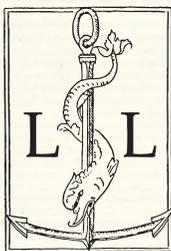


Language Policy, Education and Multilingualism in Mayotte



*edited by Foued Laroussi
& Fabien Liénard*



Lambert-Lucas

Mayotte has been French since 25 April 1841. Since 31 March 2011 it has been the 101st department of the French Republic. Two main local languages are spoken there: Shimaore (a Bantu variety) and Kibushi (a Malagasy variety). French is the official language. This is the complex multilingual situation in which arises the acute problem of teaching French, the language of education, as well as the island's vernacular languages.

If linguistic policy is seen as the context in which the complexity of social relationships in a given situation are evident and become meaningful, it must take as its perspective the island's sustainable development. It can only be fair if of benefit to the island. Linguistic policy cannot be devised without making the necessary link with school. What will be the consequences on the education system? How is linguistic variation managed in schools? What status should be given to the vernacular languages, invariably excluded from schools?

The papers in this volume try to go some way in answering such questions and shedding light on the situation in Mayotte with regard to these major problems. Not all the papers deal exclusively with Mayotte but refer to other situations: New Caledonia, French Polynesia or French Guyana, for example.

Contributed to this work : Mwatha Ngalasso, Cynthia Fleury, Christine Deprez, Foued Laroussi, Fabien Liénard, Clément Mbom, Véronique Miguel Adissu, Isabelle Nocus, Jacques Vernaudon, Mirose Païa , Léonard Sam, Philippe Guimard, Agnès Florin, Michel Launey, Sara Greaves, Marie-Laure Schultze, Michel Lafon, Kutlay Yagmur and Sjaak Kroon.

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and Multilingualism in Mayotte*

edited by Foued Laroussi
and Fabien Liénard

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Presentation

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Mayotte has been French since 25 April 1841. Since 31 March 2011 it has been the 101st department of the French Republic. This makes the island, lying in the Indian Ocean, one of the five Overseas Departments (*Départements d'Outre-mer* - DOM), namely Réunion, Martinique, French Guyana and Guadeloupe. With a surface area of 375 square kilometres, Mayotte is also the smallest Overseas department. It now has a population of around 200,000. Geographically, it lies between Madagascar and the Mozambique Channel and belongs to the Comoros archipelago, made up of four islands: Grande Comore, Anjouan, Mayotte and Mohéli. It has a rich history of contacts and inflows, being a place where peoples from Africa, the east and the west have mingled. Swahili civilisation has also had a profound influence.

The linguistic situation there is the outcome of settlement by many and varied peoples. There are two main local languages spoken there: Shimaore and Kibushi. Shimaore is a Bantu variety and Kibushi a Malagasy variety. For the Mahorese, French, the official language, that of government and state schools, serves primarily to 'get a qualification' or 'a good job,' but it not always easy for pupils to gain proficiency in it. Educationalists speak of a malaise which is partly explained by the complexity of the relations between the Mahorese and Metropolitan communities, a shorthand version of which could come down to 'yes to French as a means of social mobility, not to the outside values it conveys.' There are other languages also spoken in Mayotte: Arabic, taught in the Koranic schools and used as a language of worship, three Comorian languages: Shindzuani (Anjouan), Shingazidja (Grande Comore), Shimuali (Mohéli) and Réunion creole.

This is the complex multilingual situation in which arises the acute problem of teaching French, the language of education, as well as the island's vernacular languages. Contributions to this volume, going beyond an inventory of linguistic usage (who speaks what language? to say what? where and who with?) and seeing language not just as a linguistic code but rather as a complex system of representations, are an attempt to grasp how language practices are constructed, alongside the social representations motivating them.

Some papers aim to identify the issues of Mayotte's multilingual situation and try to bring out manifestations of consensus or conflict and measure the gap in between as well as contradictory and even conflicting opinions among the various linguistic groups. Others consider linguistic situations elsewhere that resemble or

differ from that in Mayotte so as to shed light on the situation there, taking as a starting point that a language also conveys a system of identification. The papers analyse alongside other issues the identity-building processes associated with each of the languages involved: in what terms do speakers discuss each of the languages and what symbolic value do they attribute to them? Is French, the dominant language, a tool for social integration in Mayotte? If the Mahorese are viewed as insufficiently proficient in it, how can they master it? Can the downgrading of vernacular languages be other than inevitable, something dreaded by the Mahorese, when considering the teaching of French?

If linguistic policy is seen as the context in which the complexity of social relationships in a given situation are evident and become meaningful, it must take as its perspective the island's sustainable development. It can only be fair if of benefit to the island. It follows from this that linguistic policy cannot be devised without making the necessary link with school. What will be the consequences on the education system? How is linguistic variation managed in schools? What status should be given to the vernacular languages, invariably excluded from schools? With parents torn between wanting to have their children taught French and the desire to preserve their Mahorese identity, what should the role of schools be in this process?

The papers in this volume try to go some way in answering such questions and shedding light on the situation in Mayotte with regard to these major problems. As mentioned earlier, not all the papers deal exclusively with Mayotte but refer to other situations: New Caledonia, French Polynesia or French Guyana, for example.

Mwatha Ngalasso's contribution takes another look at the so-called 'unitarist viewpoint' which regards Bantu languages, and therefore Shimaore, as dialects of Kiswahili, thereby following the classification of Guthrie. Referring to the work of Alexandre and Rombi amongst others, Musanji Ngalasso-Mwatha challenges the unitarist thesis. 'Their position, he concludes, may now be supported by sociolinguistic research which underlines, alongside major convergences between the two language forms, the notable divergences which reveal an increasingly noticeable interlinguistic distance between the two language forms that are geographically very remote from each other, at the same time as the feelings of users with regard to the languages which they speak.'

From her standpoint as a philosopher, Cynthia Fleury asks if multiculturalism is an illusion or a sustainable political option. She thinks it necessary to revisit the debate underlying the concepts of universality and particularity. 'Is multiculturalism in conflict with a universality of values? Is universality just a cover for the dominant culture? Can defending cultural diversity be the privilege of Culture, that aspiration to the universal which runs through all cultures?' Cynthia Fleury believes that there is a need to define how multiculturalism can become a sustainable political option, gaining greater legitimacy as a political model the more it contributes to 'individuals' empowerment or to the life and freedom of those concerned.

Christine Deprez's paper illustrates 'how, via the interviews, one individual expresses the inner ambivalences and tensions that are the legacy of both family history and colonial history, amidst their own individual and collective plans and those they have for their children.' An analysis of the data (the corpora collected and published by the GRPM) shows that language learning and socialization through language is more than a mere handing on of values, practices and linguistic repertoires and is more akin to the collective construction of new practices and new

linguistic identities. Her finding is that that integration is vying with resistance to assimilation in what parents are doing to encourage their children's multilingualism.

Foued Laroussi, who has been conducting research on Mayotte for nearly a decade, returns to the teaching of French, the language of education in Mayotte. He shows that schools are where the nature of the complex relations between the local (Mahorese) and Metropolitan (*wazungu*) communities crystallizes. Two conflicting ideological currents run through Mahorese society: a current of identity which aspires if to the promotion at least to the preservation of endogenous languages and cultures, and another seeking assimilation and demanding the use of the exogenous language (French), regarding it as the most effective tool for social mobility and employability. He shows that French is taught in a decontextualized way, taking no account of the first language of Mahorese children or their sociocultural environment, one which is of course very different that of Metropolitan children. The relation to learning, knowledge and the written word is not the same and deserves a different approach. To combat pupil failure and to bring Mayotte's schools into the modern age, Foued Laroussi proposes that teaching in French alone gradually give way to multilingual teaching, using three languages: French (the shared language of the Republic), English (as an international language) and a vernacular language as preferred (Shimaore or Kibushi). A forward-looking multilingual school system will be able to deal with the challenges from inside and outside that it faces in Mayotte today.

Fabien Liénard, who has worked on Mayotte with Foued Laroussi over a number of years, has a long-standing interest in electronic writing, and texting in particular. A major feature of this is the use of ways of simplifying writing, making the writing a specific one and compensating for the physical absence of the person addressed. His fieldwork in Mayotte through an analysis of a corpus of texts produces the finding that French-Shimaore code-switching in particular is a reality. Freed from the heavy constraints over the written word in text messaging, texters in Mayotte finally incorporate elements from their mother tongue, leading him to speak of a variety of 'Mahorese electronic French.'

Clément Mbom looks at how French could drive development in Mayotte and asks 'what steps could ensure that the methodologies proposed here for schools are compatible with the teaching culture but most importantly with the cultural dimension and the learning culture of the country.' He puts the question of how to see that 'French ceases to be not only a tool for social selection and exclusion but one for integration, in other words, a language with which the children of Mayotte can identify once it has become their own.' He advocates 'integrated teaching of or in French while preserving Mahorese culture, enriched by its realities, making French accessible for every child in Mayotte, and ultimately a springboard for, even a driver of, development in Mayotte.'

Véronique Miguel-Adissu puts forward the hypothesis that multilingual and multicultural competence is not so much connected to a bilingual competence (the linguistic perspective) as a bilingual posture (the intercultural and interactional perspective). She believes that such a bilingual posture is vital in that it could make for genuinely efficient learning. It is, in her view, to be considered as a component of a language-learning strategy.

In a collective paper, Isabelle Nocus, Jacques Vernaoudon, Mirose Païa, Léonard Sam, Philippe Guimard and Agnès Florin consider the assessment of the impact of multilingualism on primary school pupil learning in New Caledonia, French Poly-

nesia and French Guyana. They find that while since 2005, New Caledonia has set up primary school programmes which allow for the teaching of Kanak languages to be gradually introduced and French Polynesia has strengthened the teaching of Polynesian languages, this dynamic favouring local languages is not limited to the Pacific and that there is a similar movement in the education system in French Guyana. While they still see French as the main teaching language, this dynamic is part of a francophony which opens up to the world and respects and preserves linguistic diversity.

Michel Launey also takes the starting point of an analysis of the linguistic situation in French Guyana, Overseas languages in general, and those of Mayotte in particular to think afresh about so-called regional languages. He proposes a critical analysis of the concept of (and the demand for) language teaching and suggests three ways in for languages to be present in the school system: (i) age-appropriate mother tongue programmes (previously trialled in Oceania and French Guyana); (ii) reflexive observation programmes for languages (in the final stages of primary and throughout secondary school) and (iii) language awareness programmes, to be adapted on the basis of experience in Europe and French Guyana, building on the local and regional multilingual context. Michel Launey sees such programmes as a way of bypassing ambiguities and symbolic (French alone as the symbol of national unity, the teaching of Regional Languages and Cultures as a form of acknowledgment which is symbolic in itself), and preparing the way for a balanced bilingualism, so promoting intellectual curiosity as well as giving every encouragement for developing language proficiency and specifically proficiency in French.

Sara Greaves and Marie-Laure Schultze examine the role of the writing workshop in language learning. Considering the effect of multilingualism on students from a wide variety of backgrounds (North Africa, Armenia, the Comoros...) in their ability to learn English, they attempt to shed light on the linguistic situation in Mayotte where parents are torn between loyalty to vernacular languages and the advantages of French in the job market. They conclude that the language taught will be better adopted and learned the more value is placed on the first language, and not just in the abstract.

Michel Lafon shows that since 1996 in South Africa, besides English and Afrikaans, 9 African languages can in theory be chosen as languages of instruction in primary schools. However he sees this ambitious educational policy as a reaction to policies of the past based on a complex institutional architecture no longer in tune with the reality in urban schools, and probably ultimately proving counter-productive. He quotes the example of Mozambique, which since the start of the new century, starting from scratch, as African languages were banned by the colonial power, has run a gradualist experiment, which, despite its limited scope, shows some promise.

Lastly, Surinam, a former Dutch colony where German, which has been the official language since 1667 in coexistence with over twenty vernacular languages, is surveyed by Kutlay Yagmur and Sjaak Kroon. They show that interethnic divides explain German's continued status as the country's official language, even though coming from outside, something that is also true of many African countries, for example. Attempts to replace German with a local language have come to nothing. The authors point out that maintaining a so-called 'colonial' language as the official language is possible through popular consent, in that this can be seen as a matter of social peace, as the so-called colonial language enables ethnic divides to be

transcended. This is obviously true of other European languages in Africa. Might French one day have to take on this role in Mayotte were, by some misfortune, currently peaceful relations over linguistic differences between Shimaore and Kibushi speakers, for example to break down and lead to linguistic conflict?

The present-day social situation in the island reveals very palpable tensions. It is a matter of urgency for the State to concern itself seriously with the island's socioeconomic situation. Peace in society comes at this price.

Reading the range of contributions making up this volume, it seems hard to separate off the linguistic issue from its political dimension. Clearly, the situation in Mayotte is no exception to this rule. While the island's new status as a department is the outcome of political demands made by the Mahorese since the 1970s, there can be no doubts as to their commitment to French. However they in no way wish for their claim to French to lead to a downgrading of their local languages and cultures. Giving schools an international outlook while keeping them rooted in their local heritage is a way of allowing multilingualism into the state education system in Mayotte, a prospect which can only lead to the island's enrichment and development.

Lastly, this publication and the research behind it would not have been possible without the financial help of the Conseil général de Mayotte to whom we express our sincere thanks.

Translator's note

Edwin CARPENTER

All but two of the papers in this book have been translated from French, wherever possible in consultation with the authors, whose generous cooperation I gratefully acknowledge. Citations from French sources have also been translated unless a published translation was available.

In publishing this work in English, the aim is clearly to make this research available to a wider audience than those involved in studying the francophone world. I have therefore aimed to make references to French institutions and administrative systems as simple as possible, taking the view that the social and linguistic issues will be the main concern of most readers and that readers will seek elsewhere if they need further information on organizational structures. I have therefore opted for an anglicised version of many French terms. So Mayotte, the most recently created French *département* is a 'department.' *Outremer* is rendered as Overseas, and refers specifically here to the areas under French governance outside Europe. Similarly 'Metropolitan France' is to be understood as referring to the main body of the country in the continent of Europe. Terms such as 'prefecture' and 'rectorate' are also used on this basis.

In other cases where terminology is directly relevant to the issues under discussion, I have tried to meet the needs of readers according to context. So both French and English versions are given for terms such as *Langues et cultures régionales*, (abbreviation LCR) 'Regional Languages and Cultures,' as are brief explanations for some higher education institutions. The French school system is a particular case, discussed in a number of papers. A brief explanation of the system of classes is given in a footnote in the paper by Isabelle Nocus and her colleagues, but to simplify matters for readers an indication of the approximate age of pupils in a given class is provided where it was thought that this would be helpful.

Shimaore and Kiswahili in Mayotte

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Sociolinguistic considerations

This article puts forward some thoughts on the relationship between Shimaore, the main language of Mayotte, and Kiswahili, a widespread Bantu language spoken in a large part of west and central Africa. We will not attempt to give any clear-cut answer to the question of whether Kiswahili and Shimaore are the same language or two different languages. We will show the many convergences and underline the most notable divergences which are evidence of a slow but gradual evolution tending to set up an increasingly perceptible interlinguistic distance between the two. The geographic distance separating the Comorian islands and the African continent is a significant factor. Sociolinguistic criteria will be introduced to support the arguments from internal linguistics. With regard to borrowings by Shimaore from Kiswahili, we shall attempt to discern the nature of what may differentiate them from elements the Bantu base which is a common heritage of the two language varieties. This study, outlined on the basis of a short stay in Mayotte on a mission in the spring of 2009,¹ is the first draft of a study to be extended as part of current research for the Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) on Swahili.²

Mayotte: a complex linguistic situation

Mayotte³ (around 190,000 habitants) is, geographically, one of the islands making up the Comoros Archipelago in the Indian Ocean, about 400 km from the coast of Africa and 300 km from Madagascar. Politically, it has the status of one of France's overseas communities. The results of a referendum on 29 March 2009 provided for its status to change from that of a colony to that of a French department as from 2011: Mayotte then became the fifth overseas department, along with Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Reunion.

The linguistic situation in Mayotte is complex as a number of languages are spoken in this small island of 376 km²: Shimaore (71% of the population), Kibushi (22%), Kiswahili (2.4%), French (2.2%), Makhwa (0.6%), Makonde (0.3%) and Creole (0.1%).⁴

1 I wish to thank the Conseil général de Mayotte which funded my stay in Mamoudzou from 20 to 29 March 2009 and the CNFPT (Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale - *National Civil Service Centre for the Territory*) which invited me to run a training session for public librarians.

2 ANR-swahili « Dimensions de l'objet swahili : textes et terrains » (*Dimensions of Swahili, texts and the field*), period 2007-2011.

3 On a historical aspect of the political status of Mayotte: Mohamoud, Ahmed Wadaane, *Mayotte : le contentieux entre la France et les Comores*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1981; Fasquel, Jean, *Mayotte, les Comores et la France*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2000 et Caminade, Pierre, *Comores-Mayotte : une histoire néo-coloniale*, Marseille, éd. Agone, 2004.

4 These figures come from Jacques Leclerc, « Mayotte », *L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde*, Québec, TLFQ, Université Laval (06 juin 2009) : <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/mayotte.htm>.

Shimaore (or Mahorese)⁵ is the island's dominant language. It belongs to the group of Comorian languages⁶ which also includes Shingazidja (known as Great Comorian), Shimwali (spoken in Mohéli) and Shindzwani (spoken in Anjouan). Under the classification of the British linguist Malcolm Guthrie (1903-1972),⁷ all the Comorian languages, affiliated to the Bantu languages, Niger-Congo family, come under number G44 and are attached to the 'Swahili' group (G40). It is closer to Tikuu (G41), Kiswahili (G42) and Kimpemba (G43) which belong to the same group. For the majority of the population Shimaore is both first (vernacular) language and second (vehicular) language: it is used by native-speakers as language of identity and by non native-speakers as a medium in any interaction between speakers who do not share a mother tongue. Shimaore is the only language of the most elderly who have not been in education and who have remained monolingual.

Kibushi,⁸ an Austronesian language related to Malagasy (spoken in Madagascar), is the second most important language on the island. Those who speak it are rarely monolingual: they are happy to learn Shimaore to communicate with the majority of their fellow citizens whereas the opposite, i.e. Shimaore-speakers learning Kibushi, is a rare occurrence, except in cases of mixed marriages.

It should be pointed out that Shimaore and Kibushi already appear among the 75 spoken on French territory and listed in the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* signed (but not ratified) by the French government on 7 May 1999 in Budapest (Hungary).⁹ By signing the Charter, France undertook to encourage use of regional languages in speech and writing and improve the teaching of them in schools alongside French, the official language.

The Bantu languages of Guthrie's zone P, such as Makhuwa (P31) and Makonde (P23) spoken on the mainland by the population of Mozambique and Malawi, very much minority languages in Mayotte, are only used by speakers descending from immigration in the distant past. A French-based Creole is also found; it is spoken by persons of Réunion or Mauritian descent. Arabic seems to be restricted exclusively to a religious use: the population is 90% Muslim.

French is the official language. Learnt exclusively via schools, it is not in regular day-to-day use among the Mahorese. None of the indigenous population of Mayotte speak it as a first language or mother tongue. Its status rather that of a second language or even a foreign language spoken only at school or in formal exchanges with officials or interaction with Europeans who generally speak no local languages, even after living on the island for several years. French is still primarily the

5 On Shimaore: Rombi, Marie-Françoise, *Le Shimaore (Ile de Mayotte, Comores) : première approche d'un parler de la langue comorienne*, Paris, Sela, 1983 ; Blanchy, Sophie, *L'interprète. Dictionnaire mahorais-français et français-mahorais*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1987 ; Maandhui, Ousseni, *Parlons Shimaore*, Mamoudzou, Editions Baobab, 1996 ; Cornice, Abdillahi D., *Manuel grammatical de Shimaore*, Mamoudzou, Association SHIME – Le SHImaore METHodique, 1999; Kordjee, Chamsdine Bin Ali, Martine Jaquin *et alii*, *Narifundrihe Shimaore - Apprenons le shimaorais*, Mamoudzou, Association SHIME – Le SHImaore METHodique, 2006 [1999].

6 On the languages of the Comoros: Ahmed-Chamanga, Mohamed, *Dictionnaire français-comorien (dialecte shindzuani)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997 ; Lafon, Michel et Jean-Luc Sibertin-Blanc, *Languages et contact des langues dans l'Archipel des Comores*, Paris, éd. Inalco, 1975 ; Moineaecha, Cheikh Yahaya, *Parler le comorien*, Moroni, Impredoc, 1992 ; Saleh, Ali, « Le swahili, langue véhiculaire de l'Afrique Orientale et des Comores », *Revue Française d'Etudes Politiques Africaines*, numéro 70 (1971), p. 82-94.

7 Guthrie, Malcolm, *The Classification of the Bantu Languages*, London, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1948 and *Comparative Bantu, An Introduction to the Comparative Linguistics and Prehistory of the Bantu Languages*, 4 vol., Farnborough, Gregg, 1967-1971.

8 *Bushi* means 'Madagascar,' *Bushini* 'in Madagascar.'

9 The text of the Charter may be consulted on line.

‘language of the *Wazungu*’¹⁰ i.e. Europeans.

In a sociolinguistic survey carried out recently (2006) on CM2 pupils (age 10-11) in Mayotte, Daniel Barreteau notes, as had earlier observers:

Although we do not have truly reliable data, it would seem that the majority of the adult population of Mayotte has not been through the school system and does not use French. While it is the official language, the language of authorities and education, the language of ‘modern life,’ French is little used in daily life and so for the majority of children starting school a second language (not to say a ‘foreign’ language). [...] This situation comes about largely through advances in education being very recent and the adult literacy rate being extremely low. There is therefore no immersion in a francophone environment.¹¹

The currently fragile position of French will no doubt be strengthened by Mayotte’s new status as a department, probably leading to educational progress and increased use of the language for administrative affairs and daily life.

Kiswahili in Mayotte: a long-standing presence

Kiswahili in Mayotte, promoted by the expansion of Islam, has a long history: it goes back to the eighth and ninth centuries. The first inhabitants of the island were Waswahili:

The eighth and ninth centuries saw the first human settlements. It appears that the first inhabitants belonged to the Swahili peoples, with a rich culture spread across the whole of the shores of West Africa from Somalia to Mozambique. Mayotte and Anjouan were apparently occupied later as the two islands differ from the Comoros as a whole in their specific linguistic development. The Swahili civilization landing on these unoccupied islands was sophisticated from the outset. Maritime commerce, highly active from this time onwards, gives evidence of contact with the islamized Middle East.

In the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the island was under the domination of islamized chieftains, the Fani. There were many cultural contacts with the Swahili coast and Madagascar.¹²

This presence, still very real in all sectors of social and cultural life, is nowadays less directly noticeable: not much Kiswahili can be heard spoken in the streets of Mamoudzou and Daoudzi, the two main island conurbations, but there are many things that evoke it: the sounds and the music of Shimaore, the words and letters in advertising slogans and billboards. Mention of Kiswahili in the inventory of Jacques Leclerc (Université Laval, Quebec) gives the number of speakers as 2.4%, just ahead of French (2.2%), but far behind Shimaore (71%) and Kibushi (22 %), and gives pause for thought in that most sources rarely refer to Swahili as one of the languages spoken in Mayotte other than through Shimaore, Shindzwani, Shimwali and Shingazidza regarded as being dialectal variants of it. The omission of Kiswahili from the usual lists of the languages of Mayotte and even from all the languages of the Comoros takes on a certain importance, as it may signify two different things: either that Shimaore and other Comorian language forms are considered to be Kiswahili, or that the view is that Kiswahili is a separate language that is formally

¹⁰ *Wazungu* is the term referring in both Shimaore and Kiswahili, to ‘Europeans, Whites;’ singular: *mzungu*.

¹¹ Barreteau, Daniel, *Premiers résultats d’une enquête sociolinguistique auprès des élèves de CM2 de Mayotte*, communication au Colloque « Bilinguisme et interculturalité à Mayotte. Pour un aménagement du système éducatif », IFM de Dembéné, 20-23 mars 2006, p. 7.

¹² <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayotte>.

absent from the linguistic landscape of Mayotte as a specific language; in either case to mention Kiswahili explicitly is felt to be superfluous.

It is easy to confuse language and culture, the speakers of a language and those who are influenced by the culture conveyed by it. So it is, for example, that the inhabitants of countries with French, English or Portuguese as official language are broadly labelled as French- English- or Portuguese-speaking, while in general there is only a tiny minority of citizens using the language easily on a regular basis. The same is true of the Swahili identity. The term *Waswahili* conveys more of a sociological than a linguistic meaning: it refers to indigenous Muslims, often Swahili-speakers, as opposed to foreign, generally Arab-speaking, Muslims. The link with the language spoken on the mainland in essentially English-speaking countries has increasingly weakened as French colonization has tended to stake everything on the French language to the detriment of indigenous languages. In the event this attitude of controlling the entire Swahili network in the Indian Ocean, aided by insular isolation, helped counteract the growing influence of Islam. This is the opinion of Pierre Alexandre and Marie-Françoise Rombi:

With regard to Swahili, the problem, despite recent progress, remains complicated both by the persistence of received ideas and some terminological discrepancies between linguistic and social realities. This is a received idea –one that proceeds from a confusion between language and overall culture– confusing Swahili and Comorian language forms: all that can be said with any accuracy is that Comorians (those of the diaspora) speak Kisanifu or Kiunguja. There was no doubt a different situation in the nineteenth century, given the political and economic predominance of Zanzibar, but the linguistic policy of French colonisation resulted in the isolation to a great extent of the archipelago from the Swahili network. The phenomenon is even more pronounced in Madagascar where there now only survives a tiny Swahili-speaking colony, under threat of demographic extinction.¹³

The question therefore arises of whether Kiswahili and Shimaore are indeed two distinct languages, in the way Kiswahili can be distinguished from Kishambala and Kizigula (spoken in Tanzania), or if they are only variants of the same language, as are Kiamu, Kimvita, Kiunguja or Kingwana, spoken in various regions of the African continent.

