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## PERSPECTIVE

# Language and education: the missing link

How the language used in schools threatens the achievement of Education For All

Helen Pinnock  
with research by Gowri Vijayakumar

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## Foreword

Many people know what it is like to struggle in school. Others know what it is like to be forced to drop out. For many children, this deep frustration and disappointment is not caused by physical or monetary barriers, but by the decision to teach in a language which they do not understand.

Most of the world's countries contain different linguistic and cultural groups. Unfortunately, few education systems welcome these languages and cultures, attempting to promote one or two languages deemed important for unity and economic growth. As well as cutting many children off from their culture, this means that many children spend their time in school struggling to understand instead of building new knowledge. Many fail to learn either the school language or the language of their parents; large numbers drop out.

As this report from Save the Children and CfBT shows, the scale of damage caused by preventing children from learning in their first language is now clear. The risks of not taking action are greatest in multilingual countries affected by poverty, conflict and instability.

For indigenous people, and all those who have been denied the right to learn because of language, a better way forward is needed. Several countries, including Guatemala, are

moving towards education which values local, national and international languages and cultures. But many more governments require support and encouragement to make progress. The international community's commitments to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Education For All will not be achieved if millions of children enter school, only to drop out or fail due to poor language policy and practice.

Language is the channel through which people's cultures are transmitted. Only by ensuring its use and development at all levels can the tragedy of the disappearance of languages, which ultimately means the impoverishment of humanity, be prevented.

Now more than ever, unity in diversity is vital for human development and justice. Reflecting this in our schools is vital. All those working to improve the quality and reach of education now have an opportunity to recognise the vital role that children's language plays in learning, and to put genuine investment and commitment into good quality multilingual education.

**Dr Rigoberta Menchú**

Nobel Peace Laureate  
*UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for  
Culture of Peace*

## List of key terms

Education For All (EFA)	The Education for All movement took off at the World Conference on Education for All in 1990. Since then, the international community has taken up a set of commitments to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults by 2015.
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organisations have agreed to achieve eight international development goals by the year 2015. Goal 2 is to achieve universal primary education, with the commitment that by 2015 all children can complete a full course of primary schooling. Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women, with the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education at all levels by 2015.
Basic education	The range of educational activities taking place in various settings that aim to meet basic learning needs. According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), basic education comprises primary education (first stage of basic education) and lower secondary education (second stage). In developing countries in particular, Basic Education often also includes pre-primary education and/or adult literacy programmes.
DAC	The Donor Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
Fractionalisation	A term to describe the extent and complexity of divisions between different groups in a country, often applied to groups divided along religious, cultural, ethnic or linguistic lines.
Fragility	A fragile state is a low income country characterized by weak state capacity and/or weak state legitimacy.
Instruction/language of instruction	The main language used to conduct most or all teaching and learning activities in education. This may be determined by an official policy, or it may be the language chosen by educators in response to perceived demand.
Mother tongue	The main language used constantly from birth to interact and communicate with a child by their carers, family, friends and community. (If more than one language is constantly used in this way throughout childhood, a child can be considered bilingual.)
Mother tongue based education	Education which is based on, and begins teaching in, the language used by the child at home since birth.
Mother tongue based multilingual education	Learner-centred, active basic education which starts in the mother tongue and gradually introduces one or more other languages in a structured manner, linked to children's existing understanding in their first language or mother tongue. Teaching predominantly in the mother tongue for at least six years, alongside the development of other languages, is required for this approach to deliver high quality learning outcomes.  <i>NB:</i> There is ongoing debate about the best terms to describe education which is based in the language most familiar to the learner, and which aims to ensure strong competency in other languages also. For the purposes of this report terms which are likely to be most widely understood have been used, recognising that there may be slightly differing interpretations of some terms.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

## Executive Summary

*“Why do so many children fail to complete school, despite efforts to improve the quality of education?”*

Why are children’s learning levels in many countries so far below expectations? Why do so many children fail to complete school, despite efforts to improve the quality of education? Could there be something missing from our understanding of what it will take to deliver on Education For All, and the Millennium Development Goals? A range of experts argue that how language is used in schools for delivering the curriculum is an important factor in whether or not children succeed in education. In recent years much greater and clearer evidence on school language role in education has emerged, from a larger range of contexts.

This report is intended for senior Ministry of Education officials and national leaders concerned with education in linguistically diverse countries, as well as donor agencies supporting basic and post-basic education in low and middle income countries. The report considers the extent to which the language used for teaching and learning can be a key barrier or enabler in achieving national and international education commitments. It examines the most appropriate policy and investment actions for national governments, and discusses the challenges which might be experienced in pursuing good practice around school language. The report assesses the extent to which donor agencies are supporting or undermining efforts to address problems with school language, and presents recommendations for international collaboration to produce more strategic action to remove the language barriers which keep many children from progressing through education.

### **Evidence on the role school language plays in educational success or failure**

Large scale analysis of participation in education is showing that whether or not a child is taught in their first language, or mother tongue, often has a strong effect on whether or not a child attends school, particularly in rural areas. The language used to deliver the school curriculum pulls down the educational performance of many of those who do not use it at home, particularly those who do not have regular access to it outside school. International learning outcomes assessments show that for children who

manage to stay in education, there is a strong negative impact on achievement if their first language is not used for teaching and learning.

What is understood about how children learn in relation to language indicates that for preschool and primary years in particular, teaching in a language which is not familiar to a child is often too demanding for the child to cope with – particularly when they face other barriers to education, such as poverty, hunger and poor learning conditions. Children learn based on linking new knowledge to what is already familiar to them. Sudden shifts into an unfamiliar language sever those links. Not having access to primary schooling in a familiar language is leading to the exclusion of large numbers of children from education, particularly in developing countries.

There is also evidence that excluding linguistic communities from education because they do not understand the language used to teach contributes to political instability and conflict. Teaching through a language which a child does not already know well also fails to give children adequate skills in that language, despite being intended to do so. Such failures to achieve second language competency are likely to delay the economic growth of countries moving into the global knowledge economy.

These problems can be addressed successfully by providing at least six years of mother tongue education, with gradual introduction of other languages from an early stage. This approach is being progressively adopted in a range of settings, with significant success. However, international consensus about the value of mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education is not strong enough to deliver the shifts needed to overcome failures of school language.

### **Which countries are worst affected?**

The world’s most linguistically diverse societies, many of which use a single national or international language for schooling, account for a significant proportion of out-of-school children. 54 million out-of-school children live



in countries economists classify as ‘highly linguistically fractionalized’. These countries account for 58% of primary-school aged children. The most linguistically fractionalised countries contain 72% of out-of-school children worldwide. These numbers mean that language of instruction will need to be a strong priority for strategies focused on reaching the remaining MDG and EFA education targets.

In linguistically diverse countries, particularly those with high rural populations or large divisions between linguistic groups, it makes sense to treat school language as one of the most important factors in improving education access and fostering good learning outcomes.

The following categories in Figure 1 below represent particularly high risk settings, where language of instruction may have severe consequences for education access and achievement, as well as longer term economic and political fallout.

Any education strategy for these countries should put recognised good practice on language of instruction at the centre of plans for improving quality and access.

### Action for education leaders and planners

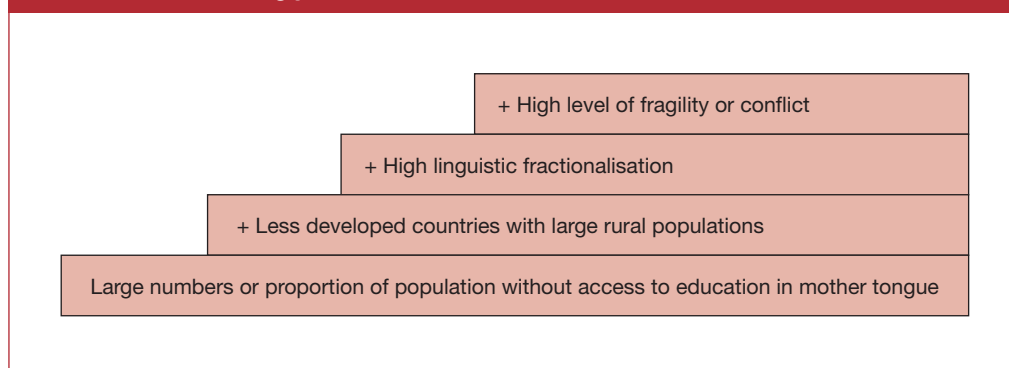
Comparatively speaking, inappropriate language of instruction is relatively easy to remove from the cocktail of poor quality teaching, poor school infrastructure, poverty and poor health facing many children in developing and middle income countries.

Education policy which prioritises mother tongue instruction within a strategy to improve quality and access, and which offers both first and second language learning opportunities to excluded groups, is strongly in the political and economic interests of countries with high levels of linguistic diversity.

Key recommendations for education ministries and national education leaders:

- Establish a policy commitment to improving school language, based on an intention to progress towards evidence-based good practice.
- Make sure teachers understand that the more they help children use and develop their mother tongues, the better children are likely to do in educational performance, including second language skills.
- Emphasise that if transitions to a national or international language are unavoidable in the school cycle, this transition should be gradual.
- Prioritise parts of the country where national or foreign prestige languages are not extensively available in daily life, and where education outcomes are poor, for assistance to develop mother tongue based multilingual education approaches.
- Develop locally appropriate and flexible learning outcome targets for these regions.
- Where a large variety of local languages present challenges to teaching in everyone’s mother tongue, a common language may be necessary at first for delivering the majority

**Figure 1: Contexts where risks associated with teaching in languages unfamiliar to children are increasingly severe**



*“When planned and resourced well, mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education can have substantial positive impact on education access and quality.”*

of the curriculum. Educators should choose this language based on how familiar it is to students. This means that in a rural area, the local lingua franca would be a far better choice as the medium of instruction than an international language.

- Instruct teacher training colleges to deliver the bulk of training in local languages.
- Allocate resources, teaching time and training to fulfil these aims progressively over time.
- Request external assistance to develop, expand and research mother tongue based multilingual approaches in the specific contexts of the country.

#### **Donor agencies – current focus and improving support**

Concerted donor action is needed to support good practice on language as a central plank in achieving education quality and inclusion aims. There is an urgent need to focus on language in order to avoid the large scale failure of efforts to deliver on the MDGs and Education For All, and to ensure that the public funds which donors invest in education are not jeopardised by financing schooling which is ‘language blind’ and excludes or fails large numbers of children.

An assessment of key education donors’ policy statements and investment activities (see Chapter 4) shows that language currently has the status of a side issue; some donors appear aware of good practice and are taking tentative action to promote it, but only on a small scale, and predominantly in relation to indigenous minority groups rather than to the whole school population affected. Few, if any, donors are currently demonstrating an understanding of the central importance of language of instruction in delivering quality basic education.

Key recommendations for donor agencies:

- State policy commitment to supporting mother tongue based primary and preschool education, particularly for rural populations.
- Bring language of instruction to the forefront of dialogue on education sector funding with government and multilateral partners. Prioritise this in countries affected by high levels of linguistic fractionalisation and fragility.

- Prioritise changes in access to mother tongue and multilingual education as desired outcomes of project and programme funding schemes.
- Work with national partners in priority countries to allocate at least 4% of pooled education funds and basic education budgets to the development of mother tongue based multilingual teaching and learning systems.
- Ensure that language indicators feature prominently in national and international benchmarks and assessment systems for school quality and education outcomes. In particular, ensure that coverage of primary education in mother tongue is highlighted as an indicator of education quality.

#### **Conclusion**

It is possible to deliver education in ways which make it easier for children to learn, which make sure that children are able to gain good second language skills, and which maintain and develop their first language. There is an opportunity for national governments and aid partners in key countries to collaborate much more strategically, in order progressively to expand mother tongue based multilingual education to large scale education system coverage. This would require placing language at the centre of international endeavours to improve the reach and quality of education for the most affected countries.

When planned and resourced well, mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education can have substantial positive impact on education access and quality. The evidence is clear that failing to start this process is taking a severe toll on educational access and delivery of outcomes in many countries. International collaboration is urgently required to support these processes. Language is not an issue limited to a few communities, a few groups, or a few countries. It affects every aspect and outcome of education systems worldwide. For millions of children, mother tongue based education represents one of the biggest gateways to achieving quality education and the opportunity of a better life.

## Introduction

“*Learning at school in a language which is not used in children's home lives is being linked both to poor performance and total exclusion from education.*”

Why are children's learning levels in many countries so far below expectations? Why do so many children fail to complete school, despite efforts to improve the quality of education? Could there be something missing from our understanding of what it will take to deliver on Education For All and the Millennium Development Goals?

Education experts and practitioners around the world have been arguing for some time that how language is used in schools is an important factor in whether or not children succeed in education. A key question is how close the language used for teaching is to the languages that children grow up with in daily life.

Estimates suggest that 44% of languages spoken by more than 10,000 people are not used as languages of instruction in education. These languages are spoken by nearly a billion people. Combining this figure with those of smaller linguistic groups indicates that 2.4 billion people speak languages which receive minimal use in education systems – nearly 40% of the world's population (Walter 2009<sup>1</sup>).

Significant new evidence has been produced to indicate that where school language is not used in children's daily lives, it can tip the balance towards total exclusion from learning.

### **Is teaching in children's first language desirable or essential?**

There is clear agreement among education and linguistics experts that teaching in the language that children have used from birth – their mother tongue or first language – offers the best chance of educational success.<sup>2</sup> Teaching in children's mother tongue has been discussed for some years as a way to help reduce the barriers that indigenous minority

children face in education (Minority Rights Group, 2009).

Nevertheless, policy and practice choices around the language used for teaching and learning in school appear to be driven mainly by the need to build mass competence in desired national or international languages; and on assumptions that schools can best achieve this by using the maximum amount of the desired language for the longest possible period. While mother tongue education appears to be recognised as good practice if all other choices are equal, decision makers at many levels tend to work on the assumption that children will 'get by' if schooling in mother tongue is not available.

There is now a growing body of evidence which contradicts this belief. Learning at school in a language which is not used in children's home lives is being linked both to poor performance and total exclusion from education. These effects are being seen in large populations across a wide range of middle and low income countries, throughout basic education.

There are rising concerns that this evidence is not receiving the attention it deserves from those shaping and investing in basic education. The dangers of ignoring this knowledge base may be particularly high for societies where key groups of children do not have access to teaching and learning in their mother tongue, and where capacity constraints and poverty issues leave children with few supports to help them learn effectively. In countries affected by conflict or fragility, the political and social implications of denying people educational success along linguistic and ethnic lines offer particular concerns for policy makers and the international community.

<sup>1</sup> This estimate refers to the entire population, not just children.

