethnic minorities in the 19–24 age group were still in school, compared with 28% of the group as a whole.

Medium of instruction and teachers' attitude and competency

First language support combined with good second language programs is probably a more effective way through which language minority students can acquire second language competency. Johnson and Swain (1997) identified a number of core features of successful second language acquisition under an immersion model, one of them being overt support for the first language. However, what is glaringly missing in many CSL classrooms in designated primary and secondary schools is mother tongue teaching for South Asians (Gao & Shum, 2010). Except for Chinese and Chinese History, all subjects in the designated schools are taught in English. South Asian students have to be eager to improve their English because English is the medium of instruction, and results in other content subjects depend on English proficiency. The students enter the educational system with fluency in their home language (e.g. Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, or Urdu) and some proficiency in English, but during the course of schooling, their mother language is totally ignored (Gao et al., 2011). A justification for this exclusion policy could be the benefits of an assimilative model. Only a few designated schools teach South Asian languages as elective subjects in optional interest groups, and a few others hire South Asian class assistants for Chinese language classes (Gao & Shum, 2010). What is lacking, however, is provision for including South Asian languages in the educational system. As stated by the Education Bureau:

> Our public-sector schools will not adopt ethnic minority languages as the MOI [medium of instruction], for this would not be conducive to the learning of Chinese and English by ethnic minority students. Nor would it help their integration into the school and the wider community. That said, we put emphasis on teaching Chinese to ethnic minority children (irrespective of whether the school adopts Chinese or English as the MOI), and we have strengthened our support for schools/students in this regard. (Education Bureau, 2006)

Knowledge of South Asian languages is almost always lacking among Chinese teachers. Recent research in Hong Kong (Gao & Shum, 2010; Lee, 2006; Loper, 2004)

on South Asian students' Chinese language acquisition indicates that local teachers have not been adequately prepared to teach students from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. The lack of South Asian languages is the opposite of the ideal situation of having bilingual teachers who are familiar with the learners' first language (Johnson & Swain, 1997). Teachers lack the appropriate training in the cultural characteristics of different ethnicities and the skills and knowledge required for multicultural education (Gao & Shum, 2010). What makes the situation even more problematic is that Chinese language teaching does not take into account differences between first language acquisition and second language acquisition in terms of language structure, language environment, and stages of development. Chinese language teachers teach Chinese modeled on the way Chinese is taught to local Chinese students, with rote learning and dictation as the dominant modes of instruction (Tsung, Zhang, & Cruickshank, 2010). Hong Kong teachers are already overloaded and find it difficult to spend extra time and resources to design specific programs, curricula, and teaching materials in order to address the special and individual needs of second language learners.

The teachers also have low expectations of the capabilities of South Asian students, who are generally considered 'culturally/linguistically deficient' (Education Bureau, 2008). The academic underachievement of South Asians is anchored in their own sociocultural, economic, and linguistic environments, resulting in teachers holding highly ethnocentric perspectives (e.g. Minami & Ovando, 2004; Trueba, 1988). For example, a group of Primary 3 Chinese teachers in mainstream primary schools believe that their South Asian students' learning difficulties have something to do with family background and socio-economic status (Education Bureau, 2008). The negative stereotype held by local teachers was echoed in research by Ku et al. (2005), in which, they found 13% of 200 of the South Asian students involved thought that some of their teachers disliked them because of their race or ethnic origin, and 30% felt that their teachers disliked teaching ethnic minority students. These low expectations discourage teachers from providing well-suited teaching strategies and extra tutorials for students at risk of school failure. Such provision is particularly important since their parents' involvement in Chinese language education is very limited or totally missing (Lee, 2006; Shum et al., 2011).

Discussion and conclusion

Although a number of international agreements ensure the right to education and to non-discriminatory education, Hong Kong did not have a law until 2008 to include language as 'a prohibited discriminatory ground' in education (Loper, 2004, p. 33). Long-term racist attitudes toward South Asians promote monoculturalism and monolingualism in which there is no policy on teaching CSL and the implementation of language policies caters to the dominant culture, providing second-class treatment for South Asians of non-dominant cultures and languages (Shum et al., 2011). Historically, English achieved unquestioned status over other languages during the colonial period. That standing has not been challenged, even though the role of English has moved from a colonial language to an international language and its status as linguistic capital has been shared by Cantonese and Putonghua in the post-handover period. The continuity and change of linguistic capital are largely a response to the interaction of political and socio-economic forces. With the increasing value of Chinese language as a defining characteristic of citizenship and education, and of market participation since 1997, there have been a considerable number of political initiatives put in place in Hong Kong to address the issue of Chinese language education for the more than 20,000 South Asians aged 24 or below, who account for significant

numbers of the 2.4% of NCS students in the total population studying in Hong Kong's schools (Census and Statistics Department, 2006). The government provides on-site support, in collaboration with NGOs and local tertiary institutes, to designated primary and secondary schools that are thus able to: (1) develop school-based Chinese curricula tailor-made to South Asians' competency levels in Chinese; (2) allocate teaching resources to provide after-school or out-of-school Chinese language tutorials; (3) employ temporary bilingual teaching assistants who help the Chinese language learning of South Asians through the scaffolding in their first languages; (4) employ temporary bilingual adult assistants to facilitate the liaison between schools, teachers, and South Asian parents; and (5) become sensitive to South Asian religions and cultures in association with appropriate school arrangements to facilitate their religious activities (Hau, 2010). Nevertheless, without a language policy to support these CSL initiatives, Hong Kong is in a difficult position to ensure the availability of adequate resources and better access to quality education for South Asians in the current trilingual environment (English, Cantonese, and Putonghua). A possible promotion of multilingual aims and means in curricula, teaching practices, and assessment in language-in-education policy and practice is thus needed to enable South Asian students to advance educationally and socially in a 'multicultural school environment' (Banks, 1981, 1989).

In this regard, four issues are critical. First, ethnic minority groups need better access to school education, especially access to tertiary education. The relevant admission policies must be taken into account in order to enable South Asian minorities to have access to qualified schools and to put them in a relative advantaged position while competing with local Chinese. Second, putting South Asian children next to high-achieving ethnic Chinese children in the desegregated schools would not automatically produce benefits for the academic attainment of the South Asians. It seems like the remedial educational facilities offered by the government and the schools have not been enough to enable the disadvantaged to compete in the system. There is a need for policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers to make informed and critical decisions to develop an appropriate and standard curriculum design and a suitable assessment system that allows for better inclusion of underrepresented South Asian children in mainstream schools. Third, effective policy initiatives and educational programs for South Asian minority students must take the multicultural issues into account. First language support and all of the surrounding sociocultural processes such as racial or ethnic sensibility occurring through everyday life are central to second language acquisition (Thomas & Collier, 1997). The support and maintenance of languages and cultures of origin in multicultural education would permit South Asian groups to maintain their linguistic and cultural rights in an authentic bilingual or trilingual model in order to avoid the emergence of a segmented 'linguistic suicide' experienced by the third generation of South Asians (e.g. Ports & Zhou, 1993). Fourth, the guarantee of quality education for South Asians requires the provision of qualified teachers. Teachers' lack of familiarity with minority issues can prevent classroom teaching from the true realization of inclusion and desegregation. Teachers will need assistance and organizational support in redesigning the classroom task and evaluation structure necessary to alter the low status of South Asian students both in academic level and in social power.

'Linguicism', akin to racism and ethnicism (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, p. 16), is 'a sort of linguistically argued racism, a process by which an unequal division of power is produced and maintained' according to the languages that different groups speak. In order to manage ethnolinguistic diversity, an alteration of government priorities needs to abolish 'all discrimination based on socially defined ascribed characteristics, such as gender, race, or ethnicity' (Denitch, 1996, p. 203), and to promote Chinese language acquisition and academic

achievement by South Asian students, if 'multimodal representations' under the policy of 'education for all' are to be maintained in Hong Kong.

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Beyond the façade of language planning for Nepalese primary education: monolingual hangover, elitism and displacement of local languages?

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The recent political transformation of Nepal from a constitutional monarchy to a federal democratic republic and from a Hindu polity to a secular country has brought about some crucial changes in language planning. The Interim Constitution of Nepal has not only recognized the multilingual and multicultural reality of the country but has also enshrined a historic legal provision by guaranteeing basic education in one's first language. To translate this provision into practice, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has already piloted a first-language-based multilingual education (MLE) program and has prepared a national framework to implement the program as an integral part of the national education system. As per the policy, non-Nepali speaking children are taught in their first languages up to Grade 3 while simultaneously studying Nepali and English as subjects. At the same time, the MOE has given greater emphasis to English by allowing private and community-managed schools to introduce English as the medium of instruction and English as a subject from the early grades. That practice contradicts the MOE's most recent MLE policy for non-Nepali speaking children at the primary level. This article discusses the various contradictions and tries to unpack the motives behind present language planning for Nepalese primary schools.

Introduction

Nepalese society is characterized by its multilingual and multiethnic composition. The number of languages spoken within its borders exceeds the number of languages (92) reported in the report of Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2001). (See Figure 1 for a map of Nepal showing its major languages.) Lewis (2009) has recorded 126 languages spoken in Nepal, with the majority of languages deriving from the Tibeto-Burman family being on the verge of extinction. Yonjan-Tamang (2005) argues that 144 languages are spoken in Nepal. Whatever the exact number spoken in the polity may be, it is certain that the majority of languages other than Nepali are endangered. Toba, Toba and Rai (2005, p. 5) argue 'because of education, urbanization, migration and intermarriage, individuals

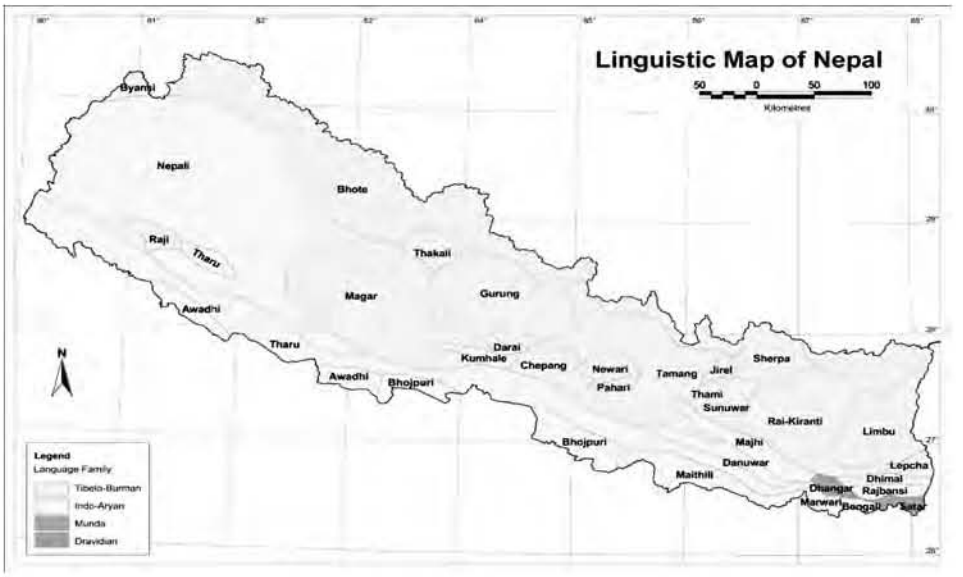

Figure 1. Major languages of Nepal (Gurung, 2006a; printed with permission from Himal Books).

moving to the urban areas for educational or professional motives go through a transitional stage of bilingualism with Nepali increasingly replacing their mother tongues'. The trend of not using the first languages (especially the ones spoken by indigenous ethnic groups), not only in wider social contexts but also at home, is increasing due to the dominant roles of Nepali and English in the mass media and in education (Eagle, 1999; Sonntag, 1995). A news report published in *The Himalayan Times* (2010a)[1] supports this phenomenon:

> According to Dillijang Maden of Taplejung, [the] Limbu language [one of the indigenous languages] is on the verge of extinction as the new generation hardly speaks it. 'Our children do not get a chance to use their mother tongue, as they are sent to school where Limbu language is not used', he said. (p. 5)

On the one hand, since the restoration of democracy in 1990, there has been a growing awareness among the indigenous tribal people of the need to preserve their first languages.[2] Based on interviews with people from 58 indigenous tribal organisations, Yadava (2007) concluded that 97% of the informants had shown positive attitudes toward using their first language as they would feel more prestigious while using their own languages. On the other hand, although there are constitutional provisions and education policies (as mentioned in the following sections) that guarantee the right to preserve one's languages and cultures and to receive education in one's first language at the primary level, the majority of languages other than Nepali (and English) are still not available through the educational system for various pragmatic reasons.

First, many of the languages lack an orthographic system though they have rich oral traditions, e.g. folk stories and songs. Sadly, as Yadava (2007, p. 6) reveals 'these oral traditions are disappearing with the growth of literacy and with an increased language shift'. He reports that only four indigenous tribal languages – *Tibetan, Newar, Limbu* and *Lepcha* – have their own scripts. Second, in addition to the Nepali language – the core part of Nepalese education – there is a growing trend to teach and learn English not only in

urban schools and among elites, as occurred before 1990, but also in rural schools and among poor families. With reference to the South Asian context, Farrell and Giri (2011, p.15) argue 'fluency in English … is fundamentally associated with the life chances of many individuals and the economic survival of many developing countries'. On the grounds of the global economic advantages of learning English, they further argue 'there is an understanding in the public rhetoric … that English is the language of the global market … and that English-literate workforce is a necessary precondition for effective participation in global economic activity' (p. 15). This view is reflected in Nepalese educational policy as well. Since 2003, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has introduced the teaching of English as a foreign language from Grade 1 in all public schools (changing the previous policy of teaching English from Grade 4), at the same time allowing English to be introduced both as the medium of instruction (MOI) and as a subject from the early grades in private schools. Moreover, with the MOE's policy of transferring the management of public schools to local communities, as promulgated in the *Seventh Amendment of Education Act* (2001), school management committees are given the responsibility for deciding on the MOI in schools. One of the most significant changes that the policy has brought about is that school management committees are gradually shifting from Nepali to English medium from the early grades to attract students to public schools. Third, most crucially, the MOE lacks the ability to make commitments and to undertake action plans to implement its own educational language polices.

Against that backdrop, this paper discusses language planning in Nepalese primary schools with a focus on multilingual education (MLE) along with English language teaching to examine the complexities that result from the present language planning practices. Practices of elitism and social exclusion in Nepalese society are briefly outlined, followed by an analysis of monolingual policies in education and issues of identity politics, in turn followed by a discussion of various aspects of language planning for the primary level presenting the views of various stakeholders, e.g. of teachers, of students and of parents collected through interviews over the span of 4 years, from 2007 to 2011. Where appropriate, reports published in various national newspapers are used to augment the discussion.

Elitism and social exclusion

Nepalese society has been significantly shaped by the traditional hierarchical caste system under the Hindu religious orthodoxy enshrined in the *Muluki Ain* (Law of the Land) – 1854

Table 1. Hierarchy of society in the *Muluki Ain* (Gurung, 2006b).

Hierarchy	Category	Social group
A	Wearers of Holy Cord (*Tagadharis*)	Parbate (Hill) upper castes, Newar Brahman, Terai Brahman, Newar upper caste
B	Non-enslavable alcohol drinkers (*Matawalis*)	Magar and Gurung (associated with Gorkhali Army), Sunuwar (Hinduized), Newar (non-Hindu)
C	Enslavable alcohol drinkers (*Matawalis*)	Bhote (Buddhist), Chepang, Kumal & Hayu (ethnic minorities), Tharu (Terai ethnic), Gharti (progeny of freed slaves)
D	Impure but touchable	Lower caste Newar, Muslim, Christian
E	Impure and untouchable	Parbate artisan castes (e.g. Damai, Kami), Newar scavenger castes

(Gurung, 2006b). The *Ain* divided the society into five hierarchies (Table 1) in which *Tagadharis* (Wearers of Holy Cord) had highest rank while *Pani Nachalnyas* (Untouchables) were of the lowest rank. Those *Tagadharis* were Parbate (Hill) upper castes (Brahmans and Chhetris), Newar Brahman (Deo Bhaju), Terai (low land) Brahmans and Newar Castes (e.g. Shrestha and Pradhan). *Matawalis* (Alcohol Drinkers) were assigned to the second and third hierarchies. Non-enslavable *Matawalis*, including ethnic groups associated with the Gorkhali army (e.g. Magar and Gurung), Hinduized Sunuwar and Newar peasants (e.g. Jyapu), had the second position whereas enslavable *Matawalis* like Hayu, Chepang and Kumal (ethnic minorities), Bhote (Buddhists), Tharu (Terai ethnic) and Gharti (progeny of freed slaves) had the third position in the hierarchy (Gurung, 2006b). *Pani nachalnya*, *Chhoi chhito halnu naparnya* (impure but touchable castes), referred to as 'water acceptable but requiring no purification after contact' (Gurung, 2006b, p. 12), including the lower caste Newars (e.g. Kasain, Dhobi, Kusule), Muslims (Musalmans) and Christians, were in the fourth hierarchy. Finally, *Pani nachalnya*, *Chhoi chhito halnu parnya* (Untouchable castes) like Kami (Parbate blacksmith), Sarki (Leather-worker), Damai (Parbate tailor/musicians) and Gaine (Parbate bard) were at the bottom of the hierarchy.

