Another early-exit transitional model doomed to fail? Or is this the wrong model at the right time in Vanuatu?

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Language-in-education policies are developed and implemented within contexts of great complexity. Where policies appear less than perfect on paper, this presents a valuable opportunity to examine the contextual factors that have led to their development, helping policymakers to understand the conditions under which policy change must take place. This paper considers an early-exit transitional model of multilingual education that has recently been endorsed in Vanuatu. While the academic literature would conclude that this model is far from ideal, this paper suggests that the time is right for the type of change that is being implemented in this context. It examines the historico-political factors that have left this problematic policy as the best chance of change, and identifies ways in which it could be modified within a plurilingual approach across the whole curriculum.

Keywords: language policy; multilingual education; plurilingual pedagogy; early-exit transitional model; Vanuatu

Acknowledgements

Introduction

It has long been recognised that language policy decisions are made within contexts of extreme complexity. It is also clear that there tends to be a large gap between policy on paper and what actually happens in practice. This has often led to an easy target for academic critique, since it can be easy to point out that a policy won't work as intended in practice, or that it is oriented to the needs of one group over others, that it ignores the educational and sociolinguistic realities of the schools that will have to use it, or that it is driven by the interests of a national government or international donor. The academic field of language policy has developed considerably as a result of these lines of critique, but simply criticising new attempts at change can often lead us to miss some fundamental features of the context that may be driving the policy possibilities available. In other words, by asking *why* we have ended up with a policy that may not appear to be in everyone's best interests, we can understand the conditions under which a policy must operate.

The context for this paper is Vanuatu, where a new policy has recently been endorsed and is currently being implemented. In brief, this policy states that children will learn through the medium of the vernacular (ideally, the dominant language spoken at home, referred to here as L1) during kindergarten and the first three years of primary school, before a transition to a second language (L2) as the medium of instruction towards the end of the third year. At approximately the same time that this transition is made, a further language (L3) will be introduced as a subject. These abbreviations of L1, L2 and L3 are necessary here for two reasons. Firstly, L1 captures an immense range of languages, with 138 being the most recent figure proposed for the number of distinct vernaculars in the country (François et al 2015), and with 45 of these being selected for the first implementation phase of the policy (Early 2015). Secondly, due to a history of joint Anglo-French colonial rule, the label L2 captures

the fact that some schools teach through the medium of English while others teach through French, while L3 refers to the other of these two languages that is taught as a subject.

Problematic aspects of this policy – aside from the challenge of creating materials in so many languages at the initial stage – are the early age and abruptness of the transition from L1 to L2, the additional complexity of transitioning to two different L2s, and the need to incorporate L3 so early on. The implementation team members themselves appear to acknowledge that the approved policy is far from ideal, particularly the timing of the transition. In this paper, I take this rather problematic policy as a window into the historical and sociocultural context in which it is being implemented. Instead of rejecting the policy as unfit-for-purpose, I seek to understand how it has come to be the best fit within the circumstances, and to identify ways in which it can be modified.

Background

Independent since 1980, the islands that are now Vanuatu were formerly administered as the joint Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides. The two powers held dual control, characterised by mutual distrust and rivalry, with the result that British and French schools were established throughout the entire island group, often set up in competition with one another. Since Independence, Vanuatu has maintained a dual-medium system, so that children are enrolled either in an Anglophone school or a Francophone school, with some parents opting to divide their children across both streams. Until 2012, the policy has been for English to be the medium of instruction in Anglophone schools, with French taught as a compulsory subject from late primary until Year 10; French has been the medium of instruction in Francophone schools, with English taught as a compulsory subject from late primary until the end of secondary school.

A number of policy changes have been attempted over the years. Shortly before Independence, the first party that would go on to govern Vanuatu announced their intention to abolish French-medium education, but this decision was revoked following public outcry in the streets, along with pressure from France (Van Trease 1995). The educational use of Bislama (the national variety of Melanesian Pidgin that is constitutionally-recognised as the national language and a co-official language alongside English and French) was then advocated at the 1981 Vanuatu Language Planning Conference, at a 1982 parliamentary debate on languages in education, and in a 1984 Pacific Languages Unit report (Thomas 1990; Topping 1982), but no resolutions were ever put into practice. In 1999, the government mandated the implementation of early education through the vernacular (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 1999), but little had been achieved by the end of the pilot stage (Nako 2004), and the matter appeared to go quiet for the following decade.

