

Building Linguistic Bridges: Lessons from Multilingual Learners?

Harry Kuchah Kuchah



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Historical and Epistemic (in)justice

- ‘decades of educational colonization and [colonial] language dominance have produced inferiority complexes so that the local or indigenous languages [...] because of their unofficial status, are perceived as liabilities rather than assets’ (Chiatoh 2014:32)
- English is best taught monolingually. Use of languages other than English affects students’ English language proficiency negatively. (Nkwetisama, 2017)
- Epistemic exclusion of local languages as not having educational value (Esch, 2010).



Some common myths



- English for international mobility
- English as door to economic advantages
- English is best taught in English
- The earlier you start to learn English, the better the proficiency outcome



Classroom/school conditions

- Large classrooms
- lack of textbooks & material resources
- lack of libraries
- Shortage in human resources
- low teacher proficiency (McCoy 2017)
- students' limited exposure to English
- other socio-political and cultural constraints





Nina

Two Children Different realities



Aisha

Home resources	Nina	Aisha
Home Teacher(s)	None	Two
Reading room	None	Yes
Prescribed textbooks	1 (English language)	All Subjects
Computer	None	Desktop and iPad
Supplementary language materials	None	Language games, crossword puzzles, story books
Holiday classes	None	June Summer school (language centre)
Parental engagement with learning	Yes *	Yes
Other affordances	Home TV	Home TV, Holidays with English speaking family friends

My Research

The research evidence in SSA

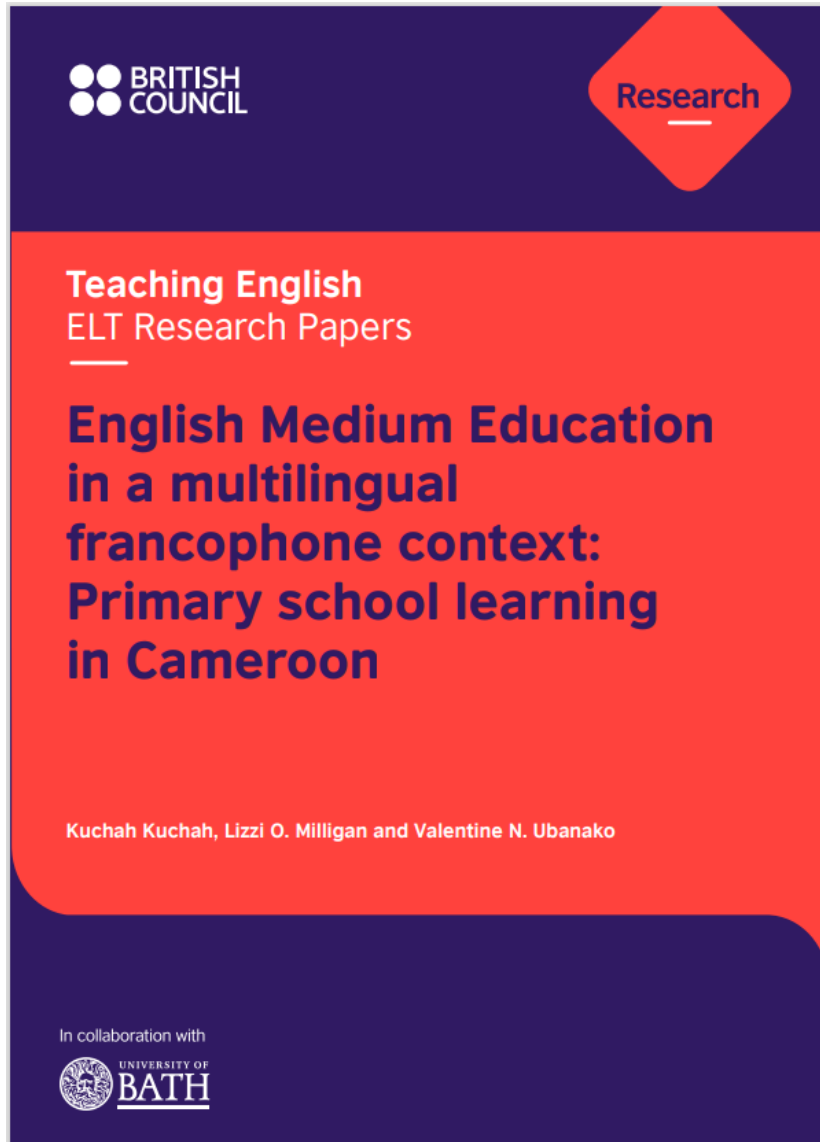
- Learning in a dominant, ex-colonial language unfairly impacts on multilingual children's ability to engage and succeed in their education (Desai 2016; Opoku-Amankwa 2009; Ssentanda et al. 2019).
- Teachers support learners' access to the curriculum and meaning making through multilingual and translingual pedagogic practices (Banda 2010; Mbendeu, 2021; Norro 2022; Probyn, 2015).
- Less about how multilingual children themselves navigate their learning



