Mother-Tongue Use in Education in the Pacific & Contribution to MDG 2 Universal Primary Education

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Objectives

- Identify the human rights perspective to language use in education: the protocols and conventions which make the case for mother tongue use both as LOI (Language of instruction) and LOL (Language for learning)
- Identify what has/hasn't worked internationally. Seek relevance to PIC's.
- Where to from here? What is needed for
  - Advocacy, planning and policy development so children are able to access education in their language of greatest fluency and cultural knowledge? This is essential if we are to meet UPE targets.

The human rights perspective to language use in education: the protocols and conventions

The following UN conventions state that individuals, especially ethnic minorities must have rights to education in a language which is accessible, known or preferred by the community of the child.

Unfortunately they do not make this an obligation for the State to provide.

International

1990 EFA Conference Jomtien,Thailand, World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal

Article 26 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Article 13 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights

Articles 28, 29,30 Conventions on the Rights of the Child

Article 24 Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

Article 14 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Regional:

Article 14 European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Article 8 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Universal Primary Education & Language of Schooling

UPE means Expanding Education Opportunity to All through

1. Expanding access
2. Improving efficiency
3. Enhancing quality
4. Achieving equity

Biggest challenge to EFA: high levels of dropouts and repetition (Ed notes 2005, World Bank)

Role of Language?

Duty of the State?

International literature on mother tongue education

Educational benefits

Research shows that school programmes which encourage mother tongue learning and use for the longest period of time are the most effective (e.g. Late exit vs. early exit and submersion programmes benefit Maths, English language and English reading, Ramirez et. al. 1991)

Language learning benefits

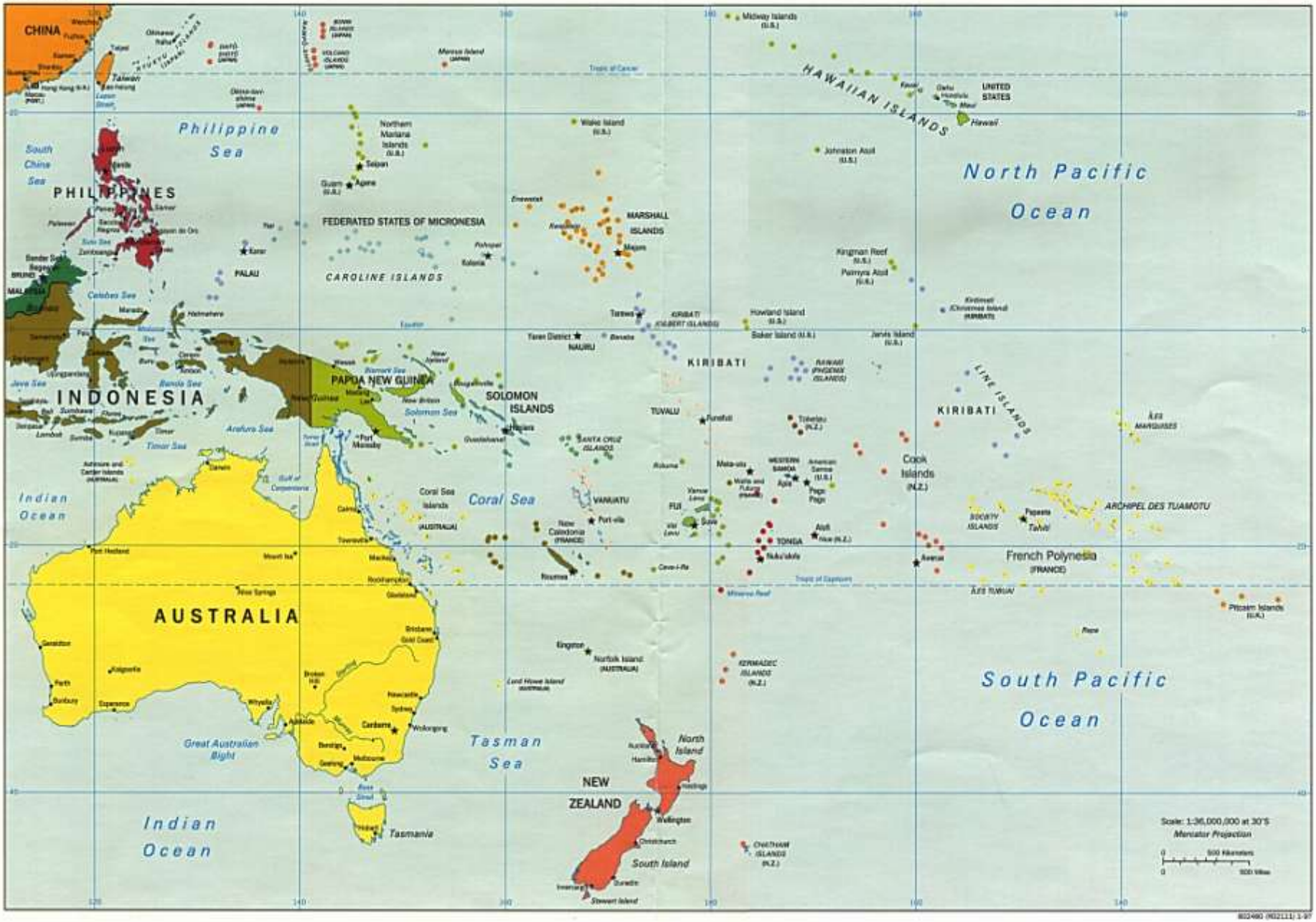
Since the 1980's several studies show the success of second language learning programmes which encourage, develop and promote mother-tongue maintenance (Cummins 1995).