2009 heralded the start of more significant change. Two separate teams were established – one to develop a new national curriculum from kindergarten to the end of secondary education, and the other to devise an education language policy. The problematic separation between these two areas soon became apparent, as the new curriculum statement was left with a number of ambiguous provisions such as 'The language of instruction in our schools will either be English or French, which one of these two languages will be determined by the Vanuatu National Education Language Policy' (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 2010, 89), while the language policy team appeared to be conducting numerous consultations with the public (Education Language Policy Team 2010a) without really engaging with what would be done in the classroom. Despite the apparent stalemate by the end of 2011, it appears that there was a sudden coming together of academics (who had long advocated change), aid donors (who had been thinking along similar lines but without any sense of coordination amongst themselves or with the national government), NGOs such as

SIL International (who had made strides towards the development of vernaculars within individual communities, but again failed to join up with national policy) and, most importantly, the national government (who perhaps finally recognised that implementation of the new curriculum would require engagement with matters of language).

As a result, a new language-in-education policy was endorsed in 2012 (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 2012) in which English and French will continue to be the principal media of instruction within a dual-medium system, but only after a year of kindergarten and three years of primary school in the vernacular. While curriculum developers, academics, technical advisors and donor partners associated with the project are in agreement that this 'early-exit' model is not ideal, there is also the recognition that this may be the best chance there will be for some time to push forward with education in languages that children understand.

Framework

To situate Vanuatu's 2012 policy within bi/multilingual education typologies (Baker 2011; Mangubhai 2002), it essentially moves Vanuatu from a (dual) submersion model to an early-exit transitional model. Submersion, as Benson (2009, 64) points out, is neither multilingual, since it operates through one language only, nor even an approach to education, since it appears to be born out of reluctance to engage with questions of language and pedagogy at all. Children are expected to cope with instruction through an L2 medium, often in poorly-resourced classrooms with teachers who lack adequate command of the language themselves. This type of education has long been criticised, both internationally (Benson 2009; García 2009; Heugh 2003; Ouane & Glanz 2011; Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, 2008; UNESCO 2016) and regionally (Early 1999; Lotherington 1996, 1998; Mangubhai 2002;

Tamtam 2008): on pedagogical grounds (since children struggle to learn through an unfamiliar language); on societal grounds (since school becomes separated from community involvement and education tends to be alien to the local culture); on language maintenance grounds (since indigenous languages are denigrated and can thus become endangered); and on human rights grounds (since children are denied the right to use their own language, and the right to effective education). However, this scenario has long been familiar throughout the linguistically diverse context of Melanesia.

Transitional models refer to programmes in which a more familiar language is used as the initial medium of instruction, before a transition is made to L2. We can differentiate between early-exit and late-exit versions, according to the stage at which the transition takes place. Early-exit programmes are arguably the most controversial of all approaches. They have been championed for attempting to address the problems of submersion education since they do include more familiar languages in the earliest years. However, the aim is ultimately to replace these languages with L2, and they are thus 'subtractive' rather than 'additive' (Baker 2011). They are monoglossic in orientation (García 2009), underpinned by the assumption that one monolingualism can be replaced by another. In most cases, the transition is made before children have gained sufficient grounding in L1, thus merely 'delay[ing] the "sink or swim" ritual' of submersion (Chimbutane 2013, 316). The question is whether they are a step in the right direction towards an additive approach, or whether they do more harm than good, as Heugh (2002) argues is the case. In terms of the efficacy of such programmes, she notes that 'there is, by 2010, no internationally-acknowledged second language acquisition expert who suggests that transition to the second language by the end of the third year of primary school will serve most children well' (Heugh 2011, 124).

More importantly, the danger is that negative results from early-exit transitional programmes will push governments back to submersion, rather than to an extension of the

use of L1. It appears this has happened in neighbouring Papua New Guinea, where, despite early signs of a successful implementation of vernacular education (Klaus 2003), the government has recently reinstated English-only education at all levels, in order to 'address the concerns of parents, teachers, students, academics and political leaders that vernacular in elementary schools created a poor standard of spoken and written English' (Belden 2013). For this reason, Heugh (2011, 147-8) argues that it is irresponsible to advocate early-exit programmes. She argues strongly for models of extended L1 use alongside L2, i.e. late-exit transitional and additive bilingual programmes.

