K4D
Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Managing transitions from mother tongue instruction to English as the medium of instruction

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Question

What is international best practice on how to phase, support and manage a transition from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction (MOI)?

Contents

1. Overview

International evidence is clear that there is **no best practice in transitioning from mother tongue to English as the medium of instruction in low and middle-income countries.** Many studies found in the development of this helpdesk report provided in-depth analysis on the complex colonial histories of mother tongue language policies, nation building, implementation realities and challenges, as well as the importance of a cohesive mother tongue policy. Other papers found for this report provided useful policy considerations for governments, donors and programme staff. Much of the research addresses wider enablers to promote better quality inclusive education at a systemic level through mother tongue language policies. Some authors suggest that we are quite a way from a 'global' understanding of the aims and purposes of EMI because it appears to be a phenomenon which is being introduced 'top-down' by policy makers and education managers, rather than through consultation with the key stakeholders. Likewise there is a lack of understanding of the wider consequences or the outcomes of EMI (Clegg, 2005; Pinnock, 2009; Dearden, 2014).

The benefits of mother tongue instruction (MTI) are well established in literature. The literature describes three main language of instruction models, namely: 'early-exit' (1-4 years of MTI), 'late-exit' (1-6 years of MTI), and 'very late-exit' (1-8 years or beyond in MTI). Results from early-exit policies show low learning outcomes, and this model is often fraught with implementation challenges from political will to resourcing. The sudden transition in early-exit policies does not allow learners to develop adequate cognitive, linguistic and academic skills in their mother tongues prior to the switch. The effective transfer of cognitive and academic competences from the mother tongue to the second language is possible only when the learners have acquired adequate linguistic and academic competence in their mother tongues. **The weight of current evidence strongly suggests that if the academic benefits of MTI are to be achieved, then initial MTI needs to be a minimum of six years.**

There are a number of challenges associated with MTI and transition to English medium of instruction (EMI). These include:

- Policy incoherence and lack of political will due to the complexity of MTI
- Negative perceptions of the value of local language versus English from international development actors and national level policymakers down to local communities
- Lack of education infrastructure to implement EMI including resources
- Little exposure to English and few opportunities for learner talk in the classroom, likewise for reading and writing opportunities
- Poor teacher preparation and in-service training, and other teacher management issues.

As a result of these complex factors, learning gains post-transition into EMI continue to be poor and many students struggle to continue schooling and eventually drop out.

Literature provides a number of policy considerations for governments, donors, and programmes to address the challenges above. The policy suggestions include: addressing issues of political will in fully resourcing MTI policies, formulating flexible and sustainable multilingual policies, managing stakeholder misconceptions associated with learning in mother tongue through strong advocacy from national level to local communities, improving the quality and adapting the focus of pre- and in-service teacher training, and using language supportive pedagogies (LSP). It should be noted however, that while recommendations may stem from empirical studies, there is

limited evidence that they will work, and thus further trialling and robust evaluation is necessary. Many researchers therefore call for more robust evaluations and longitudinal studies in this area.

Overall, the strength of the evidence on MTI and EMI issues is strong; however, the evidence relating to best practice is weak with few studies on best practices. The scope of this helpdesk report was sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Whilst there were a few examples of promising practice from Europe[1], these programmes are not tested and designed for the African context, and were therefore omitted from this report. Evidence of promising practice in this area tends to be diversified, with a range of small-scale empirical studies scattered among a number of disciplinary contexts. Some authors have highlighted the need to consolidate and systematically identify the extent to which the body of literature has evaluated the various language in-education policy options.

Whilst the report did not have a specific gender focus, it is noted in the literature that girls and other marginalised groups (such as minorities and those with disabilities) are disproportionately affected by poor mother tongue acquisition. Mother tongue schooling can therefore help to make education more inclusive, and help address the multiple disadvantages faced by girls and women belonging to linguistic minorities (Romaine, 2013).

In this report, L1 refers to mother tongue and L2 refers to the international language, in this case, English.