Focus on Learners

1. What classroom, school and home resources do bi/multilingual children use to both develop their English and access subject content across the EME curriculum?
2. What can we, (bi/multilingual) teachers learn from our learners to better support their learning?





EME curriculum orientation

- ‘at the level of basic education in Cameroon, the mastery of English by the pupil enables him or her to grasp with ease the other subjects of the curriculum’ (p1) and requires teachers to ‘create avenues for maximum exposure of the pupil to English; **this entails that English should be taught in English**’

(Anglophone syllabus p.17)

Data collection...

Data collection method:	School A		School B		Total
	Year 5	Year 6	Year 5	Year 6	
Classroom Observation	1 English 1 Maths 1 Home economics*	1 English 1 Maths 1 Citizenship education*	1 English 1 Maths 1 Citizenship education*	1 English 1 Maths 1 Art and culture *	12
English and maths unsupervised group tasks	1 English and 1 maths per year group				8
Child group interviews	1 group interview per year group				4
Arts-based individual interviews	1 child per year group				4

* One other subject selected by the class teacher for each class group



Unsupervised task

Once upon a time there was an old woman who lived in a forest. She was called Mrs ... Mrs Mary. And her daughter was ... Um um, **elle n'avait pas** a daughter. She was not having a daughter [Noise and random talking] She was called ... **Aka, continue non! Donc tu ... Toi tu veux que j'écrive quoi?** [...] She was called Mary, simple as that. **Alors. C'est vrai Mary. Dit, ce que je vais écrit. Non, dit ce que on va écrit.** She was called Mary. He was living ... **Eeehhh!** [exclamation of disapproval] She was living on trees. **Pour quoi vous criez?** She was living on trees ... on trees in the forest. [More shouts of disapproval] In the hurt. The hot is a hot. **C'est h-u-t living in a hut.** She was living in a hurt. **Hut.oualla!** One day ... **Ahaaa! Attend one day encore? On a écrit one day ici quand ici là?** [...] A man came with a catapillar. [general laughter] One day she left his ... Her! Her house, her ... hut ... **Her hut, akah!** She left her ... her hut. And saw ... Left hut ... **Tu écris left hurt?** [...] She left her hut. **Efface bien ton hurt là.** Left. She left her ... hut, hut. **Jai compris noh!** And heard ... And saw! And saw a snake. A long and large tree. **On peut toujours dit ça non ? On peut dire à dangerous snake. Snake est toujours dangereux non? On a dit foret magique non, ouais qu'est-ce que vous faites comme ça là? Tu voulais dire que quoi?** A long and large tree. Very surprise ... Very surprised! The snake was talking to her. **Attend d'abord.** Tu as vu that story? Ecrit seulement. [...] **Je demande de dit qu'il me spell surprise toi tu te fâche? Epelle sprite.** Surprise! Surprise ouala! Very ... surprise. **Ça a un /p/,**