As noted above, Vanuatu is presently attempting to implement a particularly ambitious early-exit transitional model. International evidence suggests that this is not the right way to go, and yet it seems to be the first moment at which all players are moving in the same direction, and implementers are understandably keen to act while the policy wheels are turning and the budget is in the black. The questions addressed in this paper are therefore how this particular policy model has come to be seen as the best chance of success, and whether it really can work.

How has this policy come to be seen as the best chance of success?

This policy is the latest in a long line of attempts to move beyond the cumbersome educational legacy inherited from the two colonial powers. These attempts have always required compromise, in both practical and ideological terms. When a national Ministry of Education was established at Independence, it found itself with more schools than it could afford, with Anglophone and Francophone teachers paid at different salary scales, and two completely different curricula and philosophies of education. The first government was Anglophone-led, and Francophones felt they were disadvantaged in many of the changes

made, since they generally brought things in line with the Anglophone system (Van Trease, 1995). They also felt that unifying the curriculum meant lowering their (European-oriented) standards. The Francophone outrage that followed the 1977 suggestion to remove French-medium education altogether led to today's compromise of two separate streams[i].

We thus begin to understand the 2012 policy in terms of its determination to radically alter the education system, without disturbing the tense equilibrium between Anglophone and Francophone identities. To a certain extent, this seems to be a scenario of new wine in old bottles. Willans (2015) analyses a range of policy texts produced in Vanuatu between 1980 and 2010, demonstrating that traces of discourses appear to open up space for languages other than English and French within education but that actual change is constantly blocked by the colonial legacy of these two languages. The 2012 policy texts are similar. Once again, we see rhetoric in support of change, this time shaped by discourses of educational best practice: the Ministry of Education's national language policy (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 2012) refers to the need to support the knowledge and experience that children bring with them to formal education (p.5) and quotes long passages from the recent curriculum statement concerning the pedagogical evidence in favour of starting in the mother tongue (p.8). The Vanuatu Education Sector Program (VESP) design document (2012) calls for a curriculum that will 'be inclusive, locally relevant and promote student-centred learning' (p.26), and refers to evidence that children learn best in a familiar language (p.14). However, once again, we see this rhetoric for change undermined by the need to keep English and French equal.

The first way in which this rhetoric is undermined is the constant reference to legal frameworks that serve to maintain the status quo. The following extract from the policy (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 2012) provides a good example:

As supported by the Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement (2010) this policy recognises that language learning is of critical importance to all children's educational development. A

8

curriculum policy is essential to guide the development, writing and implementing of the reformed curriculum. A clear policy about language and language teaching is essential and needs to be consistent with the legal framework provided by the Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu and the Education Act 2001. These documents provide the legal framework for education and include statements about the use of languages in education. (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 2012, 6)

The recognition of the importance of language is supported only by three sentences about the need for policy that is compliant with legal frameworks. The frameworks in question stem from Article 3(1) of the Constitution, which states that "The principal languages of education are English and French", a provision that is highly ambiguous, but interpreted variously to mean that these are the *only* languages to be used, that the languages must be treated *equally*, and/or that *all* children must use *both* languages in school. This pattern is repeated throughout the eleven-page document, with nine references to legal frameworks or legislation, and no attempts to expand on what the curriculum statement has already said about how languages should actually be used in practice.

The second sign that the desire for change is tempered by the need to keep English and French in equilibrium is the constant naming of these two languages in policy clauses ostensibly about something else. The policy makes 58 references to both English and French within a single clause, in contexts in which an alternative (such as 'language of instruction' or 'L2') is also used, making the explicit reference to the languages somewhat redundant. Several mentions are also made of the need to ensure that the curriculum, syllabi, teacher guides, learning standards and learning outcomes are identical in content across all schools, 'irrespective of their language backgrounds' (Vanuatu Ministry of Education 2012, 3), which is understood to refer here to current disparities between Anglophone and Francophone schools.