The root of elitism and social exclusion is historically associated with the caste-based Hindu social hierarchical order. Gurung (2006b) asserts that the *Ain* 'devised by the Parbate elites has been the mainspring of political inequality' (p. 15). He further contends that with the implementation of the *Ain* 'Hinduization became the *raison d'être* of the Nepalese state with its national identity rooted in the images of Parbate (Hill) high castes and their mother tongue (*Parbate/[Khas Kura*]/Nepali' (p. 11). The *Ain* legitimatized the domination of the Hill Brahmans and Chhetris by providing them with the highest position in the society while other ethnic groups, e.g. *Dalits* and *Madhesis*, were marginalized. Although the caste system was abolished in 1963, the legacy of elitism still continued through various discriminatory legal provisions (even after the restoration of democracy) perpetuating serious social inequality between high-caste people and indigenous nationalities (Janajatis), Dalits (untouchables) and Madhesis (people from the Northern plain area). Although the caste system was terminated during King Mahendra's Panchayat regime (1960–1990), Lawoti (2007, p. 24) asserts 'different native languages, religions and cultures were undermined through its assimilation policies, [and] the Panchayat promoted the upper-caste hill Hindu culture and values behind the façade of modernization and development'. From the language policy perspective, Panchayat was the darkest age as languages other than Nepali were banned not only in the classroom but also on the playground following the doctrine *ek desh*, *ek bhasha*, *ek dharma* (one nation, one language, one religion) adopted by the country at the time.

A people's movement in 1990 not only brought down the absolute role of monarchy politically but also ushered in various democratic rights like the right to free speech and the guarantee of individual fundamental rights. The most significant development derived from the democratic *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal* was that it recognized the country as 'multiethnic and multilingual' for the first time in the Nepalese history. However, various provisions enshrined in the 1990 constitution discriminated against *Janajatis*, *Dalits* and *Madhesis*; i.e. they had to face cultural, linguistic and political discrimination at different levels. Lawoti (2007, p. 24) states 'not only was the state declared Hindu by the constitution, but the native languages and different cultures of indigenous nationalities and Madhesis incurred unequal treatment from the state'. Moreover, the domination of the caste hill Hindu elites (CHHE) continued in the key policy-making position of the state. Neupane (2000) reports that CHHE, who constitute about 30% of the total population, occupied more than 70% of the legislative, judiciary, parliamentary and administrative

positions in 1999. Among the indigenous nationalities and other marginalized groups, who collectively constituted two-thirds of the total population, Newars (aboriginal people of the Kathmandu Valley) had a visible presence (15.2%) in decision-making positions in the state, but Dalits had no representation at all. Even though Newars had a better position economically, their language and culture were still being displaced from the public sphere. That displacement began with the subjugation of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768 by the Gorkhali King, Prithvi Narayan Shah, who imposed his own religion (Hindu) and language (*Khas Kura*/Nepali) on the Newars. Subsequently, many Newars adopted the Hindu religion and started speaking Nepali in public places (Sonntag, 2007). During the autocratic Rana regime (1846–1951) and King Mahendra's Panchayat regime (1960–1990), writing Newari (Nepal Bhasha) and its use in the courts and other administrative agencies was legally banned (Shrestha, 2007).

It seems that language planning has been one of the key components of social exclusion in Nepal. While *Dalits* have been excluded socio-economically and politically, *Janajatis* (including Newars) and *Madhesis* have been clearly excluded culturally and linguistically. The languages spoken by the *Janajatis* (e.g. Limbu, Rai, Newar, Gurung, Tamang) belong to the largest language family, the Tibeto-Burman language family, whereas the languages spoken by *Madhesis* (e.g. Maithili, Bhojpuri, Urdu) derive largely from the Indo-Aryan language family. The complexity of the caste-based hierarchal Nepalese society is clearly reflected in power relationship among languages. Since the unification of the country, Nepali became the language of elites or CHHE, who dominated the country for about two and half centuries, whereas other minority and indigenous languages were considered to be worthless, and the speakers of those languages have been excluded from the mainstream of society.

In April 2006, a 'People's Movement-II' (*Janaandolan-II*) not only put an end to the monarchy but also helped to bring the former rebels, the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists (CPN-M), into a peaceful and democratic political process by signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the then Seven Party Alliance[3] and the CPN-M on 21 November 2006. Addressing the aspirations of the people expressed during the movement, the House of Representatives 'declared Nepal to be a secular state, stripped the King (Gyanendra Bikram Shah) of power and removed him as commander of the army' (Eagle, 2008, p. 227). On 10 April 2008, the election of the Constituent Assembly was held in which three major parties – the CPN-M, the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) – won 220, 110 and 103 seats (out of 601), respectively. The remaining seats were won by the Madhes-based parties and other small parties. The Constituent Assembly declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic on 28 May 2008, and Dr Ram Baran Yadav was sworn in on 23 July 2008 as the first president.

One of the basic agendas of the Constituent Assembly is to restructure Nepal as an inclusive country with a focus on mainstreaming of marginalized groups (i.e. women, *Dalits, Madhesis* and indigenous nationalities). The Interim Constitution, in Article 33, clearly mentions that the State should be responsible:[4]

> To carry out an inclusive, democratic and progressive restructuring of the State by eliminating its existing form of centralized and unitary structure in order to address the problems related to women, Dalits, indigenous tribes, Madhesis, oppressed and minority communities and other disadvantaged groups, by eliminating class, caste, language, sex, culture, religion and regional discriminations.

The constitution is the harbinger for the development of inclusive language policies and for the promotion of ethnolinguistic identities that were in the past ignored. It has also guaranteed the right to get a basic education in one's first language. But without observing how

these provisions will be translated into practice, we cannot judge the intent of the State toward the formation of an inclusive language policy.

The Wood Commission and the monolingual hangover

A major legacy of Shah Kings and the century-long Rana regime (1846–1950) was that only Nepali was promoted as the official language. The Ranas opened a limited number of schools, mainly for their own family members, because they thought that, if the people acquired education, they would become aware of their rights and would oppose the autocracy. In those schools, they hired native English-speaking teachers and taught English to their children because the first Rana Prime Minister, Jung Bahadur Rana, had been influenced by the British educational system during his trip to Britain in 1850 (Eagle, 1999). Following the downfall of the Rana oligarchy in 1950, the State paid more attention to the formalization and universalization of education as a response to the peoples' aspirations for free formal education accessible to all. To this end, the first democratic government established the MOE and also formed a 20-member National Education Board (NEB) in 1952 with the aim to expand and systematize education throughout the country. In 1953, the NEB recommended the government form the Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC) (Awasthi, 2004). Accordingly, Dr Hugh B. Wood was appointed as the Educational Advisor to the NNEPC in 1954. The NNEPC, subsequently known as the Wood Commission, was a landmark in Nepalese history because for the first time a policy had been formulated to systematize education. The commission not only universalized primary education but it also set up a strong basis for the subsequent development of educational language policies (Caddell, 2002).

However, the commission could not 'capture the spirit of the political change in the country. […] In reality it failed to recognize the need for multilingual education' (Awasthi, 2011, p. 76). It was unfortunate that the commission fueled the one-language policy of the Panchayat by recommending only Nepali as the MOI in schools:

- The medium of instruction should be the national language [Nepali] in primary, middle, and higher educational institutions, because any language which cannot be made the lingua franca and which does not serve legal proceedings in court should not find a place. […] The use of the national language can bring about equality among all classes of people, can be an anchor for Nepalese nationality, and can be the main instrument for promoting literature.
- No languages [other than Nepali] should be taught, even optionally in primary school, because [only] a few children will need them and they would hinder the use of Nepali … and those who wish and need additional languages can learn them in the sixth grade. (NNEPC, 1956, p. 95)

The commission further stated that:

> […] it should be emphasised that, if Nepali is to become the true national language, then we must insist that its use be enforced in primary school. […] Local dialects and tongues other than standard Nepali should be vanished [banished] from the school and playground as early as possible in the life of the child. (NNEPC, 1956, p. 97)

As the report stated, not only indigenous languages but also English in primary schools was considered to be a hindrance for a narrow nationalism defined in terms of the Nepali

language. Thus, use of languages other than Nepali was not allowed even on the school playground because it was feared that it would weaken Nepalese nationalism and national unity. As a result, schools became a site where the 'elites', the 'privileged' and the 'high-caste' people could exercise their ideology and power through the Nepali MOI, whereas non-Nepali speaking children (especially the children representing the indigenous nationalities and Madhesi) lost their languages, their cultures and their identities. The Wood Commission also considered multilingualism to be a problem and a threat to the national identity. Awasthi (2011, p. 77) contends that the report 'proved to be a means of advocating the western ideology of monolingualism … [and] was an example of how a non-Nepali ideology was imported to transform Nepal into a monolingual nation-state'. Based on the recommendations of the commission, the curricula for various levels of education were designed, and textbooks were prepared, only in Nepali. Consequently, non-Nepali-speaking children were not motivated to go to school. Even if they attended school, they could not perform as well as the children from the Nepali speaking community could, thereby forcing them to leave schools (Awasthi, 2004). One striking issue which emerged was that, like the Ranas, the Panchayat rulers did not want the ordinary citizens to learn English, although they allowed missionaries and foreigners to run expensive English-medium schools where they could educate their children. This practice not only divided the society into two classes – rich and poor – but it also projected English as the primary symbol of elitism, wealth, power and privilege (Sonntag, 2003).

Nepal's identity as a 'multicultural and multilingual' country was first recognized only as recently as 1990, when the people's movement against absolute monarchy arose. The people raised their voices against the Nepali-only language policy and demanded a more inclusive multilingual policy. The 1990-Constituion states that 'the Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the language of the nation of Nepal and it shall be the official language' (Article 6.1). The constitution also recognized the existence of other languages stating 'all the languages spoken as mother tongues in the various parts of Nepal are also national languages' (Article 6.2). Commenting on this provision, Sonntag (2007, p. 210) argues that the constitution recognized Nepal as a 'multilingual country, but still gave prominence to Nepali over … other languages by designating the former as the official/state language and all other languages as national languages'. However, the constitution provided a legal foundation for the promotion of first languages by making a provision for *matribhasha shiksha* (mother-tongue education) at the primary level (Article 18.2) and by guaranteeing that all communities shall have the irrevocable right to preserve their cultures, scripts and languages (Article 26.2). However, since the implementation of these provisions was neglected (a matter discussed in the next section), it seemed that the constitutional provisions were only there as an appeasement for non-Nepali-speaking people (Hutt, 1991), and in practice constituted little more than a continuation of monolingual exclusionary language policy of the past (Sonntag, 2007).

Identity politics and language issue

Identity politics has become a driving force in Nepal after the *Janaandolan-II* (People's Movement-II) in April 2006. The previously excluded groups (i.e. *Janajatis*, *Dalits*, *Madhesis*, women and other marginalized people) united in order to make their voices heard to ensure their rights in the new constitution which is now being drafted by the Constituent Assembly.[5] Although there is as yet no concrete framework for the structure of federalism, the pressure is mounting, especially from *Janajatis*, to divide states on the basis of language and ethnicity (Lawoti, 2010). *Janajatis* have already started to agitate for this innovation by

forming various ethnic organizations in different parts of the country. For example, *Limbus* from the east, *Newars* from the Kathmandu Valley, *Gurungs* from the west, *Tamangs* from the center and *Madhesis* from the Terai have begun to demand respective *Limbuwan*, *Newa, Tamuwan, Tamasaling* and *Madhes* federal states. Language formed the most significant parameter for those proposed federal states. Those groups had also been demanding official recognition of their languages in education and in other government registers. However, as linguistic tribes do not occupy distinct geographical territories, states based on 'language and ethnicity alone could cause a number of complex problems, including the dislocation of large numbers people' (Eagle, 2008, p. 229). The issue of the Terai is slightly different from other places. The Madhes-based political parties in the Constituent Assembly have been demanding *ek madhes*, *ek pradesh* (one *Madhes*, one region) so that Hindi should be an official language and lingua franca in the Terai. But there are other indigenous communities, like the *Tharus*, who are demanding their own state (i.e. *Tharuhat*), claiming that they have their own linguistic and ethno-cultural identities in the Terai. In addition, it is interesting to see that most of the *Janajati* and *Madhesi* activists (most of them come from middle-class families) do not speak their first language and do not send their children to the schools where their first language is taught; rather they send their children to English-medium schools. This tradition, as Eagle (1999, p. 306) indicates, can also be 'viewed as a form of protest' against the Nepali monolingual policy in education.

At present, the issue of language has great political significance. Paramananda Jha, the first Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nepal, from *Madhesi Jana Adhikar Forum, Nepal*'[6] (Madhesi People's Rights Forum, Nepal) took his oath in Hindi on 23 July 2008. The whole nation was brought to a halt for more than a week due to strikes against his action. People chanted slogans saying that he ignored the linguistic identity of the nation by taking the oath in Hindi, the national language of India. Although the Supreme Court declared his oath in Hindi unconstitutional and ordered him to take one in Nepali, he refused to do so. To resolve this issue, the Legislative Parliament passed the seventh amendment to the Interim Constitution on 28 January 2010. The amendment allows the president, vice president, prime minister and other ministers to take the oath of office in their first language. On 7 February 2010, the vice president took a fresh oath in both Nepali and Maithili, his first language.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) clearly states that Nepal is a 'multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious, and multicultural nation' and the state 'shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these'. By giving recognition to all languages spoken in the state's territory, it has enshrined a provision that 'All the languages spoken as the mother tongues in Nepal are the national languages of Nepal'. The constitution also states that receiving basic education in one's mother tongue, and preserving and promoting one's language, script, culture, cultural civility and heritage are fundamental rights (Part 3, Article, 17). Following these provisions, the state's oldest newspaper, *Gorkhapatra*, has given space to 30 local languages to publish news and columns from the respective linguistic groups. Likewise, 19 different local languages have been introduced on local and national radio stations. However, there is a residue of the previous monolingual policy as only the Nepali language in Devanagari script is still considered to be the official language of Nepal (Yonjan-Tamang, 2009). Since there is lack of language policy coordination among various stakeholders like linguists, economists, educationalists and native speakers, and no clear plan for language planning implementation, there is a chance that these provisions in the constitution will not be functional (Phyak, 2007b).

First languages as a subject

Due to political changes and the growing awareness of people toward the value of their own languages, since 1990, people from various linguistic groups have been demanding education in their own language. Those people are also demanding the implementation of first-language education in schools. To address this issue, the MOE prepared a national primary level curriculum in which three languages – Nepali, English and a local language (a first language/mother tongue) can be taught as subjects from Grade 1. Among them, Nepali is given the highest priority as it is taught for eight periods a week (6 h). English enjoys second priority as it is taught for five periods a week (3.75 h), whereas the first language has the lowest priority as it is taught for only four periods a week (3 h) – half the number of periods allocated for Nepali, suggesting that the Nepali language still occupies a dominant place in the primary level curriculum. Table 2 presents the subjects that are specified in the national primary level curriculum (applicable for both private and public schools).