Recent research now shows that a second language is learnt more effectively if the learner has high proficiency and well developed cognitive and literacy skills in the mother tongue.

The Use of Mother Tongue as Language of Instruction and Language of Learning in the Pacific

1. How many school languages are routinely used in the home and vice versa?
2. Do we make a distinction between language of instruction and language of learning so a lack of resources (teachers, materials, curriculum) or a language without a standardized orthography can be used informally for learning?
3. Do we ensure community and parental support in all aspects of curriculum development and delivery and are we recruiting teacher aides from the language group of the child prior to formal training support?

Oceania



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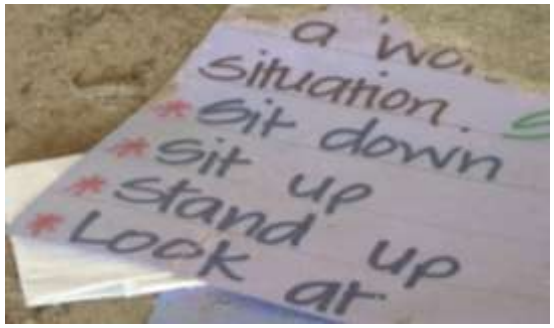


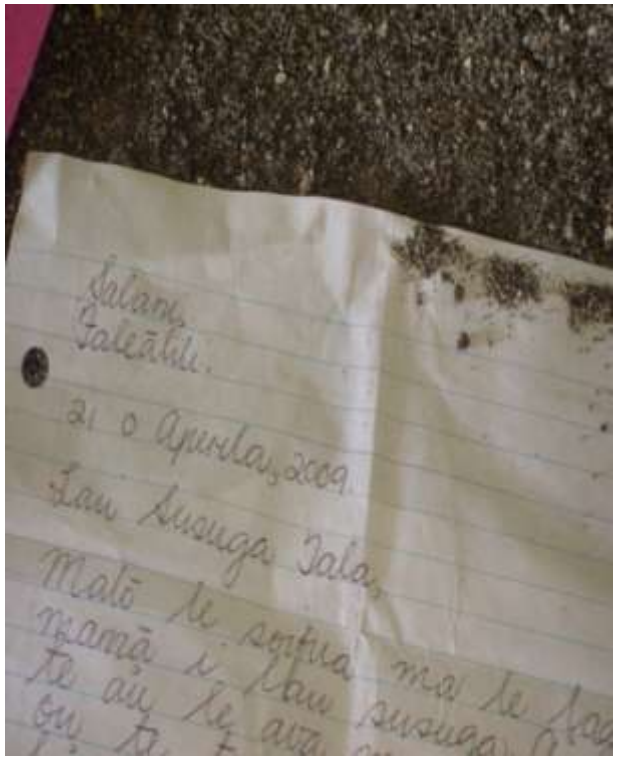
Multilingualism in the Pacific includes:

1. Imperialism and language inheritance
2. Differing language proficiencies in known languages
3. Varying patterns of language use in a range of contexts
4. Language attitudes shaped by individual and community beliefs but also political allegiances
5. Rural-urban, Provincial, Island differences
6. Positive attitudes to ESOL & resource allocation to ESOL rather than mother tongue education
7. Danger of language shift, loss and death as world shrinks with globalisation and immigration
8. Presence of lingua franca with associated low status.
9. Use of the term ‘vernaculars’ consistently in language policy and planning documents undermine the importance of mother tongues as viable languages of education

Pacific Education Images

What has worked?

Relevance to PIC's.



1. Language development (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG, NZ Maori)
2. Language planning and policy (Samoa, Cook Islands)
3. Materials development (International Reading Association: Int Dev in Oceania Committee) Text development: Niue, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati but fate unknown in all except Niue. Shell books, PNG
4. Teacher education and teaching methodologies in language teaching and teaching content through multiple languages (NZ)
5. Research at all stages (NZ, Samoa, Cook Islands)
6. Community, students, teachers and parental involvement (Fiji, Samoa)

What is needed in the Pacific?