Kiswahili and Shimaore: one language or two?

To give an objective answer to this question we need to examine a number of facts which relate both to the languages themselves and to the users of these languages. This cannot be done without making reference to scientific criteria which usually allow a language to be distinguished from a dialect, the identification of two different languages or two dialects of the same language. These criteria, which involve both internal linguistics (a systemic criterion) and sociolinguistics (a socio-cultural criterion) are: (i) the similarity of the lexical and grammatical structures, (ii) the degree of intelligibility of the speech forms under consideration and (iii) how the language forms are referred to by the speakers themselves (autonym) and, secondarily, by their neighbours (heteronym).

Many linguists, following the classification of Bantu languages proposed by Malcolm Guthrie, assimilate Comorian language forms in general, including Shimaore, to Kiswahili, making them mere dialects of this language, using the systemic

¹³ Marie-Françoise Rombi et Pierre Alexandre, « Réseaux linguistiques », in Françoise Le Guennec-Coppens et Pat Caplan (éds), *Les Swahili entre Afrique et Arabie*, Paris, Karthala, 1991, p. 16.

criterion alone. Guthrie's position is, in reality, more nuanced: he puts Comorian language forms in the so-called 'Swahili' group (G40), the same as Kiswahili (G42), on account of their strong lexical and grammatical affinities without however making them necessarily dialects of the same language. This presentation is indeed found in other groups, for example the Ngiri group (C30) comprising Bobangi (C32), Sengele (C33), Bolia (C35) and Lingala (C36) without there being any suggestion that it is one single language.¹⁴

Unitary opinion which incorporates Comorian languages in Kiswahili is widely found in scientific discourse and all popular literature on Shimaore. So the Wikipedia article on Shimaore reads:

Shimaore [...] or Maore Comorian is one of the two indigenous languages spoken in the French-ruled Comorian islands of Mayotte; Shimaore being a dialect of the Comorian (Swahili) language, while KiBushi is an unrelated Malayo-Polynesian language originally from Madagascar.¹⁵

This assertion contains a patent terminological ambiguity: Shimaore is a dialect of Kiswahili whereas Kibushi is termed a 'Malayo-Polynesian language' in the same way as Malagasy and the Merina varieties.

The Association SHIME (Le SHImaore METHodique),¹⁶ founded in 1998 in Mamoudzou with the aim of encouraging the organized teaching of Mahorese languages (Shimaore and Kibushi), also takes the view that Shimaore is a dialect of Kiswahili, even though some of its authors state: 'It is a Bantu language, close to East African Swahili.'¹⁷

This opinion is widely, but not unanimously held: there are those whom I shall term unitarists who subscribe to it, and those who do not, such as Pierre Alexandre and Marie-Françoise Rombi. I shall refer to this camp as the dualists. In point of fact there are solid arguments in favour of both camps; but when any other than systemic criteria (specifically intercomprehension) are invoked, this undoubtedly gives support to the dualist camp.

Pierre Alexandre and Marie-Françoise Rombi lambast the unitarist viewpoint as mistaken. Rombi, who regards Shimaore as a dialect of Comorian and Comorian as a language distinct from Kiswahili, speaks of a false assimilation owing to the sharing by the two language forms (Kiswahili and Comorian) of a high proportion of words borrowed from Arabic (around 30% of the vocabulary):

This Arabic lexical intake on a Bantu structural base was the basis for a mistaken assimilation to Swahili. Nearly all Bantu scholars believed that Comorian was a dialect, or even deformed Swahili.¹⁸

She raises the question of linking Comorian to the Swahili group (G40) so as to underline the important divergences that exist between Comorian and Swahili at a phonological and morphosyntactic level (particularly the adjective-pronoun and verb system); further, she challenges the linking of Comorian to G40 and stresses the fact

14 The same system is found in the D60 group (D61 Kinyarwanda, D62 Kirundi and D63 Fuliro, etc.), the H10 group (H11 Beembe, H12 Vili, H13 Kunyi, H16 Kongo, etc.), the L10 group (L11 Gipende, L12 Samba-Holu, L13 Kwese, etc.), the L30 group (L31 Luba-Lulua, L32 Kanyoka, L33 Luba-Katanga, L34 Hamba, L35 Sanga), the P30 group (P31 Makua, P32 Lomwe, P33 Ngulu, P34 Cuabo), etc.

15 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shimaore_dialect.

16 Website: <http://shime.free.fr/>.

17 Kordjee, Chamsdine Bin Ali, Martine Jaquin *et alii*, *Apprenons le shimaorais - Narifundrihe Shimaore*, Mamoudzou, Association SHIME – Le SHImaore METHodique, 2006, p. 6.

18 Marie-Françoise Rombi, *Le Shimaore (Ile de Mayotte, Comores) : première approche d'un parler de la langue comorienne*, Paris, Sela, 1983, p. 20.

that intelligibility is not guaranteed between Comorian language forms and standard Kiswahili based on Kiunguja, an urban language form from Zanzibar. She even thinks, based on the dialectometric research of Wilhelm J. G. Möhlig,¹⁹ that Comorian is closer to Kenyan language forms and other Tanzanian languages than to Kiswahili. This is how she expresses this opinion which she shares with Pierre Alexandre²⁰ (hence the plural):

Our view is that in the present state of our knowledge of the languages of this region, it can be advanced that, while Comorian does appear to come from zone G, its link to the G40 group of this zone is possible but in no way certain. Attempts should be made to make other comparisons, this time regarding the languages of the mainland, in particular the so-called 'Makua' language forms of northern Mozambique... and to extend research to language forms of the Shona group. This view was subsequently confirmed by an analysis based on the dialectometric method of Professeur Möhlig of Cologne, who states that Comorian is closer to mainland Kenyan and Tanzanian language forms than to Swahili [...].

It should be specified that intercomprehension exists between the speakers of the four islands of the archipelago, even if this requires greater effort in the Anjouanese-Mahorese → Grand-Comorian direction; on the other hand there is no intercomprehension between Comorian and a speaker of a Swahili dialect.²¹

Daniel Barreteau who carried out a survey in 2006 on Mahorese schoolchildren regards Shimaore as a language form belonging (along with Shindzwani) to the Mahorese dialect of the language termed 'Comorian-Mahorese.' This linguist notes the systemic convergences and prudently raises the question of the name:

From a strict linguistic viewpoint, 'Comorian' (including Shingazidza and Shimwali) should probably be regarded as a language distinct from 'Mahorese' (including the Shimaore and Shindzwali dialects [sic]). As hypotheses currently stand, we would prefer to regard 'Comorian' and 'Mahorese' as being dialectal variants of one single language. At all events, for obvious political reasons, the naming of 'the' language is problematic.²²

Daniel Berreteau regards 'Comorian' and 'Mahorese' (meaning Shimaore) as variants of the same language but 'for obvious political reasons,'²³ he carefully avoids referring to this language by its name: Common Comorian.

On the basis of systemic and non-systemic (socio-cultural) criteria it may be established (i) that there are important similarities between Shimaore and Kiswahili and, in a general way, the Bantu languages spoken on the African mainland; (ii) that there are also notable divergences on a phonological and morphological level which support the idea these are now probably different languages separated by an objectively measurable interlinguistic distance; (iii) that there is now only partial, if

19 See in particular his articles: « Introduction à la dialectométrie synchronique » and « Les parlers bantous côtiers du nord-est », In Guarisma, Gladys et Wilhelm J.G. Möhlig, eds., *La méthode dialectométrique appliquée aux langues africaines*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1986.

20 This is their joint article: Alexandre, Pierre et Marie-Françoise Rombi, « Les parlers comoriens, caractéristiques différentielles : position par rapport au swahili », In Marie-Françoise Rombi, ed., *Etudes sur le Bantu oriental, langue des Comores, de Tanzanie, de Somalie et du Kenya*, Paris, Sela, 1982, p. 17-39.

21 Idem, p. 20.

22 Barreteau, Daniel, *Premiers résultats d'une enquête sociolinguistique auprès des élèves de CM2 de Mayotte*, communication au Colloque « Bilinguisme et interculturalité à Mayotte. Pour un aménagement du système éducatif », IFM de Dembèni, 20-23 mars 2006.

23 It should be recalled that while, geographically, Mayotte belongs to the Comoros archipelago, politically it is not part of the Comorian State but of France as it is an overseas community and now a French overseas department.

any, intercomprehension, meaning conversely, that incomprehension has increased. One absolutely vital point, which is a prerequisite for any sociolinguistic enquiry, is therefore the study and comparison of the internal structures of the two language forms: lexical, phonological and grammatical structures.

Striking similarities

Shimaore, like the other Comorian language forms, is undoubtedly a Bantu language very close to Kiswahili.²⁴ But important lexical and phonological, morphological and syntactic affinities may also be observed when comparing Shimaore with other Bantu languages close to the western eastern seaboard (languages spoken in Mozambique, Malawi, Kenya or Tanzania) and even far away from the coast such as Lingala (zone C), Kikongo (zone H), Gipende or Ciluba (zone L). Applying the Bantu language criteria²⁵ proposed by Guthrie confirms this.

Comorian language forms (including Shimaore) share a number of linguistic features with Kiswahili. These concern first the lexis with a large common store of words inherited from Proto-Bantu and a rate of cognates (reflecting the coefficient of linguistic proximity) which no doubt exceeds 70%. They are also apparent in the phonology with a vowel system with 5 vowels (/i, u, e, o, a/),²⁶ many prenasalized consonants (/mb, mp, nd, nt, ng, nk, etc./) and a canonic open syllabic structure: CV. The absence of tonal system that is highly characteristic of Bantu languages here replaced, as in Kiswahili, by an accentual paroxytonal type system: stress falls regularly on the penultimate syllable: *'mutru* (man), *'shitru* (thing), *mu'tsanga* (sand), *ma'yangu* (my mother), *mata'mbezi* (walk), *mara'haba* (thank you), *bisiki'leti* (bicycle), *muguru'guru* (machine), *pelape'laka* (butterfly). This is another feature linking the two languages.

Morphologically, we see that there is an almost complete system of noun classes (18 classes), which is highly productive (playing a large part in noun and verb derivation), and a highly agglutinative verb system made of many derivational and flexional affixes. Lastly in terms of syntax there is the canonic order of constituents in Bantu languages: determinatum + determiner in the determiner phrase; Subject + Verb + Object in simple sentences.

While there seems to be an obvious proximity between Comorian language forms and Kiswahili on the basis of the Bantu language criteria set out by Guthrie, increasingly important divergences appear which make the supposedly intact homogeneity of Guthrie's group G40 'Swahili' language forms more relative.

Notable differences

The differences between Kiswahili and Shimaore may be identified on the same basis: phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical.

Phonologically, the presence of nasal vowels (/ĩ, ẽ, ã, õ/) in Shimaore is striking. These nasal articulations come from the influence of Arabic and French. Also

24 There is plentiful scientific literature for comparison with Kiswahili. I have essentially used the following works: Wilson P. M., *Le swahili simplifié*, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau, n.d. [1977]; Kajjiga, Balihuta, *Dictionnaire de la langue swahili*, Goma, Librairie Les Volcans, 1975; Lenselaer, Alphonse, *Dictionnaire swahili-français*, Paris, Karthala, 1983; Haddad, Adnan, *Dictionnaire lexicologique swahilo-arabe. Etude sémantique des mots swahili d'origine arabe*, Beirut, Al-Biruni, 2006.

25 These criteria are set out in Pierre Alexandre, « Le bantu et ses limites », in André Martinet (éd.), *Le Langage*, Paris, Gallimard, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, 1968, p. 1388-1413.

26 This 5-vowel-system is also found in other languages such as Kinyarwanda (D61), Kikongo (H16), Cokwe (K11), Gipende (L11), etc.

noticeable in Shimaore is the presence of some consonants or consonant combinations not known in Kiswahili: ʃ, ɗ, β, z̥, dr, tr, ɗz, ts, etc. Consonants with a special transcription, which were not inherited from Proto-Bantu, come in all likelihood from Arabic. The same applies to the closed CVC syllabic structure which can only be a borrowing from Arabic: *alhamdulillah* (Thank God), *burdajini* (waste dump), *hamsini* (fifty) or French: *duktera* (doctor) *prefektwiri* (prefecture), *zafurmie* (nurse). Lastly there are regular correspondences between some Kiswahili sounds in Shimaore: k > h: *kati* > *hati* (middle), *kazi* > *hazi* (work) *kule* > *hule* (over there), *mkate* > *muhare* (cake), *mkono* > *muhono* (arm, hand), *mwaka* > *mwaha* (year), *nyoka* > *nyoha* (snake), *kupika* > *upiha* (cook), etc.; d > dr (*kenda* > *shendra* (new), *kitanda* > *shitandra* (bed), *mwendo* > *mwendru* (journey), *punda* > *pundra* (donkey); t > tr (*tatu* > *traru* (three), *mtu* > *mutru* (person), *tumbo* > *trumbo* (intestine), etc.); z > dz (*kuzaa* > *udzaa* (give birth), *zima* > *dzima* (whole), *zito* > *dziro* (heavy), (*ma*)*ziya* > *dziya* (milk), etc.); s > ts (*shifarantsa* vs *kifalansa* (French); p > v (*pilipili* > *vilivili* (pepper), *polepole* > *volevole* (slowly), *kupumwa* > *uvuma* (breathe), *pamoja na* > *vamoja na* (together with).

In terms of morphology we note some particularities in the noun class system: class 5 is marked by the morpheme *dzi-* instead of *ji-* in Kiswahili: *dzina* vs *jina* (name), *dzinyo* vs *jinyo* (tooth), *dzitso* vs *jicho* (eye), etc., class 7 offers *shi-* rather than *ki-*: *shiri* vs *kiti* (chair), *sharabu* vs *kialabu* (Arabic), *shiswahili* vs *Kiswahili* (Swahili), *shingereza* vs *kingeleza* (English), *shitru* vs *kitu* (thing), class 8 has *zi-* instead of *vi-*: *ziri* vs *viti* (chairs), *zitru* vs *vitru* (things); classes 11, 12 and 13 are absent; class 15 offers *u-* instead of *ku-* for verb infinitives: *ula* vs *kula* (eat); locative classes 16, 17 and 18 are marked by *v-*, *h-* and *m-* respectively. Shimaore also uses augments, a sort of form pre-prefix adapted to each class with the meaning of 'definite,' not found in Kiswahili: classes 1-2 *umutru-uwatru* (the man - the men - previously referred to), *umuhono-imihono* (the hand - the hands), *ligari-yamagari* (the car - the cars), *ihazi-zihazi* (the work - the works) etc. The pronoun, adjective and verb systems also show some notable differences.²⁷

In lexical terms we note that on account of colonial history and different geolinguistic contexts there are more borrowings from English in Kiswahili and more borrowings from French in Shimaore. I shall return later to the matter of whether we may speak of mutual borrowings between Kiswahili and Shimaore. For the moment we may draw conclusions on the convergences and divergences observed between the two language forms.

An ever-widening interlinguistic distance

Comparison shows that there are naturally major convergences between Kiswahili and Shimaore, two Bantu languages, and also not inconsiderable divergences. This explains why, in spite of many lexical and morphological similarities, there is not complete intercomprehension between Comorian language forms (including Shimaore) and Kiswahili:

There is almost complete intercomprehension between Mwali, Anjouanese and Mahorese; only a few minor phonetic differences and a few lexical particularities distinguish them. This is a little less so with Grand-Comorian whereas there is partial, one-way comprehension with regard to other Swahilis.²⁸

27 On these points I would make reference to Marie-Françoise Rombi, *op. cit.*

28 <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahorais>.

The idea is again found here that, despite everything, it is still Kiswahili: they are regarded overall as dialectal variants of Kiswahili. The ‘other Swahilis’ are no doubt the mainland varieties of Kiswahili: Kimvita, Kiunguja, etc. The remark on ‘partial, one-way’ comprehension suggests that they are different languages although very close genetically and typologically different or becoming different. *Ylangue-e-langue*, the first website for learning Shimaore goes even further:

Outside the Comoros, this language is part of the great family of Bantu languages, characterized by a noun class system and verb agglutination. It is often equated with Kiswahili (Swahili), the spoken and written language of East Africa (Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya), as it has the same Bantu grammar, and also has a mixed vocabulary from Bantu and Arabic. However, in spite of these similarities, some phonetic and semantic particularities, and a somewhat different verb syntax, prevent complete intercommunication between Swahili-speakers and speakers of Shimaore.²⁹

The criterion usually used to determine if two different languages or dialects of one language are involved is, on this point, fairly clear: full intercomprehension = dialects; partial or no intercomprehension = languages. This does seem to be the current situation as regards the relationship between Kiswahili and Comorian language forms.

To achieve certainty on this point we need to go beyond comparison of linguistic structures³⁰ to measure precisely the degree of intercomprehension that exists between Comorian language forms and also that between them and Kiswahili as spoken on the mainland (in Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Congo-Kinshasa). Such a study has never been extensively carried out. An intensive sociolinguistic survey should also be carried out on the ‘linguistic feelings’ of users of the two language forms and accurately record their epilinguistic attitudes. Furthermore the scope of the various names used to refer to the different language forms should be studied and their implications from the viewpoint of the identity of the speakers based on their linguistic and cultural awareness.

On borrowings from Shimaore to Kiswahili

Is it possible to speak of borrowings from Shimaore to Kiswahili and vice versa? Definitely yes, whatever the identity of these language forms as languages or dialects may be. It is certain that the frontier between mutual (interlinguistic or interdialectal) borrowings and elements belonging to the common heritage from Bantu is tenuous. In other words it is difficult to decide on what goes back to the Bantu heritage as against what comes from mutual interference. This aspect of the question, which is not without interest, seems to me however in relatively little need of study, given that the elements from the common Bantu base are easily identifiable with lists of Bantu roots already drawn up by linguists.³¹ Shimaore words such as the following, which have no root in common Bantu, probably come from Kiswahili: *asante* (thank you), *bange* (hemp), *bengani* (< Sw. *bilingani*) (aubergine), *bibi* (madam), *bwana* (sir), *Mgombani* (< Sw. *mgombani*) (at the banana tree), [name

29 http://ylanguage.free.fr/chap_000.htm.

30 See the excellent work of Guarisma, Gladys and Wilhelm J.G. Möhlig, eds., *La méthode dialectométrique appliquée aux langues africaines*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1986.

31 See Guthrie, Malcolm, *Comparative Bantu, An Introduction to the Comparative Linguistics and Prehistory of the Bantu Languages*, 4 vol., Farnborough, Gregg, 1967-1971; Meeussen, Achilles Emile, *Bantu Lexical Reconstructions*, Tervuren, Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale, 1980 [1967] and « Bantu Grammatical Reconstructions », *Annales du Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale*, 61, p. 81-121; Nurse, Derek and Gérard Philippson, eds., *The Bantu Languages*, London-New York, Routledge, 2003.

of a district in Mamoudzou], *simba* (lion) and a few others.

It is, on the other hand, more important to clearly identify the borrowings made by Shimaore from languages such as Arabic, Persian (Indo-iranian), French, English or Portuguese and which have passed through Kiswahili. A rigorous comparison of the linguistic structures in play must make it possible to define with accuracy the processes which have allowed the various units of one language to pass into the other and the rules governing their incorporation in the new language. This is all the more interesting in that we are dealing with languages that are genetically and typologically distant. Based on earlier research³² I propose to make a thorough analysis of the situation in Shimaore as regards phonology, lexico-semantics and morpho-syntax in conjunction with sociolinguistic aspects.

As from the outset, it may be thought that borrowings from Arabic and Indo-Iranian took a direct route given the contacts over centuries through Islam. So the following words: *afudhawali* < *āfaDal* (it is better to), *asubuhi* < *subH* (morning), *baridi* < *bard* (cold), *bunduki* < *bunduqā* (rifle), *fulani* < *fulan* (such a one), *habari* < *khabar* (piece of news), *huri* < *hurr* (free), *kafiri* < *kāfir* (unbeliever, atheist), *karibu* < *qarib* [near, close] (welcome), *kauli* < *qaūl* (word), *lughā* < *lughA* (language), *maesha* < *ma'ishA* (life), *makasi* < *miqaSS* (scissors), *malaika* < *malā'ika* (pl.) (angel), *maansui* < *ma'SiA* (sin), *marahaba* < *marHaba* [welcome] (thank you), *marashi* < *marshsh* (perfume), *masikin* < *masākin* (poor), *risasi* < *raSaSa* [balle] (gun), *saa* < *sā'A* (time, moment), *sabuni* < *Sabūn* (soap), *twabibu* < *tabib* (doctor).

Likewise Shimaore borrowings from French were direct on account of colonial history. So: *adiresi* < *adresse* (address), *banki* < *banque* (bank), *barji* < *barge* (barge) *bi* < *but* (goal), *biro* < *bureau* (office), *bisikileti* < *bicyclette* (bicycle), *dara* < *drap* (sheet), *dipe* < *du pain* (bread), *direktera* < *directeur* (director), *dukutera* < *docteur* (doctor), *fenyā* < *fainéant* (idler), *garamu* < *gramme* (gramme), *kilasi*, *klasi* < *classe* (class), *lapitali* < *l'hôpital* (hospital), *pasiporo* < *passport* (passport), *polisi* < *police* (police), *saki* < *sac* (bag), *utara* < *tard* (to be late), *uvote* < *voter* (to vote), *vulvera* < *révolver* (gun), *zalumeti* < *les allumettes* (matches).

Only borrowings from English and Portuguese have come through Kiswahili and may be regarded as borrowings from that language. From English to Shimaore via Kiswahili: *aeroplani* < *aeroplane* (plane), *bangili* < *bangle* (bracelet), *beredre* < *bread* (kind of pancake), *donasi* < *doughnuts* (doughnut), *gashi* < *gas* (kerosene), *kilometa* < *kilometer* (kilometre), *kotri* < *coat* (coat), *nambawani* < *number one* (printed cotton), *penatsi* < *peanuts* (peanut), *tabaku* < *tobacco*. From Portuguese to Shimaore via Kiswahili: *bata* < *bata* (duck), *batata* < *batata* (potato), *bendera* < *bandeira* (flag), *karata* < *carta* (map), *kopo* < *copo* [coupe] (can), *meza* < *meza* (table), *puruku* (pl. *mavuruku*) < *porco* (pork), *papaya* ou *pwapwaya* (pl. *mavwavwaya*) < *papaia* (papaya), *sabuni* < *sabão* (soap), *sukari* < *açucar* (sugar).

Conclusion

The very close relationship between Shimaore and Kiswahili, going back to their common Bantu origins, is evidence of a great typological proximity of their linguistic structures. This proximity is so striking that it drove the British linguist Malcolm Guthrie to classify the two language forms in the same G40 'Swahili' group in zone G. Scientific discourse rightly echoed this and popular literature

32 Ngalasso-Mwatha, Musanji, « Structure du lexique pende. Éléments d'emprunt aux langues romanes », *La Linguistique*, 17-2, p. 53-78.

inferred that just one language was involved. This opinion has been discussed by Pierre Alexandre and Marie-Françoise Rombi (who has carried out extensive research on this question).³³ Their position may now be supported by sociolinguistic research which underlines, alongside major convergences between the two language forms, the notable divergences which reveal an increasingly noticeable interlinguistic distance between the two language forms that are geographically very remote from each other, at the same time as the feelings of users with regard to the languages which they speak. The fact that, according to users, intercomprehension is less and less certain between the two languages which have long had different names (ethnonyms), is another argument favouring the duality thesis.

As regards Shimaore borrowings from Kiswahili it seems that they are more to be found in the area of vocabulary coming from English or Portuguese with which Kiswahili has had longstanding contact on the mainland rather than Arabic or French with which Shimaore has long been in direct contact. The study outlined here should be pursued and deepened as part of current sociolinguistic research aimed at an understanding of what remains of the Swahili identity in Mayotte and across the whole of the Comoros archipelago through the languages spoken there. This is the best way to discover, in turn, what makes up the identity of Mayotte today through its cultural and linguistic otherness.

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33 Marie-Françoise Rombi, *op. cit.*

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Multiculturalism: an illusion or a sustainable political schema

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Raising the issue of multiculturalism necessarily entails a questioning of what lies behind it, a confrontation (in the debate at least) of the concept of universality and particularity, of Culture and cultures. Is multiculturalism in conflict with a universality of values? Is universality just a cover for the dominant culture? Can defending cultural diversity be the privilege of Culture, that aspiration to the universal which runs through all cultures? or of necessity the concept which marks the end of the universal and the recognition of cultural plurality?

The controversy over the Universal and the Particular, we should remember, structured the international debate, particularly that at the UN. The genealogy of the Declarations and Covenants is a reminder that following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the appearance of the two Covenants profoundly destabilised the concept of the indivisibility of Human Rights and in some way made a first breach in the universal symbolism. Between the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which placed universality and indivisibility of rights at its heart, and the Covenants of 16 December 1966, which split this indivisibility, the first relating to civil and political rights, the second to economic, social and cultural rights, the international community signalled to the whole world the fragility, even the ambivalence, of the concept of universality. Under the pretext of giving the Declaration greater effect, when by its nature it had none, inasmuch as it had no binding legal force, the international community showed a preference for strengthening the principle of normativity and lessening the symbolic scope, to the extent of prejudicing the very concept of indivisibility by creating an illusion of the divisibility of rights, and a possible opting out (Decaux 1995).

With the aim of symbolically restoring the universality and indivisibility of human rights, the international community again attempted to put a premium once again on collective voluntarism and remove human rights from the exclusive competence of States. Resolution XXIII adopted by the International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran on 12 May 1968 sees the return, 20 years after the Vienna Declaration, of the prerogative of the Universal in a context of decolonisation and armed conflicts. Article 2 in particular requests the Secretary-General, after consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to draw the attention of all States members of the United Nations system to the existing rules of international law on the subject and urge them, pending the adoption of new rules of international law relating to armed conflicts, to ensure that in all armed conflicts the inhabitants and belligerents are protected in accordance with 'the principles of the law of nations derived from the usages established among civilized peoples, from the laws of humanity and from the dictates of the public conscience.'