The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC, 2008, p. 4) has stipulated that the MOI for school education shall be Nepali, English or both languages. At the same time, it states that MOI shall operate as required:

- Primary education may be provided in the mother tongue [first language].
- Languages [as subjects] shall be taught in the language (i.e. English in English; Nepali in Nepali).

The provision is internally contradictory. On the one hand, it ignores the use of other languages while focussing on Nepali and English but, on the other hand, it loosely states the possibility of education in languages other than Nepali. It is also not clear in which contexts primary education may be provided in those languages, suggesting that the MOE is still reluctant to give local languages (other than Nepali) space in primary education. Although there is a provision for teaching languages other than Nepali as a subject, there are some notable challenges for the implementation of the provision. The rights that invoke the provision are not apparent. Regulations vaguely state that 'the mother tongue which is spoken by the majority of children in schools will be selected to be taught'

Table 2. Subjects for the primary level.

S. no.		Grades 1–3		Grades 4 and 5	
		Periods per week	Full marks	Periods per week	Full marks
1.	Nepali	8	100	8	100
2.	English	5	100	5	100
3.	Mathematics	6	100	6	100
4.	Social studies and creative arts	6	100	–	–
5.	Social studies	–	–	5	75
6.	Creative arts	–	–	3	25
7.	Science, health and physical education	5	100	–	–
8.	Science and environment	–	–	4	50
9.	Health and physical education	–	–	4	50
10.	Local subject/mother tongue	4	100	4	100

Source: CDC (2008).

(CDC, 2008, p. 4). The languages to be taught are decided upon by the school management committees that have to be approved by the District Education Office (DEO). In this connection, the CDC has already prepared textbooks in 18 different local languages. This initiation by the CDC is praiseworthy because it helps non-Nepali speaking children in their overall long-term educational development. However, there are other challenges for the implementation of the policy in practice as reflected in the following case study.

Shree Suryamukhi community primary school: a case study

Shree Suryamukhi, a primary school, situated at Tandi Village, was established in 1986, when the classes were conducted under a bamboo and straw shed. Now the school has one six-room building, but its condition, given the availability of furniture and other infrastructure, is not good. The school has about 200 students representing seven ethnic communities – Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Brahman, Chhetri, Newar and Satar (Phyak, 2007a). The majority of the students are Limbus, followed in number order by Rais and Brahmans. There are six teachers – three of them are paid by the DEO and three are paid by the school itself from funds collected from the community. Since 2000, following the introduction of the first-language education policy, the school management committee has decided to teach the Limbu language in the school as a subject. In this regard, the chairperson of school management committee said:

> The Limbu language has been introduced in the school with a great struggle in the District Education Office and even in the village. In the beginning, it was very difficult to convince all parents about the importance of teaching Limbu. Not only non-Limbus but also some Limbu parents were against the decision.

On a sad note, he revealed:

> Most non-Limbu parents (e.g., Brahmans, Chhetris and Newars) started sending their children to another school that was far from the community. They thought that teaching in the Limbu language would not help to make their children's future bright.

The chairperson's view clearly indicates that it is difficult to convince parents about the importance of teaching first language because they assume that knowledge of their first languages does not help their children to compete with others in the larger society where English and Nepali are dominantly used. Similarly, the Head Teacher of the school, who comes from a non-Limbu community, said:

> Mother tongue education [first language education] policy is a very good concept in our multilingual country. […] It helps children from minority languages to learn better. Children are excited to learn their own languages in the school. […] But we have many languages spoken in the community. It is very difficult to select one language to be taught in the school. Parents want their own languages to be taught. [He pointed to some practical issues.] Teaching of the mother tongue (the local language) as a subject has created problems. […] Children from the non-Limbu communities are not motivated to learn Limbu grammar, alphabet and words. […] For them, it is very difficult to communicate in Limbu.

With a view to observing the teaching-learning process in Limbu, and having received permission from the teacher, together with the Limbu language teacher from the same school, I entered the Grade 3 classroom. First, students greeted us in English, saying *good morning sir*. The teacher also greeted them in English. Then the teacher revised the

previous lesson in Nepali, asking the children to find the poem *Mangsewa* (worshiping god). When he was satisfied that they had found the text, asking them to follow him, he read the poem in Limbu. Although all Limbu students easily followed him with correct pronunciation, non-Limbu students read the poem without understanding what was written in the textbook. In most cases, they mispronounced the Limbu words; for example, *muksam* (spirit/will-power), *yapmi* (human being) and *chogangeo* (make me) were pronounced as *mukmam, yakmi* and *oangeo*, respectively, but these utterances do not have any meaning in Limbu.

After the classroom observation, the teacher told me that there is no training and materials to teach Limbu. He added that the DEO does not provide a separate teacher salary allocation for teaching Limbu. Thus, schools have either to hire a teacher from community-generated funds or to assign a teacher who can speak the first language selected to be taught from among the teachers working at the school. This situation indicates that the first-language education policy follows what Bamgbose (1991, p. 111) has called 'declaration-without-implementation' – the policy lacks a concrete planning and implementation strategies. In this sense, it seems only a sweetener given to non-Nepali speaking communities to appease their outcry against the long history of elite-dominated-one-language policy.

Toward MLE

Showing its commitment toward various international conventions[7] and the national constitutional provisions and policies,[8] the MOE has already piloted the MLE project – as a part of the Education for All (EFA)[9] program – in eight languages and in seven schools of six different districts as mentioned in Table 3. The MLE policy, which is different from the previous policy of teaching the first language as a subject in primary schools, is not simply teaching through and about more than two languages; it is about 'the use of L1 [first languages other than Nepali] as the primary MOI for the whole of primary school [education] while [the] L2 is introduced as a subject of study to prepare students for eventual transition to some academic subjects in [the] L2' (Ball, 2010, p. 18). Likewise, Skutnabb-Kangas and Mohanty (2009, p. 49) define MLE as 'the use of three or more [local] languages as languages of instruction, in subjects other than the languages themselves, at a single school in a multilingual community'. MLE is not only concerned with the teaching of one local language but also with using two or more local languages as the MOI in primary schools. The aim of MLE in Nepal is to help non-Nepali-speaking children learn through their first languages on the presumption that instruction in the first language at an early age not only fosters basic communication skills but also develops children's self-esteem (Benson, 2002).

The models of teaching and learning in the classroom vary from one MLE-piloted district to another. Table 3 presents the classroom features and models of MLE that have been piloted in different schools in Nepal.

In terms of the number of languages, monolingual (i.e. the use of one first language) and multilingual (i.e. the use of two or more first languages spoken by students in the school) models of MLE are in use. In four districts – Dhankuta, Rasuwa, Kanchanpur and Palpa – first languages are used as the MOI in Grades 1, 2 and 3 separately (mono grade) because the majority of teachers in the school can speak those languages and all the students come from the same linguistic background as well. In one district (Dhankuta), one teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English) in Athpahariya for one grade (grade teaching) because some teachers in the school cannot speak the students' first language (Department of Education [DOE], 2009). In three other districts – Rasuwa, Kanchanpur and Palpa – different

Table 3. Classroom features and models of MLE (Department of Education, 2009).

District/school	Classroom feature	Models of MT-MLE
Dhankuta Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School, Santang	Monolingual, Mono Grade, Grade Teaching	Athapaharia Rai both MOI and subject in Grades 1–3
Sunsari Sharada Primary School, Chahariya	Monolingual, Multi Grade, Subject Teaching	Uraw and Tharu/Maithili both MOI and subject
	Multilingual, Multi Grade, Grade Teaching	Uraw in a combined class of Grades 2 and 3 Tharu/Maithili and Nepali in a combined classes of Grades 2 and 3
Jhapa Rastriya Ekta Primary School, Kajali	Monolingual, Multi Grade, Grade Teaching	Sathal both MOI and subject and Rajbansi only MOI
	Multilingual, Multi Grade, Grade Teaching	Santhal in a combined class of Grades 1 and 2 Rajbansi and Nepali in a combined class of Grades 1 and 2 (half a day in Rajbansi and the second half in Nepali)
Palpa Nava Jagriti Primary School, Dhaireni	Monolingual, Mono Grade, Subject Teaching	Magar both MOI and subject in Grades 1–3
Kanchanpur Rastriya Primary School, Dekhtabhuli	Monolingual, Mono Grade, Subject Teaching	Rana Tharu both MOI and subject in Grades 1–3
Rasuwa Saraswati Primary School, Thade and Bhimsen Primary School, Thulobhaarkhu	Monolingual, Mono Grade, Subject Teaching	Tamang both MOI and subject in Grades 1–3

teachers teach different subjects (except Nepali and English) in children's first languages (Tamang, Rana Tharu and Magar, respectively) in one grade (subject teaching). Likewise, in Sunsari district, there are two models: only Uraw is used as the MOI (monolingual) for the combined classes of Grades 2 and 3 (multi-grade) where separate teachers teach different subjects (subject teaching), and Tharu/Maithili and Nepali (multilingual) are used as the MOI for the combined classes of Grades 2 and 3 (multi-grade) where one teacher teaches all subjects (grade teaching). In the case of Jhapa district, both monolingual (Santhal) and multilingual classes are conducted for the combined classes of Grades 1 and 2 where one teacher teaches all subjects (grade teaching).

The MLE program has received mixed responses during the pilot phase. The MLE policy was found to be more effective in those schools (e.g. Shree Deurali Lowe Secondary) where children come from monolingual backgrounds than in the multilingual schools. In a story published in the *Republica* national English daily, Bhattarai (2010) reports this information from one pilot school:

> Using mother tongue for education in a school in Chidipani-1, Dhairani, has inspired students, teachers and even parents. The Nava Jagriti Primary School [an MT-MLE pilot school], located

> in a Magar village, has breathed a new lease of life ever since starting to use [the] Magar language in education. The Magar students, who speak their mother tongue [first language] at home, are finding it easier to understand the textbooks after use of the language in classes. […] There were many absentees last year due to the students' inability to properly understand [the] Nepali language, but attendance has improved significantly after the change of language this session. (p. 2)

The news report also included opinions of various people including Gopi Krishna Acharya, the head teacher, who said, 'The students have opened up after being allowed to ask about confusions in [the] Magar language and hence there are more interactions in the classes'. Meena Thapa, a teacher, added, 'The students have become smarter [sic.] and the environment at the school has become friendlier due to the excitement of teachers and parents'.

This news report suggests that the MLE policy has helped non-Nepali speaking children to learn through their first languages, making the understanding of textbooks easier and promoting classroom interaction. Similar kinds of results have been reported from Rasuwa (Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009), Kanchanpur and Dhankuta (DOE, 2009) districts. It has been reported that teacher–students and teacher–parents interaction has increased, non-Nepali-speaking children have become more inquisitive, their performance has improved and the classroom has become more child-friendly after the implementation of MLE in schools. However, there are some challenges that have to be discussed because they are critical in facilitating meaningful implementation of the policy in the future.

The most crucial challenge arises because parents, teachers, children and other stakeholders still resist and remain suspicious of the sustainability and effectiveness of the policy. Some parents in Jhapa district have already suggested that the teaching of English along with Nepali should be given greater attention. In a personal conversation (7 January, 2011) with the author, an expert, who was involved in writing training manuals and materials and training teachers during the MLE pilot period, revealed that Rajbansi-speaking children in Jhapa district left the school when the program was introduced. She added that it is very difficult to educate both children and parents about the value of teaching through the first language because they are already attracted to English-medium schools. They believe that English is a key to the future welfare of their children and their first languages are not.

Although a few social workers and educated middle-class people have understood the value of first-language education, a majority of parents still emphasize teaching and learning through English (and Nepali). A different practical challenge concerns classroom management in schools where more than two first languages are spoken. In such schools, children from one linguistic background (e.g. Santhal in Jhapa and Uraw in Sunsari) are separated for combined classes of two grades and are taught all subjects by one or more teachers. Further exploration will be required to assess what students from one grade do and how they feel while students from another grade are being taught in the same classroom. What impact does such linguistic segregation have on students when they have to sit separately in the school although they come from the same community? Under another model, children from multilingual backgrounds are kept in combined classes of at least two grades and are taught by a single teacher using different first languages as well as Nepali in the same classroom. A slightly different question arises here: Whether teachers can teach effectively in all of the languages used by groups of children from the same village? This question suggests that there is a need to recruit multilingual teachers who have at least basic speaking, reading and writing skills in various languages spoken

in the community. Such teachers are not likely to exist; alternatively, extensive resources will have to be invested to produce multilingual teachers – an expenditure that may not be feasible in the complex Nepalese multilingual setting. Again, these issues require further study.

A noticeable challenge also lies in the development of learning and teaching materials for the MLE program. The policy suggests that schools should develop textbooks by including folk stories, indigenous knowledge, local religions, cultures, songs and poems in first languages in collaboration with local communities. For this purpose, teachers would have to explore various resources, take photographs, video record narratives from community members, compile materials and develop textbooks (Nurmela, 2009). Such a project would require research and curriculum and textbook development skills on the part of teachers – an area that has not been emphasized by the MOE. In addition, the majority of the local languages of Nepal do not have their own orthographies, impeding the translation of textbooks from Nepali into local languages. The option would be limited to using textbooks already translated by CDC. But translation from Nepali to those languages is complex due to linguistic and cultural differences among the languages.

Despite these challenges, based on the experiences and achievements from the pilot schools, the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2010) has already shown its commitment to implement the MLE policy as an integral part of the Nepalese educational system and has developed the following framework:

- Local mother tongues [first languages] will be the MOI for pre-primary education.
- The MOI for all subjects (except Nepali and English) shall be the local mother tongue up to Grade 3.
- Basic education in Grades 4 and 5 shall be bilingual in which the MOI for all subjects (except Nepali and English) shall be the mother tongue [first language] and a second language specified as official for use in a given community.
- In Grades 6 through 8 of basic education, the MOI shall be the chosen second language and the mother tongue [first language] but other languages may also be taught as subjects. (MOE, 2010, p. 3)

Moreover, schools desiring to continue providing education in a first language shall not be restricted by this guideline. The framework also states that: (a) a first language may be taught as a subject in MLE as well as in Nepali- or English-medium schools; (b) Nepali shall be taught as a second language in schools where first languages are the MOI; and (c) school management committees and language groups can manage to introduce more than one first language as the MOI in contexts where students come from different language communities. The framework indicates that schools desiring to ensure access to quality education may provide education in first languages following the provisions in the framework. Unfortunately, even the pilot schools are not able to strictly follow the MLE framework for various reasons. For example, in Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School, Santang, Dhankuta, only social studies and science subjects are being taught in the Athpahariya MOI in Grade 1 only. Due to lack of textbooks in Athpahariya, other subjects (except Nepali and English) are not being taught in the Athpahariya MOI in Grades 2 and 3 as envisioned in the MLE framework (see Table 3 and the MLE framework). In addition, since the present MLE practice is based on the early-exit transitional model (see, e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009), children are only taught in their first language up to Grade 3 with partial exposure up to Grade 5. When they switch to second and foreign languages from Grade 4, parents are confused about the relevance of teaching in the first language

in the early grades if it will no longer be used in the higher grades. Although the MLE policy is relevant to address the multilingual reality of the country, a comprehensive study of where the policy can be applied and how it can be made more effective may be necessary.

English mania and community-managed schools

Although Nepal did not have an English colonial history, the English language has become a component of the Nepalese educational system since the middle of nineteenth century. Crystal (2008) reports that 15.8 million Nepalese speak English, far more than the number (1037) identified in the national CBS (2001). English occupies a dominant space in education, mass media, information communication technology (ICT) and business. Due to the increasing influence of globalization through the mass media, trade and ICT, members of the younger generation – especially those from urban middle-class family who are educated in private schools – use English predominantly in everyday communication. The post-1990 privatization policy for education has also played an important part in helping to encourage the widespread use of English in Nepal. A major attraction offered by private schools is the use of English as the MOI. The schools also hire teachers from Darjeeling and other parts of India because the quality of schools is judged on the basis of whether there are Indian teachers who can speak better English than Nepalese teachers. English has already become an integral part of the national education framework in Nepal. In this regard, Liechty (2003, p. 213) asserts 'English proficiency is simultaneously the key to a better future, an index of social capital, and part of the purchase price for a ticket out of Nepal'. In a personal interview with the author, a third grader (7 June 2011) from a private school in Kathmandu offered a similar view: 'Everybody has to speak English in this age. If we do not speak English, we are considered to be illiterate. We can't get any job, access information and know other people without learning English'.