The Magic Forest

Once upon a time there was an old woman who lived in a forest. She was called Mary she was living in a hut. One day she left her hut and saw a snake. Very surprise the snake was talking to her the snake said, if you want to go out of this dangerous forest climb on this tree and take one of it's fruits if the fruit is green don't take it but if it is red take it. The old woman refuse to climb on that tree. She did not climb because she was afraid of the snake. She took a stone and heat the head of the snake but she foggot that the animals of this forest are magic the snake became angry because she refuse the proposition and shoot a stone on his head. The snake wanted to bite her but, she ran away. When running, she saw a lake and she wanted to drink water. And a tortuse appear. Please please help me. How can I help you says the tortuse a snake want to bite me. Come let go away the old woman was not sure that the tortuse wanted to help her prouve me that you want to help me said the old woman. If you are not sure go away now I am sorry now I am sure that you want to help me the tortuse hold the hand of the old woman and they disappear. the appear in front of a tree the tortuse said to the old woman to ask what you wanted to this tree. the woman said show me the way to go to town yes I will do what you want says the tree. The tree said to the old woman climb on my branch and it will bring you to town.



In Practice...?

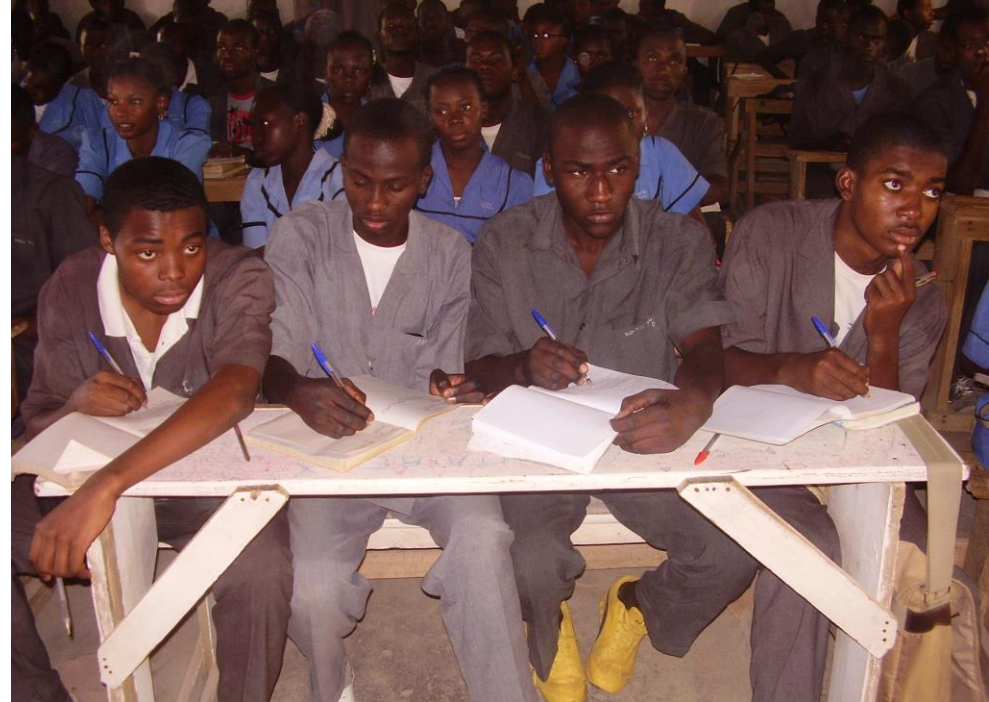
Observation: Meaning Making activities

Constrained	Finishing teacher's sentences	Repeating phrases (e.g., from the board)	Responding to closed whole-class questions	Responding to closed individual questions
Guided	Responding to open-ended individual questions	Exploratory talk in groups (covertly in French)	Creating a comic strip (from existing text)	Describing processes/images
Spontaneous	Asking a question to the teacher	Comparing and contrasting	Challenging an opinion	Concept mapping

Example One



- 2300 students
- 20 classrooms
- Average: 115 students per class
- 4 English Teachers
- Average: 575 student per teacher





Kuchah, K & R.C. Smith (2011) 'Pedagogy of autonomy for difficult circumstances: from practice to principles' *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. 5 (2), 119 – 140

I have a dream....