2. Background

There is significant research evidence that children learn best when the first language of instruction and examinations is their mother tongue (see, for example, UNESCO 1953; Benson, 2002; Brock-Utne, 2005; Clegg, 2005; UNESCO GMR, 2015). The rewards of schooling in local languages outweigh the costs, with gains in education quality and inclusion leading to reduced school-year repetition and drop-outs. When vocabulary and literacy skills are built in the mother tongue (or L1), along with building oral fluency in the second language, learners can more easily access and master learning in the second language (L2). Notwithstanding, education planners and policymakers confront a myriad of practical challenges in this regard: language choice in multilingual contexts, the optimal length of mother tongue instruction, codifying unwritten or non-standardised language, developing (in some cases creating) mother tongue curricular materials, and teacher development (UNESCO IIEP, 2018).

Africa is one of the most linguistically diverse continents, accounting for 30% of the world's languages while having only 15% of its population. In contrast, Europe which has just over 10% of the world's population only accounts for only 4% of its languages (Clegg & Simpson, 2016). Multilingualism in Africa has been widely perceived as a threat to the economy and nation building efforts, leading national governments to justify the use of one official, often foreign, language, particularly in educational settings. Consequently, the opportunity is missed to build a quality education system on the potential of the majority of the population, instead of a minority which masters the official language (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011). This has partly been motivated by a (perhaps misplaced but nonetheless common) belief that instruction in a

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[1] For example, from Content and Language Integrated Learning in Europe (CLIL)

language is an effective way of learning it, a finding consistent with many other studies in the literature, though evidence says otherwise (James, forthcoming, see also Milligan et al., 2016).

It is well established in literature that those who learn through English Medium Instruction (EMI) struggle to learn effectively across SSA (Alidou, 2003; Clegg 2005; Clegg & Simpson, 2016; Milligan et al., 2016). In addition to challenges in their development of English, children "face considerable cognitive and linguistic challenges in acquiring conceptual understanding" across the curriculum (Rea-Dickins & Yu, 2013, p. 190 cited in Milligan et al., 2016). Significant evidence suggests that learner ability in the medium of instruction (MOI) is often too low for learners to achieve acceptable levels of subject knowledge, and that many teachers are not confident enough in the MOI to teach to expected standards (Clegg, 2005; Brock-Utne et al., 2010). Some authors partly attribute this to the sudden switch from one language to another. Clegg & Simpson (2016) highlight that whilst the term 'transition' is widely used to refer to the move from teaching and learning in mother tongue to EMI, it is somewhat of a contradiction, as in many cases the change is often an abrupt switch from one language to another, rather than by a carefully planned and supported change process that seeks to prevent loss of learning. Despite the significant evidence base on this issue, language and its relation to learning processes and outcomes is poorly articulated in the wider development literature (Brock-Utne, 2015; Milligan et al., 2016).

In terms of inclusion and equity, 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 (Pinnock, 2009). 54 million out-of-school children live in countries economists classify as 'highly linguistically fractionalised'. At the time of her writing, the most linguistically fractionalised countries contained 72% of out-of-school children worldwide (Pinnock, 2009). Furthermore, the groups most impacted by injustices in language policy and planning in education are women and girls, the poor, and those speaking languages not represented in formal structures (Pinnock, 2009; Romaine, 2013; UNESCO IIEP, 2018).

Although positive advancements are taking place in some countries, in most parts of the world schooling is still virtually synonymous with learning a second, third or even fourth language. Education for minorities in many parts of the world still operates in ways that contradict best practices, with fewer than 10% of the world's languages used in education.

3. Phasing models: Early- and late-exit transitions

In practice there appears to be no consensus at the methodological level on the stage at which the medium of instruction should change from mother tongue to an official language or international language of wider communication. Likewise, there are still debates on whether it is necessary to use the international language of wider communication as the MOI or teach it as a subject, whether the mother tongue and the international language of wider communication can be used complementarily throughout the school system, what the role of the official national language(s) should be, and whether trilingual language models could be recommended. UNESCO UIL & ADEA (2011) attribute this to the varied ways terminology is used and understood across different governments, development agencies and other stakeholders.

There are two primary models used in terms of transitioning from mother tongue instruction to an official language or international language of wider communication (in this case, English): the 'early-exit' and 'late-exit' models. The early-exit model generally uses mother tongue instruction

(MTI) for the initial 1-4 years of education before transitioning to EMI. Late-exit models use MTI for up to 6 years. The third, less common very late-exit model uses MTI for up to 8 years (Benson, 2008; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; Ssentanda, 2014).