Although some argue that the proliferation of English is a threat to local languages and a factor contributing to social inequalities between rich and poor, and between the elites and the marginalized (Giri, 2010; Sonntag, 2003), it has already become 'the second most widespread language in Nepal in terms of popularity, education, and use' (Eagle, 1999, p. 302). Eagle further asserts 'although English may be a privilege for high-caste Nepali speakers, it is a necessity for many other people' (p. 308) and Farrell and Giri (2011, p. 15) further allege 'English is fundamentally associated with life chances for people who are or who wish to be employed by companies operating directly within the global economy'. In Nepal, people are also learning English outside the classroom even in the rural areas where tourism constitutes a key source of income (Eagle, 1999). The demand for English continues to grow as the number of foreign tourists visiting Nepal increases every year since the end of the 10-year-long-Maoists insurgency. With the aim of attracting more tourists, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation has declared Nepal Tourism Year 2011, thereby constituting not only an attraction for tourists but an added incentive for learning English.

The MOE has already introduced English as a compulsory subject from Grade 1 'to cater to the immediate needs of children learning English and building a basic foundation for their further studies in and through English' (CDC, 2008, p. 154). But the immediate needs of children are not clearly explained. It is alleged that communicative competence focusing on skills and the ability to use English in a limited set of situations are major objectives of teaching English at primary level. To be specific, the CDC has specified the following objectives[10] of teaching English at the primary level:

- to give pupils ample exposure to the English language so that they can understand [what?] and respond [to what?] in simple English with acceptable pronunciation and intonation;
- to provide them with opportunities to practice their English in and outside the classroom, so that they can communicate [with whom?] in simple English;
- to help them develop enthusiasm [how?] for reading [what?] so that they will be responsive and knowledgeable readers;
- to help them develop their potentialities in writing [what?] so that they can be creative writers [of what?]; and
- to develop a positive attitude toward learning English and build up confidence in using English.

These objectives are not only ambitious, but they seem to be meaningless as a number of terms – acceptable, ample, communicate, confidence, enthusiasm, knowledgeable, positive, potentialities, respond, responsive and understand – are not given concrete meaning. In general, students are expected to listen, speak, read and write English from early grades. However, there is enough room for doubt on the achievement of these goals as there is a lack of competent teachers, overloaded curricula and an ample supply of overcrowded classrooms in which the Nepali medium is used most often to teach English (Kansakar, 2011).

The policy of teaching English from Grade 1 has been implemented without sufficient preparation. In a personal discussion (10 October 2011) with the author, a Professor of English from Tribhuvan University contended:

> The then Minister for Education delivered a speech addressing a programme organized by English teachers in Kathmandu in 2002 saying that he wanted to introduce English from Grade 1 to make all children learn it. In the same month that the Minister made these remarks, the new academic session began with English as a compulsory subject from Grade 1.

An expert, also a teacher trainer from the same university, said:

> The policy of teaching English from Grade 1 came in haste without a comprehensive research. […] The policy is not appropriate in Nepal. The children from indigenous groups who have to learn English as a third language face both psychological and cognitive problems if they have to learn it from the first day in school (11 November 2010).

While taking the dominant role of English (and Nepali) for granted, the MOE seems to have forgotten its responsibility to make the people aware of the fact that learning one's first language in the early grades enhances the ability to learn English (and Nepali) better in the future (Awasthi, 2004). The policy is also controversial as it was instituted after the MOE made a provision for first language education. It seems as though the latter policy had been introduced to thwart growing voices of educated non-Nepali speaking people who have been constantly demanding education in their own first languages. Whatever may be the shortcomings of the policy, the obsession for learning English is increasing every day due to growing influence of urbanization, globalization, migration and the advancement of ICT (Phyak, 2009). The number of people currently using mobile phones even in rural areas has drastically increased. Even illiterate people have been heard using English during conversations on their cell phones. Parents' growing aspirations to educate their children in English-medium schools is the most significant factor behind the expansion of English in schools. A parent (a taxi driver), who is sending his son to an English-

medium school in Kathmandu, indicated during an informal conversation with me (on 11 June 2010):

> I am sending my son to a private school because they teach English and give a lot of homework. My son doesn't like to go to a public school because most of his friends are in private schools.

He further remarked:

> In this modern age, our children should learn English to get jobs. Although I am Tamang [a tribal group], my children speak very little Tamang, and they don't like to use it. If I send my son to a public school, he thinks that he is from a lower class family.

Private schools, which are virtually all English medium, are mushrooming not only in urban but also in rural areas, attracting children and parents to learn English, though how effectively those schools teach the language has not been explored. With the opening of private schools, the number of students in public schools has decreased because parents prefer to send their children to schools where English is the MOI. In private schools, English is not only the MOI and a subject of teaching but it is also the language of interpersonal communication. In this regard, Caddell (2006, p. 468) said:

> English-medium instruction emerged as a key dimension of the selling of dreams that characterises these aspirations. Use of English – even of a very poor level – is considered to connect students to a wider international project, offering a greater potential for mobility than Nepali-medium government [public] schools.

It appears that private schools are selling English instruction by projecting it as a key to material attainment. Private schools are extremely successful in attracting children by overemphasizing teaching of English for which parents have to pay huge amounts of money. Since the first-language education policy is not applicable to private schools, not a single private school offers local languages (Nepali as well) as the MOI. This phenomenon has created a clear division between the haves and have-nots in the society – a phenomenon in which the 'unspoken privileging of the language has created a further division in already divided Nepalese society' (Giri, 2010, p. 88). The children who go to private schools seem to be richer and more civilized while the children who go to public schools are considered to be poor and uncivilized. Given this division, parents are not enticed to send their children to public schools where English is not as central as it is in private schools.

English is gradually becoming the MOI even in public schools, given the policy of the MOE to transfer the management of public schools to local communities. To achieve the goals of enhancing the participation of the local community, ensuring the quality of education and increasing the efficiency and the accountability of schools envisioned by the EFA program, the MOE has already paved the way for public schools to transfer their management to community committees, as recommended in the provision in the Seventh Amendment to the Education Act of 2001. In 2003, the World Bank funded 'Community School Support Project' (CSSP) was launched by the MOE to support community-managed schools. According to the DOE, more than 8000 public schools have already been handed over to communities where the school management committees have taken sole responsibility for managing schools including the hiring of teachers at the local level, the selection of MOI and the generation and use of funds for overall school development. The CSSP also aims to address the deteriorating quality of education in public schools. To this end, there is

an increasing trend to shift from Nepali or local languages to English MOI in the community-managed schools.

Mangal Higher Secondary School, situated in Kirtipur Municipality (a city of the Newari aboriginal people), is a famous public school in Kathmandu. Recently, the school management committee of the school decided to switch from Nepali to English MOI at the primary level (with the aim of eventually extending that practice to the secondary level as well). The Head Teacher said:

> We switched from Nepali to English medium to compete with private schools. Parents want their children to be taught in English [in public schools] so that they don't need to pay expensive fees in private schools. Without English, we are not able to increase the number of students. If we aren't able to increase [the number of] students, we don't get more quotas for teachers from the DOE.

I asked him why children are not taught in Newari as the majority of students in the school are Newars. He provided an interesting comment:

> If we teach in Newari, first, Newari parents don't send their children to our school. They send their children to private English medium schools. Newari students [in the school] have increased after we introduced English from Grade 1.

The head teacher's views indicate that the MOE's unwillingness to mandate uniformity in language policy for both private and public schools is forcing community-managed schools to introduce English MOI from the primary level in order to compete with private schools and thus to attract more students. The trend of opting for English MOI is rapidly increasing in community-managed schools throughout the country; *The Himalayan Times* (2010b, p. 6) reported 'more and more community schools in Myagdi district [a district in the western region of Nepal] have started imparting education in English medium … Sishu Kalyan Secondary School Arman, Srijan Secondary Pankhu and Kishani Primary School Sirku in the district have initiated teaching in English medium beginning this academic session'. One reason behind this is that community-managed schools have to increase the number of students so that they may be allocated more teachers and funds from the DEO. In 2007, the DOE developed per-child funding policy that states that community-managed schools are provided a quota of teachers based on the number of students enrolled. The student–teacher ratio proposed by the DOE is: 40:1 for mountain districts; 45:1 for hill districts and 50:1 for Terai districts and the Kathmandu Valley (CERID, 2008[11]). If the number of students is very low (say only 40), the student–teacher ratio in general would allocate only one teacher, and that one teacher alone would have to teach all grades and all subjects alone, along with doing all the necessary administrative work. If the number of students is larger, the school would be entitled to a larger number of teachers. Therefore, community-managed schools are compelled to introduce English MOI instead of Nepali or other local language MOI in order to increase the number of students in schools.

The popularity of English can be seen through the growing number of teachers joining Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) – an affiliate of IATEFL in the UK and TESOL in the USA – every year. NELTA is a voluntary professional association which aims to enhance professionalism of Nepalese English teachers through training, conferences, publications and other professional activities. Established in 1992, NELTA works in collaboration with British Council, the US Embassy in Nepal, the MOE and other line agencies to provide more professional opportunities to its more than 3000 members

organized in 30 different branches. Every year, it organizes an international conference in and outside of the Kathmandu Valley. The number of participants attending the conferences has been increasing every year. In 2011, it organized its international conference in Kathmandu (18–20 February) and in Pokhara (22–23 February). The two meetings, respectively, attracted more than 700 and 500 participants (from home and abroad). The theme of the conference was 'English in Multilingual and Cross-cultural Contexts: Exploring Opportunities and Meeting Challenges'. There were two keynote speeches, seven plenary sessions, one symposium and 144 papers/workshops covering Intercultural Communication, Multiculturalism, Creative Writing and Critical Thinking, Language Testing, World Englishes, Globalisation and Teaching English, Inclusive Pedagogy, MLE, Discourse Analysis and Teaching Language Skills. Overall, the outcomes of the conference reiterated the need for designing syllabuses, writing textbooks and producing learning materials that address expectations of Nepalese children from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. It also emphasized the role of English for promoting intercultural communication, and critical thinking skills of students.

Conclusion

Dealing with primary education, Nepal has made a significant transformation from monolingual to multilingual language policies. In the changed political context, the state has enshrined an inclusive language policy by guaranteeing the right to receive basic education in one's first language. However, there is much vagueness, complexity and contradiction caused by the gap between macro-level policies and micro-level realities (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento, 2006). In basic education, the MLE policy for non-Nepali speaking children appears to be non-functional due to the expansion of English MOI beginning from Grade 1, not only in private schools but also in community-managed schools. This expansion has not only weakened the vitality of local languages, but it has also created a negative atmosphere for the implementation of the MLE policy as parents, students and other stakeholders, in many cases, do not see the relevance of first-language education compared to teaching English. It is not clear whether the policy is appropriate in all linguistic contexts, and whether it is equally applicable in private as well as in public schools. The resulting vagueness has caused confusions and uncertainties among parents, children and teachers – a condition leading to the emergence of negative attitudes toward first-language education.

Language planning for Nepalese primary schools is marked by arbitrariness because policies – not only those related to English MOI but also to MLE – have been devised without a comprehensive research and proper preparation. The resulting arbitrariness has already created linguistic and socio-cultural confusions in the society because it is – perhaps unintentionally – helping elites to enjoy a continued hegemony over access to the knowledge transmitted through education. Given the contradictory nature of its policies, the MOE acts as an antagonist to its own language policies for primary schools. On the one hand, it is not able to apply its MLE policy to private schools, and on the other hand, it has allowed community-managed schools to opt for English MOI at the primary level. Such an ambivalent position threatens local languages, including Nepali; it could mean that all local languages may gradually be phased out as MOI from schools.

The ideology of language planning in Nepalese primary schools is still shaped by a long history of monolingual policy adopted by an elite-dominated hierarchical society. Before 1990, the monolingual practice, using only Nepali as the MOI with a view to maintain national identity, has gradually shifted toward English MOI, indicating the preeminence of English in Nepalese education. Although any kind of monolingualism is not relevant

in Nepal's multilingual society, rather than being negative about the roles of English, it becomes imperative to discuss how Nepal can benefit from it without displacing local languages. Even if the issues of linguistic identity have become more visible after 2006, children's longing for a better life and their desire to access modernity and global opportunities while learning English has become an even more influential frame for language policy.

It has also become evident that the loose harmonization between legal provisions on languages, national education policies and language planning practices have turned schools into a battlefield in which powerful languages (e.g. English and Nepali) always win over minority languages, thus helping to sustain the interest of elites and educated people who are 'indifferent, unsupportive, or even hostile to plans which favour the interests of the total population, and consider them at best naive and at worst subversive' (Beaugrande, 1999, p.109). This phenomenon can be called elitism-in-language planning – i.e. the view that language-in-education planning promotes the interests of the elites. To conclude, there is a need for concrete national language policy addressing both multilingual reality and the aspirations of parents and children to learn the dominant languages, Nepali and English.

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Notes

1. A popular English newspaper published by Asia Pacific Communication Associate House, Nepal.
2. The term 'first language' is used in preference to the commonly used term 'mother tongue', as the former more accurately describes a person's initial language. The term mother tongue has been retained in quotes or references to its use in official documents [The editors].
3. The alliance was made up of seven political parties – Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress (Democratic), Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandi Devi), United Left Front and People's Front – to fight against the autocratic rule of the king.
4. Unless otherwise noted, all data originally expressed in Nepali in this paper are translated by the author. The 1990 and 2007 Constitutions were officially translated into English by the government. Articles in *The Himalayan Times* and *Republica* are published in English. The views of various stakeholders (e.g. teachers, chairperson of school management committee, professors, children, parents, trainers and experts) originally expressed in Nepali were also translated into English by the author.
5. The tenure of the Constituent Assembly is due to finish on 28 May 2011. It is almost certain that the new constitution drafting process is not going to be concluded within the given deadline due to lack of consensus among the political parties representing the Constituent Assembly. Although it has already become clear that its tenure will have to be extended, it cannot be predicted how long it will be extended for.
6. The party was formed after the People's Movement of 2006. In the beginning, it was an advocacy movement for ethnic self-determination rights in the Terai, and later it demanded the formation of a *Madhes* autonomous region, a proportional-representation electoral system, and the setting up of a federal republic in Nepal. The party achieved the fourth largest representation group in the election of the Constituent Assembly.
7. The international conventions that the MOE claims underpin the MLE program include: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the Joint World Conference on EFA (1990);

the Dakar Framework of Action (2000); the Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

8. The national constitutional provisions and policies that the MOE adheres to as the basis for the MLE include: The *Interim Constitution of Nepal* (2007); the *Three Year Interim Plan* (2008); the *EFA Core Document* (2004–2009); the *EFA National Plan of Action* (2003); the *Tenth Plan* (2002–2007) and the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal* (NCF) (2007).
9. EFA program has been designed by the MOE to achieve six major goals by 2015: (a) expanding and improving early childhood development, (b) ensuring access to EFA children, (c) meeting the learning needs of all children including indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities, (d) reducing adult illiteracy, (e) eliminating gender disparity and (f) improving all aspects of quality education.
10. The questions in the objectives were inserted by the author to highlight the vagueness of the official document.
11. Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development is one of the research centers of Tribhuvan University, Nepal. Its aim is to enhance the quality of education through quality research works in the field of education (for details, see http://cerid.org/).

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Timor-Leste: sustaining and maintaining the national languages in education

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This article presents an overview of language-in-education policy development between 1999 and 2010 in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. In the decade since independence language-in-education policy in this newly independent country has been dominated by debates about the medium of instruction. Over time, policy has shifted from an authoritarian stance that insisted on monolingual, submersion schooling in a former colonial language to one that accepts the need to accommodate linguistic diversity in order to promote social inclusion. Recent policy documents allow for instruction in the vernacular languages, designated in the 2002 Constitution as national languages. The article identifies some key drivers that have provided impetus for this change in orientation, a change which offers opportunities for localised language planning from below. The paper therefore suggests that the acceptance of agency at both macro- and micro-levels will play a critical role in sustaining and maintaining the national languages in East Timorese education.