Subsequently, the 1990s saw the resurgence of the controversy between the Universal and the Particular. This is the highly polemic discourse of 'Asian Values' in which Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister of Singapore, declared that they bore no relation to the universality of Human Rights defended by the international community. Lee Kuan Yew claims that there exist Asian values which give priority to the group, family, and the community in a broad sense as opposed to the individual. According to him, Asia does not recognize the individual as having any rights that can be enforced on the community. Here, on the one hand, we have a defence of another universal, that of Confucianism or rather the validation of the existence of cultural specificities and, on the other, a plea for a different, authoritarian, growth model which is anti-democratic and anti-liberal. At an international level, this point of view was to be trumpeted in the Bangkok Declaration, by the Ministers and representatives of Asian States, held from 29 March to 2 April 1993. Article 8 in particular states that 'while human rights are universal in nature, they must be considered in the context of a dynamic and evolving process of international norm-setting, bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.'

In response to this discourse on Asian values, two documents should be noted. The first is the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted on 25 June 1993 by the representatives of 171 States which reaffirms, in Article 5, the precedence of the Universal over particularities.

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Note the highly relative subtlety of the UN wording, the artful manipulation of the major and the minor. In other words, presenting the other party's major as the minor. Whereas the Bangkok Declaration gives priority to national particularities after first recalling the importance of universal rights, the Vienna Declaration does the exact opposite: after recalling the importance of particularities, it finishes by having universal rights prevail.

A second riposte to the Asian values discourse is found in the writings of Amartya Sen. A future Nobel Prize winner for Economics (1998), Amartya Sen was at that time the economist who in the 1990s alongside Mahbub ul Haq created the Human Development Index (HDI), the index created for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), allowing the real level of human development to be assessed and as against the GDP per capita index, deemed to be inadequate for measuring well-being, social growth or the capabilities of individuals. In this text published in *The New Republic* (1997), Amartya Sen recalls on the one hand that there is no conflict between Asian values and universal Human Rights and, on the other hand, the compatibility between democracy and economic growth. First of all, it disqualifies the authoritarian model pointing out that it is wrong to believe that authoritarian states show better economic growth. His major argument points out that no democracy based on freedom of the press has experienced a famine disaster. He goes on to show that the uniqueness of Asian values is strictly illusory, given that the vast number of cultural differences that exist across the whole of Asia. Finally,

he anticipates his core point, namely the existence of a global history of democratic ideas, in other words the presence in different Asian cultures of features with universal and democratic characteristics.

In this work, Amartya Sen defends the idea of a global historiography of birthplaces of democracy taking a 'broad' definition of democracy, inspired to a great degree by free exercise of public reason (Rawls 1971, who himself takes inspiration from Kant and his public use of reason, 1784), without wholly subscribing to it. There in point of fact exist many traditions (African, Japanese, Indian, Iranian, etc.) where there is significant use of public debate in political, social and cultural, and even religious affairs. Westernization or ethnicization of democracy reveals not only flawed thinking, but proves particularly counterproductive with regard to worldwide democratic development. Therefore it is a matter of abandoning a conception of democracy that is restricted to 'monodemocratism' (Fleury 2005). In reality, Sen is defending the plurality of democratic models more than multiculturalism, with an awareness that he foresees communitarian abuses of it.

In his collection of lectures, *Identity and Violence* (2007), his concern is indeed to give a reminder that the credibility test for multiculturalism remains the defence of individuals, or its ability to go alongside individual emancipation. Ultimately multiculturalism runs the risk of becoming the Trojan horse of a regression of universal values if it ever becomes polarized towards race or religion. Identity and culture can prove to be a form of 'captivity' if there is a unilateral construction of the subject. The mechanism of conflict begins with a fixation on identity, in other words an individual's choice to stress a single parameter of their identity to the exclusion of all else. This identity then becomes vulnerable to any form of political or religious manipulation. Here, the very idea of cultural diversity has to go through the process of identity construction. Even more than the dialogue of cultures, Sen is defending the idea of a plural identity, a key to cultural cohabitation. He is in no way denying the strength of communities, their added value, their role in identity and group construction. Nonetheless the struggle against violence necessarily involves the acceptance of the fact that an individual has multiple identities. Their psychological health and long-term individuation depends on their understanding that they must (as an individual) define themselves in broader terms. Culture becomes a mechanism for claiming affiliation just as much as for disaffiliation, for belonging as much as for unbelonging.

In the 1990s another article, dealing in part with the same issues, was to have considerable repercussions in the intellectual community. *The Clash of Civilizations*, published in 1993 in the review *Foreign Affairs*, takes its inspiration from *La grammaire des civilisations* (1987) by Fernand Braudel. In it Samuel Huntington maps out eight cultural blocs. Taking a disturbingly reductionist approach, he assimilates culture and civilization (Huntington 1996). His approach disregards the definition of a civilization and the definition of a culture. In doing so he becomes the apostle of an essentialist theory of culture and the prophet of the predominance of cultural and identity conflicts, which he sees as the main threat for the current century.

A rich and virulent disputation followed between intellectuals and academics, including the famous response from Edward Saïd, *The Clash of Ignorance* (2001). The clash of cultures is opposed by non-essentialist concepts defining culture as a dynamic of borrowings, reiterations and acculturation. There emerges the concept of the coalescence of cultures (Dakhliya 2005) which to some extent echoes the older

concept of a philosophical continuum (Arkoun 1970; Arkoun & Maïla 2003): the Greco-Arabo-Syriac heritage is a specific illustration of this dynamic, based on a culture of translation which allowed ninth-century Bagdad to become a capital of the Arabic neo-platonic tradition and the recovery of Aristotle by European universities and theology some three centuries later, thanks to Averroes, in the commentary and discussions of Thomas Aquinas. Another echo is the concept of indigenization of cultures (Appadurai 1996) which stresses the part played by invention in acculturation mechanisms.

Running counter to Huntington, thinking on cultural universality and diversity is nourished by the counter-cultures of modernity (Gilroy 1993) from the post-colonialist trend seeing minority cultures as resistance or survival cultures (Bhabha 1994). Other visions highlight the passage from creolity, defined hitherto as a process of racial mixing (relying as it does on the recognizing and going beyond Césaire's theory of *negritude*, 1950, 1987) to the creolization of the world which affirms the open and conscious process governing the formation of identities (Glissant 1995; Miura 2004). Other concepts include hybridization, localization, and even commoditization of cultures (Appadurai 1988; Kopytoff 1988). It should be noted that the term 'commoditization,' also used by Barber (1996), refers to a quasi-contradictory phenomenon inasmuch as it can be equated with a standardization mechanism. For Barber, commoditization and consumption mark a new reductionism of culture and a demonstration of dominating subconscious in cultures: there is only an illusion of the universal, or its commoditization; Culture with a big C being only a culture and not a normative and critical ideal. For Kopytoff, on the other hand, commoditization is also a way for so-called subaltern cultures to appropriate Culture and invent their acculturation.

If for the moment so-called multiculturalist models, such as those devised by Kymlicka (1996) are set aside, socio-political models can be placed in two categories: those that consider that cultural diversity is a condition for peaceful societies and those, contrariwise see it as an obstacle. New models of cultural democracies (Meyer-Bisch 1999) place culture at the heart of the process of democratic development and take the view that the universal only has meaning when it is the preserve of cultures, not as an overhanging universal but a non-abstract, reiterative universal (Walzer 1989), an extensive universal (Balibar 2007). 'A culture does not refer to a set of distinctive features of a group or individual, but the provisional outcome of their actions, which admittedly condition present ways of acting, but do not determine them. A culture is only a composite and relative set of works and usages.' (Meyer-Bisch 1999). These models defend the right to developing identity and the development of extended cultural freedoms as what binds 'the subject to common resources' and not the foundation of the exercise of cultural relativism. Far from espousing communitarian theories, Meyer-Bisch defends the idea that 'cultural freedoms are the freedoms to appropriate resources.'

These are democratic schemas which have understood the cultural demand, the ethics of recognition, the raising of the status of communities but which have also grasped the entropy characteristic of multiculturalist systems, that is the instrumentation of democratic ideals for communitarian ends. Here their desire is to defend a multicultural schema that can be reconciled with the universalist demand and the system of national integration. The case of Canada is a good illustration of the return to favour of a model reconciling the two, or even prioritizing integration processes.

Multiculturalism developed in Canada in three phases (Dewing & Leman 2006): its birth (before 1971), its formation (1971-1981) with the Trudeau administration, and its institutionalization (from 1982 to date). Since then, multiculturalism has become a constitutional value. In 1982, the concept of multiculturalism was enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Article 27 of the Charter states: 'This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.' Besides the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians, the Canadian Constitution acknowledges the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, and, as French and English as official languages, while not having either infringe the rights and privileges of the other languages. In 1985, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act continues the honouring of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism by requiring the federal authorities in particular to 'promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the ability of individuals and communities of all origins to contribute to the continuing evolution of Canada;' to 'promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society;' to 'collect statistical data in order to enable the development of policies, programs and practices that are sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada.'

The 1980s also see the appearance of the concept of reasonable accommodation, arising out of employment law. 'The duty in a case of adverse effect discrimination on the basis of religion or creed is to take reasonable steps to accommodate the complainant, short of undue hardship: in other words, to take such steps as may be reasonable to accommodate without undue interference in the operation of the employer's business and without undue expense to the employer.' While popular in the 1980s, the concept became more problematic in the 1990s to the point of arousing much debate in the 2000s. At stake was the survival of the Canadian, one might go so far as to say Québécois model of integration. In the 1990s and 2000s the concept of reasonable accommodation became no longer one exclusive to the world of employment but one that concerned political and cultural situations in a broad sense. There were demands, seen as excessive and that came in ever increasing numbers, from individuals from minority ethnic or religious groups: for example, having frosted windows at the request of a group of Hassidic Jews in a Montréal sports hall where women in tee shirts and shorts trained; or the case of religious school boards that were initially presented as a reasonable accommodation for members of Québec's practising Christian minority, and that were subsequently abolished by the Marois reform (1997); or again a Sikh worker not wishing to wear a safety helmet or the wearing of the hijab during football (2007) or of a kirpan by a young Sikh who refused to take it off in a Québec school (*Multani v. Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys*, [2006] 1 S.C.R. 256, 2006 SCC 6); or the case of the Hassidic Jews in Outremont, who in the 1990s appealed to the Superior Court of Québec to obtain permission to set up an eruv above the city (2001).

On February 8, 2007, Québec Premier Jean Charest announced the establishment of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences, chaired by the historian Gérard Bouchard and the philosopher and anthropologist Charles Taylor, known for his many works on multiculturalism. These various cases, which were more directly destabilizing the Québec model of integration, were very soon echoed in the national debate on the limits of the multiculturalist model as such. In 2008, the commission published its report and stated

that 'integration through pluralism, equality and reciprocity is by far the most commendable, reasonable course.' Nonetheless, it called for an urgent redefinition of the model of integration and interculturality and the setting up of a secular system.

Kymlicka and Taylor are no doubt the authors who have most strongly defended the multiculturalist model, even if the two chairs of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission are more somewhat more nuanced in their statements. The two authors are opposed to universalist abstraction and do not share Rawls's conviction of that 'the conceptions of the world, the philosophical doctrines and the vision of the good of the various social groups and ethnic communities should be relieved of their conflictual burden and, in some way, drained (set aside and neutralized) in favour an overlapping consensus (Rawls 1993) around principles of equity common to all' (Fistetti 2009). Taylor replaces abstract universalism by a concept of equal dignity. One of Taylor's particular achievements is to have highlighted how crucial the problem of language is for the survival of a culture, thereby marking a major linguistic turning point in multiculturalist policies. 'If a modern society has an "official" language, in the fullest sense of the term, that is, a state-sponsored, inculcated and defined language and culture, in which both economy and state function, then it is obviously an immense advantage to people if this language and culture are theirs. Speakers of other languages are at a distinct disadvantage' (Taylor 1997: 34). Taylor in this way justifies the linguistic rights granted to Québec (Charter of the French language, 'Law 101'), as a means to ensure the existence in the future of community wishing to have the opportunity to use French. The aim of this 'cultural survival' measure was 'to actively create members of a community, in their assuring that future generations continue to identify as, for example, French-speakers' (Taylor 1994, Pélabay commenting on Taylor 2001).

With Kymlicka and Taylor, what becomes universal is not access to Culture but to one's own culture. Kymlicka (1996) goes even further: cultural belonging is the only thing to guarantee the individual independence and self-respect. Honneth was to take this intuition further by showing the extent to which personal integrity and sense of self-worth are based on a set of anthropological, social and political conditions (Fistetti 2009; Honneth 2000). The example given by Kymlicka (1996) of native Canadians, and commented on by Fistetti, specifies the type of multiculturalist model defended here:

The minority of Canadian natives enjoy special rights ensuring, particularly through restrictions placed on Whites to purchase their land, the preservation of a demographic majority within their territory. Nevertheless these special rights were not granted so as to avoid the extinction of native culture, but only because they formed a minority unable to assimilate to Western culture. Consequently, without these special rights, this minority would be left without a cultural affiliation. (Fistetti 2009).

But Kymlicka, while defending 'polyethnic rights,' a set of rights aimed at combating discrimination and stigmatisation suffered by 'immigrant minorities,' does not defend a right to self-determination. The multiculturalist State is not a post-national State. It remains based, on the contrary, on the idea of 'majority nation-building.' On the other hand, the State must implement a type of 'weak' integration for cultural minorities and leave 'maximum scope for the expression of individual and collective differences, both in the public and private sphere.' The problem is that Kymlicka's defence of unconditional respect for cultural identities is ill-matched to the limitations shown by multiculturalism with regard to the integration model.

Devising a sustainable democratic schema requires a critical conception of integration and multiculturalism to be put in place. The challenge is to put in place a new multicultural synthesis of integration without indulging in its bastardized version: syncretism. A return to an assimilationist integration model would make little sense at a time when migratory and diasporic movements are continuing to increase. Synthesis is still the mark of a critical and progressive effort that can deepen theories of multiculturalism while bearing in mind the structural nature of its limitations. Many authors in the field of subaltern studies, post-colonial studies or cultural studies are indeed attempting to devise this critical multiculturalism. These authors choose to 'challenge the intertwining of aspirations, mimicry, humiliations and bad conscience that characterize colonized lives' (Alizart, Macé & Maigret 2007).

Stuart Hall finds nothing essential about being Jamaican, English or even an exile, making alienation an inappropriate term for the diasporic experience. The diasporic figure is in the end more of an archetype than a 'minority' figure. Ultimately, while conscious of the hidebound ideologies sometimes represented by the social and media systems for structuring the world, Hall is primarily a proponent of the agency of the individual, a power to act and think within or beyond collective mythologies. On globalization too, a more sophisticated analysis is intended. Obviously there is no denying the dominant forces of cultural homogenization, especially those of the US. But at the same time, none could deny its deeply contradictory features, with these processes slowly and subtly decentring Western models, so that cultural differences spreading across the world. There is an unequal fight between these forces. But globalization is inevitably a matter of transgressions and compromises of all kinds. Some trends, through unable to counter the forces of homogenization, can still subvert and adapt, and allow weaker cultures to negotiate with and indigenize global culture.

While contemplating the universal and cultures is not subversive (Arkoun 1984, 2005), there is a strong likelihood that the essentialist aberration will prevail. A refusal of absolutism (Popper 1996) is also necessary in that no culture can be the be-all and end-all of the humanities. So is fighting for a complex cultural dialogue, which does not denigrate everything about cultures with which there is deep disagreement (Parekh 2002), cultures being complementary and mutually correcting (Benhabib 2002).

At an international level, two instruments (which have no binding force even if they defend a normative demand) appeared in the first decade of the new millennium, which attempted to go beyond the limitations of universality (of human rights) and cultural diversity, or to virtuously articulate both concepts. The first involved the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in 2003, and in Tunis in 2005. Many commentators, quite rightly, were disappointed by this initiative. Nonetheless, few challenged its tripartite methodology (bringing together representatives of the states, industry and business and civil society) and its intention to only develop digital empowerment so long as there is respect for cultural diversity. An illusion no doubt, as WSIS is part of a technological and consumerist ideology that does not always speak its name. Talk of the digital divide here is often a way of legitimizing unbridled development of new information and communication technologies (Guichard 2003).

Article 44 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles is a perfect illustration of this universalism showing respect for cultural diversity, but which remains a cover for hi-tech consumerism:

Standardization is one of the essential building blocks of the Information Society. There should be particular emphasis on the development and adoption of international standards. The development and use of open, interoperable, non-discriminatory and demand-driven standards that take into account needs of users and consumers is a basic element for the development and greater diffusion of ICTs and more affordable access to them, particularly in developing countries. International standards aim to create an environment where consumers can access services worldwide regardless of underlying technology.

Nonetheless, the WSIS shows concern for the setting up of Internet governance and regulation that is less discriminatory and more open to the needs of cultural and linguistic pluralism. The Civil Society Declaration gives more specific evidence of this concern:

Cultural and linguistic diversity is an essential dimension of people-centred information and communication societies. Every culture has dignity and value that must be respected and preserved. Cultural and linguistic diversity is based, among other things, on the freedom of information and expression and the right of everyone to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, at local, national and international levels. This participation includes activities both as users and producers of cultural content. ICTs including traditional communications media have a particularly important role to play in sustaining and developing the world's cultures and languages.

The Civil Society Declaration moreover underlines the fact that, in the past, the development of the Internet for too long overvalued Romance and Germanic languages to the detriment of local, regional or minority languages and that in the future such pitfalls were to be avoided. Training content producers in the various languages is key to meeting this challenge. A number of action plans supported by the WSIS run along these lines, such as the work of Frau-Meigs (2007), Perriault (2005) and Piementa who has produced one of the first algorithms able to calculate the rate of multilingualism of the Web.

We should however remember that while the articulation between cultural diversity and new information and communication technologies is crucial, it remains complex and no easy task. While the Enlightenment subscribed to this dream of convergence between science and morality, knowledge and communication, (Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721) or Voltaire's *Ingénu* (1767) describes precisely this, the possibility (and the hope) of a new way of seeing the stranger once discovered and his codes learnt to some degree), the twentieth century, on the other hand ratified the end of the Convergence between these great categories, Auschwitz being the symbol of the wreck of reason (described in the 1930s by Husserl in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*).

The major phenomenon of the beginning of the twenty-first century is (...) the appearance of the infernal triangle identity-culture-communication. Political conflicts and demands, starting with international terrorism, are the proof of this appearance. Besides the traditional inequalities between the North and the South there are now the political risks associated with culture and communication. (Wolton 2003).

The dialectic between communication, information and culture has above all shown the reality of non-communication and conflicts over identity and culture.

The end of physical distances reveals the importance of cultural distances. So curiously, this third phase of globalization, which was supposed to make the world more familiar to us, is the one which, on the contrary, makes us aware of our differences. (Wolton 2003).

The second example (which posits cultural diversity as a right, in the context of the flowering of human rights) is that of the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted in 2005, and now ratified by over a hundred States. The Convention upholds the idea of a cultural diversity inherent in humanity, a common heritage of humanity, a sort of worldwide public good. Seen as vital to peace and democracy, diversity is regarded as genuinely being a strategic tool of politics. The Convention upholds the recognition of traditional knowledge and its intellectual property rights, the importance of the role of women, the media and linguistic diversity. It also advocates the decoupling of economics and culture and refuses to see commercial value as the only measure. This is stated clearly in the preamble:

Being convinced that cultural activities, goods and services have both an economic and a cultural nature, because they convey identities, values and meanings, and must therefore not be treated as solely having commercial value.

The Convention thus allows the recognition, under the term cultural diversity, of the concept of cultural exception. 'Within the framework of its cultural policies and measures as defined in Article 4.6 and taking into account its own particular circumstances and needs, each Party may adopt measures aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions within its territory' (Article 6.1). Thus it is logical that the United States have till now refused to ratify the Convention as it legitimizes as a universal right something denied to the World Trade Organization. However the scope of the normativity advocated by the Convention is only relative in that it states that it cannot modify international commercial agreements (Article 20-2). Moreover the Convention sets down in its guiding principles, successively, the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the principle of sovereignty and the principle of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures (Article 2). It also proposes a precise, albeit broad, definition of cultural diversity, which 'refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used' (Article 4).

Although it has no binding force on international commercial agreements, the Convention nonetheless reinforces the international system of norms and provides States that have signed it with a new instrument of influence and strategy to defend their positions in international negotiations. Moreover the Convention represents a new threshold with regard to international rhetoric as it interweaves to an unprecedented degree the concepts of universality of human rights and cultural diversity.

These two international normative instruments enshrine the idea that multiculturalism can be a sustainable democratic schema if it maintains a reasoned and measured debate between the concepts of universality and cultural diversity, in other words if the schema sets up a mutual credibility test between the two concepts, universality being the credibility test for cultural diversity and cultural diversity that of universality. Another important point to note, along with Amartya Sen, is the relationship of these two concepts with individual emancipation. One may conceive of the right to culture as a right to freedom (Kymlicka 1996) or regard cultural diversity as a vital moral good (Parekh 2002) once multicultural politics is justified

through promoting as fundamental objectives human development and the deepening of the concrete freedom of individuals, or their ability to choose and to organise their life freely. For Sen, this is no doubt the sole way of legitimizing multiculturalism: contributing to the life and freedom of those concerned.

How can we go beyond the road paved with good multiculturalist intentions and ensure their democratic viability? How far can we reason cultural diversity and, at the same time, defend societies which demand and value flexibility in affiliations? Just as Montesquieu (1748) posited the truth of the balance of the mutual checking of powers (the power stops the power), so universality and cultural diversity have to be articulated. Others, such as Fistetti (2009), would prefer to put this in a quasi-arithmetical way.

From this middle way, the only reasonable one, it would seem possible to discern some outlines. Even if our normative starting proposal –which asserted at the same time the right to rootedness and uprootedness, to difference and to equality– comes up against a host of obstacles whether logical and conceptual or empirical, it may nonetheless serve as a regulating ideal. Thus it may be posited that the right political system is the one that tends to favour maximum cultural pluralism while being compatible with its own continued existence.

Whatever the final equation is presented between universality and cultural diversity, between human rights and valuing communities, between affiliation and disaffiliation, it should be noted that the contemporary context of democratic globalization allows for now back-peddalling against systemic integration of the pluri-cultural norm, at least not without provoking regressive reactions over identity and culture. While the democratic challenge remains a collective fabrication of justice, there is a strong likelihood that it will be built on a plural fabrication of universality.

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The political and social message of interviews: another look at spokespersons

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Introduction

Sociolinguistic research carried out in Mayotte on languages, language practice and linguistic representations has an ultimate explicit aim of providing ‘decision-makers with points to consider that may help them in envisaging a linguistic policy which is fair and beneficial to the island.’ In the wake of this research, and with Mayotte’s newly acquired department status, directions and decisions have to be adapted within the framework of French legislation on the introduction of minority languages in schools.

All researchers on the ground have stressed the great variety of views expressed by the islanders on the place of local African languages or Arabic in society and its institutions, especially schools. This variety of opinions was also to be found in the conference papers from which this book emerged and resulted from the status and experience of each contributor.

We wish firstly to show that this variety is characteristic of situations of rapid linguistic change accompanying fundamental socio-economic and political changes (rural exodus, immigration, emigration, referendum on department status) which are transforming the island’s social geography. This will be analysed more broadly against the background of its colonial history.

From a more methodological angle, we shall re-examine the political and social message conveyed by the interviews, both on the side of those designing and carrying out the survey and of those interviewed. We shall present the interview, its design, its execution and its content as a product of an ideological nature, a term we shall dwell on in detail.

Finally, to study the message of the people of Mayotte, we will follow Pierre Bourdieu on the way in which he understands the links between the singular and the collective and Arlette Farge who, on the basis of her work on Police Archives, gives a view of matters seen in a different light where ‘working on the singular is to recognize and understand that the subject may wish to be separated, disaffiliated, so as to claim on the collective scene other types of belonging than those appointed by power.’ Lastly, Jacques Guilhaumou, the linguist and concept historian lays emphasis on the ‘event’ engendered by the factual structure of the encounter and on spokespersons.

What we say is based on the surveys carried out by the Multilingualism in Mayotte Research Group – GRPM). The corpora consist of 7 complete interviews published in *Mayotte, une île plurilingue en mutation*, 2009, edited by Foued Laroussi along with extensive extracts, analysed and with comments by Laroussi, in a 2008 article *Le français en contexte scolaire à Mayotte : discours et revendications identitaires*. In addition we have also looked at some blogs and websites on languages in Mayotte (consulted in April/May 2010).

Organized linguistic policy and the legacy of Enlightenment Philosophers

As explained above, research in Mayotte ‘must offer decision-makers options with regard to linguistic policy.’ ‘The main aim is provide political decision-makers with food for thought, pathways and options with regard to linguistic policy.’

So it is that the sociolinguist takes a place in the line descending from the philosophers of the eighteenth century, who considered themselves as called on to enlighten the reigning monarchs, or at least the decisions of their ministers.

One of the literary and rhetorical figures used by Voltaire, Diderot (in the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville*), Montesquieu and others, is that of the ‘Noble Savage’ the native, the Persian, the naive outsider. We know that these figures are paper and ink creations and that they are not speaking for and by themselves but for the philosopher who is crudely masked behind them. They are the mouthpiece of the philosophers and this function, which they have neither desired nor chosen and before which they are powerless, can only be carried out in the bloodless character of their paper and ink identity and in the silence of their own language, of their own speech, in their ‘delocution.’