The third way in which the attempts to achieve change are undermined is the lack of attention given to solving implementation issues. When the design team (VESP 2012) refer to the national language policy for education, they immediately note the difficulties envisaged in implementing this policy in terms of teacher training and proficiency in the language of instruction. They state the lack of adequate instructional materials to support reading and writing, and note that this is particularly problematic for the teaching of reading in French (p.14). This reference to the materials currently used to teach literacy in French (or English) suggests that consideration has not yet been given to the materials that will be needed either for literacy acquisition in the vernacular, as per the new policy, or for the transfer of these skills to L2. The document sets out draft targets for increased literacy rates in Grade 3 by 2017 (p.24), with no mention of whether these refer to literacy in the vernacular (as per the new policy and for which there is currently no benchmark to show an increase *from*) or in L2. At the time of this design document, the donor partners were clearly stating their agreement with international evidence that the current methods of teaching through an unfamiliar language were inadequate and ill-conceived, but they did not appear to have a plan in place to change this.

Two years later, a position was advertised by an external recruitment agency for a language policy implementation specialist, later followed by an advertisement for a second language transition specialist. The focus of the appointments was implementation of the policy already in place, bringing linguistic expertise extremely late to the deliberations. These recruitments provide a good window into the process that has occurred. Significant attention was given to reforming the entire curriculum from early years to pre-university, following internationally-familiar principles such as learner-centredness and outcomes-based assessment. At the back of the policy mind was clearly an understanding that choosing the right language was central to this whole reform, but specific provisions about medium of

instruction and language learning were conspicuously absent from the curriculum statement (for reasons noted earlier), and even the final language policy limited itself to broad statements about which languages would be used in each year of the system, concentrating more on ensuring compliance with (narrow interpretations of) legal requirements regarding English and French. Only once the policy had been endorsed, and thus was also bound by the terms it contained, was expertise in matters of language actually sought.

The result of all this is a new language policy rationalised, this time, by discourses of educational best practice. It is considered to be the best chance of success because it recognises the central role of language within the objectives of the new curriculum, and there finally seems a more sincere commitment to the use of the vernaculars for initial instruction. More importantly, there appears to be momentum at last, with sufficient funding to see some real change. However, with so little input from educational linguists, or at least not until far too late, the political has continued to override the pedagogical, and insufficient attention has been paid to the question of whether the model can actually work in practice.

If the policy on paper is followed to the letter, it cannot work. Early-exit transitional models have not been shown to be successful elsewhere, and Vanuatu's proposed version is more complex than most. However, if the spirit of the policy can be carried forward with a far more realistic implementation plan, then perhaps this really is the breakthrough needed. The spirit of the policy is two-fold: improving the quality of education by enabling children to learn through a medium of instruction that they understand, and maintaining Vanuatu's desire for children to learn both English and French effectively. This paper argues for a plurilingual approach across the curriculum that can achieve these goals.

A plurilingual approach across the curriculum

The key is to move beyond the attempt to transition from one language to another, and think instead in terms of multilingual repertoires of instruction, exploiting the full 'multilinguality' (Agnihotri 2007) of the classroom. Although 'plurilingualism' first entered Vanuatu's policy discourse in 2010, the concept was interpreted to mean multiple blocks of different languages, kept separate within a double transition from L1 to L2, and later to L3 (Education Language Policy Team 2010b). The 2012 policy defines plurilingualism as the ability of children 'to make themselves understood in the three official languages of Vanuatu' by the end of primary school, with 'a reasonable standard of fluency by the end of Year 8 in either French or English' and 'a foundation to become fluent in the other language of education and become bilingual' (p.10). Once again, we see the reduction of a concept that might work well to the narrow version of 'bilingualism' in English and French.

However, we ascertain that Vanuatu's national vision of societal multilingualism is one that combines over 100 vernaculars, with the three official languages of Bislama, English and French. Its vision for individual plurilingualism is for each individual to be proficient in one or more of the vernaculars, and all three official languages. Children become socialised through schooling into whichever versions of multilingualism and plurilingualism are valued (Auleear Owodally 2014). The goal of a plurilingual approach to education is therefore 'to counter the erasure of multilingual repertoires as resources for learning' (Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenbergen 2015, 178), by fostering the use of all the languages that a child knows and learns.