Introduction and overview: definition of terms

Since Timor-Leste celebrated its independence in 2002, its education system has undergone substantial change and development. Among the many logistical and educational challenges facing education planners, perhaps the most acute and controversial concern the teaching of languages in the curriculum and the selection of the medium of instruction. Language-in-education policy in Timor-Leste has been subject to swings reflecting changes in political climate, but has overall been characterised by a mismatch between top-down policymaking and grassroots language practices. Recent developments indicate a shift from what Heugh (2010) has called vertical language planning, which privileges speakers of languages used for high status functions of political-economic control, to more horizontal planning, authorising the use of local languages (Heugh, 2010, p. 380). Johnson (2009, p. 156) proposes that in order to understand language-in-education policy, one must consider the interaction between the agents, goals, processes and discourses that engender and perpetuate the policy and the dynamic social and historical contexts in which the policy exists. This paper presents an overview of language-in-education

policy development in Timor-Leste between 1999 and 2010. It aims to show how these elements have interacted in this particular socio-historical context and contributed to policy change. Increasing access to first language (L1) education improves educational access in general and when well planned and resourced, substantially improves educational quality (Hays, 2009; Pinnock, 2009). However, local ownership and agency (Baldauf, 2006; Chua & Baldauf, 2011; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008) at both macro- and micro-levels will play a critical role in sustaining and maintaining the national languages in East Timorese education.

Although the term mother tongue is considered to be problematic by many sociolinguists, it is the generic term by which home and community languages are widely known in the countries of the global south. In Timor-Leste donors, development aid agencies, educators and the public alike refer to the languages spoken in its ethnolinguistically diverse communities as mother tongues (*lian-inan* in Tetum and *língua materna* in Portuguese). Following the definition adopted in the 2004 National Population and Housing Census in Timor-Leste (National Bureau of Statistics [*Direcção Nacional de Estatística*] and United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2006, p. 46), this paper uses the term mother tongue interchangeably with the terms L1 and home language to refer to the language(s) most commonly spoken in a child's household. The term L2 refers to the second language learned. The terms L3, L4 and L5 refer to third, fourth and fifth languages as sequenced in the formal curriculum.

Starting out at ground zero: recent history, the crisis of 1999 and the development challenges facing Timor-Leste

To understand the scale of the linguistic and educational challenges confronting Timor-Leste, it is necessary to know something of its colonial and recent history. After some 400 years of Portuguese colonisation, independence from Portugal was declared on 28th November 1975. Ten days following this declaration, the country was invaded and occupied by Indonesia. In 1999, a referendum was held in which the East Timorese were invited to choose between independence and autonomy within the Indonesian republic. Despite a campaign of terrorisation by Indonesian military and pro-autonomous East Timorese militia, the majority of East Timorese citizens voted for independence. Such was the loss of life and destruction in the wake of this vote that international peacekeeping forces (PKF) were deployed. The country was placed under the administration of the United Nations (UN) during the transition to independence, which was only fully realised in 2002.

The starting point for this paper is the departure of the Indonesians from the country in 1999. In the violence that accompanied their exit, almost the entire critical infrastructure of the country was destroyed. The violence decimated the education sector, including school buildings, schoolbooks and furniture. Since the majority of the teaching force was Indonesian, the schooling system ground to a complete halt when most Indonesian teachers fled the country. Among the post-emergency measures overseen by the UN Transitional Administration and its successor missions were the rehabilitation of schools and classrooms, the provision of teaching resources and furniture and the recruitment of replacement teachers (Nicolai, 2004).

The new republic started life with legacies of colonialism and conflict that continue to present major development challenges. According to the United Nations Development Program Human Development Index, Timor-Leste ranked 120 out of 169 countries (UNDP, 2010), a ranking that places it among the 50 poorest nations in the world. According to the Population Census of 2004, basic income, health and literacy indicators are

among the lowest in Asia. According to UNESCO (2009, p. 5), the number of people living below the poverty line climbed from 36% in 2001 to 50% in 2007, a sad indictment of the effects of instability and conflict. Literacy rates are also extremely low. According to the Census Atlas (2006, p. 72), at least 54% of the population over the age of 6, cannot read or write in any of the official or working languages. High on the priority list of development needs is access to quality, universal basic education.

Of great relevance to education planning is the fact that the East Timorese population is young and expanding rapidly. According to the 2010 census, the population is 1,066,582 and it is expected to double in 30 years (Government of Timor-Leste, 2010). The number of 6-year olds is predicted to increase by around 150% by 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 26) and just over 35% of East Timorese people are under 14 years of age (CIA, 2007). With such a large population of young people, it is a matter of great concern that according to UNESCO estimates in 2008, only about 80% of children completed primary schooling. At least 20% of children are not attending primary school (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2010), an estimate that must be regarded as conservative since the World Bank put the estimate at closer to 30% (World Bank, 2009, p. 3). These poor school retention figures have serious implications for future human resource and literacy development, employment prospects, poverty reduction, economic growth, social cohesion and overall global competitiveness. In short, the figures run counter to the country's aspirations to meet its national development plans and the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The language situation and the language policy context: diglossia with multilingualism

Before commencing a discussion of language in education, it is essential to provide an overview of the language situation and the language policy context in Timor-Leste. At independence, the 2002 National Constitution conferred co-official status on Portuguese and Tetum. The Constitution also adopted Indonesian and English as working languages. Tetum and the vernaculars were given the status of national languages, to be protected and valued by the State. The language policy decision laid out in the National Constitution was controversial and subject to intense criticism from local and foreign media and from (often fairly uninformed) social commentators. Many young East Timorese, who had been educated under the Indonesian system, protested that the choice of Portuguese would leave them marginalised and reduce their employment opportunities. Sensitivities about language arouse strong feelings among the public and policymakers alike and have had a polarising effect on popular opinion about language policy. Policy debates have tended to be adversarial, focusing on polemics rather than on practicalities.

The reasons for the constitutional decision of 2002 lie in the complex historico-political relationship between the official and working languages. In keeping with its assimilationist colonial policy, all Portuguese colonies were regarded as overseas provinces of Portugal. It followed, therefore, that Portuguese was the official language of Portuguese Timor, the language of the colonial and administrative elite and the language of worship. Assimilated East Timorese and those who were able to access education were educated in Portuguese. The language was also used extensively by the resistance movement during the Indonesian occupation. According to Cabral and Martin-Jones (2008, p. 165), this use of Portuguese for both international and clandestine communication and later in preparing the ground for independence 'transformed the symbolic value of the language from that of a code solely associated with the Portuguese colonial order'. For these reasons and because it is the former colonial language, Portuguese continues to hold great prestige in Timor-Leste.

After the invasion of 1975, Indonesian was imposed as the official language, and its use in the education system was compulsory. Modern Indonesian spread rapidly, especially after the public use of Portuguese was forbidden in the 1980s. At present, many East Timorese pursue further and higher studies in Indonesia. Consequently, a significant number of East Timorese under the age of 35 are able to communicate in Indonesian, although not in general as a first language. Tetum is the most widely spoken vernacular, having functioned as a contact language and lingua franca since at least the early nineteenth century (Hull, 1998; Thomaz, 1981). Tetum also spread during the Indonesian occupation because communities dispersed by war and forced relocation used it as a contact language (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008). When the public use of Portuguese was forbidden, the East Timorese clergy rewrote the liturgies in Tetum, investing it with deep symbolic value as the language of Catholicism. Tetum came to symbolise East Timorese identity during a time of severe oppression by the occupying forces (Smythe, 1998; Taylor-Leech, 2009). Tetum has several varieties, the most widely known variety being Tetum-Praça, also known as Tetum-Dili. This was the variety selected for standardisation and modernisation at independence. English was known by a small number of people prior to 1999, but it really gained significance with the arrival of the PKF, the UN and international donor agencies. A number of educated East Timorese speak English as a result of having taken refuge or having studied in English-speaking countries as well as through contact with English-speaking UN staff, military personnel, aid agencies and business enterprises in Timor-Leste. Interest in English is high in Timor-Leste and it is widely recognised as the language of international communication.

Estimates of the number of indigenous East Timorese languages differ according to ways of classifying languages and dialects (Bowden & Hajek, 2007, p. 265). *Ethnologue* (Gordon, 2005) lists 19 living languages, while Hull (1998) identifies 16 languages with dialectal variations. It is these languages that teachers and children predominantly use at home (Quinn, 2007, p. 252). The national languages have high vitality in domestic and rural domains but, although they are used in traditional forms of socio-economic exchange, until recently they have not been recognised as languages to be used in education or for any official functions (Bowden & Hajek, 2007; Hajek, 2000; Taylor-Leech, 2009).

Using Fishman's (1967, 1972) typology, the language situation can be characterised as a form of extended diglossia with societal bi- and multilingualism and varying degrees of individual multilingualism (Taylor-Leech, 2007, 2009). According to the 2004 Population Census, 15% of East Timorese are trilingual in Portuguese, Tetum and Indonesian while 20% are quadrilingual in the official languages (Portuguese and Tetum) and the working languages (Indonesian and English). Very little statistical information is currently available on the language repertoires of the speakers of the national languages. The high rate of intermarriage between ethnolinguistic groups and the degree of mutual intelligibility between some languages means that many East Timorese children grow up bilingual in two or more national languages, but it is also known that other children grow up monolingual, particularly in the more remote areas. Monolingual users of a variety of Tetum constitute just over 25% of the population. Although 86% claimed ability to speak, read or write a variety of Tetum (National Bureau of Statistics [*Direcção Nacional de Estatística*] and United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2006, p. 84), the census results showed that for most people, Tetum is a second language. No more than 30% overall reported that they spoke some form of Tetum as their first language. Moreover, the use of Tetum varies from district to district. According to the 2004 census, just over 78% of residents of Dili, the national capital, said they spoke a variety of Tetum as a mother tongue compared with 9% of residents of the country's second city, Baucau. The number of Tetum speakers

(of any variety) as a first language is as low as 1.4% in the more remote districts of Lautem and Oecussi. The census found that throughout Oecussi and Lautém districts, more people were literate in Indonesian than they were in Tetum (Census Atlas, 2006, p. 70).

It has also proved difficult to quantify both literate and oral use of the co-official and working languages. In order to collect data on language use, the 2004 Population Census employed the term *capability*, a term defined as 'the capacity to speak, read or write or any combination of the above as informed by the interviewee' (National Bureau of Statistics [*Direcção Nacional de Estatística*] and United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2006, p. 47). According to this criterion, 86% of people over the age of 6 declared capability in Tetum; 59% in Indonesian; 36% in Portuguese and 21% in English. The census also measured language use in terms of *literacy*, considering anyone who was not able both to read and write in any of the official and working languages to be illiterate (Census Atlas, 2006, p. 72). According to this criterion, 46% declared that they were literate in Tetum; 13% in Portuguese; 43% in Indonesian and 5% in English.

These criteria were confusing and they were also unlikely to reflect the actual language situation fully. For one thing, they did not clarify the extent of bi- or multiliteracy in the official or working languages. In fact, as far as this writer is aware, no figures of this kind have been published. Nevertheless, the census results indicate that a relatively low number of East Timorese citizens know Portuguese while a high number know Tetum. However, a constraint on the use of Tetum in education is that, while it is widely known, it has several varieties and is not spoken everywhere (Taylor-Leech, 2009). The census results highlight the complexity of arriving at a functioning definition of a first language, let alone designating the sequence of additional languages for teaching purposes. The figures also point to the need for a flexible approach to educational planning and provision. The following section describes the educational challenges facing policymakers and planners and discusses some of the ways these challenges have been addressed.

The challenges facing education planners

A few brief statistics indicate the scale of the task of rebuilding education in Timor-Leste. According to the World Bank (2004, p. xvii), at independence 57% of the adult population had received little or no schooling and only 23% of the population had received a primary education. Net primary school enrolment[1] stood at 76% in 2008, making poor comparison with 96% net enrolment in Indonesia (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2010). The mean youth literacy rate (i.e. the percentage of the population between the ages of 15 and 24 who can read or write in any state language) is currently 73% (Census Atlas, 2006, p. 72) compared with a regional average of 98% (UNESCO, 2009). The Ministry of Education currently employs some 7358 primary school teachers, all recruited after 1999 (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 22). Most of these teachers were educated under the Indonesian system; however, many recently recruited teachers were employed simply on the strength of being able to speak some Portuguese. Primary teachers are particularly under-qualified. Studies across the country have found that primary school teachers can have as little as three months formal teacher training (Chowdhury, 2005; Romiszowski, 2005).

Among the other challenges identified by the Ministry of Education are continuing low enrolments and high dropout rates, particularly in the later primary grades. Statistics show that although large numbers of students start school, as many as 70% do not even reach Grade 6, let alone complete primary education (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 23). The

vast majority of dropouts occur in Grades 1 and 2 with less than a quarter of children enrolled in Grade 1 re-enrolling in Grade 9. The high rate of grade repetition results in overcrowding and the placement of over-age children in the early elementary grades. High dropout and grade repetition mean that children take a longer time to complete basic education, significantly increasing the costs, reducing the consistency, and compromising the effectiveness of children's education. Although low retention and high dropout can be attributed to a number of causes such as long distances between home and school, parental concerns about safety, especially for girls, lack of water and hygienic facilities in schools, financial barriers, levels of parental education and understanding and so on, the language of instruction must inevitably also be implicated.

Medium of instruction policy background 2004–2008

Language-in-education policy development has been primarily driven by the provisions for languages in the National Constitution. In the transitional period to formal independence, medium of instruction policy focused exclusively on the rapid reintroduction of Portuguese. In a classic example of post-colonial submersion[2] schooling (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, 2000), Portuguese was designated as the sole language of instruction. This curriculum model also delivered Portuguese as a subject for four hours a week. However, the practical difficulties stemming from the fact that so few teachers spoke the language, let alone wrote it, led the Ministry of Education to relax its policy and allow teachers to use Tetum to explain things to the children. In 2005 the Ministry accepted Tetum as the medium of instruction in the first two years of schooling, i.e. for Grades 1 and 2 in primary school. Indonesian was to be phased out of the curriculum by 2009.

Language-in-education policy objectives for 2004–2008 continued to focus on hastening the reintroduction of Portuguese, but now allotted time for the teaching of Tetum as a subject in the early years. Commencing from September 2005, the curriculum balance shifted from five hours a week of Tetum and three hours of Portuguese as subjects in Grades 1 and 2 to six hours a week of Portuguese and two hours a week of Tetum by Grade 6 (MECYS, 2004). There were no clear guidelines provided about how to use either language as a medium of instruction (Quinn, 2007), but one statement in the draft curriculum document provides an indication of prevailing attitudes at the time towards the use of Tetum as a language of instruction:

> Overall, since Tetum is at a preliminary stage of development, the implementation of Portuguese will have precedence, and Tetum may be used as a pedagogic aide in the teaching of disciplines related to the environment, social sciences, history and geography. (MECYS, 2004, p. 11, English version)

This curriculum document described the objective for the teaching of languages as 'the development of two languages at the same time in a process of mutual enrichment' (p. 9) and went on to state that early literacy would be taught in Tetum, apparently on the assumption that the transfer of literacy skills to Portuguese would occur. At a policy level, this statement seemed to imply that children were intended to acquire basic skills in Tetum, while building up a threshold level in Portuguese sufficient to cope with the demands of schooling (World Bank, 2004, p. 29), a position indicating that the curriculum had shifted from a submersion approach to a transitional one[3] (Cummins, 1980; Fishman, 1976; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Moreover, policy statements were contradictory. Although they accorded Tetum the status of a language of literacy and recognised that it should be

formally taught (Quinn, 2007, p. 256), it was relegated to use only in certain subject areas. The focus on reintroducing Portuguese also included compulsory language training for teachers in Portuguese and the development of bilingual Portuguese/Tetum teaching materials. In view of overall low rates of parental literacy and oral proficiency in the co-official languages, these goals were unlikely to be compatible with the concomitant goals of developing parent–teacher associations and reinforcing the role of parents and of communities in school life (MECYS, 2004, pp. 20–24).