1. Evaluation of programmes and approach
2. 'Leadership' in language use in education to ensure first education in mother tongue is on the agenda internationally and regionally (Dutcher, 2004)
3. Donor commitment (bilateral and multilateral) to mother tongue education as one of keys to achieving equity and UPE (Vietnam, Philippines, PNG)
4. A well implemented program for gains to hold, otherwise people will question point of high costs and negligible returns. (*Tok Ples Preskuls*, PNG)
5. Exchange visits to countries where successful models are being implemented (Samoa, NZ, Cook Islands, PNG).
6. A research driven and responsive agenda

The current scenario for five PIC's, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji and Samoa

PIC's currently working on Language policies and Education sector strategic plans.

Language policy development in education: Cook Is, Samoa, Fiji (complete) Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati (in progress)

Samoa and Fiji currently working on unpacking language policy for wider curriculum developments, Samoa writing appropriate curricula for bilingual education.

Issues with Language in Education Policies-in-Progress –

- *are the appropriate languages being identified for learning in each State?*
- *are the appropriate actions to support these taking place?*
- *are policies driven by research data?*
- *is there strong advocacy for mother tongue education?*

Pacific: Current situation

1. Problems with UPE: severe problems with low and uneven access, lack of resources, high drop out & push out rates, deficient facilities, low standards and achievements, questionable curriculum relevance, inappropriate assessment systems & ineffective quality assurance mechanisms (*Ward, Sikua & Banks in Rethinking Educational Aid in the Pacific, 2005*)
2. Solomon Islands: 71 living languages, 3 no known speakers Vanuatu:105 mother-tongues spoken, 70 of them have less than 10,000 speakers, Fiji: two main ethnic groups but a number of mother tongues, Kiribati, Samoa, bilingual
3. Independence from Colonial powers & resulting tensions with language legacy, Britain (Fiji, SI, Kiribati) & France (Vanuatu), ethnic tensions (SI), fragmentary political parties, coups (Fiji), problems with donor harmonisation have slowed developments
4. Language of wider currency and lingua franca of low status and weak political & community support, Bislama, Pijin.

Issues

Constitutions make no reference to relative status of languages

Pijin/Bislama has no official status (even though it is the main lingua franca) and has no place in formal education (LOI). Frequently used as LOL and code switched with local mother tongues and English. Children acquire Pijin/Bislama rapidly as main second language at primary school.

Education policy has revolved around literacy in English

Language policies in draft, developed by outside TA with support from MOE's. Makes little reference to Pacific and local literature, research and experience in LOI & LOL. Not clear what research evidence has been used to collect information on use, users, proficiencies, functions, attitudes.

Insufficient support for strong models of multilingual education for local languages to be used in pre-schools and increasingly in Years 1-8.

Support for ESOL much stronger and well resourced (Kiribati) weak English language competence is seen as the root cause of the failure of children to do well, to stay in school, & then to cope with higher studies

A Good Model: Samoa

- Research, language planning done and policy developed
- Orthography currently being undertaken to standardize spelling and grammar and coin new words
- Models of bilingual education analysed and chosen & developed to suit context
- Curriculum being developed in both English and Samoan in complementarity but also to support interdependence of language skills and strategies for learning.
- All skill areas addressed (listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and presenting) in progressively cognitively demanding ways
- Functional language curriculum to support use of languages in actual contexts for real purposes (e.g. high Samoan for formal speech making)
- Specific reference to gender disparities and special needs within curricula.
- Acknowledges development levels in language capacity of children in each language as they work through the primary system
- Clear complementarity between curriculum and assessment on SPELL exams (both languages) although still issues with Year 8 exams in English
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures still being worked out.

Where to from here? What is needed for advocacy so children can fully access education opportunities?

1. Research, especially on linguistic environment of students
2. Clarity on transitional bi and multilingual education models & rationale
3. Review curricula and clarify issues of language teaching and use and identify appropriate teaching methods for classroom language use in shared, group, independent, multi-grade contexts
4. Begin codification & orthography development
5. Sort out language status issues
6. Address all skills: Aural, oral, reading & literacy of teachers and students
7. Address issues of teacher support (e.g. teacher support circles, Guatemala)
8. Target resource writing, materials development (sufficient, suitable, efficient & appropriate to level and use)
9. Ascertain that assessment is appropriate
10. Mobilise community support
11. Advocate for use of mother tongue education through examples
12. Monitor and evaluate language learning and use in curricula

"the failure to use mother tongues in initial education is a significant factor in failure of States to provide equal educational opportunities to all children".

Dutcher (*2004 2nd edn, Expanding educational opportunity in linguistically diverse societies*)

THANK YOU

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