Following well-known distinctions between 'strong' and 'weak' forms of other language-related pedagogical approaches, particularly Howatt's (1984) distinction within Communicative Language Teaching, it might be fruitful to think of strong and weak forms of plurilingual approaches across the content curriculum (and see also Lennon 2010 on 'strong' and 'weak' forms of plurilingualism in publishing). A strong plurilingual approach to

learning is one that enacts all aspects of curriculum and assessment through multiple languages and modes, featuring multilingual textbooks, the combination of a range of resources in different languages, and assessments that enable pupils to demonstrate their knowledge in any or all of their languages. At the present time, we can find examples of small-scale additions to mainstream curricula that exemplify a strong plurilingual approach, but it is rare to find a full curriculum that does everything plurilingually. For example, Lotherington (2013) discusses project-based interventions used in linguistically-heterogeneous kindergarten classrooms in Toronto (see also Lotherington, Paige and Holland-Spencer 2013), in which children engage in a range of storybook activities that encourage them to use their full multilingual repertoires. However, Lotherington notes that such projects are often carried out within the 'third spaces' that educators can seek out within restrictive policy environments.

A weak plurilingual approach ensures the usage of multiple linguistic (and multimodal) resources within and across the curriculum, but it continues to use monolingual textbooks and assessments for much of the time. This is a more realistic scenario in many contexts, requiring less of a shift in the imagination of classroom possibilities, and fewer practical changes to classroom materials and assessment structures. Rather than creating new resources in multiple languages for every topic, many monolingual resources continue to be used, and, rather than suddenly inviting children to write their answers to tests in any or all of the languages they know, many assessments continue to require that answers are written monolingually in one or other of these languages. For example, under Vanuatu's new policy, the principal language of textbooks and assessments might shift from L1 to L2, although ideally after a minimum of five or six years. However, the classroom environment in which these textbooks and assessments operate can be far from monolingual.

The precise ways in which content knowledge can be dealt with plurilingually across the curriculum is context-dependent. However, I will present three extracts from lessons observed at a rural Francophone school in Vanuatu during 2011, which demonstrate plurilingual possibilities of varying degrees. Note that these lessons were observed before the current language policy had come into effect, and that the teachers all told me that they were expected to use French only in the classroom.

The first class contained pupils from Years 1 and 2 together (aged 5 to 7). The teacher was from the area in which the school was situated, and was a fluent speaker of the local vernacular, North-East Ambae. She also spoke Bislama and French fluently. The majority of the pupils came from the local area, and were dominant speakers of the same vernacular, but a few had spent some time elsewhere, and were more familiar with Bislama. The activity was to connect the beginnings and endings of three French words that were jumbled up on the blackboard. A pupil came to the board and drew a line to connect 'jar-' to '-din', thus creating the word 'jardin' (garden). The following dialogue[ii] ensued:

Teacher:	C'est juste?
	Is that right?
Chorus:	Oui.
	Yes.
Teacher:	Pourquoi c'est juste? *From wanem nao i gud*?
	Why is it right? Why is it right?
	(pause)
Teacher:	Jardin c'est quoi?
	What is garden?
Joseph:	**Talu.**
	Garden.
Teacher:	**Garea** Joseph. **Talu**. Comment dit-on **talu** en Bislama?
	Good Joseph. Garden. How do we say garden in Bislama?

Chorus:	*Garen.*
	Garden.
Teacher:	Oui bravo. *Garen*. **Talu**. Jardin.
	Yes well done. Garden. Garden. Garden.

In this short extract, the teacher moved between French, Bislama and North-East Ambae, ensuring that the children understood the meaning of the word from the activity. The lesson then moved on to the new focus: words beginning with 'k'. The focal word was 'kilo', which the teacher contextualised by asking children, in both the vernacular and Bislama, about being sent to the store by their parents to buy flour and sugar. However, the only words ever written on the blackboard throughout the lesson were in French. As noted above, this lesson was observed before the new policy, under which we would now expect to see board work done in the vernacular or Bislama during these early grades, rather than French.

Of more concern is what happens in the higher grades, given that the policy proposal is to transition to L2. The second extract comes from a Year 7 (aged 11-12) biology lesson on seed dispersal. The teacher and his pupils spoke five separate, but closely related, vernaculars between them from the three islands of the province. The teacher elicited examples of fruits whose seeds are transported by animals, and explicitly told pupils that they could use Bislama or the vernacular to provide examples.