The widespread violence and political crisis of 2006–2007 (for details see Anderson, 2006; Kingsbury, 2008; Muggah, 2010), the 2007 elections and a subsequent change of government meant that all policy plans were stalled. Recognising the urgent need to build national consensus, the new constitutional government allocated greater funding to the education sector in conjunction with a mandate for educational reform. In April 2008, the incoming Ministry issued new guidelines that allowed both Portuguese and Tetum as languages of instruction. In terms of the allocation of curriculum time, these guidelines stipulated that teachers' language use should shift from roughly 70% Tetum and 30% Portuguese in Grade 1 to 100% Portuguese by the end of Grade 3. From Grade 4, Portuguese was designated the language of instruction and the only written language, while Tetum was to be used for oral instruction only. This model still represents an example of early-exit[4] bilingual schooling (Hornberger, 1991; Ramírez & Merino, 1990; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) and it did little to provide clarity for teachers. While transitional bilingual programmes provide some respite for students from the cultural shock and pressure of monolingual, submersion education (García, 2009, pp. 124–125), they are associated with subtractive bilingualism (i.e. language shift from L1 to L2), disparaging attitudes towards the languages of the home leading to reduced student self-esteem, low levels of participation and poor literacy outcomes (Baker, 2006; Benson, 2004; Bunyi, 2005; Kosonen, 2009; Martin, 2005; Muthwii, 2007). However, since the change of administration, a number of key initiatives have been taken by both macro- and micro-level actors under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. This paper now discusses these initiatives and how they have provided impetus for policy change.

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)

Over the past decade, international development agencies have followed the trend in the global north in making increased use of educational assessments as a way of measuring educational outcomes. This focus on quantifiable outcomes has been called into question in the global north, as evidenced in the widespread criticism of the No Child Left Behind Policy in the USA (Gandara & Baca, 2008; Menken, 2006). Critics of this policy have mentioned the injustice of forcing non-native speakers of the test language to be assessed in a language they did not fully comprehend, the narrow range of skills that were tested, the fact that children learn at different rates, especially in additional languages and the complex reasons behind the poor performance and short-term memory deficit of L2 learners in word recognition and comprehension tests. These criticisms can be extended to other forms of outcomes-based literacy assessment.

The EGRA was developed by the Research Triangle Institute International with support from the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The EGRA is an oral, diagnostic test designed to identify reading problems in Grades 1–3 in order to enable the planning of early intervention strategies (Wagner, 2010). The EGRA has been adapted and applied in 23 languages in 18 countries (Carney, 2009, p. 12). One such study was carried out in East Timorese primary schools

in August 2009. The EGRA assesses the foundational skills for literacy acquisition, including pre-reading skills (USAID, 2009). The test items focus on the key components of reading acquisition: phonics and phonemic awareness; oral and written vocabulary; reading comprehension and fluency; and listening comprehension. The EGRA also includes a student socioeconomic survey with questions about the student's cultural and linguistic environment, including home language, parents' literacy status and socioeconomic status. Out of the 944 students who were interviewed in 40 randomly selected primary schools across Timor-Leste, 484 children were evaluated in Portuguese and 460 evaluated in Tetum. The results showed that over 70% of children at the end of Grade 1 could not read a single word of the passage they were asked to read aloud. Forty per cent of children at the end of Grade 2 were not able to read one word of the passage, while about 20% could not read one word at the end of Grade 3. The EGRA report concluded from these results that, although students appear to make some reading progress by the end of Grade 3, a significant number of children spend their first three years in school without learning to read (World Bank, 2009. p. 3).

The EGRA results were not unusual for a multilingual country of the global south where children speak one language at home and another in school. The research literature abounds with examples of the challenges facing children learning to read in non-native languages in multilingual environments. Some well-known facts from the research on bi- and multilingual literacy should be borne in mind when interpreting the EGRA results. Firstly, learning to read is highly dependent on the relationship between the learner's L1 and the language of literacy. Phonological features of a learner's L1 and the language of the test may differ greatly, hindering word recognition in the L2. Sound-symbol correspondence and orthographic conventions in the language of the test may also be unfamiliar to the learner. Secondly, it is now widely accepted that both literacy and cognition are highly contextual (Lipson, 2009). Literacy skills are grounded in particular contexts, social practices and human relationships (Brandt & Clinton, 2002); asking children to read aloud from a decontextualised passage only assesses one particular form of formal, print literacy. Thirdly and most importantly, L2 learners are often much slower to develop reading comprehension skills than their native-speaker peers. The reason for this disparity lies in the level of L2 oral proficiency; a well documented and damaging result of early-exit bilingual schooling is that L2 readers may not have sufficiently developed oral skills in either their L1 or their L2 to support reading comprehension (Benson, 2004; Cummins, 1991; Lesaux & Geva, 2006; Lesaux, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan, 2006; Snow & Kang, 2006).

The findings from the EGRA socioeconomic survey should be also treated with some caution. Given that that the results were self-reported by very young children (the average age was 8.8), the EGRA report provided no evidence that it had established what the subjects understood by the language their parents used at home. Bearing this in mind, the report stated that 5 out of 10 children in the sample reported speaking a language other than Portuguese or Tetum at home and 8 out of 10 children reported that they spoke no Portuguese at home. Only 17% of sampled students reported that their parents spoke Portuguese and 66% reported that the language spoken by the teacher in class was different from the language they used at home (World Bank, 2009, p. 5). In brief, the EGRA report merely confirmed a situation that could have been easily predicted. It did not provide information about children's pre-literate activities or social practices in their mother tongues that might support L2 literacy. However, what it did provide was an up-to-date, credible picture of East Timorese school children's low literacy levels in the co-official languages. The findings support accumulated evidence from both high- and low-income countries that quality mother-tongue instruction prior to or in parallel with

second-language instruction, is one of the best ways to ensure that learners become literate in second and additional languages (Gove, 2009, p. 14).

Two landmark conferences

Two conferences supported by donor and UN agencies put forward language planning initiatives that have marked new attitudes to language in education. The first conference, entitled '*Fo tulun atu labarik síra aprende/Ajudando as crianças a aprender*' (*Helping children learn*) was held in April, 2008 by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF and Care International. The organisers invited international agencies for the promotion of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), minority language speakers, non-governmental organisations, local and foreign academics, teachers and various government officials to speak at the conference. The Minister of Education placed multilingual education and educational quality squarely on the agenda by putting three key questions to the delegates:

(1) What should be considered the mother tongue in any given district given the linguistic diversity of Timor-Leste?
(2) Should teachers decide the language of instruction in each classroom?
(3) Is the current language-in-education policy giving stress to children by expecting too much from them?

Posing these questions placed the key principles of first language-based multilingual education on the table for serious and open discussion for the first time. In a cultural context where high value is placed on respect for community leaders and elders, the conference's scrutiny of Ministry language policy decisions was not without controversy. Criticism of the constitutional language provisions has provoked an understandable defensiveness among decision-makers, and the issues were hotly debated by the conference delegates. However, the emergent recommendations have opened the way for change. Key recommendations included further research and comprehensive policy development for bilingual education, clear advice and authorisation for teachers to teach in the national languages, the development of appropriate teaching materials and the development of orthographies in the national languages (Ministry of Education, 2008a, pp. 36–38, English version).

The second conference, entitled '*Enkontru dahuluk konaba dalen nasional Timor-Leste: Dalen oi-oin, povu ida deit*' (*The first meeting on the national languages of Timor-Leste: Many languages, just one people*) was held in August, 2010 by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Timor Lorosa'e Nippon Culture Centre, the *Instituto Nacional de Linguística* (*National Institute of Linguistics*) and UNESCO. The conference was attended by over 100 delegates representing almost every language variety in the country. It called on the government to honour its commitment to developing the national languages by establishing councils for the promotion of each national language and boosting its funding support for the Instituto Nacional de Linguística (INL) as the constitutional body responsible for the preservation and protection of the national languages and for the oversight of linguistic research in Timor-Leste. The meeting urged the government to give serious consideration to a role for the national languages in the education system. In a high profile gesture, the meeting launched the first-ever national languages writing competition, '*Ha'u nia lian, ha'u nia rai*' (*My language, my nation*) in the presence of the President and with advertising on national television. These two community-based policy initiatives,

which have provided the impetus for important shifts in perspective, have been accompanied by important reforms in the structure of education.

Education reform, social inclusion and current policy development

The Education System Framework Law (Law 14/2008), known as the Basic Education Act, established a system of 9 years' compulsory, free basic education, divided into three sequential 3-year cycles. The first cycle covers years 1–3, the second cycle covers years 4–6 and the third cycle covers years 7–9. Basic education is then followed by 3 years of secondary education. The new system also prioritises the expansion and enhancement of pre-school provision. Article 8 states that the teaching languages of the East Timorese education system are Tetum and Portuguese (Ministry of Education, 2008b, English version). Article 12, which lists the objectives for primary education, contains three references to language in the curriculum:

(1) to 'guarantee the mastery of Tetum and Portuguese' (Article 12d);
(2) to provide learning of a first foreign language (Article 12e); and
(3) to 'develop knowledge and appreciation of the official and national languages' (Article 12g).

The Basic Education Act put further pressure on the Ministry of Education to produce a workable language-in-education policy that supports the delivery of universal quality education. In a comprehensive document, the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2011–2015 sets out seven priority programmes for the improvement of educational provision and quality. Priority Programme Two, 'Basic Education Reform' states that on completion of basic education '… all children should excel in both national official languages and learn the fundamentals to understand English, their first foreign language' (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 19, English version). Curriculum reform is explicitly understood in this document as part of nation-building, as the following statement indicates:

> The government has decided to pursue a national basic education curriculum as a means of building unity as well as to lift educational standards. Our new national curriculum will teach our children about our national values, history, and culture promoting fluency of our two official languages, and English. (p. 21)

The NESP does not specifically state anywhere why English is considered important for the nation, but sub-program 2.2 (p. 26) states that English will be introduced in grades 5 and 6. Indonesian does not appear to have any place in the primary curriculum according to the Basic Education Act and the NESP. Priority Programme Six, 'Social Inclusion', emphasises the need to remove all barriers to children's participation in education, stating:

> The lessons and outcomes of various local initiatives and of international studies in basic education have demonstrated the superiority of the use of a learner's mother tongue or first language in improving educational outcomes and promoting Education for All. Decisions about language of instruction, particularly in the early primary years, directly impact upon the accessibility, relevance and quality of learning. The Ministry will promote a national debate to define the basis for a national language-in-education policy to be included as a component of the Social Inclusion Policy. (p. 69)

In terms of policy discourse, the NESP indicates two key changes in perspective: The first is the recognition that the current policy of transitional bilingual schooling needs to be

reformed; and the second is that first language-based instruction is now seen as part of a strategy for social inclusion rather than as a partisan political issue. The NESP also explicitly defines English as the first foreign language in the schooling system.

In 2009 the Ministry of Education took further steps towards curriculum reform. At the Ministry's request, the National Education Commission (NEC), the key advisory body to the Ministry of Education, initiated a process whereby a policy on language use in schools was to be drafted, taking into account best practice in multilingual settings in the region and around the world. In April 2010, the Ministry mandated the NEC to form a language-in-education working group. This working group was charged with preparing language policy guidelines and planning strategies for the education sector, with a particular focus on pre-primary education (targeted at the first 2 years, i.e. at children aged 4 to 5) and the 9 years of basic compulsory education. Supported by a team of international policy experts, the working group was asked to produce a policy framework for the use of official and national languages in East Timorese schools by the end of 2010. In November 2009 and April 2010, two international missions were invited to advise the working group on how to operationalise the constitutional provisions for language in the school system. Out of these two missions, a radical new policy document emerged, which capitalised on the Ministry of Education's commitment to educational reform.

The mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) policy

International Mother Language Day is celebrated annually on 21 February to promote linguistic and cultural diversity (http://www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguageday/). On 21 February 2011, the Ministry of Education officially launched the national debate on MTB-MLE. The new policy document promoting an MTB-MLE policy for Timor-Leste was released at the launch. In this document, mother tongues are defined as the home languages or L1s of learners; for educational purposes Tetum is considered the L2, although it is acknowledged that Tetum should be regarded as L1 for teaching purposes in some communities; Portuguese is regarded as L3, English as L4 and Indonesian as L5. In this document, English and Indonesian are not prioritised until the third cycle of basic education, where it is recommended that English is introduced as a compulsory subject in Grade 7. The new policy orientations keep Indonesian in the education system rather than phasing it out, as earlier policy guidelines had stipulated; instead the policy document recommends the introduction of Indonesian as an elective in Grade 10. The major departure from previous policy lies in the provisions for the use of the national languages. The policy document recommends that L1s should be used as medium of instruction from the first year of pre-primary education until the end of Grade 3 and they should then be maintained as subjects from Grade 4. Tetum should be used orally by teachers in pre-primary education; it should be introduced as a medium of instruction both bilingually with L1 and as a subject in Grades 2 and 3 and maintained until the end of basic education. Portuguese should be introduced in Grade 4 bilingually with L1 and L2 and maintained until the end of basic education. At lower secondary level, Portuguese and Tetum should continue to be languages of instruction (National Education Commission [NEC], Ministry of Education, 2010a, pp. 18–19, English version).

In essence, the proposed policy framework conforms to a form of late-exit[5] bilingual schooling (Ramírez & Merino, 1990). In keeping with the principle that additive multilingualism works best when the L1 is maintained in the system for as long as possible (Heugh, Benson, Bogale, & Yohannes, 2007; Malone, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), the proposals are also divided into short-term, medium-term and long-term goals, seeking to implement

reform in a series of stages designed to maintain and sustain the national languages in the education system. Overall actions proposed for the immediate future are:

> *Education policy*: To introduce, and promote the principles of MTB-MLE to the media, educators, school students and school communities; to authorise teachers to use L1s at primary and pre-primary levels while encouraging the use of Tetum as L2 (National Education Commission [NEC], Ministry of Education, 2010b, p. 4, English version).
>
> *Demonstration schools*: To introduce national languages at pre-primary level in three districts by identifying willing pre-primary schools linked to primary schools where there could be L1 teaching by Grade 3 in 2013. These schools are referred to as demonstration schools (p. 4).
>
> *Teaching assistants*: Where qualified teachers do not speak the local language of their students, they should be supported by teaching assistants from the local community who can provide oral explanations to the children in the local language (p. 5). Teaching assistants are envisaged as temporary positions that will be phased out as more teachers are trained and teaching assistants themselves opt to train as qualified teachers (p. 16, appendix D).
>
> *Basic teacher education*: To integrate courses in MTB-MLE into all pre-service and in-service teacher-training programmes and to update teacher competency frameworks to include the new policy orientations. All basic training curriculum and materials should be written in Tetum and all other training materials should be bilingual in Tetum and Portuguese (p. 4).
>
> *Curriculum*: To revise the current basic education curriculum for grades 1 through 9 (p. 5) to bring it in line with MTB-MLE principles.

These activities will be supported by the language-in-education working group and a language-in-education adviser whose role is to coordinate the proposed activities, to provide advice to the Ministry on the staged implementation of the new policy and to liaise with Ministry officials, non-governmental organisations and donors (p. 4).

Key medium-term goals to be achieved by 2015 include the ongoing review of MTB-MLE in demonstration schools; the continued enhancement of Tetum curriculum and textbooks; and the expansion of MTB-MLE, wherever conditions allow. Key long-term goals to be achieved by 2020 include the expansion of MTB-MLE in areas around the demonstration schools; the extension of L1s as subjects and as medium of instruction into the second cycle of basic education and the expansion of teacher training and materials development in as many national languages as possible (p. 5). Not least, the document recommends that the features and benefits of multilingual education should be disseminated via the media, particularly in the school communities around the demonstration schools. The public should also be invited to give feedback on their experience of the demonstration schools (p. 12).

In a further strong move towards bottom-up planning, it is recommended that the base for most policy actions should shift to councils for the promotion of mother tongue for each national language (p. 6). These councils should consist of community elders, men and women representing the local speech community who are willing to work with linguists and teachers to develop their languages through education. The goal of these councils is to advise and develop orthographies that can be used to develop reading and teaching materials in the national languages. The role of the INL should be to work towards the

production of harmonised and agreed orthographies as well as additional linguistic resources, such as dictionaries for the national languages (p. 8).