We on the other hand are aiming to take as our basis the practice observed and the recorded statements of the people of Mayotte who have ‘something to say.’ And these are not ‘empty words’ but words that are to enter the dialogical arena where not everyone’s words carry the same weight and where symbolic values are advanced.

For some, and most notably Bourdieu for example, this is a ‘very particular political act which brings into the public sphere, through publication, something that does not normally come into it –at least, never in this form– might be said to have been in some way distorted, and totally emptied of its meaning’ (Bourdieu: English 1999: 624, French 1993: 923).

Even if the slightly self-regarding sociologist is out to show himself in the best light, he is forcefully underlining that it is not the what the other person says that is political, but its publication (that is edited by the researcher: permanently transformed by transcription, analysed, organized so as to be read and not by just anyone). The political act is not that of the speaker but of the one bringing it into the public sphere.

So the original questions of sociolinguistics need to be put once again: who is speaking to whom? where? when? how? and to be linked to pragmatic questions on communicational acting, and so on the effects of performativity.

In production of what should be common speech comprised by a published text, who is speaking/writing for whom? Who is speaking with whom? To whom is the person expressing himself at the researcher’s request speaking? How is the political and social message, conveyed upstream by the funders, designers and survey team and downstream by the researchers’ write-up, expressed? Is this not an example where, unlike the case of the Philosophers’ Persian or Huron, it is the words of those interviewed, ‘people’s’ words which through the researcher are gaining a hearing by an institutional, decision-making target, one that they support or object to.¹ At all events, let us hope that the circulation of what they say and academic writings give them a long life.

¹ This opposition is expressed in a relatively temperate way in the interviews except in the case of the last interview analysed in this article. An examination of the corpora outside the survey shows us that if there is any radical contestation, it is rarely to be found in the socio-discursive context of the interviews that it is rather to be heard elsewhere, in blogs, radio phone-ins and organizations.

Ordinary plurality, diversity and complexity

Plurality of discourse on languages

It is now common to find in sociolinguistic surveys diverse, plural, sometimes contradictory or ambivalent discourse on languages from the same individual, the *locus* of discursive tensions. The Mayotte survey, from which we shall briefly set out a few examples and the conclusions, is no exception. So it is this diversity of opinions expressed that we are attempting to interpret. The question to be answered is: this diversity is the sign of what?

We shall then attempt to show how, via the interviews, one individual expresses the inner ambivalences and tensions that are the legacy of both family history and colonial history, against the background of their own individual and collective plans and those they have for their children, as can be seen from the following extract:

Interview with Anrifa: woman aged 40 +, local authority worker (M.145).

There are advantages if we speak French with our children (*pause*) even if we don't speak well (*pause*) when they go to school they understand a bit.

At home our children can't speak with our mothers (*pause*) that's the problem.

Yes, mixing is a good thing, but there's a problem if the children want to speak with their grandmother (*pause*) the grandmothers the: if the children speak in French and want to speak with my mother my mother doesn't understand what the children are saying to them (*pause*) sometimes my mother is sad she tells me why do the children the children talk every day in French I can't even speak with my children.

The need for French for success at school is not challenged and Anrifa, who went to school herself, thirty years ago, supports her children by speaking French to them at home (Bourdieu speaks here of 'symbolic violence'). But she has no choice as is stressed by many of those interviewed. The break in the intergenerational dialogue is nonetheless a 'sad' thing. Reporting her mother's words: 'why do the children the children talk every day in French I can't even speak with my children,' she speaks with a double voice without giving her any answer. It is admittedly the price to be paid for her children's success at school ... but it cannot wipe out the family's linguistic history.

Diversity of language practice

There is evidence from observations and interviews of great variety in the linguistic usage of local people and habitants and the actors in the life of society. It is a geographical, generational, social and stylistic variety. The question: 'What languages do you frequently hear spoken?' elicits this answer from this informant:

Oh dear! There's no counting them as right now you hear a bit of everything. Even if in my family, Kibushi is the main one because of the Kibushi-speaking environment we live in in M.. But the young people often speak Shizungu (French), the old people who try to save what is left of Kibushi and immigrants who also impose their language of origin whether that's Kibushi, Shingazidja, Shinduzuani, etc. (M. 215).

The variety noted by the survey is also the product of family and individual history. Some, the eldest (it should be remembered that education in the first schools goes back to 1962), remained at a distance from schools and do not speak French, others no longer speak the languages of their parents, and others dream of mastering English.

Between the two non-francophone/francophone extremes, there is a whole range of linguistic competences and practices. Code switching though lack of competence in a language ('When I want to say something in French/ but which is a bit hard (*pause*) if I can't explain it in French (*pause*) I speak in Mahorese'), especially among the youngest, occurs to regulate or repair difficult exchanges.

Fairly unstable bilingual usage is very widespread especially in towns or places with wide social diversity, such as school and some districts. Situational switching (change of language according to the interlocutor, subject or place ('during break, when I can (*pause*) I speak in Mahorese'), plays an important role alongside metaphorical switching which is common among young people ('and sometimes (*pause*) if I'm joking (*pause*) I speak in Mahorese (*laughter*) or in French (...) when I'm joking... when I mix languages (*pause*) it makes people laugh a bit (*laughter*).')

Complexity of categorizations and sociolinguistic indicators

Across or on top of the social categorizations connected with age, schooling and place of residence there are sociolinguistic markers and behavioural indications. There emerges a polyphony of markers of this diversity. Categorizing linguistic markers can be noted in island usage, such as tensions:

- the two terms for the French and for French: 'French' and 'mzungu,'
- dialectalization (Swahili, different varieties of Shimaore or Comorian)...
- education in French in French schools, in Arabic in the Koranic schools,
- knowledge of Arabic script and ignorance of Arabic as a language,
- writing of Shimaore or Kibushi using Arabic or French characters,
- the growing varieties of mixed Shimaore used in towns and the street, by young people and the media and 'pure' Shimaore, to be found (disappearing) in some villages,
- French which opens the way to mobility, the prized, international sphere, that of the future and of assimilation, deprecated or dreaded, etc.

Mayotte and its sociolinguistic history

A feature of francophone situations in Africa is the persistence of various historical situations predating colonization, the model and discursive forms of imperialism that are far from being dead and the part they play in the transnational globalization issues. The complexity of these situations lies in the coexistence of the effects of these various historical temporalities in a single geographic and discursive space. From this viewpoint Mayotte is a case study: the balance of power between the local African languages was transformed by the arrival of the French, then consolidated in a diglossic form with the education of children. This apparent diglossia (which conceals long-standing relations between the local languages, including Arabic) is challenged by three important demographic phenomena, the youth of the population, local immigration from the Comoros and emigration of the Mahorese to metropolitan France.

The colonial legacy in language is an ambiguous legacy with which many countries have had to deal. There are two levels to it: that of state linguistic policy: while most countries fairly quickly opted for the language of the colonizer, others such as Mali or Mozambique have attempted education experiments where African languages were used for education and still give rise to many questions (Galtier 2011).

The other level is that of the observation of variable, often heterogeneous practice. This is often riddled with contradictions, tensions and contradictory dynamics in that the interests of the various historical, geographic and social components do not coincide and may even conflict.

The linguistic complexity of post-colonial situations does not just proceed from the diversity and number of languages in play, but from their relationship, their mode of coexistence, in terms of hierarchy, in one space, or to put it another way, in one territory.

It is, in point of fact, the putting together in one space of these various historical strata with the associated languages or varieties which shapes the island's multilingualism and the dynamic of representations and practices.

The question of ideologies and the subject

Before examining the question of the political and social message, a few precautionary words on the use of the terms 'political' and 'ideological' as they are to be used below.

'Political' should be understood as Arendt's 'living together' and 'acting together,' that is the organization of the relationship between people by their very nature 'plural' and therefore different. The political takes its form in action, and in the institution (planning, elections, schools, immigration, etc.) which governs this relationship and which sets up, implements and preserves it.

Ideologies embody the political and give it its grounding. Founding first-level ideologies are formed by the ideals that are universalist in their aims or which express the ideologies of the dominant (the republican ideal or state religions, for example).

On account of the plurality of languages, linguistic policies enshrine or recreate a language hierarchy, whether in republican guise when in power (one language for all), or in particularist garb, when French is defending its status as an international language against English. The value and usage space of languages and varieties are intangible political objects but they are also troublesome objects that refuse to be standardized, codified, made uniform and tidied up. Without the colourful outburst of popular street language and songs ('Vous avez dit populaire ?' Bourdieu 1982). Uncorseted, with no matter spilling over.

How have ideologies been handled by sociolinguists? This point deserved to be clarified as historically there are two approaches to the question.

In the 1970s in France, in the new intellectual paradigm founded by Foucault, the analysis of political discourse was an important moment for the discipline. Political discourse was a favoured object (corpus) seized on jointly by left-wing historians, philosophers and linguists. This multidisciplinary which brought forth typologies of discourse, the forms of which (word recurrence, personal pronouns, etc.) were configured by the ideologies of the singular or collective authors of this discourse. In this way a communist discourse could be distinguished from a right-wing discourse, a racist discourse from a Third-Worldist discourse, etc. The values given to words were indexed on the place one took up on the political chessboard.

Ideology as an identifiable superstructure is part of all interviews. And it is the work of the researcher to establish the link between what is said by an individual, at a given moment, in a given situation which will never recur, and the social logics which organize it and which may be updated.

In doing so the freedom of an enunciator seemed all the more limited by virtue of expressing (or being the expression of) a collective, union or party discourse.

But ideology, in its various forms, as a superstructure manifested by language, amongst other things, limits the freedom of a subject currently thought in human sciences to be freer, to have greater agency, to be more responsible for their choices. It is hard to fit into this trend the ambient discourse of the early 21st century, where determinism, even in the form of Bourdieu's habitus is no longer in fashion and where the concept of the personal responsibility of a plural subject prevails. So it is the representation of a subject less determined by social history and with greater liability for its acts and words, even when contradictory, which most commonly holds sway.

It is the social message conveyed by pragmatic studies which see an act of identity in any historically and contextually situated speech production. Identity is constructed in action and speech is active in two ways.

Firstly because to speak or not to speak a language, to choose to speak one language rather than another, are secondary acts, given relevance by the semiotics of usage, which refer both to collective choices (habit or resistance) and to personal intentions in interaction (strategies).

An interpretative reading of difficulties at school

So it is that opposition, ambivalence and hesitancy reported in the survey corpus, with regard to local languages, constitute a message in themselves as discursive forms. This is no doubt its main message, which could be parodied as 'French, yes, but...'

A research project is not just a collection, a juxtaposition of individual interviews, isolated in their inalienable singularity. Beyond what is said, the researcher seeks and constructs a social meaning on what is heard.

Contrary to what might be believed from a naively personalist view of the uniqueness of social persons, it is the uncovering of immanent structures contained in the contingent statements of a discrete interaction that alone allows one to grasp the essential of each girl's idiosyncrasy and all the singular complexity of her actions and reactions (Bourdieu, English 1999: 618, French 1993: 916).

In this version of structuralism, the researchers are doubly concerned by ideologies: they are attempting to know those that can be read through the responses of informants, but they must also identify those which structure their own *modus operandi*, in the themes chosen, the concepts selected and their formulations in their analyses and mode of presentation.

As we have already begun to show, it is the structure of colonialism that may be read in the GRPM surveys. That is what is to be found in the imposition of a 'template' French republican school system in which the single teaching language is French which does not match the needs and realities of Mayotte.

It is also in the symbolic violence that parents inflict on themselves who, like Anrifa, speak French at home to advance their children's academic success:

aiming to give the children a better chance to learn to speak this language, so that the children can hear it. As I said that's what I do at home with my children so that afterwards they can appropriate it and use it to succeed in their studies and in life (Mohamed, primary school teacher, 41, FM. 82).

It can also be seen when the language (or languages) spoken by pupils is held responsible for academic failure: schools scapegoat the home language, avoiding

self-examination of how they themselves work (moreover the same is true in the case of migration languages in France).

The majority of those interviewed come out, consistently with the choice of department status, in favour of French, which is not challenged. What parent would refuse, in the second decade of the 21st century, to send their children to a state school on the pretext that the teaching language is French? ‘The question of consent to this domination having moreover little meaning in the light of the relative strength of the forces involved’ (Blanchard 2007). ‘What languages were you taught in? French, in any case, we had no choice. Besides we never thought that things could be different’ (M. 216). But the institution cannot turn a deaf ear to the evolving discourse (and which is fully attested in the GRPM corpora) on the importance of local languages. So the political question that of the place to be negotiated for languages other than French in schools and which is now being debated.²

Nonetheless schools are not the only places where language is learnt. The primacy given to intergenerational transmission by Fishman (1991) and many others should be borne in mind. It is at home that transmission of the mother tongue or tongues takes place. When the family ceases to take on this role, it is the language itself that is in danger. Admittedly systems may be put in place in schools to try to remedy this, but not to replace it.

‘Between the individual and the collective: the political...’

... with an opportunity for anyone, or for any group, in any era, to tie themselves to or untie themselves from it, to revolt, to disidentify themselves from assigned roles. Working on the singular is to recognize and understand that the subject may wish to be separated, disaffiliated, so as to claim on the collective scene other types of belonging than those appointed by power.’

This quotation from Arlette Farge³ echoes for me the multiple narrative and discursive forms of speaking of oneself and others encountered in migration and integration stories on which I have worked.

Farge, a historian and disciple of Michel Foucault with whom she published a book (*Le désordre des familles*, 1982) investigates popular discourse and behaviour in the 18th century. She works essentially on the archives of the Police where traces can be found of popular speech and of the singular word against the institution. In *Le goût de l’archive* (1989) and a number of interviews in journals (*Vacarmes, Nouveaux regards, Tracés*) she gives her political insights on the use of this speech by researchers. Showing a critical attitude towards what she calls the mode of ‘individualist celebration of singularity,’ she says: ‘for myself, I only speak of the singular word except in how it is linked to the collective.’ In discourse analysis the relationship with the collective involves the study of the processes of categorization and of the resulting terminology. But her approach is rather one taken from anthropology:

one must work on a specific form of social life: the links between a singular case, a singular speech and collective life, integration in very complex family, social and political systems. Entering into the experience of the subject, of the social actor requires a linking of this experience to all the events that it produces or undergoes,

2 An examination of various experiments in introducing minority languages at school in France shows that in general they offer 5 to 7 hours teaching a week and the content goes from learning the language and its grammar to the cultural phenomena associated with these languages (see Nocus et al. in this volume).

3 In a short article “Écrire l’histoire”, in *Hypothèses* (2003).

emphasizing that: through these words may be decoded ‘visions of the world,’ imaginations in an attempt to adjust to society or which refuse the institution.

But what appears to be equally interesting is the relationship she sets up between ‘le dit énoncé et à venir’ (literally: *the said uttered and to come*) ‘through these words it may be perceived that a society is attempting to make itself, to build itself, that an outline of a future, distant or immediate, is emerging,’ and in which ‘the consistencies and inconsistencies must be underlined.’ Even if people more readily speak of the past and their present values, this looking towards the future is as much the foundation of the activity of history as the past. It would be possible to speak at least as much of premises as of traces, of shivering as much as divides.

The pragmatic approach of the interviews

It is formulated around two concepts, that of the event which contains that of the encounter and that of resistance relating to performativity.

Considered as a ritualized and social language practice,⁴ an interview is however a unique event, it is something unusual and so stands out for the one questioned by the researcher. An interview is an exceptional occasion to say what one thinks, to make oneself heard, besides being an occasion to devise, to construct thought reflexively. On the researcher’s side as on that of the interlocutor, an interview is initiated under the seal of the encounter. An improbable encounter in daily life, asymmetrical as often an interview opens the floor to those to whom it is not given or who do not take it, so that the message is then that of the invisible for whom simply agreeing to an interview, looked at as ‘speaking for oneself’ or ‘speaking for others,’ is a strong act.

A gradation of event status may be imagined, depending on whether responses are in line with expectations or depart from them. In the corpora provided by Laroussi’s team, the first two are carried out by primary teachers. They are language and education professionals, and their highly standardized discourse in French matches the researcher’s expectations.⁵

It is the final interview that stands out most and is the most unexpected: for myself as a reader from metropolitan France, educated in the secular system, the particular expression of the links between local languages (and not Arabic alone) with religion is wholly outside my experience. It is so exceptional that it disrupts the continuity of my expectations. Contrary to the postulate of quantitative methodology, not all utterances have equal value and the most heuristic are not those found in any great numbers. The reverse is rather the case. The counterexample then becomes a stimulus for a comprehensive approach.

Anouar (illiterate farmer, 46, interview in Kibushi translated into French, F.M.86).

You see (*pause*) we are Muslims (*pause*) at two years of age our children, they’re talking in French (*long pause*) it’s fine for the observer (*pause*) it’s fine for someone not seeing how important the thing is (*pause*) but it’s bad for me knowing about the thing (*pause*) but it’s bad for me knowing what it means (*long pause*) that I baptized my child as a Catholic and now I have no way to get him back (*long pause*) so you see you are my child and I taught you the day that you tasted the gnongu⁶ (anou ni

4 Which has been the subject of many interactionist studies that will not be presented here.

5 Even if they express very different viewpoints and practices especially over the use of Shimaore at home.

6 *Gnongu*, charcoal liquid for writing out the Surats at the Koranic school.

lèlka gnongu) so today you've forgotten the tiny bit I taught you (*long pause*) so it's dangerous for me towards God (*long pause*) and as you have it because it's a tool you pick up to have happiness in life but in the beyond (*pause*) it's not there any more (*long pause*) so it's bad because children won't know the local languages when local languages appeal (*pause*) it's closer to the Muslim religion (*long pause*) so today (*pause*) they've got rid of local languages as even us parents don't know the danger waiting for us but we're glad our son brings us back (*long pause*) (mabawa⁷) (*long pause*) but we could die any day or the child himself can die (*long pause*) the (*long pause*) (mabawa) (*long pause*) comes to an end (*pause*) so I think that the presence of French leads to a loss of the local languages even if only two out of ten of the Mahorese have understood that now (*pause*) unfortunately we parents (*pause*) we've lost our power, our authority over our children and the children have lost the (*long pause*) Muslim (*long pause*) faith (*long pause*) (imani) (*long pause*) the presence of French in Mayotte is a bad thing (*pause*) it's a danger for us.

Among the things that surprise me, first of all the violence of the text: expressing a highly moral judgment ('it's bad for me' repeated three times) on the presence and use of French in Mayotte treated as a 'danger.' Admittedly, these words can be linked to the anti-assimilationist, resistance discourse which sees use of French as jeopardizing the local languages and culture and ultimately a loss of Mahorese identity, but the text does not reproduce the standard discourse of militants heard elsewhere and generally in the mouths of the educated.

But the opening of a 'religious' world and mode of thought: 'You see we are Muslims' guided me towards a consideration of the relation of French to Arabic, which is not stressed to the same extent in the other interviews. The sudden appearance of religious discourse ('it's dangerous for me towards God') which opposes the finite 'happiness in life' and 'the beyond': 'we're glad our son brings us back mabawa but we could die any day or the child himself can die, the mabawa comes to an end.'

The same applies for the mode of association which links local languages to Islam: 'it's bad because children won't know the local languages when local languages appeal, it's closer to the Muslim religion.'

The narrative episode is less than explicit but carries a high emotional charge: 'I baptized my child as a Catholic and now I have no way to get him back' introduces a dramatic atmosphere of anxiety by underlining the irremediable nature of the past error and the culpability painfully borne by the narrator. Nonetheless however painful this experience, it has given him an enunciative authority 'me knowing about the thing' 'me knowing what it means' over those who are mere 'observers' or 'someone not seeing how important the thing is.'

Lastly, the generalization of the experience by going from 'I' to 'we parents' acts as a now pointless warning ('we've lost our power, our authority over our children as our children have lost the faith' even if at the end the discourse is one of resistance. For me therefore this episode expresses the violence of the changing world in which the author lives. I have no key to decode this text, I can only work on the effect it has on me.

Jacques Guilhaumou, a linguist, a historian like Farge and like her an analyst of language and discourse practice and social signification, approaches the issue of social production of speech or of the production of social speech⁸ from the angle of the pragmatic event. For him, the discursive event is defined as such by the way it

⁷ *mabava*, chicken wings.

⁸ As I see it, the first concerns the informant, the second the researcher.

breaks into the continuum of our symbolic activities. Relying on our categorizations and thought habits, we are no longer aware of the frameworks (ideologies) which underlie or influence them. The break, whose climax is the ‘unprecedented,’ never heard, word, makes us aware of the ‘consistency of our sociability’ precisely because it is of another kind. When words like those of Anouar reach us (this is the literal sense of *event*: what comes to us) and is not simply swept aside, they open up a ‘possible world’ and a new reading, that of the faith of the believer. It forces us to challenge or reorganize our way of seeing, thinking, feeling.

The event was first of all the improbable encounter between the words of an illiterate, non-French-speaking farmer and the material reading carried out by me, a non-Kibushi-speaking French academic.

Words conveyed, published writings: the double utterance scenario

The task of the fieldworker/spokesperson is to articulate two utterance scenarios: that of the spoken words addressed to the survey investigator and that of the academic papers where the written word is reproduced and commented on by the researcher for the benefit of other researchers (or decision-makers when acting as a consultant). The fieldworker/spokesperson therefore has two functions, whence an ambiguity: they will report words of which they are not the author and at the same time, themselves say something about this message: analysing, arguing, persuading. The words of the other do not emerge unchanged after being given voice by the spokesperson. Even before the academic presentation, linguists are fully aware of the metamorphoses undergone by the oral, that is to say the raw physical materiality of the utterances, via transcription, translation sometimes, and writing up.

But there is another way of considering the transformation of the recorded word when written down. The living word is a singular word devised in a given situation, most commonly on a person-to-person basis, which will, once given a home in a text, circulate in a public space. This circulation of the message via writing will temporalize it and insert it in a chronology, and so historicize it. Unlike conversations or rumours, this written word will create its own objectivation and its own times scheme by its precise dating and objectivation, after which it can serve as a point of reference in a debate, for an analysis, or for taking decisions.

This work as a spokesperson as analysed here is not unconnected to that of a historian working on archives. According to Farge (speaking of the traces of the words of ‘little people’) ‘Speaking is a way of writing oneself into history.’

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French as school language in Mayotte

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Introduction

The aim here is to give an account of the situation of French in Mayotte in a multicultural and multilingual sociolinguistic context. What is its position as a language of education? What do the Mahorese have to say about the language? Does it play a role in the definition of Mahorese identity? These questions are a continuing preoccupation for Mahorese society, which is 98% Muslim. It is torn between claims of sociolinguistic individuation features, to do with Mahorese tradition and culture, and modernity, symbolized by the cultural values conveyed by French. This dichotomy with of two reference points for identity has a bearing on the views expressed by the Mahorese on French.

Geographically, Mayotte is part of the Comoros archipelago; it has been French since 1841. On a sociolinguistic level, there are many languages spoken there: besides Shimaore, a Bantu language and Kibushi, a variety of Malagasy –the two main vernacular languages– French is the official language and that of education. In administrative terms, Mayotte became the 101st French department on 31 March 2010, which means that official national instructions apply. The education system and its infrastructures have only recently been generalized, from the 1980s onwards. Preschool education is even more recent, with the first state *écoles maternelles* starting up in 1993. Mayotte has been a vice-rectorate since 2001, with its administrative and educational organization following that of metropolitan France.

School is where the nature of the complex relations between the local (Mahorese) community and the metropolitan community (the *mzungu*) are crystallized. There are two opposing ideological trends running through Mahorese society: one to do with identity that aspires if not to promote at least to preserve the languages and cultures, one aimed at assimilation and demanding only the use of the exogenous language, French, regarded as the sole means of upward social mobility and integration in employment. These confrontation of these two trends are reflected, even exaggerated, in the school system: while some accuse it of failing to teach French effectively, and so of pupil failure, others charge it with excluding vernacular languages from schools, and consequently, breaking the links pupils have with their sociocultural environment.

To quote the local newspaper *Mayotte Hebdo* (n°180, 6 February 2004), ‘This pupil failure happens early in a school career,’ ‘Those involved in the national education system appear to be unanimous over the scope of this problem.’ Opinions diverge however as to the underlying causes and the answers to be found. Young people’s difficulties with French are the outcome of very many realities in Mahorese society and are in some way a crystallization of the nature of the relations between local and metropolitan communities.

In a context of this kind, it is vital to question those involved in the Mahorese education system so as to assess the symbolic and ideological of their discourse and its impact on the learning of French. The requirement is to identify where dissent and consensus appear among the Mahorese and to have an overview of the clashes of opinion over the teaching of French in Mayotte.

Collecting data

This work is part of a collective research project: *Plurilinguisme et aménagement linguistique à Mayotte* (Multilingualism and linguistic development in Mayotte), run by Foued Laroussi since 2005. It is funded by the island's *Conseil général de la Collectivité départementale* and has recently led to a programme funded by the ANR (*Agence Nationale de la Recherche* – National Research Agency).

There have been (large-scale) quantitative surveys and qualitative surveys (semi-directed interviews and participative observations). We have given priority to spontaneous, flexible and free interviews. Data was collected in French and in a vernacular (Shimaore or Kibushi) when the interviewee was not a French-speaker.

Qualitative surveys were done in the following towns: Bambo-West, Combani, Handrema, Labattoir, Mamoudzou, Mronabeja, Mstangamouji, Pamandzi, Sada. They are in Grande Terre and Petite Terre.¹

Towns were chosen according to the dominant language² spoken there and their geographical situation.

- Shimaore dominance: Sada, Handrema,
- Kibushi dominance: Mronabeja, Mstangamouji,
- bilingual Shimaore/Kibushi dominance: Bambo-West,
- bilingual Shimaore/Shinazidja dominance: Combani,
- Shindzwani³ dominance: Pamandzi, Labattoir,
- multilingual dominance: Mamoudzou.