<sup>2</sup> Since the 1950s, education experts have demonstrated many times that learning in the mother tongue is the best option for children, enhancing their learning outcomes, social development, confidence, and critical thinking skills. In 1953, just 8 years after its founding, UNESCO published a 150-page document on 'vernacular languages' in education that stated, 'To say that a world language problem exists is not only to state a truism but to make an enormous understatement. ... We take it as axiomatic that every child of school age should attend school. ... We take it as axiomatic, too, that the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil.' (UNESCO 1953).

“Why is the evidence that exists not yet being used consistently and coherently in shaping practice?”

However, there is growing experience in delivering education in ways which make it easier for children to learn, and which make sure that children are able to gain good second language skills, at the same time as maintaining and developing their first language.

Why is the evidence that exists not yet being used consistently and coherently in shaping practice? This may be because available evidence is not yet understood by policy makers; or because the negative implications of continuing to teach in languages that children do not use in daily life have not been made clear. While large amounts of policy and practice guidance are available for Northern education contexts, much less is available for the very different contexts of non-OECD countries.

This report is intended for senior education officials and leaders in linguistically diverse countries, as well as donor agencies supporting basic education in low and middle income countries. It considers the extent to

which the language used for teaching and learning can be a key barrier or enabler in achieving national and international education commitments. The report presents a synthesis of data and analysis from multiple countries which outlines the effects of schooling not being provided in children's first language. The analysis highlights countries and settings with the largest numbers of children affected, and where the effects of not taking action are likely to be most severe.

The report examines the most appropriate policy and investment actions for national governments, and discusses the challenges which might be experienced in pursuing good practice around school language. The report assesses the extent to which donor agencies are supporting or undermining efforts to address problems with school language, and presents recommendations for international collaboration aimed at producing more strategic action to remove the language barriers which keep many children from progressing through education.

## Chapter 1: Making choices about school language

“Expecting children to do well under these conditions is extremely unrealistic, particularly when they may also be affected by hunger and poor nutrition, poor health, or parents unable to help them with academic learning.”

### How do children learn in relation to language?

There is a large amount of research literature available from a range of country contexts, explaining the mechanics of how children learn in relation to first and second language<sup>3</sup>. While it is important to recognise a range of cultural, physiological and other contextual differences affecting the way children learn and develop, it is possible to draw basic recommendations for policy and practice from this evidence base. Below is a brief summary of the implications of the global research evidence for children's education.

Broadly, children learn best in the language that they use most often and at home, particularly when they are surrounded by just one language in their daily life outside school. This may well be because they build their understanding of the world based on linking new concepts into what is already familiar to them. Children are far more likely to pick up another (second) language if it is highly present in their daily lives, enabling them to decode and practice this language through observation and interaction.

If this is not the case, learning a second language through schooling alone is likely to be much more difficult. In many countries schooling is very much separated from this practical context – information is not clearly linked to the context of a child's reality, and the teacher does most of the talking, preventing the child from developing the language through using it. Few general primary teachers are trained in promoting second language acquisition among children, and instead tend to deliver the curriculum in the second language, as if their students understood it already.

Requiring any child to learn abstract or academic concepts through a process which expects them to first link new second

language to the corresponding points in their first language, and then to process, retain and use that academic knowledge – all in the same amount of schooling time that another child would be given simply to learn the academic content in their first language – involves a huge cognitive demand. Where the language is not used in context within the child's community (for example, with a language such as English in remote rural communities) the difficulty in making meaning from it is far greater.

Expecting children to do well under these conditions is extremely unrealistic, particularly when they may also be affected by hunger and poor nutrition, poor health, or parents unable to help them with academic learning. Given that children in these challenging circumstances are the focus of much current debate on how to expand education access and achievement, it would be preferable to develop teaching practices which make learning easier for children rather adding extra levels of difficulty.

Examining or assessing a child in a language which they do not use outside school is likely to generate misleading knowledge about a child's real level of skills and capabilities across the curriculum: arguably, such tests are simply testing how good the child is at second language.

Literacy becomes a particular challenge when children do not know the language used to teach reading and writing. Literacy can be described as the process of linking the ideas associated with spoken words to written text<sup>4</sup>. A child starts to become literate through linking the idea behind a word with the word's written form. If a child does not understand the meaning of a word because it is in an unfamiliar language, learning to 'read and write' that word does not constitute literacy: it is simply repetition. There is a danger that millions of children are learning to copy and

<sup>3</sup>For further analysis and information in this area, see Alidou *et al.*, (2006), Benson (2004), Cummins (1998, 2000, 2001), Heugh (2002, 2005a, 2005b), Jhingran (2005), McLaughlin (1992), Save the Children (2009), SIL (2008), UNESCO (2007), UNESCO (2006), Walter, (2009b), Williams, (1992).

<sup>4</sup>For a deaf child, signed language is the equivalent of spoken language.

recite set texts from blackboards and books, without developing the ability to decode or produce new writing for themselves.

Children need support to develop their mother tongue for much longer than is often assumed. Large scale research in several countries shows that, contrary to expectations, children under 12 are less likely to be good at second language than older teenagers or adults, unless they get careful support. Younger children tend to be better at hearing and pronouncing words in second language, but actually comprehending and generating second language proficiently has been shown to be more difficult for younger children than for teenagers and adults, even when they have regular access to the second language in their daily lives. This is likely to be because young children don't have the basic conceptual and linguistic framework that adults/teenagers have developed by about age 12. Given that children are expected to complete primary education, and ideally enter secondary by the age of 12, the basic education cycle should be shaped by an understanding of how children acquire cognitive and linguistic development in relation to the language they have been using since birth.

After early primary education, there is a dramatic difference between the levels of foreign or national language needed to conduct everyday business or conversation, and the amount and complexity of second language needed to deliver and understand lessons. This can be seen in children coping relatively well in second language schooling for two or three years, and then struggling when classes get more abstract and demanding in upper primary.

Nevertheless, it is possible and worthwhile to introduce second language skills to children from early stages of education. Young children should be able to build up good second language skills if they start early. However, new second language vocabulary or structures should only be introduced after a child has learned the corresponding concepts in their first language, so that they can link meaning across to the new language easily.

For most children, it is not going to be possible to build up enough second language

in this way in time for them to cope with the advanced levels of second language needed to understand upper primary education. Children should learn second language in gradually increasing amounts from the beginning of school until at least grade 6, before they can cope with the curriculum being delivered in that language. In situations where conditions for education are difficult and resources are limited, it is more likely that children will need to learn the second language until grade 9 before it is used for teaching and learning.

Because learners create meaning by linking ideas and language, an abrupt change of school language will disrupt learning. Switching completely away from teaching in a language understood by a child is likely to distract and confuse students to a great extent. Good practice involves an additive approach, where increasing time is gradually given to one or two second languages, but the first language continues to play an important role in teaching and learning.

Teachers as well as children are affected by not knowing enough advanced second language to deliver the curriculum through it. Where teacher training takes place in an international language in an attempt to improve teachers' level of second language, teachers are unlikely to be able to absorb their training sessions or materials well. There is thus a wider implication for second language medium teacher training than the question of children's second language acquisition; how much of the content of carefully designed teacher training programmes is being lost on their recipients?

Teachers often recognise that children struggle with unfamiliar language, and attempt to translate back and forth between children's language and the official language of schooling. However, this uses up time that must be paid for by reducing curriculum delivery, and can confuse children rather than aiding their capacity to link the two languages for themselves.

All these points are important for the education of children who live in communities that speak mainly one local language, and do not have access to second language materials and



“ For all these reasons, many parents, educators and politicians feel strongly that children need national or international languages to succeed in life. ”

media. They become vital where children also face other difficulties in education, such as poverty, discrimination, living in rural areas or having illiterate parents.

### Drivers of school language choice

Calls for mother tongue based education are supported by several rights instruments in international law, which call for education reflecting the rights of people to develop their own language and culture (Minority Rights Group, 2009). However, barriers to these commitments arise when children's first language is not the same as the language considered important for children to learn.

Although many would accept that education is easier in a language already familiar to a child, the powerful drivers of politics and economics often demand a response from the education system. Where these drivers indicate that children need to become fluent users of a national or international language, decisions are often made to use that language as the means of delivering the primary school curriculum. In countries where many people live in rural areas without access to national or foreign languages, it can seem sensible to make these languages accessible to children through the school system.

Adults can believe that young children are good at 'picking up' language, and that children need to be surrounded by a language for a long time if they are to succeed in learning it. Therefore, it seems logical to fill the school environment with the language that children need to learn, from as early an age as possible – particularly if school is the only place where they will have access to that language.

There is often powerful motivation for governments to promote one language across the nation as a means of transmitting a shared identity. This may particularly be the case in countries with diverse linguistic and ethnic populations, which may only recently have become unified. It is often equally important to give children access to international languages such as English, either for communicating with other linguistic groups in the country, or for improving the country's

chance of competing in international markets. For middle income countries keen to compete in the international knowledge economy, ensuring strong international language skills in maths and science is often seen as vital (World Bank, 2007). Giving minority ethnic or indigenous children skills in the dominant language is also often considered important for them to take up economic opportunities, and to communicate better with the mainstream population. For all these reasons, many parents, educators and politicians feel strongly that children need national or international languages to succeed in life (Middleborg, 2005).

However, these drivers and beliefs, powerful as they are, are often at odds with the way in which many children learn.

### Evidence on the impact of poor school language choices

The links between language and learning may be clear when looking at the research literature, but it is often seen as difficult to base practice around them, especially when faced with the complex demands of managing a national education system with limited resources. Even if education officials are made aware that mother tongue teaching works better, this may not be enough to prompt the major changes which may be involved in shifting from a more or less monolingual school system to one which uses multiple first languages to deliver the curriculum. Those changes will only be worth making if there is a clear understanding of the scale of outcomes that can be affected by school language.

Education is influenced by the interaction of a range of complex variables. Increasing attention has been devoted to capturing the set factors which together have the most impact on educational success or failure. Key factors in achieving quality education for all sectors of society are often viewed as teaching methods and teacher motivation (VSO, 2002), particularly the extent to which learner-centred methods are used; support and space for teachers to collaborate and test new approaches; the availability of certain features in the school environment, such as learning materials, clean water and safe structures;

learners' health and nutritional status, and community participation (Hanushek, 2005; Watkins, 2000). Unless the evidence is clear that school language has enough of an impact on education to position it as one of these key variables, it is understandable that decision makers are not willing to prioritise action in such an apparently complex area.

However, since 2005, much greater and clearer evidence on school language's role in education has emerged, from a larger range of contexts. This evidence shows that in many contexts the relationship between a child's home language and the language of school should be placed at the centre of an understanding of quality inclusive education, alongside other key factors such as learner-centred and flexible teaching approaches, participatory school management and safe, protective learning environments.

The negative effects of making an inappropriate choice of school language are now clear in a large number of countries.

Recent evidence makes the most serious impacts of teaching in a language which children do not use in their home life clearer, and clarifies which groups of children are most significantly affected.

### The role of school language in pushing children out of school

Large scale statistical analyses are showing that access to education in the mother tongue has a dramatic effect on a child's likelihood of attending school. See Box 1.

### Language and education outcomes

Not only does teaching and learning in a second language result in dropout from school altogether, but for those children that manage to stay in education, it has a strong negative impact on educational achievement.

Various studies have established the link between language of instruction and learning outcomes. Assessments from the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring

#### BOX 1 Large scale statistical analyses

Smits, Huisman, and Kruijff (2008) conducted regression analysis with Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 22 countries and nearly 160 language groups. The analysis found that first language had a substantial effect on educational attendance in almost all countries, even when controlling for socio-economic status, urbanization, and gender. Discrepancies between the language spoken at home and the language of teaching were the major candidate to explain over half the differences in school attendance between different groups of local-language speakers.<sup>5</sup> The worst affected children were based in rural areas. The authors showed that children with access to mother tongue instruction were significantly more likely to be enrolled in school, both in the 7–11 and 12–16 age groups. If mother tongue instruction was identified as available at half or more of the schools to which a linguistic group of children had access, the percentage of out-of-school children in that group was 10 percentage points lower than if little or no access to mother tongue instruction were available. The relationship is stronger in rural areas: mother tongue education has had the greatest positive impact on access where children are seen as the hardest to reach.

Other examples include a study of Guatemala's bilingual education programme for indigenous children in 1995, finding that repetition rates were 25% in bilingual mother tongue schools, compared to 47% in monolingual Spanish schools (World Bank 1995, Patrinos & Velez 1996). The introduction of a mother tongue curriculum in Madagascar in the 1970s and 1980s also resulted in a decreased dropout rate (World Bank 1987, qtd. In World Bank 2006).

<sup>5</sup>Although clear gender differences in educational attendance were found, with girls having higher non-attendance rates than boys, the size of these differences was not related to the extent of teaching in their home languages.



Education Quality (SACMEQ II) from 2000 to 2002 (Mothbeli, 2005) showed that:

- only 44% of learners in 14 countries achieve even a minimal level of literacy by Grade 6
- only 14.6% of learners achieve the national standard for literacy by Grade 6

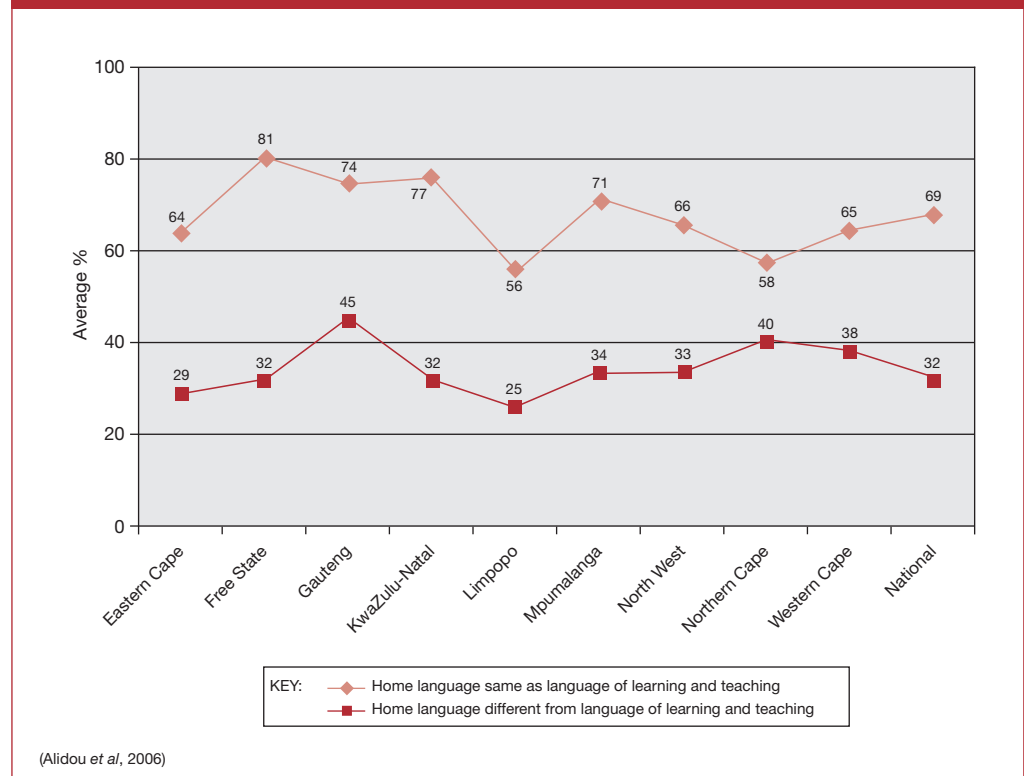
Data from the Young Lives Project offers further insights into the role language plays in inequality of education outcomes. A longitudinal study of inequality in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam, Young Lives studies a number of household factors that help shape a child's opportunities, including the child's home language. Young Lives has identified a number of factors that have significant effects on cognitive development: parental education level (in all countries except Ethiopia) and the urban-rural gap, for example. Independently of these, mother tongue had a significant relationship with gaps in cognitive test results in all countries except India – particularly in Vietnam, where speaking a minority language outstripped all other predictors of inequality (Cueto *et al*, 2008).