Even though there are some benefits that accrue from early-exit programmes, these benefits have been reported to disappear soon after transition away from the MTI, and have been criticised as a 'short cut' to the L2 (Benson, 2008; Ssentanda, 2014). Much research from Africa and elsewhere suggests that initial early-exit MTI does not deliver strong academic benefits (Clegg, 2005; Erling et al., 2016). In particular, it often does not enable learners to learn successfully either through the African MOI or later through a European MOI. In many cases, the African MOI is not the learner's mother tongue. The effective transfer of cognitive and academic competences from the mother tongue to the second language is possible only when the learners have acquired adequate linguistic and academic competence in their mother tongues (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011). Although the early-exit models are criticised as being weak for this reason, Benson (2008, p. 6) states that the extent of exposure to the MTI in such models is "better than none at all" as it is possible for learners in the early-exit programmes to register some benefits that accrue from MTI at least.

The weight of current evidence suggests strongly that if the academic benefits of MTI are to be achieved, then initial MTI needs to be longer – a minimum of six years – and more cognitively challenging (Pinnock, 2009; EdQual, 2010). That is, the adoption of a 'late' (6 year) or 'very late' (8 year) exit model (Milligan et al, 2016). Some authors advocate for MTI until the end of secondary education (Clegg, 2005; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; Erling et al, 2016; Milligan et al, 2016; Clegg & Simpson, 2016; UNESCO IIEP 2018). Underpinning this approach is sound evidence from longitudinal studies and more recent evidence which show that the longer MTI is retained, the better learners' language achievement is in both the mother tongue and in English (Ramirez & Merino, 1990; Akinnaso, 1993). Ramirez & Merino's (1990) study also produced evidence that longer periods of MTI may be associated with better performance in other subjects such as mathematics (Ramirez & Merino, 1990). Heugh's analysis (cited in UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011) of a range of literacy and language models used particularly in SSA also shows that the use of MTI throughout schooling improves the teaching and learning of the official/international language as a subject of learning. This will ultimately make it a better medium of specialised learning wherever appropriate (see UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

For these learning gains to occur however, Heugh (2006 cited in UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011) identified necessary conditions which must in place, e.g. adequate instruction in the mother tongues as languages of instruction, effective teaching of the second language as subject matter, well-trained teachers, availability of quality educational materials in both mother tongues, and a second language and overall well-resourced learning environments (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

Later exit (both late- and very late- exit programmes) approaches have been 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 (Pinnock, 2009).

4. Challenges in managing transitions to EMI

Beyond the inherent structures of different 'exit' models, there are a number of associated challenges with supporting and managing transitions to EMI:

Policy challenges and political will

At the government and national levels, three major obstacles have been identified in establishing more efficient and effective language-in-education policies:

1. Key stakeholders are uninformed about language in education (Clegg, 2005).
2. Some western experts may have negative/simplistic views towards African languages.
3. African universities have not taken the lead in developing and promoting mother-tongue and bi/multilingual education (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

In many countries, there also appears to be a disregard for pre-primary education and the absence of an MTI policy at this level. This can be described as symptomatic of a dysfunctional education system due the lack of continuity in policy (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

Stakeholder perceptions are also a challenge. Research from Ethiopia illustrated a deep concern among multiple stakeholders from the government down to the school level about the relevance of the instructional language beyond the locality the language is spoken in. For this reason, there was some apprehension in investing in developing writing systems for less common languages (James, forthcoming; Erling et al., 2016). In other African contexts, such as Ghana, there is a distinct lack of practical support for MTI (even in the 11 government sponsored languages) through the lack of investment and resourcing to develop the necessary materials, and curricula to support this learning (Opoku-Amankwa, 2015; Erling et al., 2016). In this context, both the teaching syllabuses and teaching materials for primary schools, apart from text books on Ghanaian languages as subjects, are in English. This means that the teachers have to translate the lessons from English to the language of the locality which is almost impossible if the teacher does not speak the local language (Erling et al., 2016). Because of the oft favourable linguistic ideology towards English, curriculum planners regard investment in MTI curriculum and materials as less profitable, and also more challenging due to the multilingual nature of society.

Education infrastructure

In many countries, the overall educational infrastructure does not support quality EMI provision. This is because:

- there is a shortage of linguistically qualified teachers;
- there are no stated expectations of English language proficiency;
- there appear to be few organisational or pedagogical guidelines which might lead to effective EMI teaching and learning, and
- there is little or no EMI content in initial teacher education (teacher preparation) programmes and continuing professional development (in-service) courses (Dearden, 2014).