The sociolinguistic situation in Mayotte

Mayotte's sociolinguistic history developed long before the European colonial period. Its linguistic situation mirrors its history and how it was settled; it is the result of many and varied acts of settlement. The nature of its geographical position leaves it open to a variety of very strong influences. The Mozambique Channel in which the island lies as always been an unavoidable passing place for Arab traders en route to Africa, Madagascar and India and also for Indonesians and Malagasies heading for Africa. Mayotte, despite being a small island, was therefore open to the outside world. In this limited space, besides the languages mentioned above, others are while less widely spoken are still present on the island: Arabic, taught in Koranic schools and used as liturgical language, three Comorian varieties: Shindzwani (variety spoken in Anjouan), Shingazidja (variety spoken in Grande Comore), Shimwali (variety spoken in Mohéli) and Reunionese Creole.

The school system in Mayotte: problems and issues

As Mayotte is a French territory, official national instructions and programmes apply there. The French presence in Mayotte dates back to 1841. Nonetheless, the

¹ See the map of Mayotte at the end of this chapter for the location of the towns in question.

² On the basis of the linguistic data from Insee Mayotte.

³ The variety spoken in Anjouan.

actual setting up and generalization of the education system is a recent phenomenon, dating from the 1980s.

Higher education came into being in the shape of the *Institut de Formation des Maîtres* (IFM, Teacher Training Institute) of Dembeni which gives degree-level teaching in a number of disciplines under agreements signed with partner universities. In 2009, there were 250 students studying for a first degree and 30 in the first-year Masters course at the University of Réunion. As for specialities and locations, there are 99 students entered in geography at Bordeaux 3, 70 in Modern Studies at Rouen, 52 in Management Sciences at the ISEM and 29 in Life Sciences in Réunion.

As for the *Centre des Etudes et Formations Supérieures de Mayotte* (CEFSM – Mayotte Centre for Higher Education and Training) run by the *Conseil général de Mayotte*, its main speciality is continuing education, but also runs introductory courses in some disciplines via distance teaching under agreements between French universities and the Conseil général. For example in association with the University of Rouen, the CEFSM offers all courses in DU language sciences, first degree, masters and doctorate.

School structures and population growth ⁴

	1997	2009
Number of pupils	43,158	77,603
Schools	158	197
Colleges (Secondary level)	11	19
Lycées (Tertiary level)	4	9

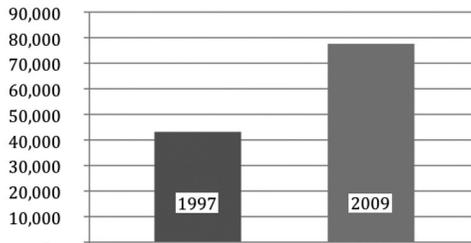


Fig. 1. Number of pupils.

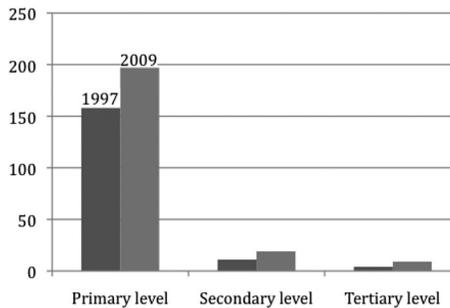


Fig. 2. Number of pupils by level.

⁴ *Vice-rectorat de Mayotte – L'éducation en chiffres*, 2009-2010 édition, p. 4.

Ever growing pupil numbers

	1997	2007	2008	2009
Primary	31,643	45,476	46,349	49,193
Secondary	12,065	24,733	26,609	28,410

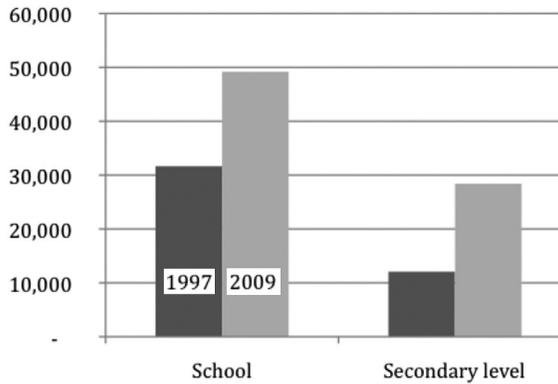


Fig. 3. Ever growing pupil numbers.

There was growth of nearly 74.2% in the school population between 1997 and 2009, requiring considerable effort and resources. Despite these efforts, many challenges need to be overcome by schools, in particular so as to deal in an effective way with growing pupil numbers as premises are not always adequate.

Secondary intake

	2003	2007	2008	2009
Overall growth	12,374	17,612	18,741	19,544
General Education	12,909	15,673	16,727	17,535
Vocational Education	165	1,776	1,840	1,871

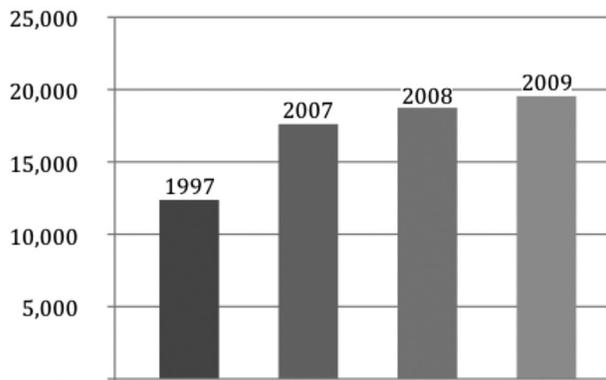


Fig. 4. Overall Growth Colleges.

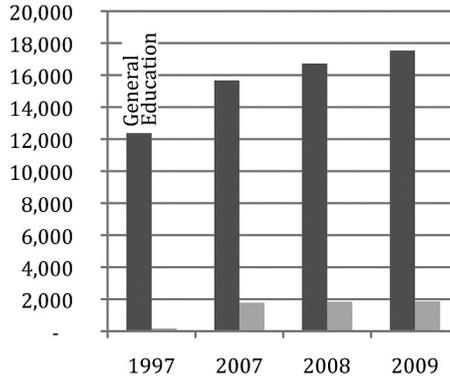


Fig. 5. General or Vocational education.

While the rate of overall growth of college intake between and 2009 is 57.9%, the figure is 43.6% for general education and over 1033.9% for vocational education over the same period.

Tertiary intake (lycées)

	2003	2007	2008	2009
Overall growth	6005	7249	7958	8866
General and Technological Education	3937	4353	4942	5829
Vocational Education	1951	2639	2751	2767

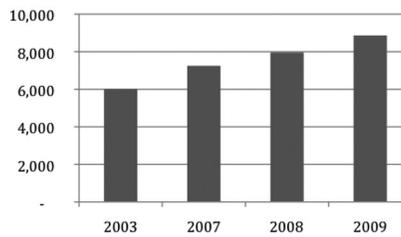


Fig. 6. Overall growth Tertiary level.

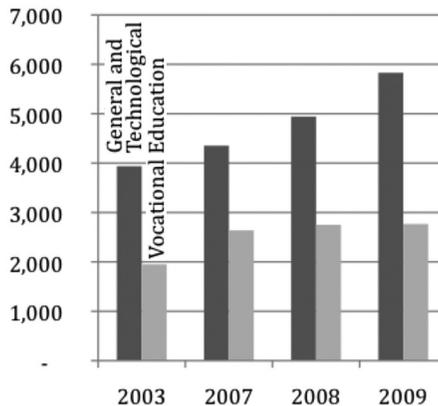


Fig. 7. General and technological or vocational education.

Between 2003 and 2009, the increase in overall intake was 47.6%, 48.1%, for general and technological education and 41.8%, for vocational education. The rate for failure to complete 3 years at lycée remained 17.6% between 2003 and 2009, although there was some slight improvement as against the previous 2006-2008 period, when it was 19%.

At primary level, there were 197 primary schools (including preschools) in 2009. There are not enough of them to take all (49,193) pupils in satisfactory conditions. Even if, over the twelve years between 1997 and 2009, 39 extra schools were added to the existing 158 making a total of 197 (amounting to 3.25% growth per year), the building of new premises cannot keep pace with the growing intake (see the table below). The outcome is that classes are often overcrowded, and a number of schools operate a shift system, with some children attending in the morning and others in the afternoon.

Intake at preschool and primary level

	2003	2007	2008	2009
Preschool	9,966	12,607	13,081	14,611
Primary	30,375	32,869	33,268	34,582

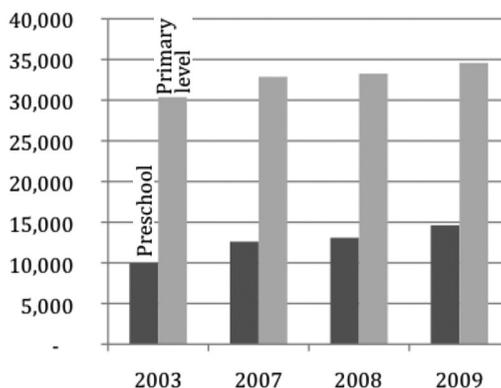


Fig. 8. Intake at preschool and primary level.

Over a six years period between 2003 and 2009, preschool intake rose by 46.6% and primary intake by 13.9%.

Alongside these practical difficulties, over the last twenty years, another problem has arisen, that of a shortfall in teacher recruitment. To remedy the problem, Mayotte called, for a number of years, on Mahorese teachers with a secondary level education, with an inadequate training and command of French. From 1997 to 2006, the teachers recruited had a baccalaureate and did a two-year course at the I.F.M. They have a local qualification. Since 2006, their recruitment level has been the baccalaureate and two years' higher study and they continue further training for two years before qualifying as State registered teachers.

But it is in primary schools that problems are the most acute. There is a high rate of pupils who repeat a year: 28% are behind by three (or more) years in CM2 (final primary year, normally \pm age 10-11). The proportion was over 60%, in 1993, showing the progress made. In 2004, success rate for the *brevet des collèges* (secondary

school leavers' qualification) was 62.1% and 56.6% for the baccalaureate (in all subject combinations). However, many pupils reach the maximum age for CM2 or the fourth year of secondary school without reaching the level to move up to the next class and are therefore forced to leave school.

In Mayotte –more than in the other French Overseas territories– a command of French is a prerequisite for success in school. The school system has a duty to face up to this challenge, as pupil failure is due amongst other things to shortcomings in the level of command of French. How this learning deficit is to be explained after a century and a half of French presence, a quarter century of compulsory teaching in French and a large-scale political commitment by the Mahorese population to Mayotte's incorporation into France? This incorporation has been official since 31 March 2010, the date when Mayotte became a French department.

With no claim to being exhaustive or delimit highly complex issues, six points can be made in an attempt to answer these questions:

- (1) Disregarding the undeniable efforts made in practical terms, on the matter of linguistic diversity and an open approach to multilingualism, there is a noticeable absence of a bold educational policy. The Mahorese school system cannot break free from the sword of Damocles that is Jacobin ideology. So it is that experiments in multilingualism have come to fruition. Nonetheless after the *Etats Généraux sur le multilinguisme dans les outre-mer* (States General on multilingualism Overseas, Cayenne 14-18 December 2011) and the presentation to the Vice-Rector of Mayotte of the report on the experimental *Le plurilinguisme à l'école maternelle*⁵ (multilingualism in primary schools) scheme, in January 2011, we hope that, on this occasion, the recommendations of this report will not be a dead letter. Without going in to detail, these recommendations stress the need to set up this at least in the schools with very high pupil failure rates and to propose another scheme better suited to preschools. As part of initial teacher training, the report advocates setting up teaching modules on multilingual education and the linguistic description of vernacular languages. As is well known, a native speaker is not necessarily a specialist in their mother tongue.
- (2) Besides the unfavourable structural conditions, teaching materials and timetables are unsuitable, even if the *J'apprends à lire avec Azad et Laura*⁶ textbook is a step forward in integrating the culture of Mahorese pupils, being designed 'for children of Overseas France' at the start of primary school (CP, second cycle), to quote the Vice-Rector of Mayotte in the preface.

Beyond its general objectives, this book has a place in the more specific context of Mayotte. Through daily life situations –from the first days at school and taking in the discovery of the lagoon– pupils learning to read will acquire reading skills while learning to express things from their everyday life.⁷

As regards 'the more specific context of Mayotte,' in spite of good intentions, mentioned in the passage above, an examination of the book shows that while this is true for information on the locations, events occurring in Mayotte, referencing the fauna and flora or mentioning public buildings (the town hall of Mamoudzou, the village of Chiconi, M'Tsapéré maternity hospital, etc.), in lexical terms, for example, the language is still very French French, in the sense

5 These experiments in Mayotte preschools were carried out under the scientific leadership of Foued Laroussi.

6 Edition du Centre de documentation pédagogique de Mayotte, 2007, 2 tomes.

7 From the presentation of the textbook (no page reference).

that it is cleansed of any borrowing from the French of Mayotte, even though it has incorporated many terms coming from Shimaore or Kibushi.

- (3) French, the language taught and used for teaching in Mayotte, is the medium for all learning at school, which inevitably poses problems for understanding for the majority of pupils and instructional difficulties for teachers.
- (4) A disconnect between school culture and local culture. Local culture is far removed from that conveyed by the official curriculum that is supposed to be used.
- (5) Inadequate teacher training and official school syllabuses that are poorly suited to the reality of Mahorese society often entail conflicts likely to hinder the learning of French.
- (6) A latent sociolinguistic conflict standing in the way of the learning of French. This conflict is described in an article in *Mayotte Hebdo*⁸ in these terms: '(...) Young people's difficulties with French are the outcome of a very many realities in Mahorese society and are in some way a crystallization of the nature of the relations between local and metropolitan communities.' Alongside large-scale commitment to the cultural and social opening up stemming from Mayotte's taking on department status, defensive reactions are in evidence, to be detected in discourse on identity advocating the preservation of local languages and cultures.

In this context, a real desire for change and an aspiration for modernity is accompanied by constant questionings on the perils of assimilation; questionings driven by a feeling of fear, even denial.

Views expressed on schools in Mayotte

For most Mahorese, school should not be a place of linguistic downgrading but the agent of a multilingualism that is recognized and constructive, even if there is an awareness that the issues of multilingualism go beyond the school context.

Starting with an analysis of some corpus extracts, the aim of this paper is to show whether, in the view of the Mahorese, the school system values (or fails to value) vernacular languages and puts children in a better position for them to develop an enriching multilingualism in a balanced way. Does the school system as a vehicle for equal opportunities have a place for linguistic and cultural diversity? Does acknowledgement of vernacular languages facilitate emotional development, success at school, the survival of heritage and an outlook on the future?

These are socio-political, identity, economic and educational issues which are challenges to be faced by the school system. Let us look at what the Mahorese have to say.

The school's role

Answers to the question of what role schools should play over multilingualism are far from uniform.

Bounou, a state employee (49), gives this answer:

right (*pause*) so schools er:: first of all it's::: to see (*long pause*) for a start to take account of (*pause*) those who are (*pause*) so the reality that exists in this country (*pause*) this reality that it's a world (*pause*) Mayotte is a world er completely cut off from the outside even if nowadays we're told: (*pause*) right vote for Europe (*laughs*) we only have money they're going to do this for us they're going to do that for us but

we don't see the consequences that can lead to for Mahorese society (*pause*) because in France the debate is divisive already (*pause*) divisive and in Mayotte we want to head straight for Europe (*pause*) (...) it's to show you that the school system in itself (*pause*) it has to allow for this reality see for a start that a Mahorese child, this child that gets up at seven o'clock who gets up at four o'clock in the morning, goes first to Koranic school, after the Koranic school quickly to the er official school er without anything to eat with nothing in their stomach, nothing only rarely or if he comes with a snack it's a snack that's nothing like his::: what he needs is a proper meal what he needs for his body so for a start teaching Mahorese what hygiene is:: (*pause*) himself how he can behave with himself with his environment the one he's living in (...) it's unbelievable you see so there are already things in terms of the idea of the school system there has to be this change (*pause*) see for a start what type of :: of people you have and then see what type of school you should have:: it's not schools copied from a model but schools that meet needs and realities (*long pause*).'

For Mohamed, a primary teacher (41), do not try very hard to speak French to pupils. He blames them in a way for using the mother tongue, even though he can understand:

er unfortunately er (*pause*) I think I think that Mahorese teachers don't try hard enough and so I I think personally that it's through us teachers er that er the problem can be solved as as right once teachers among themselves don't make the effort even if it's natural as I said just now to speak in your mother tongue but trying er to be able to give children a better chance to teach them to speak this language so that the children can hear it as I said that's what I do at home with my children so that they can make it their own and use it to succeed in their studies and in life...

This teacher thinks that education in Mayotte should not be a copy of education in metropolitan France. He thinks pupil failure is a result of this discrepancy between official instructions and Mahorese social reality. In other words, the education system does not take account of the linguistic and cultural specificities of Mayotte where, he believes, French is not a mother tongue but a second language.

When I say that French for us really er it's a second language its not the language: so it should have been taught in another way (*long pause*) what we want (*pause*) they want us to understand (*pause*) that means that the first failure of language actually (*pause*) is that they wanted to have education in Mayotte be a straight copy of : what it is in metropolitan France (*pause*) it's a political problem purely political but people didn't see the reality (*pause*) because right now a Mahorese is not a French-speaker he is a francophile (*long pause*) French-speaker er.

Continuing along the same lines, he thinks that, in order for education to be a success in Mayotte, it should not downgrade first languages:

If er I speak French to them from seven o'clock till twelve (*pause*) they're going to say (*pause*) that's not on (*pause*) even children themselves when: you : say come on in French instead of talking in Mahorese they look at you first even if they can there's a reluctance in the first place to : (*pause*): abandon their language because they they have an involvement they feel concerned because it's the language in the whole : environment (*long pause*) that's a huge issue too.

He is also more critical of the education system and accuses the official system of only teaching Mahorese pupils what is 'negative' in French civilisation.

Right so there is this issue now Mayotte is much more French as regards values as regards traditions but in terms of culture (*pause*) really I'd say that everything that's positive er in French civilisation we've taken the negative (*laughs*) you see (*laughs*)

that's right just the negative but / because (*laughs*) I don't know what I see.

Whatever might be said about these views, coming from a primary teacher, someone with a major role in the education system, they are at the very least evidence of the malaise felt by Mahorese teachers. It should therefore come as no surprise when school results are poor.

Alongside this there are other difficulties related to the way are recruited. The reality is that there are many who have been recruited to cope with the situation but who have not received adequate training; some do not have sufficient command of French. When Mohamed says that he became a primary teacher by default, in other words, with no vocation, there are questions to be asked as to the motivation these teachers have for winning the interest of Mahorese pupils.

you see the gap there is so you see that the world of and most of the teachers (*pause*) may be here er:: you don't feel it but if you go to the other villages there you feel that there's a problem (*pause*) what there is is also putting a brake on French because me if I teach it and I don't speak it properly (*pause*) (...) (*pause*) because I'm a teacher but it's not because of any vocation (*pause*) I do it simply because I had no other choices right I became a (*pause*) teacher that's it:: the the (*long pause*) so if there are a lot of problems it's not with the children but the problem is with us who are being called on to...

It follows from this that these teachers, who are at the centre of the education system with no motivation or vocation, do not try hard enough to speak French to their pupils, as Mohamed says here:

exactly eh and er unfortunately er (*pause*) I think I think that Mahorese teachers don't try hard enough while I think personally that it's through us teachers er that er the problem can be solved as as right once teachers among themselves don't make the effort even if it's natural as I said just now to speak in your mother tongue but trying er to be able to give children a better chance to teach them to speak this language so that the children can hear it as I said that's what I do at home with my children so that they can make it their own and use it to succeed in their studies and in life...

What language(s) should children in Mahorese schools be taught?

While some interviewees are highly critical of the education system for the reasons set out above, when questioned on the language or languages in which they want to see their children educated, the response is virtually unanimous: 'French.' Most Mahorese are realists as they are perfectly aware that French is the language of upward social mobility in Mayotte.

In Fatima's opinion, only French should be taught in school: 'I'd say that I'd like that there only be French taught in school that's right.' As for Mohamed, his answer to this question is clear-cut. In his view, while vernacular languages symbolize Mahoresee tradition and culture, French is the language that opens up the world:

er it just has to be French because Shimaore or Shibushi it's true it's a question of culture so safeguarding this culture but it's French that's the only language that will give young Mahorese an opening on the outside world and er let them integrate in the world because now you don't think in terms of a village or a place any more but er internationally for every young Mahorese er to have their place so I think that now it's French that er that really take chances try to give and plan out a the future of these young people (...) er as regards Mayotte er I'd say it's er the I'd say the vehicular language of education and success in school and success I'd say integration in society I'd say er anyway it's a vital language for a young Mahorese.

Lastly, in the words of Madi, another teacher, French is still the language of success in school and upward social mobility in Mayotte:

French (*long pause*) first of all for the moment it's (*pause*) for a start the language for success in school (*pause*) for getting into employment (*long pause*) er er (*long pause*) it's the language you have to have (*long pause*) you speak French well (*long pause*) you don't speak a single word of French (*pause*) no I mean Shimaore (*long pause*) you speak Shimaore without even speaking French (*pause*) you're in trouble (*long pause*) and then as well as that (*pause*) it's a language of the future eh (*long pause*) to get out (*pause*) it's a business language (*long pause*) even if internationally (*pause*) it's not spoken as much as English (*long pause*).

Conflicting claims over identity

When speaking about identity Mahorese views on French swing between claims and rejection: 'French has to be a language of Mayotte' versus French, 'a language from outside.'

It is not always a simple matter to give an account of complex processes. So what words should be used to speak of identities in Mayotte? In theory, all words are possible, none is more appropriate than another; the only possible requirement is to respect the words used by the Mahorese to express their identities. But in practice, the situation is different, as everyone behaves as if the situation were different.

Although interviewees almost unanimously state that the language of education must be French, with the exception of a minority in favour of local languages, in particular Shimaore, when questioned on the relationship between language and identity, they appear critical, even hostile towards French.

When asked 'is French a language of Mayotte?', their answers are highly nuanced. In asking the question, the aim is to find out if there was a genuine commitment to the language, if the Mahorese had made it their own or not, if they laid claim to it not only as a language for success at school but also as a vehicle for cultural values.

Although most of those questioned stress the efforts made by the Mahorese, firstly, to remain part of the French Republic, and subsequently to achieve department status, they often seem sceptical and answer in two different ways. A strictly institutional response is often advanced, seeing it as an idiom, uninterested in scientific reflection: 'Mayotte is French, so French is a language of Mayotte.' For Madi (45),

er (*long pause*) people have always asked for (*long pause*) people have always fought for becoming a department (*long pause*) we've been asking for it (*long pause*) meaning a stronger integration in France (*long pause*) and on that score I (*pause*) I'd say that it's a language of Mayotte (*long pause*) as we've chosen to take French nationality (*long pause*) so it's necessarily a language of Mayotte.

Anouar, a peasant who has not been to school, is sceptical, even opposed to French; he speaks of his fear of losing his Mahorese, even his Muslim, identity. For him, French is a language destroyer, in the sense that the presence of French entails a loss of the local languages.

You see (*pause*) we are Muslims (*pause*) at two years of age our children, they're talking in French (*long pause*) it's fine for the observer (*pause*) it's fine for someone not seeing how important the thing is (*pause*) but it's bad for me knowing about the thing (*pause*) but it's bad for me knowing what it means (*long pause*) that I baptized my child as a Catholic and now I have no way to get him back (*long pause*) so you

see you are my child and I taught you the day that you tasted the gnongu⁹ (anou ni lèlka gnongu) so today you've forgotten the tiny bit I taught you (*long pause*) so it's dangerous for me towards God (*long pause*) and as you have it because it's a tool you pick up to have happiness in life but in the beyond (*pause*) it's not there any more (*long pause*) so it's bad because children won't know the local languages when local languages appeal (*pause*) it's closer to the Muslim religion (*long pause*) so today (*pause*) they've got rid of local languages as even us parents don't know the danger waiting for us but we're glad our son is bring us back (*long pause*) (mabawa¹⁰) (*long pause*) but we could die any day or the child himself can die (*long pause*) the (*long pause*) (mabawa) (*long pause*) comes to an end (*pause*) so I think that the presence of French leads to a loss of the local languages even if only two out of ten of the Mahorese have understood that now (*pause*) unfortunately we parents (*pause*) we've lost our power, our authority over our children and the children have lost the (*long pause*) Muslim (*long pause*) faith (*long pause*) (imani) (*long pause*) the presence of French in Mayotte is a bad thing (*pause*) it's a danger for us.

For Anouar, the experience of sending his child to the French school is like a journey, even an exile to another world. In saying the words 'at two years of age our children, they're talking in French,' he meant that Mahorese children go into exile. Clearly this is not exile in the spatial sense of the word –the children go nowhere– but a cultural, linguistic and psychological exile; here we have a feeling of acculturation.

For Sidi, a primary teacher, French is not a language of Mayotte but 'comes from outside':

no (*pause*) French is not a language of Mayotte (...) it a language that comes from outside' and that is imposed on us because they force us (*pause*) and they force our children to speak it too. Answering the question: 'what is being French for you?' he says: 'it's having French papers.

Such a statement cannot fail to make an impression on anyone with an interest in the relationship between languages and identities in Mayotte, and it is also to be found coming from young people from an North African immigrant background in the Rouen area. For a Mahorese to be able to bring French identity down to a mere identity document –a passport or other identity document– means that they do not recognize themselves in the model on offer to them. Why? Because this model does not recognize them as such, that is as different from the vision created by the standard model, and furthermore offers them nothing in exchange. Moreover, there are questions to be asked about the effectiveness of this French integration model and its limits. Currently, many voices in France, those of sociologists, linguists and politicians from all sides, are raised to point out the failure of this model.