In Africa, teaching children in a language they do not use in daily life has been demonstrated to have a poor success rate in terms of children's literacy and fluency in that language, their competency in other areas of learning, and their competency in their first language (Williams, 1998; Alidou *et al*, 2006).

Figure 2 gives provincial-level scores from South Africa's 2005 Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation tests in maths, language and science. It shows the dramatic gap between children who learn in the same language as they speak at home, and children who do not use the language of school at home.

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a test of mathematics and science ability conducted in 36 countries at Grade 4 and 48 countries at Grade 8, categorises children as speaking the language of the test at home 'always or almost always,' 'sometimes,' or 'never'. The assessment found that children whose home language differed from the test language ('sometimes' or 'never')

**Figure 2: Test scores from South Africa, 2005**



“It is important to highlight that quality learning outcomes will not automatically be achieved if children are taught in their first language.”

perform worse in math and science (Martin *et al* 2008, Mullis *et al* 2008: 132). The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted in 35 countries, finds a similar trend for reading literacy: ‘In all countries the students who reported never speaking the language of the PIRLS test at home had lower average reading achievement than those speaking it more frequently’ (Mullis *et al* 2007).

It is important to highlight that quality learning outcomes will not automatically be achieved if children are taught in their first language. However, if other components of quality education are receiving investment and are improving, but the language of teaching is unfamiliar to the child, the evidence indicates that the effect of other quality improvements will be significantly weakened. Where the other elements of quality education are not in place, an unfamiliar school language is likely to significantly reduce the scope for learning (Heugh, 2005b).

#### **Political and social effects of language-related exclusion from education**

Stewart *et al* (2006) emphasise that all forms of social exclusion have the potential to lead to violence. Through case studies and econometric analysis, their research has shown that group inequality can be a strong predictor of violent conflict, particularly when an excluded group has a common identity upon which to mobilise or there is competition for resources.

The term ‘fractionalisation’ refers to the levels and complexity of division between different groups in a country. Language, closely linked to ethnic identity and even identical to it in some contexts, plays a key role in such inequalities. In a situation where some groups do poorly in education because their language is not used in school, those divisions are likely to be heightened. Alesina *et al* (2003) have developed an analysis framework to separate out indicators of ethnic and linguistic fractionalization – measures for the levels of ethnic and linguistic diversity in a country – and are able to show that high levels of division between ethnic and linguistic groups contribute significantly to weaker institutions and slow economic growth.

Easterly (2001) uses a measure of institutional quality in multi-country research to support this finding: if a country has stronger institutions such as school systems, even a higher level of ethnolinguistic diversity is less likely to lead to genocide, war, or slow economic growth. He suggests that a more linguistically diverse society is less likely to have language of instruction policies that appeal to all groups, and some groups are likely to become excluded from education as a result (p. 693).

Education policy can either increase linguistic fractionalisation or it can reduce it. Stewart *et al* find that social exclusion can lead to conflict when governments fail to take action to include groups within the state through proactive policies. One way to make groups feel included in the state is to recognise their language in education, and ensure that first language is not a barrier to educational opportunity.

The fallout from not offering linguistic and ethnic groups education in their mother tongue can be perceived in conflict worldwide. There have been several moments in history where tensions between groups over language and education have erupted in violence. See Box 2.

#### **Education approaches which deliver learning and language outcomes effectively**

It is possible to deliver education in ways which make it easier for children to learn and which make sure that children are able to gain good second language skills, at the same time as maintaining and developing their first language. Various approaches have been developed which are based on these principles.

An approach termed ‘mother tongue based multilingual education’ (MTBMLE) is seen as one of the most practical approaches to dealing with the need for multiple languages in education. MTBMLE makes the child’s language, culture and context the foundation of learning. It starts by using the child’s language throughout school, and gradually introduces a second or even a third language as the child progresses through education. The child’s first language remains the key language of education throughout. The second

**BOX 2**      **Examples of tensions over language erupting into violence**

**1952, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh)**

On 21 February, police opened fire on students protesting against Urdu as the state official language and advocating for Bangla, their mother tongue, to have equal official status. Celebrated as International Mother Language Day, the events of 21 February are considered a key catalytic moment in the eventual war with Pakistan and formation of Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup>

**1976, South Africa**

A ruling to conduct schooling for black students in Afrikaans – and not in African languages or English – brought 10,000 students to the streets in protest. An estimated 700 people were killed in the ensuing riots and police violence around the country.<sup>7</sup>

**Early 1990s, Kosovo**

The closure of primary and secondary schools teaching in Albanian and the expulsion of Albanian-speaking students from universities contributed significantly to increased tensions.<sup>8</sup>

**2004, Syria**

30 people were killed and over 160 injured in violent clashes among Kurds, Arabs, and Syrian security forces.<sup>9</sup> A key strategy of the Syrian government in suppressing the Kurdish community has been to ban the Kurdish language from schools; it has also denied citizenship to Kurds.<sup>10</sup> Kurdish language is similarly repressed in Turkey, though there have been recent improvements.<sup>11</sup>

**China**

In recent years, poor implementation of bilingual education policies has led to increased tensions and violent conflict between the government and groups such as the Uyghur, Mongols, and Tibetans. Monolingual education in Mandarin both contributes to these groups' sense of social exclusion and causes dropout, increasing the likelihood of violence.<sup>12</sup>

language does not become the main language of teaching and learning for at least six years. It is possible to introduce a third language at a slightly later stage, enabling children to develop linguistically and cognitively through their mother tongue, become competent in national language and then learn to use an international language effectively (see Figure 3 for an example of how languages are

introduced through pre- and primary school grades). Mother tongue based multilingual education programmes and bilingual programmes around the world have resulted in dramatically increased academic achievement.

In both Africa and Asia, teaching children in their first language and introducing other languages has been demonstrated to

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO (2009) International Mother Language Day – 21 February [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=38724&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=38724&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html); see also BBC (21 February 2000) Bangladesh remembers its martyrs [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/651430.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/651430.stm)

<sup>7</sup> BBC On This Day (16 June 1976) Soweto protest turns violent [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/16/newsid\\_2514000/2514467.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/16/newsid_2514000/2514467.stm)

<sup>8</sup> Minority Rights Group (2009) *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples and Minorities* Ed. Preti Taneja (London: Minority Rights Group) p. 85 <http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=649>

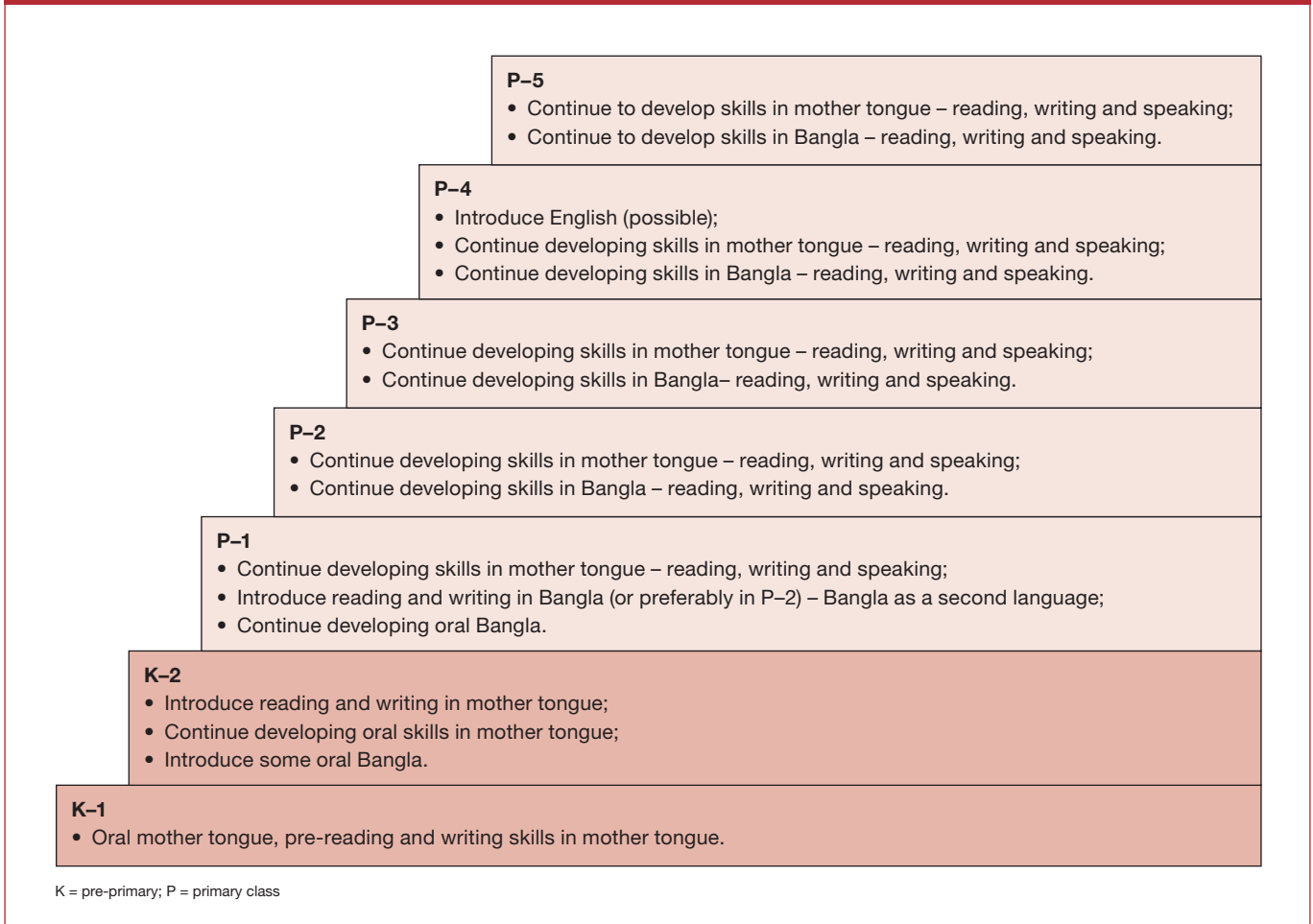
<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch (2004) Syria: Address grievances underlying Kurdish unrest <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2004/03/18/syria-address-grievances-underlying-kurdish-unrest>

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch (2005) Syria <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/english/docs/2005/01/13/syria9812.htm>; see also Human Rights Watch (1996) Syria: The Silenced Kurds <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/Syria.htm>

<sup>11</sup> BBC (12 May 2005) Plight of Turkish Kurds continues <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4540535.stm>

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights in China (2007) China: Minority exclusion, marginalization, and rising tensions (London: Minority Rights Group) <http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=29>

Figure 3: Progression of language skill development in pre-primary and primary education in Bangladesh (Durnnian, 2006)



dramatically improve children’s mother tongue competency, their second language skills, and their performance across the curriculum (Walter, 2009b; Dumatog & Dekker, 2003). See Box 3 below.

Many more such examples exist and have been shared and assessed in a wide variety of literature (Dumatog & Dekker 2003, UNESCO 2003, 2006, 2008; Benson 2005; Dutcher & Tucker 1997).

**BOX 3**

**Introducing other languages improves children’s mother tongue**

An evaluation of students in a bilingual programme between 1986 and 1991 in Guatemala found that children in the bilingual programme performed better than children in monolingual schools on seven out of ten measures of academic achievement, and had about the same performance as their counterparts on the other three measures (Dutcher 2003). Evidence shows that children in bilingual and multilingual programmes perform better than their counterparts not only in their mother tongues, but also in second and third languages. A bilingual education programme in Zambia covering 1.6 million children found that children performed approximately five times better on average in both English and Zambian against baseline (DFID 2008, Linehan 2005).

“Experts have analysed the challenges which prevent first language teaching being implemented, and have identified practical solutions.”

### Tackling challenges in shifting to education in children's first language

There is a range of practical questions that arise when considering how to adopt mother tongue based multilingual approaches on a large scale in different contexts. Issues such as how to support primary school teachers to teach second languages appropriately; how to teach in local languages when writing systems are not available; or how to produce learning materials in multiple languages. Several research studies and guidance publications are available to help policy makers and practitioners develop these approaches in their own settings. See Save the Children (2009) and UNESCO (2006) for an introduction to several of these.

Any attempts to take an evidence-based approach to school language will need to strengthen stakeholders' capacity to work through the political and societal challenges that may arise. However, these may not be as large as is often thought. Experts on language in education have developed various analyses of the challenges and perceptions which prevent first language teaching being implemented, and have identified practical solutions (see Heugh 2002, Dutcher & Tucker 1997, and Komarek 2003).

One concern is that, because parents want their children to learn English, instruction must be provided in English. Studies have shown negative attitudes toward mother tongue instruction among student teachers in Nigeria (Ejeh 2004); parents, teachers, and students in rural Kenya (Muthwii 2004); and community members in villages in Ghana (Mfum-Mensah 2005). Often, these attitudes stem from the notion that English provides access to the global community. Sometimes, socio-political factors come into play as well; Chan (2002) describes English as a way of distinguishing Hong Kong identity from that of mainland China; and in apartheid South Africa, mother tongue instruction was seen as a way of dividing ethnic groups and denying black children employment opportunities (Heugh 2002).