In addition to the above, curricula may be designed and make no reference to the fundamental language barrier between learner and curriculum, and therefore not embed learning activities. They may look, at first sight, no different from curricula designed for fluent users of the MOI, with

the new curricula for Rwanda and South Sudan as examples. A further challenge to EMI in low-income contexts arises from the increasing adoption of competence-based curricula, representing a move away from knowledge-focused curricula, a shift which increases the language and cognitive demands on learners and teachers (Clegg & Simpson, 2016).

Some authors suggest that we are quite a way from a 'global' understanding of the aims and purposes of EMI because it appears to be a phenomenon which is being introduced 'top-down' by policy makers and education managers, rather than through consultation with the key stakeholders. Likewise there is a lack of understanding of the wider consequences or the outcomes of EMI (Clegg, 2005; Pinnock, 2009; Dearden, 2014).

Parent and community level perceptions

In many SSA contexts, parents have strong ideologies of English as a language of education, economic development and social mobility, as well as assumptions regarding the value of English in the labour market and as the language of opportunity (Benson, 2002; Pinnock et al., 2011; Clegg & Simpson, 2016; Erling et al., 2016). In Ethiopia for example, parental support for MTI is most clearly related to its perceived benefits *vis-à-vis* instruction in the alternative language of wider communication (James, forthcoming). Benson (2004, p. 214 cited in James, forthcoming) states that 'in societal contexts where the exogenous language constitutes unquestionable linguistic 'capital,' parents and communities as well as policymakers are often more certain of the importance of the ex-colonial language and culture than they are of the mother tongue and home culture.' In James' forthcoming paper, even though parents had awareness of the potential benefits of MTI, this was often overshadowed by the prestige and perceived value of the international language in education.

Exposure to language and opportunities for learner talk

The exposure to spoken English in many SSA countries, particularly in rural communities, is very limited. Similarly, the African MOI at the school level may still not be the mother tongue of the learner or wider school community. Teacher deployment issues, i.e. where teachers are deployed to communities with which they do not share a common language, further exacerbate this (Akyeampong et al., 2006). Teachers then have to conduct lessons using EMI completely, and the language-in-education policy ultimately turns out to be a monolingual language-in-education policy. Compounding this, there is evidence that in African classrooms, as in many contexts elsewhere, learners say relatively little either in L1 or L2 either in plenary classrooms or in groups (EdQual, 2010). EdQual's (2010) study suggests learners talk more when working in an African language, and that professional development for teachers can increase opportunities for learner talk in both African languages and in English. Similar findings were found for reading and writing opportunities (see also Clegg & Simpson, 2016).

Classroom resources and textbooks

While data is already available on the effectiveness of EMI in various African countries, very few studies have investigated classroom processes or textbook readability. Furthermore, there is little research on the quality of classroom processes in MTI and comparison of the educational effectiveness of mother tongue and EMI (EdQual, 2010; James, forthcoming). A low degree of reading may take place in African classrooms and the readability of African textbooks in a European language such as English is one reason for this.

Research shows that textbooks written in English are often hard – or impossible – to read, make high demands on writing which many learners cannot meet, as well as high demands on learners' English vocabulary, especially with regard to subject-specific words (Clegg & Simpson, 2016). Research and guidelines on textbook design for learners working in European languages is therefore needed. Moreover, textbooks for African classrooms need to be designed to be particularly accessible by these learners, while remaining cognitively challenging (EdQual, 2010; James, forthcoming; Milligan et al., 2016). Local publishing industries can help to support this. In many countries, the textbook market accounts for 95% of the book market. Hence, education and language policies determine the demand for educational materials in African languages (UNESCO UIL &ADEA, 2011).

5. The role of teachers

At the micro level, there are a number of challenges in using EMI. For example, teachers and students not sharing a language, school communities being diverse, and students not sharing a language. This can occur particularly in urban contexts or when there is a mismatch between the state language which serves as the MOI in government primary schools and the languages that many children use at home (Erling et al., 2016). Furthermore, there are often assumptions from policymakers and international agencies about the capacity, language ability and wider teaching skills of teachers in EMI versus the mother tongue (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016; James, forthcoming).