As I said before (*pause*) the presence of French leaves us disabled us in our language (*long pause*) we are losing our *Shimaore* vocabulary (*long pause*) right now (*pause*) there aren't many people who want to make a full sentence in *Shimaore* (*pause*) without putting in a single French word (*long pause*) when you can make a sentence in French with French words (*pause*) even if the sentence has no meaning (*long pause*) this implies that French is gaining ground on our language (*long pause*) and by gaining ground (*pause*) we'll be at a complete loss (*long pause*) there's a real risk of losing our personality (*long pause*) we'll be like the people from Guadeloupe or Martinique who don't like (...) (*pause*) who hate their African origins.

⁹ *gnongu*, charcoal liquid for writing out the Surats at the Koranic school.

¹⁰ *mabawa*, chicken wings.

He would like his children to be taught in Shimaore: ‘in Mayotte (*pause*) I’d like the learning to be in *Shimaore* (*pause*) in *Shimaore*.’ However, he is not against the teaching of French but not as a teaching language:

as a primary teacher (*pause*) I’m giving you a teacher’s answer (*long pause*) they say that children are failing (*pause*) even at football (*pause*) they’re failing (*long pause*) why (*pause*) when you take a bit of paper (*pause*) and you write (*pause*) you run (*pause*) you go 150 paces (*pause*) you turn right and you come back to me (...) (*pause*) if a child can’t read (*pause*) they haven’t understood (*pause*) what they’re being asked (*pause*) they can’t do that (*pause*) cant do the exercises (*long pause*) whereas if you say that in *Shimaore* (*pause*) they’ll understand straight away (*pause*) they’ll perform so well (*pause*) that the teacher will say (*pause*) my teaching is effective (*long pause*) on that score (*pause*) if teaching is done in *Shimaore* (*pause*) the children will perform really well (*long pause*) now (*pause*) French can’t be taught in another (*pause*) it has to be done in French (*long pause*) if you learn French in French (*pause*) that’s obvious (*long pause*) but if you learn maths (*pause*) in French (*pause*) for a child in a learning situation (*pause*) maths in a foreign language (*pause*) while being alien to what they are (*pause*) then (*pause*) they’re failing (*long pause*) the educational system (*pause*) there (*pause*) is not effective (*long pause*) that’s why there’s a lot of failure.

Conclusion

Most of those we have interviewed are in agreement when they say that French is the language of the future in Mayotte. On the other hand, those hostile to its presence in school as the main teaching language are rare. What they are condemning moreover is a form of education copied straight out of that in metropolitan France and which stigmatizes local languages and cultures.

It has been seen that this language of education is taught in a contextualized way. it is taught without reference to the children’s first language première, who occupy a different sociocultural environment from those in metropolitan France. The relationship to learning, knowledge and writing is not the same. For that reason, and to combat pupil failure, French, the sole language of education in Mayotte must, in my view, gradually make way for multilingual education where teaching would be in three languages, namely French, English and a vernacular language of choice (*Shimaore* or *Kibushi*). It is such a multilingual school system that would be able to meet the challenges from inside and outside. In other words, it will be capable of both responding appropriately to the legitimate claims over the recognition of vernacular languages as languages of education in and facing up to the demands of globalization alongside real multilingualism.

At all events, the situation in Mayotte is far from that described here by Anrifa:

I wanted to tell you something: one day my mother had a problem with my father (*pause*) she told me when I was little there were already schools in Mayotte but my father didn’t want to take me to school because I’d become a *mzungu*

This is the story of a woman whose father did not want her to go to the French school as he was afraid of the harm brought about by an ‘assimilationist’ culture, via education in French, on Mahorese languages et cultures; this is the meaning of the words: ‘because I’d become a *mzungu*.’ It should be realized that for many years Mahorese parents were unwilling to put their children in French schools, because they saw them as being the same as Christian schools which in their eyes had a mission to evangelize Muslim children.

Nowadays, even if this is still a genuine fear especially among the elderly and illiterate, schools no longer have this role. As is shown by the final fragment of what Anrifa has to say:

if my father had put me in school, I wouldn't be like this¹¹ (*long pause*) your father wouldn't misbehave at home (*long pause*) because I I (*pause*) I'd be like him (*pause*) I'd work like him (*pause*) so I thought to myself that school was very important.

She came to understand that the role of the school was not the one that it was seen as having, that is the eradication of local identity or the evangelization of Mahorese children but the passing on of knowledge and their education, an education aimed amongst other things at emancipating Mahorese women.

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¹¹ She no doubt meant that she would not be like a submissive woman, perhaps also not the wife of a polygamist?

Electronic writing in Mayotte: a case study of texting

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Introduction

This article looks at electronic writing practice in Mayotte. Research carried out over the past ten years shows that it often favours language writing practices. So there is a tendency among writers who are multilingual towards a meeting of the various languages that they use widely, whatever their degree of expertise and competence in them. While language contact is above all an oral phenomenon and studied as such, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and their accompanying usages make regular written language contacts possible. What is the situation in Mayotte, a perfect example of a multilingual island? ¹ In attempting to answer this question, we shall outline the state of play as regards ICTs in Mayotte despite the small quantity of data available in contrast to Metropolitan France or even other French islands. This will lead us to focus on the electronic writing practice that we are concerned with, namely texting. The very principle of Telephone-Mediated Communication (TMC), which is subject to a variety of constraints, widely described elsewhere. We shall therefore review the existing typologies (of writing procedures) so as to then make an analysis of the corpus of texts collected in Mayotte. This will be based in part on the typology we have used for some time now but also on what other researchers have said about texting practice in Mayotte.

ICTS in Mayotte. State of play

Even if we are aiming here to observe practices in texting and hence in TMC, we cannot avoid a broader survey incorporating Computer-mediated Communication (CMC), the reason for this being that CMC and CMT make up electronic performance, digital knowhow that allows the understanding and use of language(s) according to the mode of communication involved: they are a vital stage in the production of a 'digital literacy.' In which case, do the Mahorese have the same sort of relationship to ICTs as their fellow citizens in Metropolitan France?

CMC and Internet access

The socio-economic and geographic specificities of Mayotte mean that a comparison with Metropolitan France is indeed difficult. As a first item of data, the level of

¹ On this point we would cite F. Laroussi. He explains that Mayotte has two main languages: 'Shimaore, a Bantu language, belonging to the Swahili family and Kibushi [called Kibushi by Shimaore speakers], a Madagascan variety of the Malayo-Polynesian family, the only one spoken outside Madagascar. (...) In addition there is French, the language of government and education. Other languages are found in the island, namely Arabic (taught in Koranic schools and used as a liturgical language), three Comorian varieties: Shinzwani (Anjouan), Shingazidja (Grande Comore), Shimwali (Mohéli), an Indian language, Shihindi (spoken by Indians) and Creole' (2009: 22-23).

computer penetration in homes in Mayotte was 7.4% in 2002 and 17.2% in 2007.² This was a modest increase over five years, all the more so when we note that the figures for the same date (2007), are 38.6% in La Réunion and 55.7 % in Metropolitan France. Even if private areas (businesses), public spaces (schools in particular) and some internet cafés gave people an opportunity to use computers this left considerable shortcomings in this area. And the availability of a computer was not the same as the possibility of connecting to the Internet.

A study by Akamai,³ summarized on their website,⁴ ranked Mayotte as last in the world in terms of Internet accessibility, with the slowest connection speed in the world, averaging 43 kilobits/second! As an indication of the enormity of this figure, the average speed worldwide was 1.7 megabits/second, which is almost 40 000 faster than in Mayotte! Another indication is that minimum broadband speed was 512 kilobits/second with several minutes required just for a web page to display... if it ever did. Broadband was planned for late 2011 after work started in April 2010, linking Madagascar to Mayotte via an undersea cable (called Lion II) which already serves La Réunion and Mauritius. The contractor (Orange and a number of partners) claimed that this optic fibre link would offer a connection speed of up to 1.3 terabits/second but acknowledged that it something like 20 gigabits/second would be more realistic.⁵ After a further delay and while the figures do not match these forecasts, the cable has been operational since June 2012). This is a real revolution which gives the 15,000 homes⁶ in Mayotte with a landline allowing for broadband to browse the Internet freely ... providing they have a computer and a contract. After this, the arrival of broadband should also make possible the development of Wi-Fi and promote communication of all kinds (CMC as well as CMT) until there is efficient 3G.

CMT and penetration rate

According to the *Autorité de Régulation des Communications Electroniques et des Postes* (Arcep, Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Postal Services), the Réunion-Mayotte zone had over one million active mobiles phones (1.077 million to be precise) in 2010. Of these phones, 52% were on postpay contracts as against 48% pay-as-you-go.⁷ This detail is of some importance as contracts normally include, along with a number of call minutes, unlimited texting.⁸ This is not true of pay-as-you-go. Data from Arcep also reveals that while the mobile phone penetration rate in Mayotte is 97% (again in 2010), 70% of phones use the pay-as-you-go system. The result of this consumer behaviour is that the vast

² Source: INSEE Survey 2007.

³ The Akamai company specializes in web application acceleration and performance management, streaming media services, and content delivery.

⁴ At http://www.akamai.com/html/about/press/releases/2011/press_042611.html where the full 'State of the Internet' report may be downloaded.

⁵ 20 gigabits equate to 20 000 000 kilobits (approximately) making the Internet connection in Mayotte 465,000 times faster!

⁶ Source: Arcep.

⁷ Pay-as-you-go involves the user buying a topup card each whenever their phone credit is used up. Topup cards are more expensive than a contract (billed at the end of the month, the postpay system) but allow consumption to be more closely monitored. Again as a matter of information, of the 62.6 million active phones in Metropolitan France, 45.2 millions are on contract as against 17.4 on pay-as-you-go.

⁸ This type of contract is relatively new in this zone, being offered for the first time in November 2007 in La Réunion.

majority of Mahorese pay for each text sent. This no doubt explains that the figures on numbers of texts sent per active phone in this zone are primarily from La Réunion. So it is that each month more texts are sent in the Réunion-Mayotte zone than in Metropolitan France. In September 2010, 160 texts per active phone were sent in this zone as against 'only' 139 in Metropolitan France. This equates to a cumulative total for the same zone of over 1.2 billion texts for 2010.⁹ Electronic writing is therefore a widespread practice (despite what is stated above) and coexists with a more classic use: voice calling. CMT in Mayotte is generally limited to these two uses.

As with Internet broadband, Mayotte is faced with a technological deficit and while 2G mobile phones are fully functional, 3G is far from being a reality. Planning however started in 2002 so that 3G was scheduled on the island for late 2008. A new public consultation by Arcep was launched in July 2010. This led to the announcement that the process it started 'has allowed the launch of the third generation of mobile networks (UMTS) overseas, giving overseas users access to this new generation of mobile communication systems just as in Metropolitan France.'¹⁰ In the course of the previous consultation, Arcep had recalled the obligations imposed on the operators concerned: covering 90% of the population by 2013; 'providing telephone service, Internet access, data transmission at a minimum of 384 kbps and, if standards allow, geolocalization.'¹¹ While the three operators in the zone (namely Orange Réunion, SFR and Outremer Télécom) have been authorized to use the 2.1 Ghz wavelength required for 3G deployment since 2008, the financial costs, the obligations imposed on them and the consumer behaviour explained above leave them clearly reluctant. An appendix to the latest Arcep public consultation reveals that none of the three operators has positioned itself for (or been awarded) a 2.1 GHz wavelength. This will not prevent the Mahorese for taking advantage of some 3G features, but will make use comparable to that in other overseas departments and communities or Metropolitan France impossible. Mobile Internet is an illusion for the moment for example.

Summary

While Mayotte has come some of the way towards full use of ICTs, much remains to be done for electronic communication practices to develop (both from the point of view of CMC and CMT). The arrival of broadband will change the life and digital behaviour of the Mahorese and no doubt develop island's market. We can suppose that the low computer penetration rate in particular is explained by the near impossibility of connecting to the Internet. A high connection speed and improved reliability will perhaps make a difference and help the island to combat its digital isolation. This will no doubt have repercussions on many levels of Mahorese society. This will also apply to TMCs even if an important stage (for development of electronic practices) is the transformation of mobile phone offerings. Operators therefore have a major role to play just like the younger generation with their appetite for these little electronic messages that can be sent to whoever you want wherever you are and when you want...

9 Over 25 billion texts were sent in Metropolitan France over the same period (excluding overseas departments and territories).

10 http://www.arcep.fr/uploads/tx_gspublication/consult-umts-900-dom-juil10.pdf - Page 6.

11 http://www.arcep.fr/uploads/tx_gspublication/consult-umts-dom-mai07.pdf - Page 17.

Texting – a widespread practice

No one had predicted the worldwide success of texting. These little messages play a large part in the success of the mobile phone industry and are now an essential daily communication tool for a huge number of men and women. What is the charm they exert over users? There are many explanations and, quite apart from the practical, economic and intimate aspect (a point to be discussed), this article will rather highlight the ludic (and identity-asserting) dimension via the text writing specificities which allow users/writers to take full ownership of the writing process.

Specificities of text writing

The electronic writing practice of texting leads all users to play with language and/or modify it. The reasons are simple and have often been explained. They mainly involve managing time,¹² technical¹³ and financial constraints. The last two tend to disappear as the actors in the field (phone manufacturers and mobile operators) make efforts to mitigate them: phones become more ergonomic and unlimited texting offers are becoming standard despite what we have stated to be the case in Mayotte. So economizing on letters in a text is no longer of interest as the cost is no greater if the writer goes beyond the once fateful 160 character cap. More and more informants, from among the biggest consumers of texts (the famous Messenger Generation that we have described elsewhere: Jacob & Liénard 2009), admit that they use intuitive writing: keying using predictive text so that typing in the first letters of a word an on-board program which gives the writer the final choice from among a small list of words. All this will no doubt affect electronic text writing in the years to come. We will perhaps see an evolution of the practice even if the ludic and identity-asserting dimensions also come into play in the way in which some writers modify language. With these caveats and warnings in mind, we can proceed by noting that text writing has formal characteristics.

A number of researchers have proposed typologies to describe writing procedures commonly used in this context. Panckhurst, in a recent article (2009), summarizes these typologies and proposes another in her turn. This useful summary identifies five typologies¹⁴ that we show in the table 1 below.¹⁵

Anis, who proposes the densest typology, as the semi-linguist he was, also specifies that text writing is characterized by its heterogeneity (in that writers frequently combine several procedures), a certain polysemy (one spelling may refer to a number of signs and it is up to the receiver to decode and construct the meaning from the context) and a common variation (one sign may be transcribed in a variety of different ways). In addition to these very important details which are not evident in the succession of typologies, Panckhurst (2009: 38) gives a number of syntactic characteristics that we of course endorse. She explains that text writing is most often organized

12 Texters rarely have 'the time' for writing which is often done in places not suited to complex encoding: public transport, public areas, at the same time as other activities ...

13 The screen and keypad are the two main technical constraints.

14 The works or articles where these typologies appear are listed in the bibliography but we state here that the typology that we present dates from 2005 (Liénard, 2005a) and not 2007 as stated by Panckhurst. We had presented this typology at the Congress organized by J. Anis at the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie de Paris: *Le SMS : enjeux linguistiques, sociaux et culturels*. In a 2007 article (Liénard, 2007), we merely refined the typology in question in the light of new corpus analyses.

15 We are not defining all the procedures and refer to the articles in question with the exception of Panckhurst who gives this summary of typologies so as to better justify her own.

around the use of the present of the indicative, deictic words¹⁶ and preference for noun forms.¹⁷ She is basing her formulation on a diachronic study of electronic writing, including all genres of communication. Fairon et al. complement it by incorporating two equally interesting aspects that they refer to as *discourse* (which are those bursts of answers that follow on so often from multiple questions) and *variety of forms*. The latter refers to the lexical richness and creativity found everywhere in this type of writing creating a confusion of genres that no one has yet ‘elucidated.’

Anis 2004	Liénard 2005	Fairon & al. 2006	Véronis & al. 2006	Panckhurst 2009
Graphic Reduction	Abbreviation	Phonetization	Phonetic spelling	Phonetized substitution ¹⁸
Phonetic reduction	Truncation	Rebus	Consonantal skeleton	Graphic substitution ¹⁹
Consonantal skeleton	Elision of semiological elements	Phonetic spelling	Rebus	Phonetic reduction ²⁰
Syllabogram and rebus	Initialisms	Graphic phenomenon	Truncation	Graphic reduction ²¹
(para)logo-gram	Borrowing	Icon and symbol	Initialism	Graphic deletion ²²
Graphic expansion	Semiophonological notation	Lexical phenomenon	Graphic expansion	Augmentation ²³
Truncation	Compression of characters	Morphosyntax	Word agglutination	
Anglicism	Emoticon	Syntax		
Back slang (<i>verlan</i>)	Repetition of graphemes			
Onomatopoeia				

Table 1.

16 These deictic words take the form of personal pronouns: usually the first and second person singular.

17 At the expense of verbs and even more of adjectives and adverbs.

18 Three types of phonetized substitutions according to the author which correspond overall to the semiophonological notations described by us elsewhere (Liénard, 2005, 2007). An interesting aspect of the proposal is the way it takes *Variation* as the third type of substitution giving as an example *bisou* which can be turned into *bizoo*.

19 By graphic substitution, Panckhurst refers to what we call elision of semiological elements to which she adds the replacement of some characters by symbols, icons or special characters.

20 Truncations (by apocope or aphaeresis), initialisms and acronyms are phonetized reductions. Panckhurst adds, as with the previous categories, *Variation* (this time giving as an example *ui* for *oui* or *i* for *il*).

21 Graphic reductions, a category in which truncations do not appear, groups together deleted mute word endings and weak *es* (which we choose to regard as types of truncations). Among them she includes abbreviations, truncations by internal aphaeresis and compression of characters (which she refers to as agglutinations).

22 Graphic deletions correspond to what we call elisions of semiological elements (disappearance of typography, punctuation and diacritics).

23 The Augmentation category covers emoticons, repetitions of graphemes (punctuation, added or repeated characters) and onomatopoeias... a procedure which is clearly lacking in our typology.

This was the first idea of Anis who liked to term text language *parlécrit* ('spokenwritten'). With the possible exception of Gadet (2008), there would seem to be a consensus over regarding text writing as a hybrid form even if Panckhurst says that: 'MED (*mediated electronic discourse*) may resemble the oral or the written, varying according to the communication tool used (...) with chat appearing to be a more "oral" communication tool, while forums and email seem to be closer to a more "written" tool' (2009: 39). While accepting that in text writing situations, neology and neography favour the presence of 'phenomena including orality, the written and the link between the two,' she seems to place greater importance on the type of mode of communication as a factor influencing writing practice. We are partly in agreement with her because this makes it possible to point to the primary difficulty which is to categorize a writing practice which is by definition unstable, whose essence derives from its lexical creativity and variety. Let us put matters in perspective by recalling that the aim of the typologies is not to give an exhaustive description of all ways of speaking (or writing) by text but to fix, synchronically, usages which reveal the emergence of a language variety. Following Fairon et al. or Panckhurst, we see text language as a simple variety of the electronic language which concerns us: French. And there coexist on the networks (in both CMC and CMT) different varieties of electronic French depending on the specific objectives of the texters. We mean that we are not certain that the type of communication tools used by a texter at a given time has such a great influence on the 'quality' of the language, on the choice of a variety of language at the expense of another. Rather it is much more the relationship with the other, how they relate to the other person being called (usually belonging to a circle of friends or loved ones (Rivière 2002) as their details are in the contact list) that will make the texter opt to use certain graphic forms. These forms will allow the construction or confirmation of a close relationship through what some see as familiarity through writing. As ultimately what really disturbs its detractors in text language,²⁴ once the classic argument of mistreatment of language is set aside? It is no doubt this new form of exchange, of calling, informal communication which denies or confounds most of the interactional rituals on which society has constructed itself in its way of always seeing and taking a stance in relation to the other. This other to whom it is now possible to speak immediately without being present²⁵ and on whom a vision of the world is imposed through a style of writing or calling. A text is a call sent out during a conversation in which the recipient might possibly be engaged, and who, ever more frequently breaks it off to read this message, so transgressing also, almost unconsciously, the basic rules of the face-to-face exchange. A call which is characterized by there often being no greeting: the texter no longer opens or closes the message and so disregards the interactional basics. Panckhurst's findings follow this line: she gives an account

24 Cougnon and Ledegen (2008), following the same line of argument, prefer to opt for Panckhurst's proposal (2007) and to speak of *écrit SMS* (written text production) which they all write as: *e-sms* (Panckhurst even speaks of *écriture SMS* (text writing) and not *écrit SMS*). Cougnon and Ledegen add, to justify this term: '(...) in terms of the medium, this is a written production which is intended for our vision (and not an oral production that is taken in by our hearing).' This comment is genuinely interesting and follows the line taken elsewhere by Klinkenberg (2009). We will undoubtedly return to this issue in other research. To return to *e-sms* as in our view, the proposal has a limitation in the polysemy of the term. For many the connotation will be 'web text,' as e-regularly refers to the Internet: e-learning, e-marketing, etc...).

25 The telephone has long made it possible to *speak immediately without being present* but still fits in a traditional dialogue situation: tone, intonations, vocal identity are all features aiding a concrete understanding of the other and what is being said.

of this new arrangement, these new interactional rituals when she points out two extralinguistic dimensions that are a feature of electronic communication: the relational and the communication situation. Its varieties are looser (or more specialized and expressive) and indicate an outburst, a reaction, a furtive statement made by a texter to a recipient on intimate terms.

Apart from the issue of description (and hence of typologies), the thoughts above are, in our view, at the heart of the debate. They are intended to give a better understanding of what this variety of electronic French represents for texters using it, again in order to achieve specific objectives. Such a line of argument follows involves a sociopragmatic perspective which sees saying as doing as understood by Austin and Searle. We shall show, through an analysis of the pre-corpus of texts from Mayotte, that the said can carry a far greater meaning than might be imagined from the written, notwithstanding Cassaganaud's claims.

Texting in Mayotte

Cassaganaud, in her work on the young people of Mayotte, devotes a whole chapter to texting: *Chapitre X : Le SMS, nouveau langage de Mayotte ?* (Chapter X – the text, a new language in Mayotte?) (2010: 13). These questions appear all the more interesting especially when followed up by other major mobile phone ICT issues:

Will it strengthen social links by renewing forms of sociability and socialization or lead to a cultural impoverishment of those who become accustomed, for example, to the simplified language of texts? What new representations of French and the local languages are created by mobiles, given that texts have become the new language of Mayotte and that, for adolescents, they are taking the place of love letters? (545)

Let us ignore this last comment as while texts may strengthen links of intimacy, shorten distances and allow a connection to the other (whatever the nature of our relationship with this other), it is hard to discern in them, with their lexical and syntactic poverty, the quality of a love letter.²⁶ It can recall the texter's presence, existence or, possibly, their feelings to the beloved, but most often the approach is more playful than deeply emotional.²⁷ Instead we shall briefly discuss two of the author's other proposals with regard to texting practice in Mayotte: the first concern the alleged *cultural impoverishment* and the second deals with *new representations of French and the local languages*. Cassaganaud claims that texting has become the new language of Mayotte, confirming our statistical explanations above. This is therefore a recognition that the practice is widespread in Mayotte, that texters (the young in particular) have never made so much use of written French. So is it a real cultural impoverishment to write as never before? May it not be that the practice of writing a language, whatever the quality, is a bridge to a more expert and more standardized practice? In the light of the complex relationship many young Mahorese with education, can we not look at these writing practices from another perspective than that of proper usage of the fine French Language? This is a wide-ranging question closely linked to that of *new representations of French and the local languages*. Writing in French without the quality of the French being challenged (and even with permission to treat it roughly, badly) makes for a gradual shift of this language

²⁶ Cassaganaud takes the same approach when quoting Ivanova (1999 – Master's Dissertation IC – Paris VIII) on love letters: 'It is a genre where ordinary writing comes close to Belles Lettres, where it feeds on literary ambition' (550). We are positing that texts, and more specifically here amorous and/or erotic texts, only rarely have such ambitions...

²⁷ See on this topic V. Lane: *Textos in love* (2011, Editions Bruno Leprince) particularly for the corpus of love/erotic texts presented by the author.

towards vernacular status. It becomes an everyday, intimate, language that texters use to communicate with those close to them (family, friends, lovers). With its vehicular dimension it keeps its practical objective; it takes on a vernacular dimension by entering a writer's personal (digital) intimacy and identity. This 'new' status, this new representation of language suddenly on equal terms with the local languages may, in our view, lead to a genuine encounter of all these languages (through the practice of texting). As we have shown elsewhere,²⁸ it is undeniable that such electronic usages favour language contacts. We would posit that Mahorese texters, all of whom are in a multilingual situation, will in their electronic writing, and so in their texts, mix the languages which they use. We would also posit that the difficulties in writing French (educational level) or local languages (primarily oral and with no alphabetic standardization) will be somewhat neutralized in an electronic writing situation. We would refine this however by recalling that, in the interviews carried out by Cassagnaud for her survey, all informants stated that they wrote their texts first of all in French. Here we give a transcription of a passage illustrating this (562):

<i>Josy</i>	(Rires) <i>et est-ce que tu envoies des SMS (pause) des textos ?</i>	(Laughter) and do you send texts?
<i>Rama</i>	<i>Oui (pause) des textos (pause) oui (longue pause)</i>	Yes (pause) texts (pause) yes (long pause)
<i>Josy</i>	<i>Qu'aux filles ?</i>	Just to girls?
<i>Rama</i>	<i>Non (pause) aux filles (pause) aux amis:: (pause) en français (longue pause)</i>	No (pause) to girls (pause) to friends:: (pause) in French
<i>Josy</i>	<i>Et pourquoi pas en shimaoré ? ou en kibushi ?</i>	And why not in Shimaore? or in Kibushi?
<i>Rama</i>	<i>C'est très difficile (pause) c'est long en plus (pause) et tu dois réfléchir beaucoup (longue pause) et en français c'est plus facile (pause) tu sais lire (pause) tu sais écrire (pause) c'est plus facile (longue pause)</i>	It's very hard (pause) and it takes time as well (pause) and you have to think about it a lot (long pause) and in French it's easier (pause) you can read (pause) you can write (pause) it's easier (long pause) ²⁹

Texting is an immediate, synchronic practice. So keying time (as a time constraint) along with the time spent encoding (cognitive processing of the message to be typed in) means that texters may by default lean towards French,³⁰ being the language over which they believe they have a degree of expertise in writing. This is an important nuance but does not call into question the hypotheses set out above and that, ultimately, an analysis of a corpus of Mahorese texts can confirm or disprove.