Evidence demonstrates, however, that studying in an English-only or national-language-only curriculum is not the best

way to develop proficiency in that language. In fact, children have higher achievement levels in both their mother tongues and in national and international languages when they study in their mother tongues (Williams, 1998; Walter, 2009b). Experience from India suggests that many parents who express a desire for their children to learn English do not necessarily recognise a difference between learning in English medium and learning English in a mother tongue based curriculum. Once they have full information, they often prefer mother tongue based programmes (Miller, 2005). Parents should be reassured by education authorities and governments that there is increased commitment to giving children access to desired languages, and that teaching methods and materials are changing as a result. This approach has been successful when part of a clear communication and engagement strategy (Middleborg, 2005).

Another concern about mother tongue based multilingual approaches is that they are too expensive for lower income countries to implement. The existing research indicates the opposite. Cost-benefit analysis of mother tongue based education systems has shown that they cost more to set up, but the overall costs of moving to mother tongue based approaches are not as high as might be expected. Additional costs of developing such approaches on a large scale include:

- scripting and developing local languages for academic use;
- writing, developing and publishing textbooks and materials;
- developing programmes to train teachers in mother tongue strengthening approaches;
- better teaching of national or foreign language as a second language.

Vawda and Patrinos (1999, quoted in Alidou *et al* 2006) use evidence from Guatemala and Senegal to show that producing local-language materials represent a potential cost of 1% of the education budget. Since the materials are mainly start-up costs, the investment is eventually returned through decreased dropout and repetition rates if the programme is sustained. Heugh estimates that moving to a fully multilingual school

system could cost up to an additional 4% or 5% of a country's education budget (Heugh, in Alidou *et al* 2006). However, mother tongue based multilingual education leads to reduced repetition and dropout rates, resulting in significant cost savings. When fewer children have their education interrupted by repetition and dropout, it takes less time – and therefore costs less – to get the same number of children through basic education. In Guatemala, for example, a study of bilingual and monolingual schools finds that bilingual schooling, despite higher costs, ultimately led to savings of US \$5.6 million a year because it reduced dropout and repetition (World Bank 1995, Patrinos and Velez 1996). See Box 4.

Perhaps the biggest concern is the immediacy and strength of the political sensitivities around language and education, which can mean that pursuing a school language approach based

simply on the evidence about how children learn is not straightforward – even if the indications are that promoting local languages in education is more conducive of stability and growth in the long term.

In a country such as Malaysia, where arguably the biggest driver for education is the need to compete in the global knowledge economy, a recent decision to switch from teaching primary mathematics and sciences in English to Malay caused passionate comment and discussion. However, the report that sparked the policy decision clearly showed how far students' maths and science achievements had fallen within the internationally authoritative TIMMS assessment since English instruction was introduced five years previously (SIL, 2009). The fact that the analysis of the TIMMS figures was produced by a respected Malaysian university, and that political debate

**BOX 4**

**Investigating the cost per child of different models: data from Guatemala**

In 2000, Ron Morren and Steve Walter decided to look for evidence of the impact of local language education in Guatemala. Two types of evidence were to be examined: evidence that children from bilingual schools were more likely to complete primary school and evidence that Mayan-speaking children who had studied at mother tongue schools were more likely to pursue a secondary education than those who attended a Spanish-medium school.

The total cost to educate the number of children enrolled in the schools in each category of each year was calculated. The cost of successfully producing one graduate from that programme for a given grade in a year was calculated, along with the total cost successfully to produce one primary school graduate capable of going on to secondary. This number was computed by dividing the total cost for the six years by the number of children who were promoted from Grade 6.

The cost per Grade 6 graduate was \$3,077.64 for all Spanish-medium schools compared to \$2,578 for bilingual schools. The collective cost of the differential effectiveness of Spanish-medium education for Mayan speaking children in this sector was \$499. This difference appears to capture the difference between the two programmes in terms of the basic measures of repetition, dropouts, failures, and promotion.

Using this estimate of cost effectiveness, an estimate was produced of the hypothetical savings, which could be realised by employing the Mayan-medium model throughout areas of high ethnicity. This savings estimate was \$11,023,688.

Despite the stronger cost effectiveness of bilingual schools, demand for Spanish-medium schooling appears to have dramatically increased during the study period. The data indicate the presence of 596 bilingual schools in the highly ethnic area compared to 638 Spanish-medium schools in 1991, the first year of the data set. By 1999 this balance had shifted to 580 bilingual schools and 1,659 Spanish-medium schools.

*(adapted from Walter, 2009b)*



“More difficult to resolve is what can be an underlying but unspoken reason for refusing to use mother tongue – the fear that this will empower groups seen as historically disloyal...”

on the best action to take in response to the study was transparently conducted, is likely to have helped the public accept that the policy change was motivated by a clear desire to improve Malaysian education outcomes. Nevertheless, the level of concern in the media that English competency would be downgraded by the new approach indicates that a strategic public communications approach around this shift is likely to be required in the next few years to report results of the new approach transparently<sup>13</sup>.

For a country where the most immediate political concern for leaders may be keeping fragile national boundaries in place, or preventing shifts in power between ethnic groups, creating the political will needed to make significant shifts towards multilingual education will be more of a challenge. The argument that education based in a diverse range of languages is more likely to create fluency in the language of nationhood can help. Leaders in such situations may also recognise that successful universal basic education is required if major economic growth is to be achieved. With support from the international community, it should be possible to develop strategies of change and communication that build political and social trust around multilingual education, without disrupting short term stability concerns. See Table 1.

*‘There are many quite credible reasons why using mother tongue based approaches are not always easy to implement. But an increasing number of programmes demonstrate that problems can be overcome, and not necessarily at great expense of time or resources. More difficult to resolve is what can be an underlying but unspoken reason for refusing to use mother tongue – the fear that this will empower groups seen as historically, currently or potentially disloyal to the state, thus threatening national unity. I think the argument must be made that groups whose language and culture are clearly recognised, valued, and even promoted by the state will be more – rather than less – loyal to the nation.’*

(Sheldon Shaeffer, former head of UNESCO Bangkok, quoted in Save the Children, 2009)

<sup>13</sup>New Straits Times Online, 23 July 2009; ‘Cabinet unlikely to make decision before Jan 5 on teaching of Maths, Science’; ‘Time for Hishammuddin to break his month-long silence and explain Malaysia’s disastrous showing in the 60-nation TIMSS 2007 – the four-yearly international maths and science assessment of Year 8 students’ *Media Statement by Lim Kit Siang in Petaling Jaya on Saturday, 10th January 2009*: <http://dapmalaysia.org/newenglish/>

**Table 1: Summary of key implications of the evidence around school language**

<b>Implications of evidence about children’s learning and language</b>
Children in rural locations are much more likely to drop out of school unless they can learn in their first language
In all settings, children perform worse across the curriculum when their first language is not used to teach
Children do badly in a national or international language which is used for teaching if they do not use it at home
Children never become fully literate if they do not already know the language of literacy well
Children may never make it into secondary education if they struggle with language in primary school, even though by their teens their ability to learn advanced second language might be greater
Groups who do not have easy access to dominant languages will continue to see their interests as not being served by the state
If school assessments are conducted in a language that a child does not understand well, it will be impossible to get a picture of their real capacities and to judge school quality
<b>Anxieties about moving towards mother tongue based multilingual approaches</b>
Using mother tongue based education for too short a period will not deliver strong improvements
Primary school teachers will need support to start teaching second language in a structured way that is linked to context and meaning for children
If change is miscommunicated, the public may fear that second language teaching is no longer being supported
Changing from one approach to another on a system wide scale requires commitment
Concerns about changing political relations through altering education delivery may need addressing
Initially limited capacity to produce learning materials in local languages may require a phased transition strategy (see UNESCO 2008)
In some settings teachers may not speak the languages used by minority children, unless efforts are made to fast-track minority people into teaching



## Chapter 2: Which countries are most at risk from poor school language?

“...the cost and the consequences of not using [local, non-prestige] languages in education are going to be extremely high.”

### Estimating the numbers of people without first language education

Approximately 221 million primary-aged children worldwide are estimated not to have access to schooling in their mother tongues (Walter, in Dutcher 2004). In some countries, a colonial language like French and English remains the sole language of instruction, and nearly the entire population of children entering school each year has little or no understanding of that language. While most of these are in developing or transition countries, these challenges are not confined to the developing world: in the UK, for example, 1 in 7 children does not speak English as a first language, though English is the only medium of instruction used in schools.<sup>14</sup> In Arab countries the difference between the Arabic used in children’s home lives and the formal Arabic used for education can be a significant barrier for many children. Over half of the world’s out-of-school children are estimated to live in regions where their own languages are not used at school (World Bank, 2005). See Box 5.

Within these settings, which countries face the biggest chances of educational delay and inefficient use of resources if children continue to experience school in an unfamiliar language?

*‘...the cost and the consequences of not using [local, non-prestige] languages in education are going to be extremely high. The higher the percentage of a nation’s population which speak such languages, the higher the long term cost in terms of educational failure and under- or nondevelopment.’*

(Walter, 2000)

### Countries with high linguistic diversity and large rural populations

A recent multi-country study by Smits *et al* (see Chapter 1) found that not speaking the language of school had a major impact on dropout from primary school. By far the highest levels of dropout linked to unfamiliar school language were found among rural people (Smits *et al*, 2008). It can be inferred that a key factor in this rural dropout was that the language used

#### BOX 5

#### Children not having access to school in their first language

It is a challenge to determine how many children don’t have access to school in their first language. This is because policy frameworks in support of, or against, mother tongue education often get translated in very different ways in practice. For example, South Africa’s constitution provides for people to learn in their mother tongue if a certain number of parents within a school request it, which would suggest that most people have access to mother tongue education. However, in practice many people are not aware of this entitlement and many parents and teachers feel that teaching in English offers their children the best chance of success in later life. In Pakistan, the overarching policy uses major national languages such as Urdu as the language of instruction, but teachers often use local language for verbal instruction, although reverting to the national language for reading and writing. Dr Steven Walter of the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics has produced the most carefully thought through and comprehensive estimates available of numbers of people without access to mother tongue instruction that are available, taking issues like these into account. Dr Walter has provided his latest estimate information for this analysis: see Appendix 1 for more detail.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5008673/English-not-first-language-for-one-in-seven-primary-pupils.html>

in school was not available in the everyday surroundings of children. In urban areas dominant languages would be more commonly used in daily life, and more access to print, radio and television media in those languages would be available. It is also likely that strong teaching methods and learning materials were not as easily available in rural locations (Heugh, 2005b). This would mean that fewer supporting factors are in place in rural areas to help children cope with the language used for teaching. An estimated 57% of people in less developed countries live in rural areas (UN Dept for Economic and Social Affairs, 2007).

Settings where large proportions of school aged children live in poorly resourced rural areas, and where the school language is not the same as the language spoken by children in their daily lives, should be viewed as likely to experience high dropout, repetition and poor achievement. This undermines the potential to achieve key education targets. In such settings gaps between educational outcomes in rural and urban areas would be expected to widen. Expanding educational access and quality in rural areas will involve inefficient use of resources unless languages are given strong consideration.

### Countries affected by fragility or conflict

For a large group of linguistically fractionalised countries, education policy which excludes certain groups from success due to lack of mother tongue instruction is likely to be a factor in continuing fragility. The world's most linguistically diverse societies account for a significant proportion of out-of-school children: 54 million out-of-school children live in countries economists classify as 'highly linguistically fractionalised'. These countries account for 58% of primary-aged children (Alesina 2003, Lewis and Lockheed 2006, UNESCO 2008). They contain 72% of out-of-school children worldwide, indicating that language of instruction will need to be a strong priority for strategies for reaching the remaining MDG and EFA education access targets.

Of the 10 states ranked highest on the 2006 'Failed States Index' of countries affected by violent internal conflict (Somalia, Sudan,

Zimbabwe, Chad, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan, and the Central African Republic), all but three (Somalia, Iraq, and the DRC) are considered in analysis undertaken by Alesina *et al* to be 'highly linguistically fractionalised'. (Somalia is, however, highly ethnically fractionalised.) See Appendix 1.<sup>15</sup>

The most recent Project Ploughshares list of countries affected by armed conflict within the last year shows that over half of the current list of 30 (18) are considered highly linguistically fractionalised. Analysis of the contexts of the conflicts shows that approximately half have some component of ethnic violence between groups that speak different languages (see Appendix 1). This is an area in need of further research, but the links suggest that for particularly fragile or conflict affected countries, the weaknesses of education systems in providing quality education, combined with the danger of allowing ethnic and linguistic divisions to worsen, indicate that evidence-based school language should be viewed as a priority for education policy.

Given the evidence that school language can push children out of school, it is reasonable to assume that a highly multilingual schooling approach based on multiple local languages would be most appropriate for these settings, to minimise exclusion from education along linguistic lines.

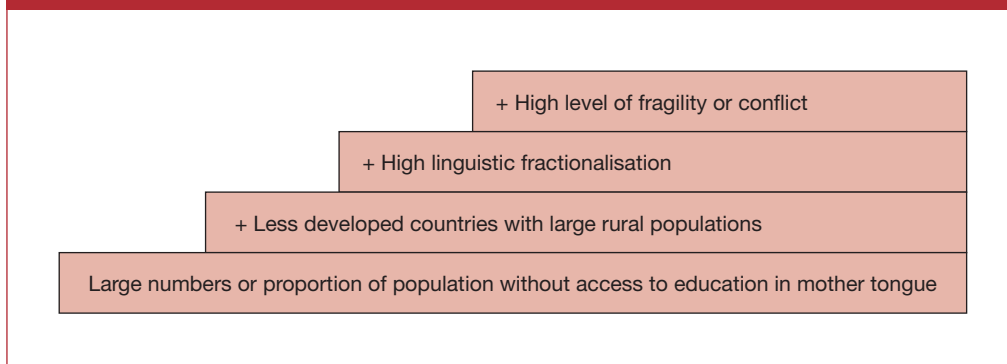
### Which countries face the greatest consequences from sticking with poor practice?

How many countries are likely to be highly affected by the problems that have been discussed so far? To determine which countries should prioritise language of instruction as a major focus in basic education, countries have been grouped within a matrix of high-risk categories. In ascending order of priority, the key risk characteristics are as seen in Figure 4.

Any education strategy for these countries should put recognised good practice on language and learning at the centre of plans for improving education quality and access.

<sup>15</sup> Definition of 'high' as above 0.6 comes from Lewis and Lockheed (2006).

**Figure 4: Contexts where risks associated with teaching in languages unfamiliar to children are increasingly severe**



**BOX 6**

**Countries in each risk category, with likely impacts of not prioritising a shift towards mother tongue based education<sup>16</sup>**

**Countries with large numbers/proportions of population without access to education in mother tongue<sup>17</sup> = Strong likelihood of educational failure for many; little chance of achieving skills targets in international languages**

China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo, USA, Iran, South Africa, Tanzania, Algeria, Kenya, Sudan, Morocco, Russia, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Uganda, Saudi Arabia, Ghana, Mozambique, Italy, Taiwan, Yemen, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Malaysia, Spain, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Thailand, France, Turkey, Vietnam, Mexico, Germany, Peru, Brazil, Afghanistan, Canada.