Looking back and looking forward: risks and prospects

Language-in-education policy in Timor-Leste has been subject to controversy and criticism from all sides, but it would be wrong to underestimate the progress that has been made in the reconstruction and re-development of the education sector since 1999. In just over a decade the Ministry of Education has moved from a position where Tetum was considered a language unfit for use in schools, to one where it was regarded as merely a 'pedagogic aide', to a development and maintenance view which accommodates multilingualism and legitimates the national languages as a medium of instruction.

Tracking the shifts in education language policy development, it seems clear that the early focus on the rapid introduction of a high status, former colonial language as sole medium of instruction exacted a high price from East Timorese parents, teachers and children. A significant percentage of families, especially in rural and remote areas, have not been convinced enough of the value of formal education to send their children to school. Policy orientations to date appear to have left many teachers caught between complying with macro-level policy and meeting the needs of their students, many of whom have not been able to understand monolingual instruction in Portuguese (Baldauf, 2006; Chua & Baldauf, 2011). In a longitudinal study of East Timorese teachers' classroom practices, Quinn (2007) found that, although they made use of children's home languages in the classroom, teachers had little idea how to elicit meaning from curriculum content. According to Quinn (2007, p. 259), the fact that they were using a range of languages was more illustrative of their efforts to make learning accessible to students than of an understanding of the relationship between language, literacy and content-based teaching. Although such practices allow teachers to be seen to accomplish lessons, there is little creative, exploratory or developmental use of language in the classroom (Martin, 2005, p. 89). This type of micro-level resistance to unworkable policies (Baldauf, 2006, p. 157), through the use of other resources alongside the official language, has been reported in many countries, for instance in Botswana (Arthur, 1996), Brunei (Martin, 2005, 2008), Kenya (Bunyi, 2005; Muthwii, 2007) and South Africa (Probyn, 2005). All these studies report that teachers' unsystematic use of language produces poor learning outcomes.

The lag between new policy developments and public understanding and acceptance has also meant that policy changes have been slow to be translated into practice. Hailemariam, Kroon, and Walters (1999, p. 490) note the inherent tension between the need for public evaluation and discussion and the orderly, efficient implementation of policy. As they write, 'emotionally charged arguments, sometimes based on ungrounded assumptions, may stem from prejudices and mistrust. Such emotion is bound to affect the implementation of even the most ideal policy'. For their part, the larger donor agencies have done little to provide clarity. With only a handful of notable exceptions, donors have signally failed to engage with MTB-MLE and they have consequently failed to convey policy alternatives to the general public.

In a study of impediments to the effective implementation of mother tongue-based instruction in Malawi, Kamwendo (2008, pp. 356–357) noted:

- the lack of accurate and adequate sociolinguistic data that could have guided policy;
- inadequate human and material resources;
- missed and underutilised opportunities;

- a lukewarm approach to the language policy;
- frequent changes of personnel at the Ministry of Education headquarters;
- ill prepared personnel;
- inadequate sensitisation of key Ministry staff; and
- the lack of publicity.

Any and all of these impediments are very real threats to the successful implementation of MTB-MLE in Timor-Leste. The lesson to be drawn from the experience of language-in-education policy development in Timor-Leste to date is that language policy-making and planning from above need to be complemented by language planning from below (Chua & Baldauf, 2011, p. 940; Heugh, 2010). The early imposition of a Portuguese-only language-in-education policy was a highly symbolic decision, motivated by strong ties to the former colonial language and the geopolitical exigencies of post-independence nation building. However, it failed to take into account the social and educational contexts of the local communities in which policy was to be enacted (see also, Martin, 2005.).

Measures that will facilitate the effective and sustained implementation of MTB-MLE in Timor-Leste include: the equitable management of the process of identifying communities for the first demonstration schools; the consultation of the various language communities and their engagement in developing orthographies for their languages; the use of reliable research methods to predict the social and language ecological impacts of introducing literacy in certain languages; the consistent planning of professional development that reaches all teachers; the production of appropriate materials; and the careful, supportive monitoring of classroom practice.

The successful implementation of MTB-MLE will depend heavily on teachers' investment in its principles and their willingness to adopt new practices. The role of teachers in successful policy implementation cannot be underestimated. As Martin (1999) notes, teachers are the interface between policy and their pupils. They also have an influence on how their students engage with the curriculum and its content. Martin (2008) argues that it is essential for teachers to be equipped with the necessary pedagogical skills and understandings of the sociolinguistic context in which they live and work if they are to work for and not against the policy (Chua & Baldauf, 2011, p. 938). A simple shift to mother tongue instruction will not in itself improve teaching quality, student literacy or educational outcomes, particularly in view of the current conditions in most schools. There is a risk that continued insufficient outcomes will result from poor teaching, inadequate or unsuitable materials and unsystematic language practices.

In addition to teacher education and materials production, curriculum development and appropriate assessment, public support and community understanding all need to be in place for a successful MTB-MLE programme to become established. An emphasis on formal assessment and examinations in the L3 (Portuguese) and/or parental pressure to prioritise L4 (English) may well produce a washback effect (Messick, 1996) that undermines public faith in the effectiveness of MTB-MLE (see also, Benson, 2010; Heugh, 2010). Given the role of Indonesian in the region and the number of East Timorese who speak it, the exclusion of L5 (Indonesian) from the curriculum could lead to the public perception that the new policy is neither multilingual nor equitable. Community attitudes to the use of their languages and cultures in educational contexts are another key constraint in the implementation of a localised curriculum using the languages of the home (Young, 2002, p. 230). Lack of parental and community understanding of MTB-MLE has often been the reason why programmes founder in contexts where the dominant and former

colonial languages are regarded as the only languages of opportunity and upward mobility (Hornberger, 1987; Kamwangamalu, 2001).

Policy made at the state or the macro-level needs to find resonance with a range of stakeholders within the polity (Chua & Baldauf, 2011, p. 938). In order for reforms to become a reality, the Ministry of Education needs to make them meaningful to different target groups. One key target group are members of parliament and leaders of political parties, who need to be persuaded to stop treating language-in-education as a side issue and lend their active support to MTB-MLE. Political leaders have an important role to play in helping understandings of policy trickle down to their supporters and constituents. A second key target group are the international donor agencies. International donors provide the funding that can make or break policy decisions. The genuine commitment and active involvement of donors will pay a major part in making MTB-MLE a reality in Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste need not look to the countries of the global north for evidence to show that MTB-MLE programmes improve educational outcomes, provided they are maintained in the educational system for as long as possible. It could look to the Philippines for examples of successful bridging programmes for minority language communities (Dekker & Young, 2005; Malone, 2005; Young, 2002, 2003). It could look to Cambodia (Middleborg, 2005; Thomas, 2002) and China (Geary & Pan, 2001) for examples of mother tongue schooling for ethnic minorities in remote communities with low resources. It could look to Papua New Guinea for successful examples of community materials development projects (Easton, 2003) and the use of indigenous, culturally appropriate pedagogies for vernacular education (Pickford, 2005). Timor-Leste could look to African and Asian countries for examples of successful mother tongue pilot projects (Benson, 2004, 2010). It could look to Ethiopia and the Philippines for longitudinal evidence that maintaining L1s in the curriculum for as long as possible improves literacy and numeracy outcomes (Alidou et al., 2006; Benson, 2010; Heugh, 2010; Nolasco, 2009; Walter & Dekker, 2008).

In closing, clear policy and guidelines from above that are: (a) free from deference to donor pressure and perceived imperatives to use a former colonial language; and (b) developed in close consultation with stakeholders, allow the development of localised language planning from below (Heugh, 2010). With the Basic Education Act, the NESP and the MTB-MLE policy documents comes the opportunity for real bottom-up change to be enacted and consolidated. If the NEC policy document is passed by the Council of Ministers, the scene will be set for children to be taught to read and write in the languages of their home. However, policy documents will remain merely words on paper if Ministry leaders waver or East Timorese politicians, donors, educators, parents and community actors do not take up the recommendations and put them into practice of their own accord. Macro- and micro-level policy and planning need to work together in order for effective implementation to take place (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008). It is not enough to rely on individual actors and foreign advisers to make MTB-MLE a reality in Timor-Leste. The strongest chance for sustainability and ultimate success now lies in localised, community acceptance and ownership of the new policy orientations, i.e. in the assumption of agency. This assumption of agency will entail the consultation and involvement of local school communities in combination with detailed sociolinguistic research and strong efforts to win the understanding and engagement of teachers in adapting and developing curricula and pedagogies that are firmly grounded in local communities and their cultural realities.

Notes

1. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, in 2008 net primary enrolment was lower than all other countries in the region; e.g. Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, 97%; Philippines, 92%; Cambodia, 89%; and Laos, 82% (retrieved May 11, 2011, from http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=125&IF_Language=eng&BR_Fact=NEFST&BR_Region=40515).
2. Submersion schooling: a system where children with a low status L1 have to learn through the medium of a foreign language with high status. The L1 does not develop because the children are forbidden to use it or they are made to feel ashamed of it – a subtractive learning situation (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, p. 582). It contains the idea that the student is expected to learn in the dominant foreign language as quickly as possible (Baker, 2006, p. 216).
3. Transitional schooling: the shift in the language of instruction from the L1 to the dominant foreign language or shift from the L1 to the language of literacy (Benson, 2004). Students are taught briefly in the L1 until they are deemed proficient enough to cope with instruction in the dominant foreign language. The aim is assimilation; i.e. to shift the child from the use of home languages to the use of the dominant language (Baker, 2006, p. 218).
4. Early-exit bilingual schooling: 2 years maximum teaching support using the L1 (Baker, 2006, p. 221).
5. Late-exit bilingual schooling: allows around 40% of classroom teaching in the L1 until at least Grade 6 (Baker, 2006, p. 221).

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Success or failure of primary second/foreign language programmes in Asia: what do the data tell us?

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Primary school second/foreign language (SL/FL) programmes in Asia, as well as in other parts of the world, are becoming more common, with many targeting English as the SL or FL. The pressures for such English language programmes come from top-down notions that in a globalised world English is required for societies to be competitive, especially with Asian neighbours, and bottom-up pressures from parents who see English as the key to educational success for their children. In many polities, these forces have resulted in support for policies that introduce early primary school English teaching curricula for all students and have led to parents spending large sums of money on private tutoring or out-of-school tuition. This study reviews the results of nine language planning studies from the Asian region that set out to examine questions such as 'Is this trend towards early primary SL or FL education (mainly English) realistic or is it unattainable and a waste of resources? Do children really benefit from these programmes? What needs to be done to foster learners' success?' These issues are viewed from a language planning and policy perspective through an examination of the language-in-education policy types required for the development of successful programmes. The policies of a number of Asian countries are used as case studies to illustrate this issue.

Introduction

Kaplan, Baldauf and Kamwangamalu (2011) have suggested 12 reasons for educational language plans sometimes failing. These include:

(1) The time dedicated to language learning is inadequate.
(2) Indigenous teacher training is not appropriate or effective.
(3) Native speakers cannot fill the proficiency and availability gap.
(4) Educational materials may not be sufficient or appropriate.
(5) Methodology may not be appropriate to desired outcomes.

(6) Resources may not be adequate for student population needs.
(7) Continuity of commitment may be problematic.
(8) Language norms may be a problem.
(9) International assistance programmes may not be useful.
(10) Primary school children may not be prepared for early language learning.
(11) Instruction may not actually meet community and/or national objectives.
(12) Language endangerment may increase.

In addition, having different language policies for different types of schools (e.g. public and private) also can lead to the government policy failure (Phyak, 2011). Although there have been some attempts made to examine more general language planning issues and their successes and failures in individual polities in Asia (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2006; Fishman & Garcia, 2011, Chapters 13–22; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003, 2008), and a number of sources are available that look at English language teaching in Southeast and East Asia (Choi & Spolsky, 2007; Ho & Wong, 2003; Lee & Azman, 2004; McCloskey, Orr, & Dolitsky, 2006), there is a lack of cross-national analysis available that looks systematically at the issue of planning for English or other second languages (SLs) or foreign languages (FLs) for primary schools in Asia (but for Europe, see Extra & Gorter, 2008; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, for a more general discussion of language policy and planning (LPP) and education in Asian). The authors of the papers in this volume fill this gap by providing some specific examples of both successful and more problematic LPP outcomes. They also examine what has influenced that policy and planning in relation to introducing languages (i.e. primarily English) as an FL/SL in primary schools in the Asia Pacific region. In this paper, we summarise these issues and draw some conclusions.

Discussion: the early introduction of English

Having examined some instances of the successes, problems and challenges of language planning for primary schools in the nine Asia Pacific polities covered in this volume, let us now step back to see if there seem to be generalisations that can be made about language planning success and failure with regard to primary school SL/FL (i.e. predominantly English) teaching in East and Southeast Asian polities and, in particular, whether there are more general implications that can be drawn. Nearly a decade ago, Nunan's (2003, p. 594) survey of polities indicated that English was being introduced at an early age, indicating a change in access policy. This trend has intensified under the pressure of economic competition. This is so despite the fact that such teaching requires massive commitments of funds (i.e. resourcing policy), special early childhood teacher training, teachers with excellent language skills (i.e. personnel policy), and books and materials (i.e. curriculum, materials and methods policy). As with much language planning, the decisions taken by governments appear to be predominantly political (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2007) and against the little FL – as opposed to SL – research evidence available (Mũnoz, 2006). Support for such teaching also appears to be inadequate. Unless such programmes are properly resourced, one might predict massive failures and the unfortunate waste of resources. A brief overview of the language policies, language-in-education policy imperatives and the reasons for implementing them and language evaluation strategies are summarised in Table 1. In the following sections, drawing on the 12 reasons for language-in-education plans failing, the findings from the studies in this volume are summarised under the six key policy headings found in Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) before some of the contextual factors involved are examined.

Table 1. Policy and reasons for the introduction of primary SLs/English in Southeast and East Asian polities?

Polity	Access policy[a]	Frequency of instruction	Impact of L2s/English as a global language; community policy	Evaluation policy
Bangladesh	Grade 1, age 6	Five times a week, 3 h, on average, a week	Introduced in the earliest grade in 1992 Setting communicative competence as the goal of instruction for national participation in the global economy Enhancing the standards of English in the country School instruction has not helped much in reaching these goals and factors outside school influence learning achievement and outcomes	
China, PRC	Grade 3, ages 8–9	Four times a week, with a minimum of 80 min	Age for compulsory English lowered from 11 to 9 in September 2001 English teaching emerging as a private business	Formative assessment to evaluate students' performance is suggested in various forms for students to choose
Japan	Grades 5 and 6	One 45 min period per week	Implemented in 2011 in the form of 'Foreign Language Activities' Part of the plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities' to remain competitive in the international market	

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

Polity	Access policy[a]	Frequency of instruction	Impact of L2s/English as a global language; community policy	Evaluation policy
Malaysia	Grade 1, age 7	National schools: 300 min/week; National-type schools (vernacular):150 min/week	English is an SL in Malaysia	*The PPSMI* was implemented in 2003 and has shown potential of undesirable outcomes – in terms of students' content and language learning and the urban–rural divide – which led to the reversal of the PPSMI policy in stages beginning in 2011
			English is a compulsory subject in primary school curriculum	*The MBMMBI Policy replaces the PPSMI policy and began its implementation at Grade 1(Year1) in 2011. The MBMMBI* positions the higher status of Bahasa Malaysia as the language of knowledge, which was missing in the PPSMI policy, while English is empowered, evidently in the increase of teaching time and the reintroduction of native English-speaking teachers in the educational system
			Concern with the decline in educational standards and economic competitive advantage Pro-PPSMI parent groups who lobby for maintaining the PPSMI policy The trend that parents send their children to expensive private schools for better exposure to English-linguistic environment Fear of impact on national language	