Summary

The famous language of texting comes about both through the technical characteristics of the ICTs that mediate them and a limited number of writing procedures

28 See Laroussi and Liénard (2008) on this point as well as Ledegen (2008).

29 Others say: '(...) when it's between friends (laughter) (pause) I do it in Kibushi (pause) it's spontaneous (pause) yeah (pause) that's the way it is (pause) that's the way it works (pause) but it can be in French too (pause)' (569).

30 We would stress that this 'choice' is not a genuine one. Let us repeat that it is *default* choice because, once again, there are few Mahorese with expertise in writing local languages that have little or no writing tradition.

(varying according to the typologies) as they undergo variation. This texting language can achieve a variety of objectives (perlocutionary effects intended and actually achieved) and these objectives will influence the way in which texters construct electronic messages, texts. Cassagnaud uses a set of interviews to claim that in Mayotte, young people who use mostly texts for communicating (as they do everywhere in the world) use French above all to construct these messages. As it is a ludic writing practice (that is also able to make a strong assertion of identity), we hypothesize that local languages may come into play more than informants are willing to say, or admit.

Analysis of the corpus

We use the term corpus but this is actually a pre-corpus in that we see it as an opportunity to consider how a large corpus of texts from Mayotte might be processed. To do so, we would need to refine the collection methodology for the texts which is always a delicate procedure to draw up. Collection was handled by colleagues at the CEFMS (*Centre des Etudes et de Formation Supérieure de Mayotte*, a training and education centre). They randomly called students in order to negotiate a copy of the texts that they agreed to provide for this research in return for guaranteed anonymity. 88 texts (appearing in the appendix) were collected in this way, which cannot be representative of Mahorese texting practice but which should allow us nonetheless to formulate some observations. They are based on an analysis carried out using our typology of electronic writing procedures.

First notes: nothing new under the sun

First of all, we note that, as with the other corpora we have been able to work on,³¹ the process of simplifying the language (which for us covers the first four procedures: abbreviation, truncation, elision of semiological elements and initialism) is widely represented. It is even present in all the texts collected and we can randomly cite:³²

SMS 19 G pa pu taplé. (14)

Je n'ai pas pu t'appeler. (25) [I couldn't call you]

SMS 21 Kesk ta o just ? (16)

Qu'est ce que tu as au juste ? (30) [So what's the matter with you?]

SMS84 J ten supli jtéméré pr tte la vi j te feré ma grde dam. (55)

Je t'en supplie, je t'aimerai pour toute la vie. Je te ferai ma grande dame. (76) [I beg you, I'll love you my whole life long. I'll make you my great lady]

While we find no initialisms in these examples, the three other procedures are present with abbreviations (*te* for *toute* or *grde* for *grande*), truncations (*pa* for *pas* or *supli* for *supplie*) and many elisions (punctuation marks, diacritics, articles, adverbs...). Other texts make use of these same procedures and we can only pick out their particularities:³³

31 See Liénard (2007, 2005, 2004).

32 We give the texts as they were transcribed by those carrying out the survey, followed by 'translations' into standard French and English. The figure in brackets at the end of the text and its standard French version is the number of presses required for keying in the message on a phone with a standard keypad. Instruction had been given to those carrying out the survey to record the type of phone used. Not a single smartphone was noted (which have keyboards which remove the issue of the number of presses and savings of time and effort through these texting procedures).

33 We use bold type for the usages that we wish to highlight here.

SMS59 Bsr.excuz g pa d **cmt** a te rndr mé jte di jsor pa avc **lu.2+** on ne parl 2cekon c pa. (82)

Bonsoir. Excuse je n'ai pas de compte à te rendre mais je te dis que je ne sors pas avec lui. De plus, on ne parle pas de ce que l'on ne sait pas. (146) [Evening. Sorry I've no need to give you any explanations but I can tell you I'm not going out with him. And you don't talk about things you know nothing about]

SMS70 Je **su** ds ltaco jtapel d k jseré arivé ok. (41)

Je suis dans un tacot. Je t'appelle dès que je serai arrivé. D'accord. (70) [I'm in a car. I'll call you when I get there. OK]

SMS74 J 2neré lé sou a él é **pu** el te lé filra. (40)

Je donnerai les sous à elle et puis elle te les filera. (55) [I'll give her the money and she'll pass it on to you]

The abbreviation *cmt* for *compte* is worth noting. We have never encountered a form like this which raises a decoding problem (the recipient would be more inclined to think of *comment*). Because of its rarity we advance the idea of variation (or even keying error) to justify it.³⁴ The abbreviation *rndr* is also very interesting but would rather look more closely at another simplification procedure, truncation. It is noteworthy that it is found frequently in such a small corpus. This is the deletion of the grapheme *i* in final position: *lu* for *lui*, *su* for *suis* or *pu* for *puis*.³⁵ We shall not go so far as to advance that the semi-vowel [ui] is neutralised in this corpus, for two basic reasons. Firstly because the corpus is not representative; secondly because we twice find this semi-vowel spelt 'correctly' (SMS 24 and 65): *nuit* for *nuit* and *enui* for *ennui*. We would however consider this truncation to be typical and its frequency may be an interesting line of enquiry in characterizing a variety of *Mahorese electronic French*. And it would appear not to be the only one...

An omnipresent specialization process

Our earlier research showed that the process of specialization, where present, was largely supplanted by the process of simplification. In this pre-corpus, there seems to be greater balance. We can note a large number of syllabic, bisyllabic and even total semi-phonological notations! Figure (1) below is a perfect illustration of this.³⁶

We note 7 NSP semi-phonological notations and two word compressions (*kon* pour *qu'on* and *jte* for *je te*) compared with 10 procedures aimed at simplifying writing words. And this tendency is found in the majority of the texts in the corpus. This is truly remarkable especially as all the specialization procedures are present. Even the *Borrowing* procedure is widely represented. A first category strictly matches the definition that we propose and is manifested by borrowings from English (*i love you, kiss, week...*) or Arabic (*inchallah*). A second category covers borrowings from local languages and especially from Shimaore. If we pick these out it is because it more a case of language contacts than of borrowings: texters are not making use of a term in a foreign language but are incorporating formulas from local (and first) languages or are writing the texts completely in these languages as is the case in the following examples:

34 (Sociolinguistic) variation also justifies the presence of *tacot* for *voiture*...

35 We shall restrict ourselves to these three examples but this is one of several instances of this truncation: Texts 3, 22, 24, 30, 35, 40, 43, 47, 49, 50, 59, 61, 70, 71, 74, 79, 80, 85, 87, 88. So we find 25 cases of this truncation with forms like *su* for *suis*, *pu/puz* for *puis/puisse(s)*, *dpu* for *depuis*, *lu* for *lui* or, more rarely, *menu* for *m'enuie* and *ajdu* for *aujourd'hui*.

36 For space considerations, semi-phonological notations are sometimes abbreviated to SPN and Elision of semiological elements to ESE.

- SMS7 Ça va **mogné wahayiri** 1 peu fatigué mé la jrné pace ka mem. Gté fé d gro calin. (77)
Ça va homme de bien, un peu fatigué mais la journée passe quand même. Je te fais de gros câlins. (102) [I'm fine man, a bit tired but the day is going by all the same. Big hugs from me.]
- SMS20 Slit moi sava tte mé felicatio pr ta sœur alr kom sa tu cherch du boulo si ten trouv tu cherchera oci pr moi **bé madza tsiléméwa ousoma**. Pac bone soiré biz. (154)
Salut. Moi, ça va. Toutes mes félicitations pour ta sœur. Alors comme cela, tu cherches du boulot. Si tu en trouves, tu chercheras aussi pour moi car je suis fatigué d'étudier. Passe(z) une bonne soirée. Bises. (211) [Hi, I'm fine. Many congratulations over your sister. So you're looking for a job. If you find one, look for me too as I'm tired of studying. Have a good evening. xxx]
- SMS81 **Jouwaw amba [anchoki] yangu déwawé gnadzo zay roho zangu...wawé dé uliyi rohoni hangu...** (83)
Tu sais [**anchoki**],³⁷ c'est toi le bien aimé de mon cœur, c'est toi qui est dans mon cœur. (84) [You know [**anchoki**], you're my heart's beloved, it's you that's in my heart.]

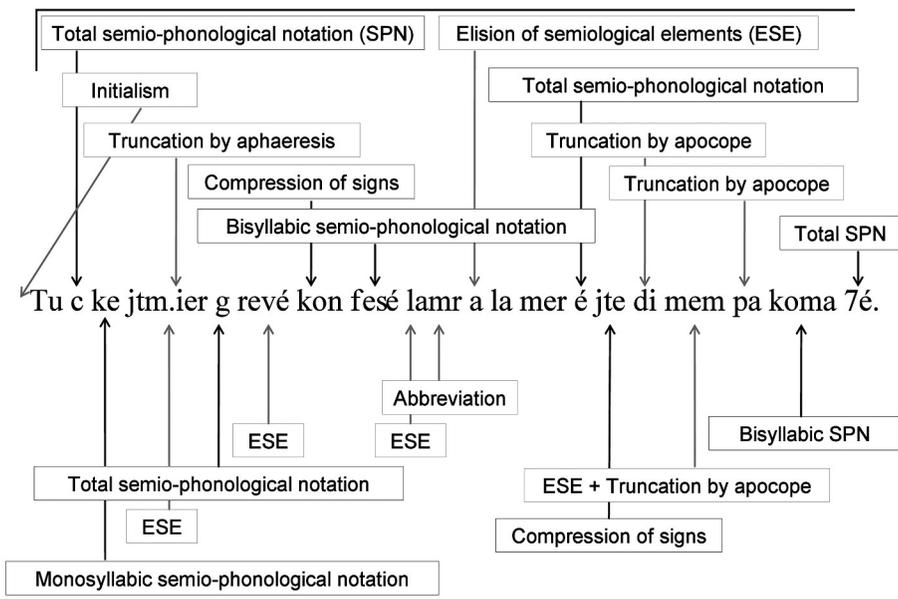


Fig. 1.

This last example is very interesting. It is the only one in the pre-corpus entirely in Shimaore, and its presence there prompts a somewhat more nuanced approach to Cassagnaud's conclusions. While, as she claims, texting is used to achieve perlocutory effects in sentimental matters above all, this does not always involve messages in French, as is proved by this Text 81. Moreover Shimaore-speaking informants called on for the translation encountered real difficulties, both over identifying the linguistic signs and over interpreting the message. In doing so they

37 Our informants were unable to translate [anchoki]. They therefore suppose that it is a name or nickname given by the texter to the recipient of the message.

gave evidence of its poetic dimension while highlighting the fact that oral command of this language is already remarkable and highly prized in Mayotte, and writing it even more so; by invoking alterity in this way, there is more to what the texter says than what is actually written. So we are in this way completely immersed in the process of specialization (and expressivity) to the extent that all the diacritics are noted in this language. The aim is no longer to simplify the practice but to use the local language as an identity marker for the interaction and relation embarked on. Unless this is merely a game played with alterity in which case only the ludic dimension is required to explain it. Only interviews with these texters could allow us to draw conclusions. At this stage of our work, we can only outline possible interpretations.

Summary

As in most of our corpora, there are many simplification procedures in Mahorese texts. Proportionally they are roughly as many as for specialization procedures which are also widely represented. We should note some expressivity markers not conveyed by emoticons or repetitions of graphemes essentially by playing with spelling. We are not incorporating this in the typology that we are putting forward and this could well be an error deserving correction. In our defence, we would say that we have never encountered any in our corpora. There are some in this one and, to highlight a term, to ‘yell’ a word texters put the sign in capitals. Examples we can cite are Text 57: BIZ, Text 83 BIG BIZ and Text 87 ANRAFA. Apart from this, what we would consider to be the real discovery, what is truly new, is the fact that only a minority of signs is unaltered, not transformed by the texters. Of the 8,920 linguistic signs making up the corpus, only 270 are correctly entered, undergoing no alteration! This accounts for only 3% of the linguistic signs complying with the lexical and grammatical rules of French. None of our text corpora produces results of this kind. What lessons are to be drawn and what directions open up in the light of these results?

Conclusion

There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. First of all, as we have explained above, while Mayotte is a digital enclave, texting is an electronic practice that is as popular as elsewhere in the world. Taking up the Cassagnaud’s theme, love is central for these texters. These two parameters may go some way in accounting for the richness and lexical creativity found because:

- very regular practice leads to the development of a text-writing expertise and a technological dexterity (when typing in the message) which undoubtedly influence the form of the messages;
- the aim (the perlocutory effects sought) is to create strong links, reduce distance by engaging in real dialogues with an emotional charge leading texters to play with language and languages;
- this expressive and ludic dimension should be correlated with a practical approach: the texts collected are long (compared with the length of those collected in other corpora) and texters are no doubt faced with the temporal constraint of keying in messages.

But these are ‘classic’ comments. The specificity of this corpus guides us towards other paths that may be used as working hypotheses for collecting and

analysing future Mahorese text corpora. The first path involves the patterns of telephone use in Mayotte. We mentioned that pay-as-you-go, buying cards for call minutes and/or a limited number of texts, was a widespread practice on the island.³⁸ Operators do not find this type of consumption sufficiently profitable. Offerings are therefore restricted and the latest telephones are not included: smartphones that are so highly prized by young people in Metropolitan France are rare in Mayotte. These phones undoubtedly make keying in messages easier as they have proper keyboards. This is not the case of older generation phones (with 10 keys for all graphemes) that are used by the majority of young Mahorese. This, along with the low use of predictive texting, as admitted by our informants themselves, may again in part explain why texters have recourse to the process of specialization almost by default. We mean that in our earlier corpora, use of the procedures involved in this process was justified by the need and wish to place an identity marker on discourse (Liénard 2005, 2006). This time, we would claim that the linguistic lacuna among texters may be a better explanation of this overuse of semiophonological notations and other sign compressions (however language contacts noted will be viewed from this perspective of identity). So texters will tend towards writing French phonetically to compensate for their lack of lexical and grammatical knowledge/skill in the language. The opposite reasoning may also be true: is it not this type of electronic writing which leads young Mahorese to mistreat French to such a degree? These questions are matter for further research on electronic writing and ultimately the confirmation of these tentative interpretations depends on the collection of a corpus of some size and interviews with the texters. This will make it possible to determine if, as seems apparent, we may speak of a variety of Mahorese electronic French.

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38 This is no mere pattern: GDP/habitant in Mayotte is one of the lowest in the world and, logically enough, mobile phone costs are prohibitive for many.

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Appendix

1	J'tm, jtador i love mi amort a ou si jte di tou sa c parske ta une grade place ds mn cœur. Kiss
2	Pire cochmar sache ke je t'aimeré pr tjr kan tu ora 2la pén noubli pa ke je seré tjr la pr tékouté te konsélé trov é dé solution je priéré tjr pourke ntr amitié dur.
3	Té vrma bo jsu ravi 2vr un bogs cm toi.
4	Je te souhét joyeu st valent1 ke dieu vs done la joi pé bnheur lamour ke d bn choz kil réaliz vos rev lé + cher é kil vs protég 2 tt malhr.

5	Amine groz biz toi é tn cher amr. Toi ta 2 la chnz en amr mé moi no.
6	Toi té 1vrai merveil kon trve pa n1port ou é ossi 1hom 2kalité si joz dir ki me fé tourné la têt
7	Ça va mogné wahayiri 1peu fatigué mé la jrné pace ka mem. Gté fé d gro calin.
8	Ok merci bocou mn cane a sucz bizou a toi choupinet jtm bocou é tu mren fou.
9	Pa de souci di a ta famiy ke jvien avc une dote é rien dotr. Et il ns mari.... Dacor ?
10	Vnir comen ?
11	Jc pa coma fair car en + on se voit pas.
12	G compri ke tu men veu mé sach ke jtaim sincermen.
13	Tu te retien é te mefi de moi alrs parfoi du mal a le compren.
14	Tu vi pr le pasé et tu reni le presen.
15	Slt bb d'amr sava bil alr tu pense tjr a mwa wami mahoukou namitsana tsissilala tsissiwona wanguina dévo wanimégna piya mafikira dan mo roho tu vivra tjr ds mo dzobo tu restera tjr alr wami na wawé c est pr la vi sourayaho dé y chido yangou ntr coupl est deja décidé o paradi passé un agréabl jrné nissou houvendza ta chahoula tsi chondro yla mana dzina laho lissinikourassa.
16	Excuz moi m jté tre tre pri duran la jrné jpa eu ok1 moma 2 repli.
17	Prkoi tu derangé lo1 2la.
18	Loin 2la gde ke t.
19	G pa pu taplé.
20	Slt moi sava tte mé feliciatio pr ta sœur alr kom sa tu cherch du boulo si ten trouv tu cherchera oci pr moi bé madza tsiléméwa ousoma. Pac bone soiré biz.
21	Kesk ta o just ?
22	Moi je menu car je né person a ki parlé....jespr k tu ten sortira je tien for a toi majgr tou.
23	Ma puz jespr ke ts va bil- tu m'mank énormemmt.
24	Stp n m lése pa souffrir parck jtm dtou mon keur e oublé ts lé kon se fé e contuné ntr rlation cm dpar e jt souhét bn nuit e bn rev e jtm e j v fr ma rest d ma vi avc toi m pa kelk1 dotr e kan jrflechir ts lé bn momen kon avé ensembl cela ke j mal en regardan ke tu ma motré d truk ke j n jamé vu ni fr surtu kan jtadmir tn cor sa mfé du bil é c prcela k jsu jalou d toi e dpu ma nésanz j né jamùé vu ceke tuport en toi e jte 2mad 2me pardoné stp.
25	Slt ma puz, jesper ke sava moi sava trankil.Dsl mé ché moinya pa d encr Kiss.
26	J regret 2 tavr conu prkoi Dieu a fé ke j croise tn chem1.
27	C metna kr j coné ta vrai personnalité.
28	Nn jne finiré pa avc toi tan ku tu n'aretera pa 2 m'acusé ou 2 m roproch é ds chse ke g jmé pensé.
29	E le credi c est pa tn pb.
30	Ske tu ne pig pa dan tou sa c ke jlué parlé 2 chaouki é tu c chao nou a montré sk'il fé. Il nou disé jtrvl ché moi obou du cpte il me di k'il na ri1 fé. C moi ki a fourni tt ls tach ke javé a fer avc lu.

31	Sl't mwa jvé b1 & jlesper osi pr toi. Voilà mn ad.
32	Alé miss dja o li? Jspr q tt s pass b1. sino jt souhét 2pasé 1 week en plein form santé & fierté.
33	Avc tt mes respect jt di Peace & Love.
34	Tu a été alé o cité ? pr toi sasa ? tu peu fer ce k tu veu 2 mn ker le lancé le torturé le brulé m'fé etention tu é a l'intérieur bn jrné boté biz.
35	Exucuz.jvé vnir mé jc pa tro akel h jvé arivé .la jsu dja 2bou.a+.
36	Merci bcp.jpensé pa sa 2toi.
37	Tmank bcp jte jur.jtm 2tte mo ame
38	Jvé pa tré bi1 mé pa tro grav c sa letr hum1.
39	Tu m'mank grav.Tu me mank grav.G k1 seul pensé vnir te rejoindr.
40	Jpensé pa ke jpouv' tfer 2lefé vu ke jsu k1 gamine.En tt ka jador jm sen fam kan jsu avc toi.Jtador
41	Bjr !jesper ke tu profit 2te vacnz malgré lfroi.Ici yari1 dneuv ou jc pa.En tt ka moi g hat davr t nvl.Tmank enormema.
42	Ne te prez pa .Jatendré cm dab.Biz .
43	Bjr mn amr tn absenz mtu te bezé me mank t pti carez.Jamé tu nsora cmbil jsu eperduma amruz 2toi .tu c g casé avc lu car jtm 2tt mo keur malgré ke jc ke sa ne durera pa mé jvoulé etr ri1 ke pr toi é c le ca.
44	Tu c ke jtm.ier g revé kon fesé lamr a la mer é jte di mem pa koma 7é.
45	Sl't !Ici sava bi1 apar ke jregret 1peu 2né pa etr parti avc vs ts.Jvoi kasima t ami tt ltan sr mmdzou.Tmank gravisine jte jur .groz biz.
46	Dimoi t marié san me doné d1vitation ?kel genr damitié avns ns.Jpensé etr ta meyeur ami.
47	2 7amr nétra 1mnd 2pé 2tendrez é 2cnfianz pr ke chak1 puz y trouvé sa plaz ds lkeur 2lotr san sucmbé a la trichri ki circul ds 7univer.Tu npeu jamé imaginé cmbil tm'mank.jté fé mavi mo am tt ceke g 2+ cher sr ter.jte done mo keur cm proméz mo am pr la fidélité é mo cor pr te rechofé.
48	Joyeu aniv ke 7ag tport santé pé serenité é armoni.soi heureu avc ceu ki tentour é ke tu trv 1bo boulo é 1tré bel fam avc d gro nichon é d groz féz.
49	Sl't copine alr comt va ?Bi1 jspr sinn bin cT pr te mnré ke jsu pa encor mor lol.A+
50	Tan ke le ter trnera ds mé vne tu culra tu a pri mn ker en otag jsu cm 1oizo encag té mn +bo payzag jnevi ke prtn imag c1évidence té ma seul chnce témn unik importance mn am apri consiance JTM.
51	Sl't miss sava merci di ta dja comencé tes cour é la té ou mana la jpar a mamdzou cicé possible on va ce voir léo.
52	Bjr cmt va ?bi1 dormi ?té prêt ?
53	Bjr mis sava exus si jte pa rpd hier kia sinon sabou sava meme moi jenvi 2te voir envoi moi ton num only haya bon journé base. Wami mchachi ! Tu lé +ke moi.ier ta reusi a menlevé ma gourmandiz.
54	Bjr vé bi1 é toi ? ri1 2bo a raconté !!just le vif souvenir d'l étreint rempli 2douceur é 2passion. Mé bra otour 2ta tail mé yeu é m cor ds le ti1. 1tourbillon 2plésir ki me

	nouri par ta bel silouèt vetu d' ltenrdres enivran.
55	Tu c bi1. ltruc ki va te fer mal.
56	Slt alr koi 2 9 a myte ? Jspr ktu va bi1 é ke t cour spass bi1, bin pr tfr 1pti cc. A+
57	Tu peu fer ceke tu veu 2 mn ker le lancé le torturé le brulé mé f attention tu é a lltérieur. Bn jrné boté BIZ
58	G + dcredi. il me rest ke d txto. si 1jr tu veu mvoir tu coné mo num. paz 1agréabl soiré.
59	Bsr. excuz g pa d cmt a te rndr mé jte di jsor pa avc lu. 2+ on ne parl 2cekon c pa.
60	Jvlé just t1 formé 2me resulta c tt.
61	Bsr ésay 2fer en sort prke jpu te parlé ce mecrdi.
62	Pr dir vré jvé pat ré bi1 mé c pa tro grav ? bne fl dweek.
63	Tu mparl 2koi ? Jc pa ceki mariv en tt ka tt ceke jc ke jtourn par on ce tan ci.
64	Jpaz 1movéz faz é c tré dur.
65	Bnjr b1 revélé jspr ke sava. chak jr ki se lev jtm davatag esayon 2sevoir léo b tum mnk tro g jé enui du visversa 2cek tumavé envoyé jtador bn matiné bizz.
66	Di c ok pr 2m1 aprm en sortn du boulo ?
67	Moi il ya pa k cel 2 2m1 si ct posibl joré émé kon se voyé ts lé js.
68	Tu c ke le mr é mor la on é o cimtier.
69	Ma bel jé hat kn seret coracor ds lendroi person k ns 2 lerest dieu seul le c fé bn rev mm ti keur.
70	Je su ds ltaco jtapel d k jseré arivé ok.
71	Té ma cheri repon moi stp, jfé jrné cntinu juska 15h je su o dpo kaweni je tembraz jpenz for a te tu m mank.
72	Ne tenfé pa g eu dsouci mé jsu vivan.
73	Tu viendra lé fer cz moi ou tu va lé avr cmt ?
74	J 2neré lé sou a él é pu el te lé filra.
75	Te dcevoir jipenz pa ke sa me traversera ds ma tet c vré ts ceke j t di jtador jéméré tan ke sa march pr ns 2 a 2m1.
76	Bnjr b1 revyé, il é areté joseré pa te trté com tu le pense jtm é jveu resté avc te pr 2bn ... j jamé eu l arier penc sr te ou te cnsdré com tul pens jtadr.
77	Tamal ou ?jesper k c grav ! jé bezoin dentendr ta voi avt 2 dormir.
78	Je peu taplé sr kel num ?
79	Je termine a 12h je feré posibl dy etr laba pluto k posibl pr kon puz se voir ichalah.
80	Sach k la ou tu sera je su tjr avc toi mn ker é ouver k pr te il ya k te ki ya pu entréé ts lé rest on fé k le parcourir je c ke jamé je pouré émé com jtm mon gran souhé c 2 vivr avc toi.
81	Jouwaw amba anchoki yangu déwawé gnadzo zay roho zangu...wawé dé uliyo rohoni hangu...
82	Il fo k tu sach k san te se gach malgré le tps ki pace jamé mn ker ne se lache a te je je m atach lamur prnd tt sa place.