**Less developed countries which also have large rural populations = Dramatic exclusion from education in rural areas; little chance of achieving MDG of primary school completion for all, or national education and language targets**

China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Egypt, Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, South Africa, Tanzania, Algeria, Kenya, Sudan, Morocco, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique, Yemen, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Malaysia, Nepal, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Vietnam, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Afghanistan.

**Countries which also have high linguistic fractionalisation = Additional risks of inappropriate school language contributing to long term political, social and economic instability and divisions along linguistic and ethnic lines**

Afghanistan, Benin, Bosnia, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda.

**Countries which also have high levels of fragility or conflict = Likelihood of serious interactions of language policy with extended fragility**

Pakistan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Myanmar, India, Thailand, Philippines.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 1 for further detail

<sup>17</sup> Countries with over 5 million people without access to education in their mother tongue, ranked by number of people (based on estimates by Dr S. Walter, 2009)

## Chapter 3: Action for education ministries and leaders in affected countries

*“For rural areas in particular, the wrong choice of school language is likely to be the deciding factor in large numbers of dropouts, and children achieving lower skills on leaving school than expected.”*

The evidence discussed so far shows that there is likely to be a major advantage for certain countries to invest in moving towards teaching in children’s first languages, and gradually introducing other languages in a structured way.

The features of such an approach will need to be different according to the context and capacities of education systems in different countries. However, for all countries there is likely to be a major advantage in moving towards an approach which delivers learning more effectively to a larger number of children, and which has the potential significantly to

reduce educational failure for those facing other barriers to success.

Not taking action risks the potential loss of many of the resources invested in rural children’s education. For rural areas in particular, the wrong choice of school language is likely to be the deciding factor in large numbers of dropouts, and children achieving lower skills on leaving school than expected.

Table 2 below describes the likely costs associated with not moving towards basic education that has a stronger basis in local languages.

**Table 2: Likely effects and costs of providing schooling in a language not used by children in daily life**

Negative effects of schooling in unfamiliar language	Investments at risk from schooling in unfamiliar language
Cognitive and linguistic benefits of preschool substantially reduced	Investment in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)/preschool
Large numbers of children drop out at early grades	Costs of providing school places for primary aged children
Large numbers of children perform poorly in assessments	Costs of running assessments and not meeting intended national competency targets; failure to bring students through to higher levels of education
Large numbers of children repeat years	Cost of basic education per child doubled or tripled, for government and families
National/foreign language competency targets not achieved by end of secondary school; due to children not being in school and targets not being achieved by those who remain	Costs of investing in second language materials and higher education courses in national/foreign language
Teachers not fluent in school language absorb teacher training in school language poorly	Investment in curriculum delivery, which is likely to be significantly weakened
National targets for education never met	Efficiency of overall education investment
Higher illiteracy and innumeracy rates	Poorer skills base for industry to build on; delayed economic and social development
Continued/expanded social and economic divisions between groups, as success in education depends on having access to school language in daily life	Disrupted political, social and economic stability; urban/rural divides embedded

Education policy which prioritises mother tongue instruction as part of a strategy to improve quality and access, and which offers first and second language learning opportunities, is arguably in the political and economic interests of countries with high levels of linguistic diversity.

For countries already affected by fragility or conflict, developing a way of moving towards better practice in education appears to be an urgent priority to avoid further setbacks. The recent study by Smits *et al* showed that the relationship between access to mother tongue instruction and reduction in dropout holds, regardless of the linguistic fractionalization level of the country – in other words, access to mother tongue instruction can cancel out the negative effects of linguistic divisions on educational access (Smits *et al*, 2005).

A curriculum which aims to help children learn languages which they can use for practical communication in their daily lives is likely to be more effective in promoting children's linguistic and academic competencies. If pre and primary school teachers lack confidence in international languages, they are likely to find it much easier to help children learn in their mother tongue and local second languages. See Boxes 7 and 8.

### BOX 7

#### Suggested benchmarks of good language practice to work towards

- Local languages used by communities in everyday life should be used as the language of instruction throughout preschool and primary education
- Children should learn to read first in the most familiar language possible, to maximise understanding and genuine literacy
- Children's mother tongue should be developed through primary (and beyond) to promote cognitive development
- Teacher training and performance management should include:
  - support and requirements for teachers understand the language and cultural background of children
  - an understanding of language development (including the importance of MT, of how children learn language, learning to read etc.)
  - an understanding of the interdependence of MT and L2 development and appropriate first and second language teaching practices

## BOX 8

## The Philippines: making large scale, progressive change

The Philippines has recently started a journey towards mother tongue based multilingual education, based on a recognition of clear evidence that children learning in Filipino and English were failing dramatically. In comparison, children learning in their mother tongue with support to learn Filipino and English as second languages were performing extremely well, despite challenges of rural poverty in remote areas (Dumatog and Dekker, 2004).

The new Philippines directive on mother tongue education recognises the strength of this evidence as applying to all children, and sets up specific mechanisms to support the progression of the school system towards good practice.

*'Education Secretary Jesli Lapus has signed Department of Education Order 74, nullifying the 35-year-old bilingual directive laid down in the 1970s on English and Filipino as the only languages of instruction. Neither of the languages is the first language of most Filipinos. Lapus said findings of various local initiatives and international studies in basic education have validated the superiority of the use of the learner's mother tongue in improving learning outcomes and promoting Education For All.*

*He added the Order 74 institutionalises the use of mother tongue as a fundamental educational policy and programme in the department in the whole stretch of formal education including preschool and in the Alternative Learning System. Under the new order, Filipino and English will be taught as separate subjects in the early grades and will be used as media of instruction when students are 'ready.' This means when they have gained sufficient proficiency in the two second languages, as determined by the department, English and Filipino will remain the primary languages of teaching in high school, with the mother tongue as auxiliary and supplementary medium.*

*Lapus clarified that mother tongue based multilingual education (MLE) will only be implemented at the level of the school, division and region after a process to meet certain conditions. These include the establishment of a working orthography or spelling system; the formation of a technical working group to oversee the programme; the development, production and distribution of culturally-relevant but inexpensive mother tongue materials; in-service MLE training of teachers; the use of the mother tongue for testing; and maximum participation and support from the local government unit, parents and community under the concept of school-based management. The new policy also extends to the alternative learning systems and madrassa schools.*

*Philippine education stakeholders and linguistic experts have been clamouring for a change in the language-in-education policy. They have identified the disparity in the home and school languages as a major factor in the worsening functional literacy levels, high drop-out rates, and low learning outcomes among Filipino pupils.'*

*adapted from Kwintessential (2009)*

### What can national leadership in 'at-risk' countries do to start working towards delivery of basic education in local languages with strong second language teaching?

1.	Establish a policy commitment to improving school language, based on an intention to progress towards evidence-based good practice. Allocate resources, teaching time and training to fulfil these aims progressively over time.
2.	Make sure teachers understand that the more they help children use and develop their mother tongues, the better children are likely to do in educational performance, including second language skills.
3.	Emphasise that if transitions to a national or international language are unavoidable in the school cycle, this transition should be gradual and additive – no language should be completely removed.
4.	Prioritise parts of the country where national or foreign prestige languages are not extensively available in daily life, and where education outcomes are poor, for assistance to develop mother tongue based multilingual education approaches. Develop locally appropriate and flexible learning outcome targets for these regions.
5.	Work towards national learning targets that focus on key outcomes in cognitive development, literacy, life skills and (values), with a clear policy framework that allows corresponding targets to be developed in children's home languages rather than in one language across the curriculum.
6.	Where a large variety of local languages present challenges to teaching in everyone's mother tongue, a common language may be necessary at first for delivering the majority of the curriculum. Educators should choose this language based on how familiar it is to students. This means that in a rural area, the local lingua franca would be a far better choice as the medium of instruction than an international language.
7.	Produce estimates of numbers of primary school aged children without access to education in their home language.
8.	Sample the language skills of teachers currently within the primary and secondary school system. Which languages are teachers genuinely most comfortable using for communication? Do these overlap with languages that are present in children's daily lives, especially in rural areas? Where this is the case, issue guidance to teachers to use more of the language that is most familiar to both teachers and children in a given local area, as an initial step in making school language less challenging.
9.	Instruct teacher training colleges to deliver the bulk of training in local languages; and to develop modules that initially strengthen trainees' skills in a key national or international language; and then support them to teach that language as a second language.



**What can national leadership in 'at-risk' countries do to start working towards delivery of basic education in local languages with strong second language teaching?**

10.	Decide the minimum level of second language competency that children are likely to need in practice by the time they finish lower secondary school, and develop assessment and teaching targets accordingly. For example, if the secondary school curriculum were not in English, what level of English would children need on leaving school to work or enter non-academic training? How long would it take to learn English to this level if it started as a relatively small, but increasing, part of teaching time from early primary upwards? What resources would be needed to train primary teachers in understanding and teaching this language as a second language?
11.	Where university curricula are in English or other foreign language, develop intensive second language learning programmes for upper secondary students. Continue to offer these throughout university courses.
12.	Where teachers do not know the language of minority children, in the short term provide local language training for them, and in the long term develop easy-access routes for minority adults with basic education to become teaching assistants and progress to full teacher status.
13.	Request external assistance to develop, expand and research mother tongue based multilingual approaches and supports in the specific contexts of the country.
14.	Work with international publishers to produce appropriate materials for teaching foreign languages in a structured way as second language components which are fit for the specific context of second language use in that country – not as curriculum delivery tools.
15.	Where many local languages do not have a writing system, consider investing in participatory script development programmes.
16.	Incentivise local and national publishers to produce teaching, learning and literacy materials in local languages.



## Chapter 4: Donor agencies: part of the solution?

“Most DAC donors are prioritising investment in countries that are highly affected by lack of access to mother tongue education.”

For linguistically diverse countries which lack strong capacity to develop or change their school systems, the role of the international donor community becomes crucial in enabling national leadership to understand the evidence around language and schooling, and to implement ways of working towards basic good practice.

The size and nature of the evidence around language in education indicates that concerted donor action in this area is needed, both to avoid the large scale failure of efforts to deliver on the MDGs and Education For All, and to ensure that public funds invested by donors in education are not jeopardised by financing schooling which excludes or fails large numbers of children.

### Donor governments' priorities

If donor agencies recognised the significance of school language, their policy and activity documentation would be expected to show substantial policy engagement and capacity building to promote mother tongue based education, as a central part of efforts to improve access and quality of education. Such activity would be expected where large numbers of people are excluded from mother tongue education, especially in rural areas, or where school language choices are relevant to mitigating conflict or fragility.

Most DAC donors are prioritising investment in countries that are highly affected by lack of access to mother tongue education. For donor agencies to be able to assure their stakeholders that education aid is being directed efficiently, it would be appropriate for them to demonstrate that they are using the evidence on language to shape their support to these countries. Donors should be able to demonstrate that they are giving priority to mother tongue based education in proportion to its significance in children's education.

An assessment of key education donors' policy statements and investment activities (see Appendix 2) shows that language currently has the status of a side issue; some donors appear

aware of good practice and are taking tentative action to promote it, but only on a small scale and predominantly in relation to indigenous minority groups, rather than to the whole school population. Few if any donors are currently demonstrating an understanding of the central importance of language of instruction in delivering quality basic education.

### Donors with some policy awareness

Several donors are aware that language is an education issue in the countries they support. Of the 23 Development Assistance Committee donor governments, 15 make some mention of language issues in their education strategies or other publicly accessible materials, most acknowledging the benefits of mother tongue instruction in some form.

Table 3 below ranks national donors by the extent to which they recognise the importance of language in education, assessed from public documentation on their education priorities. See Appendix 2 for further detail.

**Table 3: The place of language in national donors' thinking**

Country	Recognition
Finland	strong recognition
Germany	strong recognition
Sweden	strong recognition
Denmark	more recognition
Ireland	more recognition
Canada	more recognition
Australia	some recognition
Netherlands	some recognition
New Zealand	some recognition
France	some recognition
Norway	some recognition
Spain	some recognition
Switzerland	some recognition
UK	some recognition
USA	some recognition

No other DAC donors showed recognition of language issues in education in publicly available documentation.

Three donors demonstrated a relatively good ranking in the assessment, having made publicly accessible statements in support of mother tongue education and having funded some relevant programmes to support bilingual education training or materials. Finland and Germany's aid agencies make strong statements about the importance of mother tongue instruction, while Sweden's SIDA has progressively strengthened its position on education to place mother tongue based education more at the forefront of priorities. However, there is little evidence so far that these commitments have translated into a major focus for investment or policy dialogue.

Canada and Ireland demonstrate relatively strong awareness of the potential of language of instruction to damage education, while Danida is in the preliminary stages of developing a position on mother tongue instruction. The European Commission has funded some projects in Asia to support and promote mother tongue based bilingual education for minority groups, but has produced no clear policy statements on language as an education priority.

Despite the apparent awareness of these donors of the need to move away from monolingual approaches, there is no evidence that any have undertaken strategic collaboration or large scale investment to promote mother tongue based education.

### **Donors with uncertain positions**

Other donors display a mixed position on mother tongue and bilingual education. In some cases, acknowledgment of the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits of mother tongue teaching appears to conflict with an interest in promoting the donor language in former colonies. These donors include France and Australia.

The Netherlands has a leading position among education donors, investing 15% of all education aid and prioritising conflict affected countries, literacy, and quality of education for the poor. Nevertheless, the Dutch Foreign

Ministry has not demonstrated significant recognition of the key role of language of instruction in delivering on education goals. The Netherlands supports the Bolivian government's strong focus on multilingual and intercultural education, but no other evidence is available that the Netherlands is engaging in dialogue or investment around language with development partners.

The USA has considerable experience supporting bilingual intercultural education in Guatemala, and has funded bilingual or mother tongue based programming elsewhere in Latin America, as well as in Malawi. However, this programming has not translated to any institutional statements in support of mother tongue instruction. USAID's 2005 Education Strategy, which emphasises literacy and numeracy as creating economically productive citizens, makes no mention of the language issues central to literacy in many US partner countries.