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

Nepal	Grade 1, age 6	Primary level (Grades 1–5): 150 periods in one academic year	A large number of public schools which are managed by local communities are shifting from Nepali to English medium of instruction	Grades 1–3: Continuous assessment: managed by schools and teachers in which everyday records of students' progress (portfolio) in language skills, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are kept
		Lower secondary (Grades 6–8): 175 periods in one academic year	Teaching of and in first language policy at primary level is not effective due to early introduction of English both as a subject and as the medium of instruction	Grades 4–5: formal test (half-yearly and annual examinations managed by schools) involves (a) simple, familiar conversation, (b) response to aural stimulus and reading/writing test which tests the pupils' ability to read and understand simple sentences and write neatly and correctly
		Secondary (Grades 9–10): 150 periods in one academic year (Note: Duration of period is 45 min)	Parents are sending their children to private schools (which are virtually English medium) by spending a huge amount of money as they assume that learning English is synonymous with getting quality education	Grades 6–7: terminal (summative) examination (60%) and continuous assessment system (40%)
			Two language policies: English medium (private schools) and Nepali or other local language medium (public schools)	Grade 8: district-level examination (managed by District Education Office), 25% marks for listening and speaking skills and 75% marks for reading and writing skills

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

Polity	Access policy[a]	Frequency of instruction	Impact of L2s/English as a global language; community policy	Evaluation policy
			Due to lack of competent, proficient and trained teachers, students (in public schools) still find English as the most difficult subject, leading to high failure rate in the national-level School Leaving Certificate Examination though they start learning from Grade 1	
Singapore	Grade 1, age 7	As an L1 for Grade 1 through tertiary (except for mother tongue classes)	English is the first language of all Singaporeans	Major national examinations to serve as the benchmark:
			It is compulsory for all Singaporeans to learn to speak and write in English proficiently	1. Primary School Leaving Examination taken at the end of primary school education (12 years old). The subjects English, Mathematics and Science are tested in English, except for mother tongue languages
			It is the medium of instruction used in all subjects in government schools, except for mother tongue and third language classes	2. The General Certificate of Education (GCE) O-Level taken at the end of secondary school education (16 or 17 years old) and GCE A-Level taken at the end of junior college education (18 or 19 years old) by students who are enrolled in the government or government-aided schools
Taiwan	Grade 3, ages 9–10	Two 40 min periods a week	EFL education lowered from secondary school level (Grade 7) to Grade 5 in 2001 and to Grade 3 in 2005	Multiple assessments are stipulated in primary EFL education curriculum

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

			Inconsistency in starting grade levels of EFL education among local government districts Parents put an overemphasis on children's English learning Private language institutions have mushroomed nationwide Huge financial investment in primary EFL education Marginalised the local language policy and its use and learning	However, most of the assessments are conducted in the form of written tests Some local governments require fifth-grade students to take a cross-district proficiency test
Timor-Leste	Grades 1–9 Portuguese as MOI. Tetum as an auxiliary teaching language Grade 7–9 English is introduced or Year 5 where human resources and materials allow. (RCDEB, 2010, p. 15).	First and second cycles (Grades 1 through 6): Tetum: Grades 1–2: Five 50 min periods a week. Grade 3: Four 50 min periods a week. Grades 4–6: Three 50 min periods a week Portuguese: Grades 1– 2: Three 50 min periods a week. Grade 3: Four 50 min periods a week. Grades 4–6: Five 50 min period a week. English: Grades 5–6: Two 50 min periods a week (optional, depending on the school's capacity to teach English. Third cycle (Grades 7–9):	• Widespread public interest in learning English. • Growing numbers of urban East Timorese have been exposed to English and have gained at least some proficiency in English. • The proposed multilingual education policy recommends that English should be introduced in Grade 7 to allow for longer exposure to the national and co-official languages.	• Summative assessment in all subjects at the end of each semester from Grade 1. • Standardised tests in Grades 4 and 6. • National exams at the end of Grade 9. All subjects are currently examined in Portuguese except for Tetum and English.

(*Continued*)

Table 1. Continued.

Polity	Access policy[a]	Frequency of instruction	Impact of L2s/English as a global language; community policy	Evaluation policy
		Tetum: Three 45 min periods a week. Portuguese: Five 45 min periods a week. English: Three 45 min periods a week.		
Vietnam	Grade 3, ages 8–9 (pilot)	Grades 3–5: 140 periods per year	The introduction of English at the primary school level has become increasingly prominent, especially in big cities since the 1990s	Evaluation focuses on students' communicative competence in language use
		Grades 6–9: 105 periods for each Grade (three periods/week	Compulsory English lowered from secondary school level (Grade 6) to Grade 3 in 2010 (pilot English curriculum). English was taught as an elective subject long ago	Desire for primary children to reach Level A1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
		Grades 10–12: 105 periods for each grade (three periods/week)	English is taught from Grade 1 in some private primary schools. There has been a great demand for quality primary English education	Inconsistency between the objectives and teaching practice Lack of qualified teachers Lack of resources

Notes: Additional contributors to this table were Nor Liza Ali (Malaysia) and Chen Ai-Hua (Taiwan). No data were provided for Hong Kong. Abbreviations: *PPSMI policy – Dasar Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris*, The use of English in the teaching of science and mathematics policy.

[a]Grade level and age at which English/SL/FLs are introduced as a compulsory subject.

Access policy

Governments have increasingly been providing access to English through primary programmes in English that now start in Grade 3 or even Grade 1. The important question as to whether children are prepared for early language learning in an FL before they have developed literacy skills in their own language is rarely considered, although in Singapore, where the early teaching of English is most advanced, policy puts an emphasis on pre-school activities in English. However, this input still may not be sufficient to prepare students who do not speak English at home to start English as a medium of instruction in school in Grade 1 (Chua, 2011). While this access is often initially couched in terms of ability to offer programmes, or provided in cities where resources were available, early access has become more widespread. This expansion has led to inequalities in both access and quality of access within most polities (see the discussion in Chen, 2011; Hamid & Baldauf, 2011; Li, 2011; Nguyen, 2011; Phyak, 2011).

Personnel policy

Primary teaching requires a different type of training for all teachers, including language teachers. The rapid expansion of primary programmes has meant that there are not enough teachers, not to mention appropriately trained teachers. For instance, in Vietnam, most of the primary English teachers were not formally trained to teach English at the primary level (Nguyen, 2011). Even where there are enough teachers, such as in Bangladesh or Nepal, many are not adequately trained nor do they have adequate English language skills (Hamid, 2010; Phyak, 2011). Even in well-resourced situations such as in Singapore, teacher training could be more effective (Chua, 2011). This shortage has led to the use of part-time (often unqualified) locals (Chen, 2011; Li, 2010, 2011) or the importation of expensive native speakers (some of whom also may not be well trained) (Ali, Hamid, & Moni, 2011; Chen, 2011; Hashimoto, 2011). This deficiency points to an urgent need for programmes that develop the specialists required, through both pre-service or in-service training. Such training needs to go beyond short-term language assistance programmes, such as those being provided in Bangladesh (Hamid, 2010), to develop local capacity to train teachers. Provision also must be made for teachers to counter drift away from full control of the target language through periodic opportunities to refresh language skills (Nguyen, 2011), perhaps through residence in areas where the target language is the dominant language.

Curriculum, methods and materials policy

One commonality found across the polities in the region is that they all have put in place often quite impressive curriculum policies with a communicative focus. However, this is in some ways the easy part – setting aspirations through policy. However, as these polity case studies show, implementation which involves moving to a more communicative methodology and requires appropriate materials, especially textbooks, as well as a variety of other supporting facilities, is much more difficult both to follow and to finance. For example, in both Taiwan (Chen, 2011) and Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011), the textbooks in use are controversial, and the appropriateness of some is open to question.

The reality that the target language is not widely spoken in the community has an impact on adopting a communicative focus, as the target language remains entirely a school artefact, never employed by learners beyond the classroom and beyond the narrow range of topics available to the classroom. This situation found in many areas outside the major

urban areas in Asia constitutes a problem that may make using the communicative approach much more difficult, if not impractical (e.g. in Bangladesh – Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

Resourcing policy

Funding for language programmes is inherently expensive, and for some countries in Asia, this creates major problems. In Bangladesh (Hamid, 2010) and Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011), for example, funding for normal programmes, the training of teachers and money for textbooks are all inadequate. There is little or no funding that can be found for languages that consume a lot of resources. For this reason, in some countries such as Bangladesh, much development funding for English language teaching relies on funding from interested foreign donors (Hamid, 2010). Under such circumstances, FL teaching is unlikely to increase significantly, unless there are other social or economic reasons for this to occur. Foreign donors may misconceive the limitations in the target policy and the differences between sociocultural assumptions (e.g. about the role of women, the role of schools and the role of learning) in the donor community and in the recipient community.

In most other polities in the region, the private sector plays an important role in primary-level English study. As Nguyen (2011) found in her study of two primary schools in Vietnam, the privately funded school was able to attract better teachers and provide better conditions because it was better resourced. In Taiwan, many parents indicated that they were sending their children for extra tuition (Chen, 2011), while even in Singapore where funding for education is substantial, most parents still send their children to after-hours tuition, with English and mathematics being the subjects most frequently invested in (Chua, 2011). Some of these programmes are also sponsored by foreign entities such as the British Council. However, as Chen (2011) and Hamid (2010; also see Hamid & Baldauf, 2011) pointed out, in Taiwan and Bangladesh, this disparity between those who can afford private tuition and those who cannot is creating social divisions in society.

Community policy: parent-driven demand for English

While globalisation and comparisons with proficiency in other Asian polities have driven polities to develop early primary school English language programmes, parents are also pressuring governments to provide primary English programmes (Chen, 2011) and are investing heavily in English language education through after-school classes and tutoring – see the previous section (also see Hamid, Sussex & Khan, 2009). Many parents clearly believe that their families' economic future depends on English proficiency. This is creating inequality of opportunity in many societies and preserving socio-economic differences within the learner community.

Evaluation policy

One of the major problems is that evaluation policy – at least as it is implemented – has not caught up with curriculum policy and is often contradictory to it. While curriculum policy at the primary level tends to stress communicative competence, most of the high-stakes examinations are still based on grammar, vocabulary and multiple-choice rote learning. These case studies show that there is some awareness of this issue. Tests with a more communicative focus are being developed in a number of polities (e.g. South Korea, China, Nepal and Taiwan), but there is still a problem of bringing evaluation policy and language teaching policy into alignment.

Contextual factors

The studies in this volume raise a number of contextual factors that need to be considered as they relate to teaching English or other SLs at primary school. These include changes to the language ecology, indigenisation of English, objections and resistance to English, and issues of language, identity and language rights. Communities need to consider what impact strong languages such as Chinese, English or Portuguese might have on majority languages in some polities (Kristinsson & Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2010 – Icelandic), minority languages, immigrant languages or indigenous languages and whether the loss of registers by these languages justifies the wide use of a strong language of wider communication.

English and changes to the language ecology

As English has become increasingly important in Asian education and societies, it has had an impact on other languages. For example, in Singapore, use of English as a mother tongue in Singaporean households has increased, and this has required a change in the way Mandarin (and Tamil) is taught in schools, with Mandarin as an SL programmes being implemented (Chua, 2011; Zhao, Liu & Hong, 2007). Its increasing presence in the curriculum more generally may be reducing the space for other languages to be taught, including minority languages. This is clearly occurring in Taiwan, where the curricular reforms which introduced English and minority languages into the curriculum at about the same time have marginalised minority language teaching (Chen, 2011; Tsao, 2008), and in Nepal, where the popularity of English is undermining reforms to teach minority languages (Phyak, 2011). In Hong Kong, the changes in policy beginning with the handover from British colonial rule to incorporation in the People's Republic of China as a Special Administrative Region have also meant changes that effect minorities, such as the South Asians (Gao, 2011). Given that the curriculum is not infinitely expansive, and that time is an important factor in teaching a language (Kaplan et al., 2011), the addition of English to the curriculum is bound to force other things out.

As a new nation with a fresh opportunity to develop language policy, Timor-Leste provides an interesting contrast to other polities discussed in this volume, as under the proposed new multilingual approach, Portuguese and Tetum would be introduced in pre-primary school and FLs such as English and Indonesian would only appear in Grade 7 (RCDEB, 2010; Taylor-Leech, 2011). It will be interesting to see whether this approach is successful more generally, but also in terms of keeping English out of primary school.

Indigenisation of English

A widespread phenomenon in Asia is the development of a cline of varieties of English ranging from 'standard' English at one end to substrate varieties at the other end. These varieties represent both indigenisation and identity markers; for example, Singlish incorporates Hokkien and Malay words and usage (see http://www.talkingcock.com) and is widely used by young people in Singapore (Chua, 2011). Other recognised varieties in the literature include Manglish (see the impact of this at the university level in Ali et al., 2011), Chinglish (Qiang & Wolff, 2003) and Japlish/Japalish (Yamagouchi, 2002). Such varieties already exist in Korea, Vietnam and South Asia. Similar varieties have also been reported elsewhere in the world, for example, Sheng in Kenya, which derives from the mixing of Swahili and English (Parkin, 1974), and CamFranglais (also Franglais) in Cameroon, which refers to a dialect created by mixing English and French (and some local languages). The prevalence

of these indigenised Englishes in Asia is illustrated in the following anecdote provided by Kaplan:

> At an academic cocktail party in Tokyo some dozen years ago, I met a Japanese economics professional who was recently retired from a career in Japanese Government service. We spoke together (not without some difficulty) for quite some time, largely in Japlish – his developed through his exposure to global English, mine through my exposure to Japanese academic colleagues who were mildly tolerant of my ignorance. In sum, he argued that all efforts to teach 'good' English to Japanese should be abandoned; rather, Japlish should be taught because Japanese would speak it to non-Japanese and would encounter it from non-Japanese, regardless of the circumstances and the linguistic backgrounds of the interlocutors (our conversation being an example). In hindsight, he was arguing, probably rightly, for the kind of plurilingualism described by Canagarajah (2009). As my Japanese interlocutor's behaviour shows, the 'correction' (in language management theory terms) was for both of us to use Japlish, despite the fact that in this situation, hosted by the Japanese faculty of a Japanese university, a Japanese speaker, a government official, an elder, surrendered his first language and control of the discourse to me, an English speaker, a foreigner, a mere academic and a chronological junior. (Kaplan, 2011, p. 92).

Objections and resistance

Examples of resistance to the spread of English or other FLs (Canagarajah, 1999) are perhaps more difficult to cite, although this is clearly occurring in some sectors and may be causing increased social stratification as in Bangladesh or Nepal or may be causing the felt need to protect the national language, as in Japan (Hashimoto, 2011). However, we may note that despite the fact that English is a required subject in many polities (for graduation and for professional qualifications), many students seem demotivated to learn it. The question as to whether this is the result of resistance and/or problems related to instruction may be posed (Tran & Baldauf, 2007).

Identity and linguistic rights

The increased presence of English in the curriculum normally means that something else must go – curricula and schools only have a fixed amount of time. Most new introductions – except for the previously instituted programmes such as teaching mathematics and science in English in Malaysia from Form 1 (Ali et al., 2011) – do not make use of bilingual principles. Typically, such additions put pressures on third languages (e.g. South Asian languages in Hong Kong, Gao, 2011, or indigenous languages in Taiwan, Chen, 2011), whether they are minority languages or SLs/FLs. Although the issue of linguistic rights for indigenous communities is being addressed by language policies in different polities such as Nepal (Phyak, 2011) or Taiwan (Chen, 2011), the popularity of English language education continues to increase due to the perceived relationship between English as a language of the educated and material prosperity and social standing. In this sense, parents' and children's desire to acquire wider social identities through English seems to be more powerful as social capital than the right to get an education in one's minority language for the expansion of English at the primary level in Asian countries.

Conclusions

In much of Asia, community-based multilingualism has traditionally been the norm, with new languages being absorbed into the language ecology (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), but there now seems to be a shift, whether stated or unstated, to an English-knowing bilingualism as the underpinning for these multilingual societies, for example, bi-literate, tri-lingual

Hong Kong (Gao, 2011) or English-dominant Singapore, with its cultural languages and Singlish (Chua, 2011). English is clearly becoming an Asian language and is being indigenised and used for local intercultural communication. In some polities where this process is more advanced, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Korea, there are signs of concern about how English is affecting the national or mother tongue languages, as well as the growing development of local varieties. These globalisation pressures are also putting pressure on minority languages and the resources available to teach them. In all the polities examined in this volume, the status of languages is in flux and policy-makers are struggling to manage outcomes that are increasingly being influenced by choices made by individuals. Perhaps in a globalised and interconnected world, at least in the urban areas, it is individual choice rather than government decisions that makes a difference to policy outcomes.

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