Teacher:	Allez ensuite, ceux qui sont transportés par des animaux? Oui, Patrice?
	Okay next, those which are transported by animals? Yes, Patrice?
Patrice:	**Nakatambol.**
	Nakatambol. (Local fruit sometimes translated into English as 'dragon plum')
Teacher:	Oui, bien merci. Ensuite? *Wanem bakegen?*
	Yes, good thank you. Next? What else?
Simon:	Un mangue?
	A mango?

Teacher:	Merci Simon. Une mange. Une. C'est feminine. Uh huh? Et puis?
	Thank you Simon. A mango. A. It's feminine. Uh huh? And then?
	(pause)
Teacher:	*Hemia nomo? I gat fulap iet. Traem tingbaot ol tri ia long ples ia.* Ici à l'école.
	That's all? There are still lots. Think about the trees around here. Here at school.
Jesela:	**Navele?**
	Navele? (Local nut sometimes translated into English as 'bush nut')
Teacher:	**Navele.** Excellent!
	Navele. Excellent!
Markson:	**Matui! Matui!**
	Coconut! Coconut!
Teacher:	**Matui?** Noix de coco? Je pense pas. *Hemia hem i travel long wota.*
	Coconut? Coconut? I don't think so. That travels by water.

During this extract, we see the same three languages used. Three examples are named using local terms, only one of which (matui) is translated into French. Unlike in the first example, the plurilingualism here does not appear to be motivated by ensuring understanding, since the French is relatively easy for the pupils of this level to understand, and, by this stage in the lesson, they have already covered seed dispersal by wind, so have a good understanding of what is required. Instead, it enables the pupils to draw on their own knowledge of the fruits and nuts growing around them, and it perhaps encourages them to participate in the discussion more freely than they would in French. However, immediately following this elicitation exercise, the teacher wrote a set of notes in French about dispersal by animals on the blackboard, which the pupils copied into their exercise books.

The third example comes from a Year 10 (aged 14-15) social science lesson about population growth. The teacher is from a different island from all the pupils and does not speak the local vernacular.

Teacher:	Qui peut me donner un effet de la croissance de la population? (Pause) Ce qui arrive? Si la population augmente, ce qui sera le résultat? L'effet? Par exemple, est-ce qu'il y aura assez d'emplois? Assez de nourriture? (Pause) Vous comprenez la question?
	Who can give me an effect of population growth ? (Pause) What happens ? If the population increases, what will the result be ? The effect ? For example, will there be enough jobs ? Enough food ? (Pause) Do you understand the question ?
Chorus:	Oui.
	Yes.
Teacher:	*Traem tingbaot long Vila. Long Efate. I gat fulap man we oli kamaot long fulap defdefren aelan we oli kam stap long Vila. Naoia yumi luk wanem? Oli save faenem wok?*
	Think about in Vila. On Efate. There are lots of people from so many different islands who come to live in Vila. So what do we see? Can they find jobs?
Chorus:	Non.
	No.
Teacher:	Allez, c'est un effet de la croissance de la population. *Sapos population i hae, bae i no gat inaf wok.* Bravo, ensuite?
	Okay, that's an effect of population increase. If there is a high population, there won't be enough work. Good, next ?
Willie:	*Kakae.*
	Food.
Teacher:	En français s'il vous plaît.
	In French please.

In this third example, the classroom language is clearly expected to be French. The teacher uses French for as long as she can, until she realises that the pupils do not understand the question. However, as soon as she has clarified the question in Bislama, she expects the dialogue to proceed in French, as we see when she rejects Willie's suggestion of 'kakae' (food). The teacher compiled a list of effects on the blackboard, using French only.

In these three extracts, we see different extents of pedagogical translanguaging, 'the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, understandings and knowledge through two

[or more than two] languages' (Baker 2011, 288). In Extract 1 and, to a lesser extent, Extract 2, the teachers use the different languages fluidly together, inviting the pupils to participate, and ensuring that this participation is meaningful. Extract 3 demonstrates that the teacher is less comfortable with such an approach, using Bislama only as a fallback strategy when French has failed, and this particular instance could therefore be considered a form of momentary codeswitching in order to solve a problem. In making this distinction, I follow Probyn (2015) and others in using the term 'pedagogical translanguaging' with reference to its power to harness the educational potential of using more than one language at once, while using 'codeswitching' to refer to switches triggered by a particular change in context, such as the need to clarify unknown vocabulary or tell a pupil off. As Heugh (2015) notes, the term 'translanguaging' does not, in itself, capture the fluidity of language usage any more effectively than 'codeswitching' – with both terms seemingly trapped in the back-and-forth between distinct languages – but, as Heugh points out, the use of a new term does perhaps enable policymakers to engage with the idea of multilingualism in the classroom as something more productive than a fallback strategy.