Despite a strong emphasis on education quality, literacy, and learning outcomes, the USA's actual programmes in developing countries pay little attention to language issues, evidenced by their core education communication materials. For example, the multi-country Educational Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP 123), which focuses on quality assessments and monitoring, has no overall position on language, though language policy is one of its areas of research. This is surprising given the strong practice on multilingual education in parts of the USA (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Other programmes do not address multilingualism and mother tongue instruction. USAID's Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training in Latin America, which train teachers on research-based reading methodologies, do not mention bilingualism or multilingualism in their materials. The \$600 million Africa Education Initiative in 39 countries includes only English literacy and not mother tongue literacy as an evaluation outcome, and involves large donations of English-language books, without safeguards as to how these are to be used. Similarly, USAID's \$31 million support for the Pakistan Primary Education and Literacy Programme trains primary school teachers on English-language teaching, apparently

“Strategy papers mention the need for ‘more mother tongue instruction’ even as they suggest that ‘a narrow focus on a minority language... may reinforce social and economic marginalisation’ (DFID, 1999).”

without reference to bilingual methods, and its \$96 million support for basic education in Afghanistan includes the establishment of ‘American-style English-language’ K–12 schools.

The Early Grades Reading Assessment framework promoted by USAID contains almost no focus on language of instruction in relation to the child’s home language. Guidance materials focus solely on assessing the child’s reading and writing performance in the school language of instruction, without attempting to distinguish whether the child understands that language or whether they are held back by having a different first language (USAID, 2009). This provides potential to produce skewed information on children’s literacy performance, with an inaccurate understanding of whether children speak or understand the language in which their literacy is being tested.

The UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) has a strong focus on inequity and exclusion in educational access and outcomes. Despite this, DFID’s position on language is unclear. Strategy papers mention the need for ‘more mother tongue instruction’ even as they suggest that ‘a narrow focus on a minority language... may reinforce social and economic marginalisation’ (DFID, 1999). Without careful clarity and a clear policy stance, such a statement can be taken to imply that developing learning in minority languages is counterproductive.

DFID does not appear to be strategically taking opportunities to support development partners around language challenges. For example, DFID’s flagship education project in Nigeria, ESSPIN, with a budget of over \$175 million, does not have a clear focus on language of instruction in the project documentation or instructions to project partners, despite enormous difficulties in moving away from teaching in English and improving education outcomes being a recognised challenge in Nigeria (Aliyu *et al*, 1992).

DFID’s strategy framework places particular emphasis on evidence-based policy and practice, on addressing the underlying conditions for conflict, and on promoting quality education for both equity and for economic growth (DFID, 2009). The evidence that has been discussed so far points to the need for a clear policy commitment to promote teaching that children understand, if these priorities are to be achieved.

### Major education donors’ project investments in language and basic education<sup>18</sup>

Most major education donors put substantial funds into budget support schemes, which follow key national government priorities. However, assessing donor project documentation offers a useful insight into the way in which donor agencies prioritise key issues when they have more direct control over budgets and activity areas.

Table 4 shows the place of language within the education projects funded by three of the world’s top education donors. All the countries receiving project support fell into the high risk categories outlined in Chapter 2.

These donor agencies clearly have an awareness that mother tongue and bilingual education is positive, but do not appear to be pursuing it consistently or at a strategic level through their project investments. In some cases their funding is promoting practice that is likely to undermine efficient learning outcomes.

It is likely that major education donors will be promoting education quality and access issues through policy dialogue with government partners, which is less straightforward to track for analysis. Nevertheless, if language was featuring at the centre of these discussions, a more consistent picture of donor engagement would be expected to emerge. See Box 9.

<sup>18</sup> All information on the USA comes from the USAID website ([www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)) and the EQUIP website ([www.equip123.net](http://www.equip123.net)). Information on DFID funding comes from the Accessible Information on Development Activities (AiDA) database from Development Gateway ([aida.developmentgateway.org](http://aida.developmentgateway.org)). Information on programmes comes mainly from the DFID website ([www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)). All information on the World Bank comes from the World Bank website ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)), which includes a database of projects with cost and strategy documents.

**Table 4: Donor emphasis on language, indicated by active projects with published information, 2009**

Donor	World Bank <sup>19</sup>	USAID <sup>20</sup>	DFID <sup>21</sup>
# projects including bilingual or mother tongue education as major element	2	0	0
# projects including mother tongue or bilingual education as minor element	11	2	4
# projects with no emphasis on language	23	8	6
# projects actively promoting teaching the curriculum in foreign language	0	2*	0

\*One of which, the Equip23 programme, takes place in 39 countries

**BOX 9**

**The World Bank: playing a supportive role?**

The World Bank has given relatively strong attention to the need for mother tongue based education, publishing some key international policy resources (World Bank 2005) and facilitating policy dialogue within South and East Asia, Latin America and parts of Africa on multilingual education (SEAMEO 2008). Nadine Dutcher and other key figures associated with the Bank have promoted good practice on language and education for many years.

Recognition of the need for mother tongue and bilingual education is also reflected in World Bank investment patterns for basic education, although to a lesser extent. Most World Bank programmes in primary education appear to follow national priorities on language rather than seeking to influence them. For example, the Mexico Education Quality programme, a \$240 million programme with a 40% emphasis on primary education, seeks to ‘promote Spanish as a national language while protecting indigenous languages,’ in accordance with the Mexican constitution. Programme documents do mention that promoting school autonomy may lead to more locally appropriate language policies, but the World Bank plays no role in the decision – nor does it offer any capacity support in developing good language practice.

As with the DFID and USAID projects reviewed, several World Bank basic education projects incorporate mother tongue based instruction into discussion of indigenous groups, but not into their overall strategies for the wider population. Programmes in the Philippines, Argentina, Bangladesh, and in China all mention language only briefly in reporting documents, as a minor or optional portion of their plans and strategies for indigenous groups. Project documents for the Bangladesh Primary Education Development Project say that ‘most’ NGO programmes attempting to provide education in tribal languages are ‘experimental’ and ‘not appropriate.’<sup>22</sup> As a result, the programme addresses language only by distributing supplementary tribal-language textbooks to schools.

Continued...

<sup>19</sup> Source: World Bank project database (<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/>), accessed April and August 2009

<sup>20</sup> Sources: Published information on USAID single and multi-country education projects from individual project websites and <http://aida.developmentgateway.org/aida/>; [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov), accessed April 2009

<sup>21</sup> Sources: OECD-DAC-CRS database and DFID project website (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/About-DFID/Finance-and-performance/Project-information/>), accessed April 2009

<sup>22</sup> Source: World Bank project database (<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/>), accessed April and August 2009

### ...Continued Box 9 The World Bank: playing a supportive role?

The World Bank risks undercutting the limited progress that it is making in promoting mother tongue and bilingual teaching because of its procurement rules for educational textbook publishing, which influence both directly-funded World Bank projects and national procurement systems. Despite attempting to promote good practice, the World Bank's operational textbook guidelines on language of instruction are tentative, presenting mother tongue instruction as desirable only at early stages, and an 'optional' consideration that can be discarded if cost, preference and convenience conflict. Mother tongue instruction is referenced as a 'minority' issue, rather than an overarching education quality concern (World Bank 2002, p. 3).

This guidance is counteracted by the implications of World Bank guidance on national capacities for procuring textbooks. To support production of teaching and learning materials in local languages, publishers with strong links to local language populations and the capacity to produce a variety of materials in relatively small batches are required (UNESCO, 2006). It is logical to expect that in-country, local publishers are more likely to be able to fulfil this remit. However, the influence that World Bank procurement guidance has on textbook publishing, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, is recognised as giving advantage to major international publishers, who do not have the linkages and capacities to develop diverse local language materials.<sup>23</sup> Without protection and support for small local education publishers to operate in a marketplace dominated by global publishing firms, firms with the local contacts and knowledge required to develop local-language materials are unlikely to survive.

The World Bank in South-East Asia has, on the other hand, provided funding for policy and practitioner dialogue on multilingual education at regional level, and for small scale pilot projects on mother tongue based education. Ministry of Education teams have been supported by the World Bank, UNICEF, SIL International, UNESCO Bangkok and other agencies to come together and have open, supportive dialogue about the challenges and opportunities facing them around language in education. This grouping has played a role in facilitating positive policy change towards mother tongue based multilingual education approaches in East Timor, the Philippines and Malaysia among others. The SEAMEO language initiative (SEAMEO, 2008, 2009) offers a promising model for promoting positive dialogue and capacity development on language in school in other regions.

Current donor policy and practice around school language indicates a recognition of good practice, but a serious lack of awareness of the scale of the problems in which inappropriate school language is concerned. Rural children in middle and lower income countries are likely to be affected by poverty, lack of parental

education, more limited access to schooling and poor school quality. Because of these challenges, donors often target their assistance at these groups. It appears counterproductive to add another barrier to their education in the form of language of instruction, and for donors not to challenge this in partnerships and investments.

<sup>23</sup> For example, World Bank guidelines require governments receiving education financing to award to be awarded to the lowest evaluated bidder. No preference can be given to suppliers or contractors based on region or locality of registration, small size, or ethnic ownership. (World Bank, 2009) World Bank policy requires textbook contracts to be opened up to international and national firms on an equal basis, banning requirements that foreign firms enter into joint ventures with national firms. Restrictions on sources of labour and material are also banned, unless they are for unskilled labour in the contracting country (World Bank, 2009, McDonald, 2008). International firms with greater capacity to produce bidding documents and produce textbooks for a lower unit cost are more likely to win contracts. These firms are less likely to have capacity in local language orthography and materials production, and are likely to offer textbooks in foreign language only, rather than the ideal package of second language learning materials and local language curriculum materials. The World Bank has so far failed to move from standard global guidelines to country-specific procurement systems, in which international firms tend to fare less well (Bretton Woods Project, 2008).

For countries where donors have significant involvement in education funding or engagement with education policy, the messages donors promote have a vital influence on the direction of educational development. If the need for child friendly school language is not being highlighted by development partners, a policy vacuum risks being created, as governments often lack resources and capacity to access evidence and analysis from other countries.

There are indications that the prevailing educational trends in neighbouring countries act to fill that vacuum. Where those trends are not based effectively in evidence, a wave of poor education reforms move back and forth across regions. Conflict affected countries require particular support from the international community. Arguably, the opportunities after conflict to 'build back better' in education offer a good basis for instituting mother tongue multilingual education. However, without access to strong evidence and policy guidance, countries are left to fall back on political expediency and inaccurate assumptions to determine language of instruction. See Box 10.

No education donor has yet pursued a sufficient level of engagement on language to be able to assure stakeholders that attempts to promote human resource development, equity and stability will not be undermined by failures related to school language.

While some donors demonstrate awareness that mother tongue and multilingual teaching is important, there is no evidence that any donor has taken concerted action to promote large scale improvements, except for some of initiatives supported by the World Bank in Asia. Few donors appear to be promoting good practice where the risk of not taking action is worst. A significant scaling up of awareness, investment and action is needed to prevent language of instruction dragging down efforts to achieve international commitments to deliver basic education. See Table 5.



## BOX 10 Conflict affected countries

While Guatemala and Bolivia have garnered international support to pursue bilingual and intercultural education as part of recent peace processes, Sudan and initially Timor-Leste changed school language from that of recent enemies (Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia respectively) to that of potential international supporters (English and Portuguese), before considering the likely impact on education outcomes. With support from UNICEF and SEAMEO to assess the international evidence and experience, the Timor-Leste government is currently redeveloping its school language policy to promote instruction in local languages in primary education.

(SEAMEO, 2008)

**Table 5: Investments from the largest education donors<sup>24</sup>**

Could outcomes from this education aid be more successful if language were recognised as a crucial issue affecting children's education?

Donor	Basic education aid commitments (constant 2007 US\$ millions, average <sup>25</sup> 2005–2007)
Netherlands	\$645.6
United States	\$530.2
World Bank IDA	\$522.4
United Kingdom	\$459.2
EC	\$384.4
Japan	\$207.3
Canada	\$206.2
Germany	\$173.7
France	\$161.8
Norway	\$134.7

<sup>24</sup> DAC data as at 30 Aug 2009. Calculated using basic education aid + 10% of general budget support (GBS) + 1/3 level unspecified education aid

<sup>25</sup> Figures are the sum of basic education aid commitments, 10% of general budget support (GBS) commitments, and 1/3 of level unspecified education aid commitments. All data is from the OECD DAC database and averaged over the 2005–2007 period.

Recommendations for bilateral and multilateral aid agencies	
1.	State in policy documents commitment to supporting mother tongue based primary and preschool education, particularly for rural populations.
2.	Bring language of instruction to the forefront of dialogue on education sector funding with government partners; particularly in relation to both quality and equity concerns. Prioritise this in countries affected by high levels of linguistic fractionalisation and fragility.
3.	Commit to significantly increasing funding for good quality mother tongue based multilingual education support in major education projects; particularly in high risk countries.
4.	Further assess data on costings. Work with national partners in priority countries to allocate at least 4% of pooled education funds to the development of mother tongue based multilingual teaching and learning systems.
5.	Prioritise changes in access to mother tongue and multilingual education as desired outcomes of programme funding schemes, tendering bids and project guidance.
6.	Where national capacity is lacking to develop flexible competency targets, literacy materials and assessment frameworks in multiple languages, offer technical assistance.
7.	Ensure that language indicators feature prominently in national and international benchmarks and assessment systems for school quality and education outcomes.
8.	In particular, ensure that coverage of primary education in mother tongue is highlighted as an international indicator of education quality.
9.	In expenditure and activity reporting, report to what extent investment has helped the expansion of mother tongue based school instruction.
10.	Resource innovation and research in supporting monolingual or early-exit bilingual school systems to move towards quality mother tongue based multilingual approaches at scale.
11.	Promote through UNESCO a measure of numbers of primary school aged children without access to education in their first language, published in the annual EFA Global Monitoring Report.
12.	The World Bank should update textbook guidelines to actively support mother tongue and bilingual instruction. The Bank should also incorporate provisions in textbook procurement policy to incentivise and support local production of education materials in local languages.



## Conclusion

“*There is now clear evidence that, for children who do not have dominant languages in their daily lives, using that language for teaching significantly damages their education.*”

There is now clear evidence that, for children who do not have dominant languages in their daily lives, using that language for teaching significantly damages their education. For children facing other barriers in education, inappropriate language of instruction can tip the balance into complete exclusion. In linguistically diverse countries, particularly those with high rural populations or high fractionalisation, it makes sense to treat school language as one of the most important variables in fostering good quality learning outcomes, as well as improving access.

It is possible to deliver education in ways which make it easier for children to learn, and which make sure that children are able to gain good second language skills at the same time as maintaining and developing their first language. A large body of information indicates that mother tongue multilingual teaching is achievable and cost-effective, and can greatly expand educational access. When planned and resourced well, mother tongue based bilingual or multilingual education can have substantial impact on both education access and quality.

There is an opportunity for national governments and aid partners in key countries to collaborate far more strategically to expand mother tongue based education to large scale education system coverage. This would mean placing language at the centre of international endeavours to improve the reach and quality of education for these countries.