I have a dream that one day,
The sons of former slaves and the sons of slave owners
Will sit down together at the table of brotherhood.
I have a dream that one day,
My four little children will live in a nation
Where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin,
Where little black boys and little white boys
Will join hands and work together as brothers.
This will be the day when all of God's children
Will be able to sing with new meaning:
"Let freedom ring!"
Martin Luther King Jr



Tribalism

I have a dream that one day
Tribalism will be kick out of Cameroon
And soon **Gadamayos** and **Wadjos**
Will live together and think together
About the future of their nation.

I have a dream that one day
Bamilekes and **Mundangs**
Will eat **Nkwui** and **Nyebe** together.

I have a dream that one day
Cameroon will be a big village
Where every son and daughter
Will feel good every where
This will be a day of glory



Gender Discrimination

I have a dream that one day,
Boys and girls of Maroua, Garoua
Boys and girls of Cameroon, of the whole nation
Will be able to stay together in a classroom for the society.
That one day, girls will drive **bendskin**
And boys while sit behind
That women while marry men
I dream of a world where women
Will take care of their husbands and
Husbands take care of their wives
Where they while live in equals rights and privileges.
And when this dream shall come true
I have the faith that one day,
Walai! Men and women joined together
Will move this country into a great nation.



Example Two



T: Now let us divide 3 by 6. Yes, division. 3 divided by...

Ss: [All] six madam

T: Good. Now what is the process?

Ss: Silent

[...]

T: Now we put 3 over....?

Ss: [All] Six madam

T: How many three go into three?

Ss: One madame

T: How many 3 go into 6?

Ss: Silence

[...]

T: Therefore 3 divided by 6 is equal to....?

Ss: Half madam

Multilingual classroom



T: You have 3 bananas and you and your friends are hungry. Will you eat the bananas alone?

Ss: No Madam

T: [...] What will you do?

Ss: [scrambling to speak] I will share with my friends

T: Good. Why would you share with your Friends?

SS: Because it is not good to be selfish. I like my friends. Because my friends too are hungry like me etc
[...]

T: What is the best way to share the bananas? Will you eat two and give your five friends one?

Ss: No madam...



Example Three

Some of general are
 of later ethnic groups
 the Comorian Coast, as
 as part of the tribes of
 the island, which comprises
 ethnic groups of the
 off these populations
 the Komorians as belonging
 to the group although the
 and historical Comorian
 only are extremely rare

The ngando organized
 in duoba is the main
 in December. The
 have the makossa (a
 song in duoba) which
 name, o'kete) and
 o'kete (which, like
 common to all songs
 o'kete would dish
 knowledge on the



Monday, 2nd 2020
 2:10 pm
 2 cameras



My culture favorites the Bamileke
 culture. The Comoros is the country
 in miniature because it have meaning
 plus. Bamileke culture is my
 because it have meaning.
 words their culture. The mask
 represent the ancestor who is
 clothes represent the model
 who carry the inhabitant.
 and one god who is
 in. it is over the skull
 of wood. the King is
 among a population of

Cultural Display



Conclusions

- Language as tools not, not outcome.
- Value Learners' linguistic and cultural resourcefulness
- Investment in richer understandings of educational value of children's linguistic resources.
- De facto 'languaging' practices needing institutional support
- Sustained teacher-learner pedagogic partnerships
- Enhancement of School – home partnerships





h.k.Kuchah@bham.ac.uk