Significant evidence demonstrates that teachers' English proficiency impacts on the quality and type of teaching that teachers can engage in. Both Alidou (2003) and Brock-Utne (2005) have argued that low levels of proficiency of both teachers and learners can lead to less effective pedagogical practice and a reliance on teacher-centred interaction (see also Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015). Milligan et al. (2016) note that in the context of EMI, it is rare to find that the use of an African language by teachers or learners is officially sanctioned in MOI education policies once the 'transition' from the mother tongue to English has happened. There are numerous examples of informal 'code-switching', particularly for the explanation of new concepts to learners who are struggling to comprehend in English (Ssentanda, 2014). However, this practice can be contentious, occurring covertly and with teachers and learners often feeling that they are doing something wrong since this goes against official language policies (Milligan et al., 2016). It is therefore difficult to find examples of good or accepted practice of the use of code-switching or other pedagogical practices that may support effective teaching and learning (see Clegg and Simpson, 2016).

Regarding teacher preparation, teacher training is largely theoretical and lacks practical focus on supporting the realities of the classroom, such as more multilingual and ethnically diverse groups, as access schooling becomes more universal (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016. The increased demand for and provision of English – whether as a subject or as the MOI – is not usually accompanied by language enhancement or appropriate training (Erling et al., 2016). This is especially challenging for primary school teachers who are not necessarily language specialists but are expected to teach across a range of subjects (Erling et al., 2016). Although subject-based English teaching materials may be increasingly communicative in their approach, teachers are often more comfortable relying on more familiar, traditional methods in exploiting them (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al, 2016).

Effective teaching in MTI and EMI require different pedagogical skills and tools (Clegg, 2005; EdQual 2010). Any shift in language-in-education policy rhetoric therefore requires a shift in teacher education, as teachers need pedagogical expertise – what has been labelled 'language supportive pedagogies' (Clegg, 2010; Milligan et al., 2016; Clegg & Simpson, 2016). Language supportive pedagogy has been mostly used in North America and Europe (see Appendix with expert comments) but has been piloted in small scale projects in Rwanda and South Africa (see page 11 for the example on Rwanda). The research therefore recommends that teacher education programmes (both pre- and in-service) provide practitioners with support to develop effective multilingual pedagogic strategies to help their students achieve a range of cognitive and affective learning goals (Erling et al., 2016).

6. Policy considerations for phasing, supporting, and managing transitions to EMI

In addition to the heavily supported recommendation to employ late or very late exit models, there are several related recommendations from authors suggesting strategies for improving the phasing and support of transition to EMI. A collaboration between Save the Children and the Educational Development Trust resulted in a detailed and comprehensive guide which compiles policy recommendations for governments and ministries, donor agencies, education planners and implementers (Pinnock et al., 2011). **It should be noted however, that while recommendations may stem from empirical studies, there is limited evidence that they will work, and thus further trialling and robust evaluation is necessary.**

Policy level

A series of papers have provided useful policy considerations for governments, donors and programme staff. These are highlighted and summarised below:

Move towards formulating more holistic language-in-education policies that promote 'sustainable additive bilingualism', or 'mother tongue-based multilingual education'. Implicit in this idea is a recognition that the mother tongue may be mobilised in the teaching of additional languages, such as English, as opposed to being relegated to convert classroom teaching practice used when pupils do not understand (Erling et al., 2016). Using both languages of learning alongside each other particularly in the transition phase is seen as vital to making the necessary connections between them so as to facilitate transfer of knowledge and skills from one language to the other, as well as to maintain ongoing learning during the move from mother tongue to EMI (Clegg & Simpson, 2016).

Adapt the basic education curriculum to give teachers tools for delivering multilingual lessons. Where possible, Ministries of Education should start adapting learning standards and curriculum content to a multilingual education approach. This will involve national or local curriculum development specialists, linguists, teacher training experts and textbook and materials development experts. Donor agencies or multilateral organisations could also be asked to provide expertise or resources (Pinnock et al., 2011). Collaborations with donors should always strive to stimulate local industry and bridge existing gaps, such as Namibia's GTZ-sponsored Upgrading African Languages Project (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

Develop resources that facilitate English learning and improve learning across the curriculum (Erling et al., 2016). Studies recommend that these resources should be meaningful

to students' lives, incorporate local contexts and multiple languages and feature accessible levels of English as well as themes that are age-appropriate and interesting (Erling et al., 2016). While societal multilingualism is often presented as an obstacle in the development of local resources, there are examples of how some of these challenges have been overcome, e.g. the LaST project in Rwanda which has sought to develop materials that offer bi-lingual vocabulary support, good quality, contextually relevant illustrations, clearly labelled, relevant support activities, and teachers' guides in the mother tongue and English to complement these (Erling et al., 2016).