The original term 'translanguaging', as put forward by Williams (1994), refers to the use of one language to discuss and develop understanding of a text in another language. Although the concept has since been used as an analytic construct, returning to this original usage of the term is useful in a weak form of plurilingual pedagogy, in which the classroom materials may well continue to be in a language such as English or French after a certain stage. In the three classrooms discussed above, there were no textbooks or handouts used, with the only writing occurring on the blackboard and in pupils' exercise books. However, all of this writing was done in French, and the translanguaging occurred in order to bring its content to life in meaningful ways. While the lack of published materials appeared to give the teachers freedom to use whichever languages they liked, they were actually copying from the

prescribed textbook that their school should have had copies of. They were understandably trying not to deviate too far from these materials, even when they did not hold physical copies of them.

Pedagogical translanguaging can therefore work as a 'supportive bilingual scaffold' (Saxena 2010) to create more dynamic and active learning and teaching (see also Saxena 2009), regardless of the language that is used as the principal written language of the classroom. This aligns with Hornberger's (1989) model of biliteracy, in which three different continua intersect: L1 to L2, oral to written, and receptive to productive. The model recognises multiple progressions from the familiar to the new, and makes it clear that there is no sudden cut-off point at which the familiar can be left behind and replaced by the new, as is expected by a transitional model. Probyn (2015, extending Gibbons 2006) provides examples of how such a model can be enacted in the science classroom through "bridging discourses" to help pupils make similar connections between oral and written, everyday and scientific, practical and theoretical, and L1 and L2. However, these are not one-way bridges across which learners may never return, but multiple and multidirectional bridges across which pupils can make meaningful connections within their learning.

Pedagogical translanguaging does not, of course, need to be teacher led. Through the use of pair work and peer teaching (see, for example, Abiria, Early and Kendrick 2013; White, Hailemariam and Ogbay 2013), pupils with similar language backgrounds can help each other negotiate meaning, even when the teacher does not speak all of the same languages. Indeed, White, Hailemariam and Ogbay (2013) provide some good examples of the way pupils engage productively and plurilingually together on homework tasks outside school, but report that they can only collaborate in such a way in the classroom by whispering or by texting each other under the desks. By bringing effective practices into the open in the

19

mainstream classroom, teachers can guide activities without dominating every single episode of interaction.

Some activities will necessarily culminate in pupils sharing their ideas in languages that others can understand, for example when reporting ideas to the whole class, submitting a piece of homework to the teacher, or completing an external assessment. Again, contexts will dictate which languages need to be used in each case. However, even in the weakest form of a plurilingual approach, in which a language such as English or French might be chosen in all of these cases, there are opportunities to scaffold the linguistic resources that pupils need to use. While discussing and completing the content aspects of a task, whether using multiple languages or predominantly using L1, pupils can be encouraged to ask explicit questions such as 'how will we say this in English?' or 'what is the word for this in French?' if they know that they will have to report back in that language. Alternatively, an initial whole class discussion might be held in one language, before some input from the teacher on key vocabulary items and useful phrases in another language, in order to facilitate a follow-up discussion in that language. Importantly, explicit instruction regarding the language and genre expectations of tasks needs to be provided by teachers of all subjects. White, Mammone and Caldwell (2015) refer to a whole-school approach to genre-based pedagogy, through which content teachers of all subjects guide pupils in the analysis and construction of appropriate texts to suit particular context- and content-dependent purposes (see also Derewianka 2003). A curriculum-wide approach such as this ensures that connections are made between what is taught in the L2 language classroom, and what is expected in the L2-dominant content classroom, allowing pupils to see how different genres work in practice.