While practical challenges remain about the mechanics of transferring to multilingual education systems on a large scale, the evidence is clear that failing to start the process is taking a severe toll on educational access and delivery of outcomes. International collaboration is urgently required to support these processes. Language is not an issue limited to a few communities, a few groups, or a few countries. It affects every aspect and outcome of education systems worldwide, and after decades of research, it cannot be ignored any longer. For millions of children, mother tongue based education represents one of the biggest gateways to achieving quality education and the opportunity of a better life.

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## Appendix 1: Countries likely to be affected by lack of mother tongue education

The following tables provide analysis of which countries and populations are likely to experience the most severe consequences from not having access to education in children's first language. Tables are presented in order of the severity of risks to achieving

education goals anticipated for countries which do not have first language education available for children. The information in these tables is used to form the analysis of high risk contexts described in Chapter 2.

Table A: Large populations without access to education in home language (based on data from Walter, 2009a)

	Number of languages	Total population	% estimated population L1+ not used in education	# estimated population without access to L1+ education <sup>25</sup>
China	205	1,263,286,686	30.74	388,281,935
India	401	1,013,905,650	25.33	256,798,673
Indonesia	747	213,037,095	90.37	192,513,985
Pakistan	75	156,579,457	91.62	143,459,780
Nigeria	512	111,577,934	99.96	111,534,798
Egypt*	20	68,508,989	100.00	68,508,989
Philippines	180	76,039,820	74.19	56,411,951
Democratic Republic of Congo	220	51,727,448	99.99	51,721,763
USA	338	278,429,995	18.40	51,235,073
Iran	74	68,012,771	67.52	45,923,463
South Africa	38	40,546,564	91.54	37,116,395
Tanzania	136	33,595,674	98.60	33,124,064
Algeria	22	31,480,639	100.00	31,480,639
Kenya	64	30,179,922	99.44	30,010,313
Sudan	134	29,492,742	100.00	29,492,742
Morocco	10	28,656,432	99.71	28,572,034
Russia	126	146,844,861	16.63	24,421,459
Iraq	28	23,037,891	100.00	23,037,891
Uzbekistan	41	24,334,404	92.61	22,536,203
Bangladesh	44	129,052,366	16.84	21,728,243
Uganda	47	21,721,138	99.96	21,711,701
Saudi Arabia	20	21,576,639	100.00	21,576,639
Ghana	84	20,210,715	99.73	20,155,349
Mozambique	39	19,835,799	99.79	19,793,774
Italy	40	57,369,000	32.02	18,368,600

	Number of languages	Total population	% estimated population L1 <sup>†</sup> not used in education	# estimated population without access to L1 <sup>‡</sup> education <sup>26</sup>
Taiwan	28	22,941,779	79.37	18,209,707
Yemen	13	18,159,754	100.00	18,159,754
Myanmar	110	45,571,332	38.92	17,737,488
Ethiopia	84	62,546,516	24.94	15,601,603
Cote Divoire	91	14,811,143	99.85	14,789,503
Malaysia	145	22,274,963	55.25	12,307,744
Spain	20	39,628,000	28.65	11,352,400
Nepal	126	23,956,818	46.28	11,088,365
Kazakhstan	44	16,221,232	60.36	9,791,552
Thailand	84	61,390,277	15.27	9,373,401
France	67	59,153,397	14.80	8,757,474
Turkey	46	66,689,915	12.72	8,481,353
Vietnam	96	80,063,845	9.20	7,367,926
Mexico	294	98,922,131	7.17	7,089,976
Germany	68	82,297,356	7.58	6,240,923
Peru	94	25,647,262	23.32	5,980,586
Brazil	204	170,191,159	3.50	5,948,700
Afghanistan	51	22,610,493	23.75	5,370,132
Canada	146	31,177,357	17.22	5,368,827

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\* In many Arabic speaking countries like Egypt, the formal Arabic officially used for teaching is not the same as the informal Arabic used at home.

‡ (L1 = first language)

<sup>26</sup> Note that these figures refer to the full population of speakers of the affected languages, not just to school-aged children. School aged children are often estimated to form approximately 25% of the population in developing countries, although there are significant variations.

**Table B: School Aged Children in Highly Linguistically Fractionalised Countries (by level of ethnic fractionalization)**

Analysis produced by combining UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report data (UNESCO, 2008) with national fractionalisation analysis by Alesina et al (2003). 72% of out-of-school children are in these countries, indicating that language of instruction will need to be a strong priority for strategies focused on reaching the remaining MDG and EFA access targets.

	Low Ethnic Fractionalization			Medium Ethnic Fractionalization			High Ethnic Fractionalization		
	Primary age children	Out-of-school children		Primary age children	Out-of-school children		Primary age children	Out-of-school children	
Philippines	11,877,000	953,000		124,357,000	7,208,000		4,430,000	1,816,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,877,000</b>	<b>953,000</b>		<b>769,000</b>	<b>125,000</b>		<b>1,913,000</b>	<b>824,000</b>	
							42,000	400	
				<b>125,126,000</b>	<b>7,333,000</b>		<b>1,415,000</b>	<b>244,000</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>378,569,000</b>						101,000	20,000	
Total out-of-school children	<b>54,020,300</b>						198,000	18,000	
% of all out-of-school children in target countries	<b>71.86%</b>						2,327,000	1,215,000	
							2,796,000	465,000	
							691,000	375,000	
							1,730,000	1,186,000	
							573,000	243,000	
							2,993,000	1,164,000	
							10,043,000	5,203,000	
							122,000	75,000	
							585,000	308,000	
							13,142,000	3,721,000	
							184,000	11,000	
							3,409,000	967,000	
							1,425,000	389,000	
							265,000	132,000	

Low Ethnic Fractionalization		Medium Ethnic Fractionalization		High Ethnic Fractionalization	
Primary age children	Out-of-school children	Primary age children	Out-of-school children	Primary age children	Out-of-school children
				Indonesia	418,000
				Iran	508,000
				Kazakhstan	9,000
				Kenya	1,371,000
				Liberia	356,000
				Malawi	202,000
				Mali	793,000
				Micronesia	17,000
				Mozambique	954,000
				Namibia	89,000
				Nepal	702,000
				Niger	1,245,000
				Nigeria	8,097,000
				Pakistan	6,821,000
				Senegal	513,000
				Sierra Leone	285,000
				South Africa	469,000
				Sudan	2,798,000
				Tanzania	143,000
				Thailand	900
				Gambia	90,000
				Togo	176,000
				Uganda	1,168,000
				Zambia	150,000
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,734,300</b>
				<b>241,566,000</b>	

**Table C: Countries in Failed States Index 2006; proportion with high levels of linguistic and ethnic fractionalisation**

This table combines analysis of the most linguistically fractionalised countries (Alesina *et al*, 2003) with the international list of countries considered highly fragile (Fund for Peace, 2009). Countries where deep linguistic and ethnic divisions intersect with high levels of fragility require a careful focus on language in education.

Failed States Ranking	Country	Year (Ethnicity data)	Ethnic Fractionalization	Linguistic Fractionalization (2001)	Religious Fractionalization (2001)
1	Somalia	1999	0.8117	0.0326	0.0028
2	Zimbabwe	1998	0.3874	0.4472	0.7363
3	Sudan	1983	0.7147	0.719	0.4307
4	Chad	1993	0.862	0.8635	0.6411
5	Democratic Republic of Congo	1983	0.8747	0.8705	0.7021
6	Iraq	1983	0.3689	0.3694	0.4844
7	Afghanistan	1995	0.7693	0.6141	0.2717
8	CAR	1988	0.8295	0.8334	0.7916
9	Guinea	1990	0.7389	0.7725	0.2649
10	Pakistan	1995	0.7098	0.719	0.3848
11	Cote d'Ivoire	1998	0.8204	0.7842	0.7551
12	Haiti	1993	0.095		0.4704
13	Myanmar	1983	0.5062	0.5072	0.1974
14	Kenya	2001	0.8588	0.8860	0.7765
15	Nigeria	1983	0.8505	0.8503	0.7421
16	Ethiopia	1983	0.7235	0.8073	0.6249
17	North Korea	1995	0.0392	0.0028	0.4891
18	Yemen			0.0080	0.0023
19	Bangladesh	1997	0.0454	0.0925	0.209
20	East Timor			0.5261	0.4254
<b>% with high fractionalization (&gt;0.6)</b>			<b>60%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>40%</b>

Note that ethnicity data may be out of date in some cases, where highlighted in red, but has been cross-checked carefully with other data sources. All linguistic and religious fractionalization data is from 2001 (Alesina *et al*, 2003).



**Table D: Countries on 2008 Project Ploughshares list of states that experienced at least one armed conflict in the 1995–2004 period: proportion with high levels of linguistic and ethnic fractionalisation**

Country with Conflict	Ethnic Fractionalization	Linguistic Fractionalization	Religious Fractionalization	Is the conflict based on ethnicity in a context where language helps define ethnic groups?
Afghanistan	0.7693	0.6141	0.2717	N
Algeria	0.3394	0.4427	0.0091	N
Burundi	0.2951	0.2977	0.5158	N
Chad	0.862	0.8635	0.6411	Y
Colombia	0.6014	0.0193	0.1478	N
Democratic Republic of Congo	0.8747	0.8705	0.7021	Y
Ethiopia	0.7235	0.8073	0.6249	Y
India – Kashmir	0.4182	0.8069	0.326	N
India – Maoist insurgency	0.4182	0.8069	0.326	N
India – Northeast	0.4182	0.8069	0.326	Y
Iraq	0.3689	0.3694	0.4844	N
Israel – Palestine	0.3436	0.5525	0.3469	N
Kenya	0.8588	0.886	0.7765	Y
Myanmar	0.5062	0.5072	0.1974	Y
Nepal	0.6632	0.7167	0.1417	N
Nigeria	0.8505	0.8503	0.7421	Y
Pakistan	0.7098	0.719	0.3848	Y
Philippines – CPP/NPA	0.2385	0.836	0.3056	N
Philippines – Mindanao	0.2385	0.836	0.3056	N
Russia – Chechnya	0.2452	0.2485	0.4398	Y
Somalia	0.8117	0.0326	0.0028	N
Sri Lanka	0.415	0.4645	0.4853	Y
Sudan	0.7147	0.719	0.4307	Y
Sudan – Darfur	0.7147	0.719	0.4307	Y
Thailand	0.6338	0.6344	0.0994	Y
Turkey	0.32	0.2216	0.0049	Y
Uganda	0.9302	0.9227	0.6332	N
Yemen		0.008	0.0023	N
<b>% with high fractionalization</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>50%</b>

## Appendix 2: DAC donor interest in language and education

Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
<p><b>1 = The donor makes no mention of language in any publicly accessible forum.</b></p> <p><b>2 = The donor has mentioned mother tongue in publicly accessible documents and has funded/been involved in at least 1 relevant programme, but has not identified language as an area of focus.</b></p> <p><b>3 = The donor has made strong publicly accessible statements in support of mother tongue education and considers language a priority.</b></p> <p>*Information on particular projects is based mainly on information OECD DAC online data (<a href="http://stats.oecd.org">stats.oecd.org</a>). Since a consistent level of information is not available for all donors, relevant projects may not have been included on this list.</p>					
Australia	\$80.4	Aware of need for mother tongue education, but focuses on English in line with 'strengths.'	2	[as part of strategic framework] 'Improve the teaching of English in schools; support English language initiatives through informal education tools, such as the media.' (AusAid, 2007: 3)  'In multilingual countries the policy to offer the early years of schooling in children's first language requires significant resources and is typically not supported by adequate public funding.' (AusAid, 2007: 14)	Better Education: A Policy for Australian Development Assistance in Education (2007) ( <a href="http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/education_policy.pdf">http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/education_policy.pdf</a> )
Austria	\$5.2	Committed funding to one explicit bilingual education project in 2005 in Nicaragua. Education funding largely goes to scholarships.	1	N/A	Three-Year Plan on Austrian Development Policy (2007–2009) ( <a href="http://www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/ThreeYearProgramme08-10_05.pdf">http://www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/ThreeYearProgramme08-10_05.pdf</a> )
Belgium	\$37.4	Has funded bilingual intercultural teacher training programmes in Peru and Bolivia.	1	N/A	DGDC Annual Report (2007) ( <a href="http://www.dgci.be/documents/en/annual_report/2008/dgdc_annual_report_2008.pdf">http://www.dgci.be/documents/en/annual_report/2008/dgdc_annual_report_2008.pdf</a> ) ( <a href="http://www.efc.co.uk/projects/.../Appendix%20L_CountryFactSheets.pdf">www.efc.co.uk/projects/.../Appendix%20L_CountryFactSheets.pdf</a> ).
Canada	\$206.2	Funded programme on language rights in Sri Lanka and a mother tongue programme in Kenya.	2	'The quality of education must not be compromised because of inappropriate or biased curricula, cultural insensitivity, or language of instruction.' (CIDA, 2002: 12)	CIDA's Action Plan on Basic Education (2002) ( <a href="http://dsp-psd.communiqu.gc.ca/Collection/E94-320-2002E.pdf">http://dsp-psd.communiqu.gc.ca/Collection/E94-320-2002E.pdf</a> )

Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
Denmark	\$43.1	Is supporting mother tongue education in some countries but not in others. In some cases supports early-exit bilingual education strategies. No cohesive policy in place because of concern for local context, but may be moving toward one.	2.5	'A major demand-side issue is language. The official language and the language taught at school is often different from the language spoken at home. High dropout rates and poor achievement results at primary level can often be attributed to the use of second language learning for the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy. Mother tongue instruction in the early grades could be a response to this dilemma.' (DANIDA, 2001: 5)	DANIDA (2001) Education sector policy paper ( <a href="http://www.um.dk/Publikationer/Danida/English/TechnicalGuidelinesAndSectorPolicy/education/education.pdf">http://www.um.dk/Publikationer/Danida/English/TechnicalGuidelinesAndSectorPolicy/education/education.pdf</a> )  DANIDA's policy and practice in relation to mother tongue and bilingual education: A preliminary mapping (2007) ( <a href="http://www.uddannelsesnetvaerket.dk/rdb/1196683901.doc">http://www.uddannelsesnetvaerket.dk/rdb/1196683901.doc</a> )
Finland	\$22.5	Considers mother tongue education a priority area based on domestic experience. Committed funds in 2006 to at least one programme with a focus on mother tongue education, in Kenya, and has also funded bilingual projects in Latin America.	3	'The question of bilingualism and multilingualism are becoming more and more important in development policy and education policy dialogue. Finland emphasises the necessity of providing educational opportunities in the children's own mother tongue with appropriate regard for their local culture.' (MFA, 2006: 9)	Education Strategy for Finland's Development Cooperation (2006) ( <a href="http://formin.finland.fi/Public/download.aspx?ID=13657&amp;GUID={A8FB0D24-5BDD-4664-AE80-E802F052B41C}">http://formin.finland.fi/Public/download.aspx?ID=13657&amp;GUID={A8FB0D24-5BDD-4664-AE80-E802F052B41C}</a> )
France	\$161.8	Has an interest in 'promoting the French language' in Francophone Africa, but education strategy does suggest interest in early-exit mother tongue instruction as a route to French proficiency.	2	'Bilingual teaching right from the primary cycle gives better results for students when they use their mother tongue during the first years. This anchors the school in its sociocultural environment and fosters communication and teaching in class.'  'It would be advisable to promote better proficiency in French by supporting the implementation of national language policies.'	AFD Website ( <a href="http://www.afd.fr/lang/en/home/Portail-Projets/Education/pid/1479">http://www.afd.fr/lang/en/home/Portail-Projets/Education/pid/1479</a> )  ( <a href="http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/education-university_2274/french-support-sectorial-strategie-education_2647/index.html">http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/education-university_2274/french-support-sectorial-strategie-education_2647/index.html</a> )
Germany	\$173.7	Considers mother tongue education a priority area and has provided technical assistance to governments in implementing their mother tongue policies since 1978.	3	'The 25 years of experience with the promotion of intercultural bilingual education and/or instruction in the mother tongue mainly in South America and Africa South of the Sahara allows GTZ to draw some major conclusions and to share them with stakeholders of primary education in multilingual societies. The overwhelming experience is the technical feasibility of intercultural bilingual education and/or instruction in the mother tongue.' (GTZ, 2003: 6)	Universal Primary Education in Multilingual Societies: 25 years of experience in GTZ (2003) ( <a href="http://www2.gtz.de/dokumente/bib/04-5238.pdf">http://www2.gtz.de/dokumente/bib/04-5238.pdf</a> )

Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
Greece	\$3.0	Commits hardly any aid to basic education and does not seem to have any sectoral strategy for education.	1	N/A	Hellenic Aid website ( <a href="http://www.hellenicaid.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=NODE&amp;cnode=1&amp;clang=1">http://www.hellenicaid.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?cpage=NODE&amp;cnode=1&amp;clang=1</a> )
Ireland	\$46.7	Aware of mother tongue issues and has funded a local language programme in Zambia (Irish Aid, 2008: 8). Also has funded English-language teacher training in Ethiopia (Irish Aid, 2008:12). Language is not one of its four priority issues, though language falls under its policy objective focusing on quality.	2.5	'Research is showing that children learn more quickly and the knowledge gained is retained, when they are taught in their own mother tongue thus setting a stronger foundation for future learning.' (Irish Aid, 2008: 8)  'In working toward this objective [promote significant improvements in the quality of education] Irish Aid will... facilitate the development of appropriate language policies that enhance learning achievements.' (Irish Aid, 2008: 15)	Education Policy and Strategy: Building sustainable education systems for poverty reduction (2008) ( <a href="http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/Uploads/Education_policy_9.pdf">http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/Uploads/Education_policy_9.pdf</a> )
Italy	\$15.9	Commits hardly any aid to basic education and does not seem to have any sectoral strategy for education.	1		Ministry of Foreign Affairs website ( <a href="http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN">http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN</a> )
Japan	\$207.3	Interested in infrastructure, math and science and technical training; also funds basic literacy projects but does not mention language anywhere in its online material.	1	N/A	JICA Annual Report (2008) ( <a href="http://www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/reports/annual/.../096-101.pdf">www.jica.go.jp/english/publications/reports/annual/.../096-101.pdf</a> )
Luxembourg	\$10.1	Has few projects in basic education; those that do address it focus on infrastructure or vocational training. No publicly accessible education strategy and no mention of language.	1	N/A	Lux-Development Annual Report (2008) ( <a href="http://www.lux-development.lu/publication/rapann/rapann_fr_08.pdf">http://www.lux-development.lu/publication/rapann/rapann_fr_08.pdf</a> )
Netherlands	\$645.6	Has made minor statements recognising that language of instruction is relevant in education.  Some programmes in Bolivia are bilingual.	2	Besides supporting the [Bolivian] government's sector programme, the Netherlands also supports the educational councils of indigenous peoples (CEPOS), which represent around 30 indigenous groups and work to promote bilingual education and train bilingual teachers. The Netherlands contributes USD 75 million to the current five-year education reform plan.	Classroom: Newsletter on Dutch Education for All Policy (2007)  Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs website ( <a href="http://www.minbuza.nl/en/Key_Topics/Development_Cooperation/Dutch_development_policy">http://www.minbuza.nl/en/Key_Topics/Development_Cooperation/Dutch_development_policy</a> )

Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
New Zealand	\$42.2	Recognises children's right to mother tongue education and supports mother tongue based multilingual education in Vietnam. However, language is not mentioned anywhere in New Zealand's official education strategy.	2	'NZAID is supporting UNICEF's early childhood development programme (in Vietnam), taking a particular interest in the work that UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Training and the Vietnam Women's Union are undertaking in the area of mother tongue based bilingual education amongst ethnic minority children.' ( <a href="http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-vietnam.html">http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-vietnam.html</a> )  'Cultural rights...include such rights as the right to the benefits of culture; the right to indigenous land, rituals, and shared cultural practices; and the right to speak one's own language and to 'mother tongue' education.' ( <a href="http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/mainstreaming-human-rights/nzaid-commitment-rationale-key-concepts">http://nzaidtools.nzaid.govt.nz/mainstreaming-human-rights/nzaid-commitment-rationale-key-concepts</a> )	NZAID website  Achieving Education For All (2003) ( <a href="http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/library/docs/nzaid-education-policy.pdf">www.nzaid.govt.nz/library/docs/nzaid-education-policy.pdf</a> )
Norway	\$134.7	Has funded research on mother tongue education in Vietnam and CASAS, which promotes mother tongue education in Africa.  Publicly accessible statements, however, do not explicitly support mother tongue education and describe it as 'experimental.'	2	'Norway will support experimental activities aimed at ensuring that education meets local and national needs. These may involve adaptation of teaching methods and bringing local culture into the school. They may also involve testing more democratic forms of social interaction and working methods that focus on the children themselves, or mother tongue instruction for children whose first language is different from the national language.' (MFA, 2003: 11)	Education – Job Number 1: Norwegian Strategy for Delivering Education for All by 2015 (2003) ( <a href="http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/ud/.../168658-utdanning-eng.pdf">www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/ud/.../168658-utdanning-eng.pdf</a> )  ( <a href="http://www.norway.org.vn/development/education/education.htm">http://www.norway.org.vn/development/education/education.htm</a> )  ( <a href="http://www.lms.no/educaid/educaid06_1.pdf">www.lms.no/educaid/educaid06_1.pdf</a> ).
Portugal	\$9.3	In general, Portuguese development aid focuses on former Portuguese colonies and the OECD database suggests that primary education projects are limited. Those that do exist focus on 'Portuguese schools.'	1	N/A	
Spain	\$113.3	Promotes bilingual intercultural education in relation to its work with indigenous groups and includes it in its education strategy.	2	'The new development strategy, under the first education objective ('contribute to basic education and training that is inclusive, intercultural and free for all') includes the following objective: 'enable bilingual education in intercultural contexts.' (Plan Director, p. 118)	Plan Director de la Cooperacion Espanola, 2009–2012 ( <a href="http://www.aecid.es/export/sites/default/web/galleries/publicaciones/descargas/Plan_Director_2009-2012.pdf">http://www.aecid.es/export/sites/default/web/galleries/publicaciones/descargas/Plan_Director_2009-2012.pdf</a> )

Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
Spain (continued)				<p>'Bilingual intercultural education and public health are especially relevant. The first of these concepts interconnects the cultures of indigenous peoples and the surrounding society, enabling indigenous children to retain their culture while at the same time participating in that of the surrounding society.' (Strategy for Cooperation with Indigenous People, p. 3)</p>	<p>Strategy for Cooperation with Indigenous People, Spanish Development Cooperation (2005) <a href="http://www.aecid.es/export/sites/default/.../indigenas_resumen_ing.pdf">www.aecid.es/export/sites/default/.../indigenas_resumen_ing.pdf</a></p>
Sweden	\$82.6	<p>Has 'pursued mother tongue education' with the government of Bolivia and funded research on mother tongue education. While past policy statements on language in education fell short of supporting mother tongue education, saying that 'the right to use one's mother tongue' is sufficient, SIDA is progressively strengthening its focus on mother tongue education.</p>	2.5	<p>'Recognition of minority languages. In many education systems the majority of learners are disadvantaged linguistically since schools use a language that is not their mother tongue. It is stated that children have the right to use their own language. This does not however, necessarily entitle them to be taught entirely in that language, though initially this may be necessary for refugee or immigrant children. The right may also involve positive measures to ensure that children are able to speak their mother tongues in schools.' (SIDA, 2005: 32)</p> <p>From the Foreword 'Sida's Policy 'Education for All, a Human Right and Basic Need' has a strong focus on a rights based perspective. Enhancing bilingual or multilingual learning is one of its priority concerns.'</p>	<p>Education, Democracy and Human Rights (SIDA Position Paper, 2005) (<a href="http://www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=SIDA2852en_Education+Democracy+and+HR+web.pdf&amp;a=2850">http://www.sida.se/shared/jsp/download.jsp?f=SIDA2852en_Education+Democracy+and+HR+web.pdf&amp;a=2850</a>)</p>
Switzerland	\$16.0	<p>Aware of mother tongue issues and official policy states that it will support communities to develop MT education if they take 'initiative'. No cohesive stance stated in publicly accessible material.</p>	2	<p>'The SDC attaches particular importance to including disadvantaged social groups, especially women, ethnic minorities and country dwellers, as well as to using new-style methods that boost the quality and relevance of what is taught – for instance, bilingual teaching...'</p> <p>'The SDC will also seek to support certain groups which are marginalised on account of their ethnic or cultural origins, by helping them to develop a form of basic education in their mother tongue, when they themselves take the initiative to do so.' (SDC Sector Policy – Education, NORRAG analysis)</p>	<p>SDC website (<a href="http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Themes/Education/Basic_education_and_education_systems">http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Themes/Education/Basic_education_and_education_systems</a>)</p> <p>NORRAG (<a href="http://www.norrag.org/db_read_article.php?id=96&amp;PHPESSID=e172ad2df03e42d377a8fe474269bd83">http://www.norrag.org/db_read_article.php?id=96&amp;PHPESSID=e172ad2df03e42d377a8fe474269bd83</a>)</p>

Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
UK	\$459.2	Has sponsored research on mother tongue education. However, no strong statements on mother tongue that are publicly accessible. Historically, DFID has supported English-language education and is in transition to supporting mother tongue education. Some statements suggest that DFID supports 'international language' learning in some scenarios, and believes language policy in general to be a country-level issue.	2	<p>'The consortium concerned with the quality of education is linking state of the art school effectiveness research with selected national priorities in a range of countries, such as the development of science and technology teaching, more mother tongue instruction...' (DFID, 2008: 4)</p> <p>'The acquisition of literacy skills in a familiar language is of crucial significance for escaping from the poverty trap...but there is also the risk that the overloading of the curriculum with too many languages, or a narrow focus on a minority language, may reinforce social and economic marginalisation. Education in a familiar language has to be complemented in most education systems with access to opportunities embodied in a more widely used national language or an international language.'</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/HDLHTML/EDUCRES/DIF13E/EN/CH08.HTM#LANGUAGE%20FOR%20LEARNING">http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/HDLHTML/EDUCRES/DIF13E/EN/CH08.HTM#LANGUAGE%20FOR%20LEARNING</a>)</p>	<p>DFID Research Strategy 2008–2013: Working Paper Series: Education (2008) (<a href="http://www.research4development.info/PDF/Outputs/Consultation/ResearchStrategyWorkingPaperfinal_Education_P1.pdf">http://www.research4development.info/PDF/Outputs/Consultation/ResearchStrategyWorkingPaperfinal_Education_P1.pdf</a>)</p> <p>DFID (1999) Learning opportunities for all: A policy framework for education (<a href="http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/HDLHTML/EDUCRES/DIF13E/EN/BEGIN.HTM#CONTENTS">http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/HDLHTML/EDUCRES/DIF13E/EN/BEGIN.HTM#CONTENTS</a>)</p>
USA	\$530.2	Has funded bilingual education for indigenous groups in Guatemala since 1996, and before that research on bilingual education in other Latin American countries. USAID has also supported a mother tongue programme in Malawi. However, it does not mention mother tongue explicitly in its education strategy, despite a heavy focus on literacy and numeracy and skills for the globalised world.	2	<p>Very little mention of language issues, even though there is a strong focus on reading and learning outcomes. Language issues do surface more when they are discussing the role of education in 'social cohesion' for 'stable states' and when discussing language and cultural loss because of an increased focus on English. Also comes up to an extent in costing discussions, highlighting that bilingual children may cost more in resource allocation towards hard-to-reach populations.</p> <p>Reference to language of instruction in 2008 USAID strategy – 'The United States Government will work closely with host country officials and other stakeholders to ensure that age-adjusted, culturally appropriate learning materials are available and to provide teacher training in intensive reading as well as other subjects described below. If reading is introduced first in local</p>	<p>Education Strategy: Improving Lives Through Learning (2005) <a href="http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/education_and_universities/documents/education_policy05.pdf">http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/education_and_universities/documents/education_policy05.pdf</a></p> <p>Guatemala programme proposal (2000) <a href="http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cp2000/lac/guatemala.html">http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cp2000/lac/guatemala.html</a></p>



Donor Country	Total Basic Education Aid (Average 05–07)	Notes	Commitment to first language or multilingual education?*	Examples of publicly available statements	Sources
USA (continued)				languages, before a country's official language, clear levels of achievement are also expected, according to established country standards, and each language should be supported to the extent practical.' 'Over half of all Guatemalan school-age children are indigenous, though only eight per cent have access to schooling in their mother tongue...The purpose of this SO is to increase educational access, raise educational quality, and enhance the capacity of civil society and the Ministry of Education to define and carry out policies and strategies that recognise the cultural and linguistic pluralism of the country.' (USAID, 2000)	

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**Notes:**

Figures are the sum of basic education aid commitments, 10% of general budget support commitments, and 1/3 of level unspecified education aid commitments. All data is from the OECD DAC database and averaged over the 2005–2007 period.

All information on the USA comes from the USAID website ([www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)) and the EQUIP website ([www.equip123.net](http://www.equip123.net)).

Information on DFID funding comes from the Accessible Information on Development Activities (AIDA) database from Development Gateway ([aida.developmentgateway.org](http://aida.developmentgateway.org)). Information on programmes comes mainly from the DFID website ([www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)).





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