Ensure that language indicators feature prominently in national and international benchmarks and assessment systems for school quality and education outcomes, **particularly in education projects.** In particular, ensure that coverage of primary education in mother tongue is highlighted as an indicator of education quality (Pinnock et al, 2009)

Political will. How to develop African languages are already known: it is political will that is needed. The costs of developing the local publishing industry are smaller than the economic costs of poor language acquisition and poor learning outcomes (Clegg, 2005; Clegg & Oksana, 2011).

Advocacy is crucial. Governments need to promote multilingualism throughout the system with the aim that learners acquire high proficiency levels in local, regional and international languages. Parental engagement and advocacy are indispensable as a support mechanism for the child as a learner, support for teachers' efforts and overall outcomes of improved literacy. This could involve public information campaigns to educate teacher, parents, students, and other stakeholders on the benefits of the policy and dispel any misconceptions/misinformation about its value (Pinnock, 2009; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; Clegg, 2005; Erling et al., 2016).

This can also be achieved via regular meetings with school management committees, parent-teacher associations and district-level partners by creating school level resources, training capable parents as bilingual aides or teaching assistants and therefore including parents in the learning process (Benson, 2002). In locales where more than one regional language is spoken the above committees could discuss and select the preferred regional language of instruction in the school (Erling et al., 2016).

District level supervisors could also be provided with coaching and support where necessary for teachers, a successful approach adopted in Uganda (Ssentanda, 2014).

In addition to advocacy, **generating more evidence of education programmes** and interventions, with strong evaluative methods and longitudinal data (where possible) is important for generating evidence and building the research base for advocacy (Clegg, 2005; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; Pinnock et al., 2011).

Teacher preparation

The quality of initial teacher education for MTE and the quality of specialised teacher-education for subject teachers working in English and other European languages should be improved. In-service programmes for teachers teaching in both an African and a European language should raise awareness of how language is used in the classroom and the needs of second language learners should be designed and implemented (EdQual, 2010; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

There is also consensus that teacher supervisors whose role is to support and evaluate teachers should have training in multilingual education and pedagogy, as well as the appropriate

assessment and evaluation methods used in bilingual and intercultural education (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).

Classroom level

Move towards language supportive pedagogy (LSP) approaches. According to Clegg & Simpson (2016), LSP recognises and compensates for learners' lack of skills in reading, speaking and writing and amplifies classroom meanings beyond the level achieved by conventional pedagogy. Forms of language supportive pedagogy are familiar in various sociolinguistic school contexts, chiefly in minority education, bilingual education, immersion education and content and language integrated learning (Clegg & Simpson, 2016), but rarely in SSA.

Milligan et al. (2016) evaluated a 'language supportive textbooks and pedagogy'[2] intervention in Primary 4 Rwandan classrooms through a mixed methods design. In the baseline, nearly three-quarters (74.70%) of lessons were characterised as teacher-led with little learner interaction, discussion or use of learning materials. By contrast, towards the end of the evaluation, less than one-third (31.94%) of lessons were entirely teacher-led. In every lesson, learners engaged in at least one activity and in many learners completed written, talking and reading activities in groups, with the teacher supporting this style of learning.

The most significant finding from the study is the impact of the use of language supportive learning on learner outcomes. At the school level, learners achieved 16.09% higher test scores on average than learners at similar comparator schools across Maths, Social studies and Science comprehension tests, based on the topics of the second term of Primary 4.

Encourage translanguaging in policy and in classrooms. Some authors advocate moving away from the unstructured use of code-switching and towards the conscientious and planned use of two languages (translanguaging). This has been shown to improve L2 development as well as strengthening bilingualism, bilteracy, and cultural and affective development (Ssentanda, 2014; Clegg & Simpson, 2016)

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[2] Language supportive pedagogy (LSP) is reflected in textbook design in textual characteristics, the range of activity types, the use of vocabulary, the use of visuals, and the inclusion of bilingual practices. At low levels of learner language ability, reading passages are short; sentences are short and grammatically simple, and texts are clearly signposted. The number of academic words and subject-specific words is limited to the minimum needed while still conveying key topic messages (Milligan et al, 2016, p. 322).

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