Stille and Cummins (2013) provide evidence of plurilingual pupils in Canada who are more effective L2 vocabulary learners when they use L1 as a scaffold. Lin (2013) gives examples of children in Hong Kong who write productively in both English and Chinese in

science journals as they make sense of their new scientific discoveries, despite being enrolled in an English-medium system. An important finding from Probyn's (2015) comparative study in South Africa is that the classrooms in which the teacher and/or the learners speak more L1 (isi-Xhosa in this case) than L2 (English) still contained more interaction in English overall between learners and teachers than the classrooms in which English was the dominant language. The fear that the use of L1 in the classroom will prevent pupils using L2 is simply not supported by evidence, and it appears that the contrary is actually the case.

Meanwhile, it is clear that the curricula for the teaching of languages such as English and French need to acknowledge the fact that these languages are rarely used outside the classroom by the vast majority. Children must be given time to learn how to use these languages before being expected to learn other subjects through them. Even once L2 has taken a more dominant role in the content classroom, language lessons must continue to support this role. At the present time, there is little connection between the L2 language curriculum and the content curriculum, with the former focusing heavily on literature, creative writing, formal letter writing, and the analysis of language in domains such as advertising. When school leavers arrive at the University of the South Pacific, the first course they take is an introductory unit in 'English for Academic Purposes', in which a lot of students struggle, despite the fact that they have already been *using* English for academic purposes throughout school.

The new policy is clear on the need for all students in Vanuatu to master both English and French, and also states that senior secondary students will be able to learn additional languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Spanish. This vision, of course, fits in well with the concept of plurilingualism, but attention does need to be paid to questions of methodology, curricula and teacher availability. There must be a clear vision for why the different languages are learnt and for what purposes they will be used, in order to guide their effective

teaching. The L3 lessons I observed during 2011 (English at the Francophone school, and French at the Anglophone school) were filled with the copying of grammar notes in L2 *about* the language, with almost no opportunities to practise *using* it. There are, of course, multiple ways to learn a language, but this approach didn't seem to fit particularly well with the reasons I was given for needing to know both English and French (which were, primarily, to interact with tourists, to communicate in the workplace, and to seek scholarships to study overseas).

Will the new policy work? The wrong model at the right time

In the absence of evidence of a successful early-exit transitional model (Heugh, 2011), it is hard to argue that Vanuatu is heading in the right direction with this particular policy. However, we are witnessing for the first time the willpower, resources and imagination to include more languages, and it is essential to work within this moment to stretch and exploit the policy until it does make sense for Vanuatu. By delaying the transition from L1 to L2 as the principal written language of the classroom for as long as possible, and by ensuring that teachers across the whole curriculum foster a plurilingual pedagogy, this may be possible.

To achieve this, teacher training must ensure that teachers of all curriculum subjects are comfortable dealing with language. I witnessed good practice by a science teacher at an English-medium school in Vanuatu, who would look at the content of students' answers first, giving praise and making corrections as necessary, before going back to look at the linguistic elements, using utterances such as "this is good, but what's wrong here with 'two bulb'?" and "can we all just check the spelling of 'parallel' please?" However, many teachers feel reluctant to talk about language. Teacher training must also provide teachers with the confidence to work plurilingually within the classroom, helping them recognise and replicate

the way they use multiple languages in other areas of their lives. We know already that teachers are operating plurilingually in many classrooms of the country, so recording and sharing examples of what works and what doesn't would be beneficial.

The top and bottom may finally be meeting within Vanuatu's language-in-education policy. The top is sending down a policy that opens up space for languages other than English and French, and the bottom has long been pushing upwards with pragmatic responses to the challenges of teaching through L2, albeit when nobody is looking. By working sideways with communities, schools, teacher training bodies, and curriculum and assessment units, it should be possible to do more than open up ideological and implementational *space* (Hornberger 2002) for languages other than English and French, and actually provide ideological and implementational *support* for plurilingualism. As Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) argue, 'the practice of policy encourages us, as researchers and teachers, to read between and behind the lines (cf. Cooke, 2004), to interpret the ambiguities and gaps in critical ways that open up moments and spaces for transformative pedagogical interventions' (p. 448), an opportunity that the developments in Vanuatu may finally be providing.

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[i] Although Bislama, the national language, might be considered by outsiders to provide a logical solution, it slips into the ideological no man's land between the indigenous and the international, and such a suggestion has never been taken seriously.

[ii] Regular type is used for French; italics is used for Bislama; bold type is used for North-East Ambae.