83	R1 ni pers ne peu savr lamour k jé pr te mn ker é ouver k pr te ne me lès spa ds la solitud é linkietud...BIG BIZ
84	J ten supli jtémeré pr tte la vi j te feré ma grde dam.
85	Bnjr b1 reveyé jesper t envi fol 2 te voir ac la vi é simpl ds t yeu j lisé joi é foli Anrafa revin.
86	Bnjr b1 , je revé 2 sourir t c koi ojdu mn ker segn car j n pa pu te gard te prouvé cmb1 jtm, jtm pr léternité javé cru pvoir ts oublié mé j mé j m trmpé en moi t é resté gravé j t dmdé just 1 chnce.
87	Je n c pa kel miracl san j su encor vivan on m di k ts soubli avc le tps c du ven a koi ser dexisté si t né + a mé coté k fer ds la vi qd on a pa son am son espri ANRAFA j c plu ou jen su donon ns 1chanz bigg bizz.
88	Anraf jtm tro j su pré a prndr le risk avc te j n veu ni la ter ni le ciel k toi pers

French as a springboard for growth in Mayotte

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Studying the problems raised by the teaching of French or in French and the consequences it has in Mayotte, now a French department which, geographically and humanly speaking is part of the continent of Africa and/or the Indian Ocean but that the vagaries of history have linked to France, reveals the highly complex situation faced not only by the learners in question, in this case the young Mahorese, but also by the teachers who have the hard task of training young minds, those of the French citizens of Mayotte of today and tomorrow. The aim will be to share some questions, thoughts and proposals, from the viewpoint of a researcher who has travelled the highways and byways of education, first of all on Africa and the Indian Ocean where, since independence, there have been a number of experiments over the use of French and/or the national languages in school, with a varying degree of success, seeking an education system that could meet the requirements of development, and then in North America where most commonly learners of French have English, of course, as their mother tongue, but often Spanish, Chinese, Japanese etc. To what extent might the appropriate assimilation of all these experiences contribute to casting light on the current school situation in Mayotte, setting aside a number of possible past or ever-present pitfalls (Ki-Zerbo 2003: 7-15) and conceivably instigate, bring into being and shape what it is and may become?

This paper will therefore follow three lines of approach:

- (1) Relations between schools and development.
- (2) Demands on schools in a multilingual context.
- (3) Challenges and lines of research and a new vision for the schools of Mayotte.

Relations between schools and development

The question of the contribution to development to be made by schools is wide-ranging, always open, a sensitive one which points up the complexity of the problem and possibly challenges the analyses put forward, to gain a better grasp of the burning issue of the choice of teaching language(s).

Attention however must be paid to a number of points:

- The concept of development is very complex and is not to be confused with that of economic growth. There can be economic growth without development; for example, a rise in the prices of raw materials or agricultural products is all that is needed for growth.
- Development occurs when there is change in society, in political or economic life, even in family structure creating greater well being and better living conditions for people.

- Change is first and foremost brought about through individuals, their own representations of the world, the nature of how they are bound to others (family or social links). As an example, consider the rural school experiment started up in West Africa by Alfred Charton, Director of Education for French West Africa (A.O.F) from 1930 to 1937 in response to the desire to make schools a moving force in the development of country areas, so as to develop but not uproot. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the experiment was a failure. Post-independence it was retried in various places (Cameroun, for example) with outcomes that continued to be unconvincing.

What is more, the experience of history has often shown that stimulating development is not achieved necessarily and exclusively through the direct and immediate action of schools. To give an example: during the Industrial Revolution in Europe, investment in physical capital preceded investment in human capital. The expansion of education followed that of the economy and the spread of the Industrial Revolution, rather than preceding it.

The most dramatic change that schools have experienced over the last two decades is certainly the rise to power of economists in defining educational policies. Should there not be a brief analysis of this process to allow us to better reflect on the role to be played by schools, where French is supposed (or ought?) to play a role in development?

The move from a developmentalist strategy, in early independent sub-Saharan Africa, to a regulated strategy is based on findings and research work as well as on ideological assumptions that radically change the perception of schools and their place in society, also altering the nature and form of intervention. The question to be asked is whether economists, societies and peoples view matters in the same way.

Behind these policies lies a grand theory, *the theory of human capital*, devised by the American economist Gary Becker (Nobel Prize 1964), which claims that the size of material and financial investment cannot on its own explain the phenomena of growth and development. The quality of the workforce and its training also plays a vital role. From this viewpoint, education and training become investment costs aimed at building human capital.

An educational system must therefore be assessed on the basis of its ability to build this human capital, a capital that is unequally distributed across the world. It is known that in lower-performing countries, the workforce is inefficient in technical terms, not only because it is poorly trained nor not trained at all, but mainly simply because education falls far short in achieving its objectives and so falls short of its essential mission, that of promoting human capital that is viable because it is operational. We shall pass over the political details of interventions during the 1990s, which, it should be noted, produced positive effects, as well as some disappointments. Rather let us highlight the way this approach has affected modes of intervention in schools:

- Investment in human capital follows the same rules of analysis as those for traditional investment. There is a parallel process whereby there is a sort of disembedding of education which moves out of the social and political sphere into an exclusively political sphere.
- The economy is now at the centre of social organisation.

The State is reduced to the role of regulator, or rather of agent in relation to a civil society which is now tasked with implementing educational policy. This is the

analysis to be made of the view of Vignier who writes:

It is understandable that such an approach should remain deeply alien to States and African societies accustomed to the ‘welfare state’ and for which schools are deeply embedded in the social structure, part of an educational culture that resists reduction to purely ‘rational’ logic of intervention and operation as understood by the neo-classical economists using this expression. (2001: 157).

The criticism that could be made of this approach is not that economists start looking at the school system, but that they do so in a way that sometimes disregards how it operates and above all its symbolic function even if education comes at a cost. To quote Vignier again:

An educational system is one involving many factors whose effects are hard to measure directly and immediately. Economists are impatient people whereas for schools time takes time ... Schools are not a business, they are an institution ... Education is not a market but somewhere where symbolic assets are developed and their reinvestment and distribution may take place over the whole lifetime of an individual. (2003: 191).

After all these questions of economics with an importance that no one could ignore, we should now concern ourselves more particularly with the development of the child, a being in formation, a link in the human capital chain required for the development a country or region in a multilingual context, hence my second line of approach.

Demands on schools in a multilingual context

This issue may be examined from two angles: languages in general and French in particular.

Languages in general

Language, as we all allow, is most the basic constituent of a human being’s identity. Amadou Hampâté Ba said on this point that of all the human characteristics, language has the greatest relevance. The base of culture and the matrix of creativity, it is the preeminent tool for the construction of learning and knowledge. Languages are the living expression of cultural, individual and collective identities.

In social and cultural terms, each language reflects a vision of the world and a form of social and cultural life which ultimately impose a certain mental and reasoning structure on those using it going about their daily lives. This is to say that peoples’ way of life is manifested through their languages which are for them *primary tools for understanding and awareness of the outside world*.

There have been many ways of interpreting this aspect of language, positive and negative, and schools have often paid a high price for this.

In 1981, President Sékou Touré, speaking in Conakry at a Unesco-organised meeting of experts to define a ‘strategy such as will contribute to the implementation of the Unesco project Horizon 2000,’ the main objective of which was to help African States wishing to do so to use their languages in all activities of national life before the end of the twentieth century, made a call, using his usual dramatic formulas, ‘to solve all the major problems facing our continent, including that of the enrichment of our language.’¹

¹ Opening address to the Unesco Horizon 2000 Conference in Conakry 1981. In *Dialogues et Cultures* FIPF n° 47 p. 9. Also available as ‘La définition d’une stratégie relative à la promotion des langues africaines’ in Documents de la réunion d’experts qui a eu lieu à Conakry (Guinée) 21-25 septembre 1981 at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0008/000809/080934mo.pdf>.

And there is a great temptation to wonder if the languages of Southern countries are so poor with all the other connotations evoked by such words.

Joseph Ki-Zerbo put this better with a degree of humour: 'European languages imported into Africa are bridges to the globalized world, but it is still hard to abandon your house to live under a bridge!' (1999 : 699). French, it is understood, was and still is one of these bridges in francophone Africa.

French

Without making an apologia à la Senghor for French, some facts must be faced. As a language, French comes fully equipped (standardized, with norms for its written version, with a long rhetorical tradition to look back on) and being so it is available for general training, as part of a mathematical and scientific culture, for professional and technical training. In this way French can contribute to the promotion of the social and economic integration of young people whatever their origin or country.

French is the working language in higher education and specialized institutions. Without proficiency in it, failure is inevitable. In Madagascar, for example, even at the time when Malagasy was being made the language of education, university teaching was in French and this language was also the key to opening the doors of higher education this has remained so today.

French, despite declarations, quite inflammatory at times, regularly rehearsed in various quarters, is still to be found in the educational systems of francophone African countries.

This is typical wherever French is used as the language for schooling and education. The problem becomes more complex in countries where French is not pupils' original language, at which point a multilingual approach comes into play: pupils speak several languages in their culture of origin, as is the case of Mahorese children: I would go so far as to say in the case of most learners of French in the United States. This situation has been remarked on for some time and led those attending the States General of French Language Teaching in Sub-Saharan Africa (Libreville 17 to 21 March 2003), to declare 'the coexistence of French and African languages, born of History, should not be a matter of language conflict or wars, but rather of solidarity and complementarity.'²

It is of course easy to make statements that beg the question when action to reconcile opposites and find unity in diversity and complementarity in differences requires not just good will but most of all know-how and constant efforts to maintain standards, for example, with regard to the specificities of French in the school situation.

Particular issues for French in schools

What is known as a language for schooling or what the Council of Europe also calls a *language of education* may be considered in terms of its major functions: its social communication function as a means of conversational exchange, at an oral level, but also its function for passing on or acquiring knowledge and know-how in the form of rules of writing. This second function is a vital one as it is meant to bring pupils into contact with the knowledge essential for development in its various forms to take place.

When considering French as a language of education, teaching issues cannot be ignored. Practices develop that could be described as unconventional, based on, for example, popular culture: songs, theatre, comic strips. Is it enough to adopt a strong

² *Actes des Etats généraux de l'enseignement du français en Afrique*, Libreville 2003, in *Documents FIPF*, décembre 2009, p. 11.

communicative approach to French teaching that does not bypass traditional of communication?

In English- Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking countries French is taught as a foreign language (FLE, *français langue étrangère*), but is this not also true for many learners in francophone Africa and Mayotte? We use 'foreign language' in its educational sense, i.e. not a first language and one with which there is practically no contact outside school. For example, does a village child in Gabon experience French like a child in the affluent districts of Libreville? So a one-size-fits-all answer is a teaching heresy if learning is to be truly child-centred.

Is not the acceptance of the many sides of francophony, in words, in accents, in ways of expressing realities, an opportunity for the learners to have a positive attitude to language, as their way of speaking would not automatically excluded or stigmatised? At the start of the learning process such an approach is bound to promote a feeling of linguistic security. Of course, as with a mother tongue, the role of the school is not just to consolidate learners' knowledge as they start out, but also to give them access to other ways of expressing themselves, which may be more effective and more rewarding in given situations. The ideal is to enable learners to identify the situations in which they will need to use French, to use a given francophone standard and so leave the way open for them to use the language with confidence and effectiveness.

One final comment: an understandable desire to see that pupils achieve a good command of French often leads to overexposing them to systematization activities, spelling, conjugation, morphology and syntax, with no consideration of the any cultural outlook. This is *French teaching of a meaningless kind* with outcomes soon forgotten unless tied in with the discovery of works that tell stories and so introduce pupils to a universe of life and thought with vast scope.

A language will only truly be appropriate if, through its use and what it reveals, it matches a child's needs for self-understanding and for understanding the world where they will live their adult life. What is the position of Mahorese children?

Challenges and lines of research and a new vision for the schools of Mayotte

The scope and importance of this last line of approach of our paper lead to us to divide it along three lines: the cultural dimension and the methodological export-import process, harmonization, the links between school and life through learning about others.

Recognizing the cultural dimension of the country concerned and respect for its teaching and learning cultures are fundamental in managing the challenges posed by Mayotte's school system. Learning about and understanding the cultural dimension of Mayotte on the ground and seeing through its traditions, mores, customs and other aspects of daily life there must be a part of what I would term the *methodological export-import process*.

As in any import-export transaction, both exporter and importer are winners. But there is no guarantee that this is so for the customer. Something that worked well somewhere else will not necessarily be right for Mayotte. It is not our business to say that there should be no circulation of ideas, methods, or even equipment between different parts of the world, but experience teaches us that before adopting or dismissing a proposed methodology, we need to ensure that it is compatible not only with the actual teaching conditions, but also and most importantly with the culture of the environment, the educational culture the learning culture of those

doing the learning. With this in mind the Fédération internationale des Professeurs de français (FIPF – International Federation of French Teachers) launched a world-wide research project in partnership with the Agence de la Francophonie (AUF – University Francophony Agency) entitled ‘Teaching Culture and Learning Culture’ (*Culture d’enseignement et culture d’apprentissage*) involving teams from around twenty countries which put the following question:

Looking beyond the major teaching principles that have now won widespread endorsement, what can be said of local, collective or individual ways of taking ownership of French as a second/foreign language in teaching institutions? What constants are found in these methods, inside societies and not merely a portrait of representations and behaviour? ³

The important thing is to avoid a North-South type of outlook and rather foster a cross-cultural and integrated methodology. Harmonization might be seen as partnering the cultural dimension in the methodological export-import process. The programme is vast as we are proposing the ‘reconstruction of the learner’s cultural identity based on the use the mother tongue and French alongside each other.’ ⁴

Recognizing ‘heritage’ differences, to use Louis Porcher’s term, does not excuse us in any way from creating harmonization tools –far from it. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), even if it is not an instrument to be used as it stands outside Europe, could, given its spirit of openness, integration of educational realities, its proposals for harmonization in the field of assessment, the very methodology which saw it set up, serve as a research framework. But this is a quite an undertaking, demanding both political and technical skills, as this is a matter of organizing the respective places of French and the national languages so that there would be *a sharing of linguistic responsibilities and an effective bilingualism in schools*. Surely such a sharing is one of the concrete manifestations of what is known as *language partnership*.

However the opposite extreme is also to be avoided, thinking that the use of national languages will solve every problem. We shall not go over the misadventures of all the reforms in sub-Saharan Africa (and still less the case of Madagascar on which much has been written) but simply recall the examples of Algeria and Morocco where the arabization policy, perfectly legitimate be it said, failed by some way to produce the outcomes expected and the demand for instruction in French has never been higher.

Links between school and life through learning about others naturally and inevitably complement both the cultural dimension in the methodological export-import process and harmonization.

There is very often a tendency to say or believe that after the primary school stage the problem of the language for learning no longer arises. But the ability to find one’s bearings in a language so as to express ideas, one of the particular tasks of secondary education, is still at an early stage and is not achieved by a sharing between the inherited language and the learnt language. Using one language at home and another at school, when properly managed, does not necessarily lead to failure at school, and on the contrary often is a path to remarkable success. Teachers must realize that such success is not a painless one, but involves torments and conflict. Having to find ones own place rather than inheriting it sometimes demands profound effort calling on secret resources of individuality, not to mention its shortcomings.

3 « Pour l’Afrique : Burkina Faso, Burundi, Gabon, Ouganda et Sénégal », *Doc. FIPF*, déc. 2009, p. 6

4 *Ibid.* p. 6.

Here again, experience seems to require a delicate touch on the part of the teacher so as not to hinder an ongoing process, rather than specific instructions.

There is a temptation to answer the question 'how does school help the learner attain an awareness of their identity but most importantly of that of others?' by saying: by playing its part, by being what it is supposed to be, one of the crucibles of human capital. Here obviously we must know what is to be expected of schools and what is meant by 'their identity and that of others.' If these two terms are taken to mean teaching each individual not just to read, write and count, but also to be themselves, to have self-esteem, and most importantly to be open to others and ready to listen to them, in other words to pass on a right or authorization to speak and make oneself available, then this is the very purpose of schools. So what is the place to be given to being skills, know-how and the culture conveyed by language(s) of learning?

Things are not so simple. The identity claimed may arise from no longer belonging. Membership of a gang, for example, is not a membership of a family even if the success of the idea of a right to difference comes from the desire to be in a group where in which similarity rules.

Respecting pupils' individuality certainly means accepting what they reveal about themselves, but is also respecting what they want to keep quiet at school. Paying an individual attention is not pointing out who they are, 'identifying' them, but rather passing on a right, an authorization to speak, granting the opportunity for speech and marking out their place as a subject. This happens by way of discourse, the language taught in school.

Fare from being a mere instrument of success or indoctrination of values, language can create, through self-knowing and knowing the other, the conditions for genuine dialogue, through which learners can make their own voices heard and most importantly be aware of the other and reckon with the other.

However unlike building a house which starts with laying the foundations, in education the starting point is the roof, i.e. the training of the trainers. However perfect a programme may be, so long as it is not properly used by good teachers, there will be few positive outcomes. So the principles set out above need to be instilled in the teachers working in Mayotte.

Firstly that teachers and educationalists in this highly complex situation must never lose sight of the fact that languages are never passed on or absorbed without integrating the cultural dimension of Mahorese children, as economic development and human development cannot be separated. Then it is important not to forget that languages and development must achieve harmony not only from a pragmatic and utilitarian point of view, but also and primarily in defining a shared culture. To quote François Cheng, who came to France as a young Chinese twenty-year-old and now a member of the Académie Française:

Is not the ideal image of a culture a garden with many plants competing in their singularity and which through their mutual resonance become part of a complex work? As there is exchange and circulation with a human group, why should this not occur between cultures, especially when they seek to move towards a truly open form of life?⁵

It was never the aim of this study to draw conclusions on such a subject when its scope, complexity and opportunities for opening are realized. Our approach was to tackle the problem head on and think out loud so as to open up lines for work and research.

5 *Le dialogue*, Interview with Bernard Pivot on « Double JE », France 2, 24 April 2003.

When the children of Mayotte, French through the vagaries of History, come to start school, they encounter the same problems as many children from the continent of Africa, the Indian Ocean, even New Caledonia, once French colonies or protectorates, be they Cameroonian, Congolese, Gabonese, Malagasy, Moroccans, Togolese, Senegalese, etc.: they do not find there the language they speak at home and are destabilised by having to acquire knowledge, behaviour, skills in a language which has foreign, unfamiliar and obscure codes, one source if lack of motivation, interest and one failure after another.

So what can be done to prevent French becoming a foreign language for a French citizen of Mayotte? What steps could ensure that the methodologies proposed here for schools are compatible with the teaching culture but most importantly with the cultural dimension and the learning culture of the country? How to raise the status of the existing francophone environment while incorporating Mahorese culture and so achieve a genuine bilingualism? Why not propose, as happens in world trade, while this is not the best example, but valid at least in terms of an actual slogan, win-win education so that French ceases to be not only a tool for social selection and exclusion but one for integration, in other words, a language with which the children of Mayotte can identify once it has become their own?

It would seem vital to draw the attention of decision-makers to these points as in wishing to meet the social demand account must be taken of the group(s) addressed and their particularities. Is not the issue that of creating a French school system for Mayotte based on both similar experiences in the francophone world and above all the specific context? Does turning systematically and dogmatically to national languages always solve the problems? Might it not be possible, in the specific situation of Mayotte to envisage a genuine sharing of linguistic responsibilities in which teaching of or in French would be the backbone of the education system?

As for content, should not each cycle meet the needs of all learners, including those who leave the school system on the way by creating suitable alternative pathways, such as vocational training models? Is it enough to incorporate practical knowledge in the curriculum to ensure social integration? Even better would it not be wiser to have the means to manage the complex action programmes that such integration necessarily entails?

The final and by no means minor point has to be the place, profile and mission of teachers in an environment that is both unique and common to other places where French after being the colonial language has become a foreign language before becoming, according to the particular country, the administrative language, the official language or the national language. At a time when schools are, according to many, less effective, what are the skills and also what flexibility is required of a teacher in Mayotte so that they can, while incorporating the cultural dimension in their work, be innovative in daily classroom practice?

In reaching the end of this study, the questions are diverse but it could be said that while the answers may not be simple and still less preconceived, they converge towards a single objective: integrated teaching of or in French while preserving Mahorese culture, enriched by its realities, making French accessible for every child in Mayotte, and ultimately a springboard for, even a driver of, development in Mayotte through firstly self-reconciliation by the Mahorese and then reconciliation with the status of French which is now their present and their future.

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A sociolinguistic approach to multilingualism among schoolchildren in Mayotte. A multilingual stance and relationship to french teaching norms

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French in schools: the issues for schoolchildren in Mayotte

In Mayotte the use of French as the school language is a major development issue for the inhabitants of this French department who, unlike those in metropolitan France, most commonly use languages other than French in daily life (Shimaore, Kibushi to name only the two most widely spoken) (Laroussi 2009). In this multilingual situation, French is much used by young people: 84.5% of young people between 14 and 19 say that they speak French ‘and at least one local language’ whereas among those over 40, the figure is 40% or lower depending on the age range.¹ Likewise, 81% of these young people say they can read French (and in some cases other languages), whereas only 45% of those over 40 say they can do so.² These figures are evidence of the growing ethnolinguistic vitality of French in Mahorese society as well as of the overall effectiveness of educational action in Mayotte since the 1980s. While French is not yet the main language of professional development and socialization, it will be increasingly so in Mahorese society in years to come. But at home it remains one language amongst others, a language added on to traditional languages through the Republican school system. This system, given its mission, cannot ignore the fact that pupils live and grow up hearing and using a number of languages throughout their school years, and that as French Mahorese citizens they will have to develop a multilingual approach. What means are there for doing more than admitting defeat in mastering French³ so as to move towards a multilingual way of tackling the learning of the language of education?

Given Mayotte’s status as a French department, education follows the directives of the national school curriculum, notwithstanding some as yet timid adaptations made by some teachers or even the academic authority for the island.⁴ There is a

1 Sources: INSEE 2007 http://www.insee.fr:443/fr/themes/detail.asp?reg_id=27&ref_id=1110&page=donnees_detailles/rp2007/resultats_detailles/rp2007_langues_lang1m.htm (accessed 10/09/2010).

2 Sources: INSEE 2007 http://www.insee.fr:443/fr/themes/detail.asp?reg_id=27&ref_id=1110&page=donnees_detailles/rp2007/resultats_detailles/rp2007_langues_lang2m.htm (accessed 10/09/2010). The percentage of adults between 40 and 54 who are literate in French is higher than the number of those claiming to speak French, explained by the fact that this age group also includes French-speakers from metropolitan France, in particular the large number of teachers, whereas there are very few children from metropolitan France who go to school in Mayotte.

3 The concept of failure in school deserves proper consideration in educational terms. Assessment and examination results in Mayotte are still significantly below those in metropolitan France (INSEE: http://www.insee.fr:443/fr/insee_regions/mayotte/themes/dossiers/tem/tem_7-2-population-scolaire.pdf).

4 See for example the handful of primary text books published by the Mayotte Vice-rectorate (Vice-rectorat de Mayotte / Éducation Nationale, 2010, *Éducation en chiffres*, édition 2009-2010, Mamoudzou, p. 10). There are also a few bilingual pre-school pilot project classes.

genuine concern in the school system to deal with the specificities of this school situation, shown, for example, by the priority given to ‘proficiency in the language’ and a number of training courses available for primary and secondary teachers.⁵ However the pathways open still fail to take sufficient account of pupils’ linguistic and cultural realities. The importance given to objectives must not overshadow the need to train pupils growing up in a school system in which learning takes place in a monolingual perspective and in a society where multilingual, cultural and life skills are very different those of metropolitan France. Askandari Allaoui, a Mahorese deeply involved in education on the island, highlights the divide between metropolitan France and a holistic society, where ‘the way of thinking is different from that found in so-called modern societies’ (Allaoui 2008: 12). So there is a ‘cohabitation’ (ibid.: 32) with a school system perceived both as giving access to upward social mobility⁶ and as a vague threat to traditional cultural values (Blanchy-Daurel 1990: 122). If pupils cannot reconcile family, peers and classroom, there is a high risk of a feeling of anomie emerging, as described by Blanchet:

The exteriorization of a norm of reference based on another linguistic variety, another group, allows that other group to re-produce its domination over time. (...) There are two key symptoms to the destructuring of the identity of the ethno-sociocultural group, linguistic insecurity (loss of linguistic bearings, inability to identify with confidence one’s own linguistic practice and its relation to linguistic norms and social conventions) and cultural alienation (loss of cultural bearings, desocialization). (Blanchet 2000: 132).

It is therefore vital that at all levels of schooling learning pathways be devised which allow every pupil to build a link between school and society. In concrete terms the learning of the language of education when it is not the pupils’ first language means that a proficiency in French cannot be acquired while ignoring the practices and representations of their entire verbal repertoire. Research on language acquisition in a school context has shown that pupils’ multilingual skills should be considered as ‘plural verbal repertoires’ (Moore 2006) rather than in terms of linguistic skills assigned to one language or another: learning takes place from the starting point of complex and dynamic forms of knowledge and sociocognitive strategies. Knowing how to recognize the identity-forming components of these multilingual dynamics while assessing expected progress at school is therefore vital, both for Mahorese teachers (most often working at primary level) and for French teachers (who are mainly posted to secondary schools).

Practice and representations of multilingual pupils in an AEFÉ school⁷

I wish to make my contribution to this discussion from the perspective of a teacher of French trained in a monolingual environment and who has worked for over ten years in a multilingual context, and on the basis of doctoral research done between 2006 and 2010 on adolescent pupils learning in French at the Franco-Ethiopian Lycée of Addis-Ababa (Ethiopia). My initial question comes back to the one asked earlier for Mayotte: how can we take account of the skills of multilingual pupils for learning French in a multicultural context? I shall show that a study of pupils’ practice and representations in the field reveals a relationship to language dynamics

⁵ See the courses on offer in the Vice-rectorate’s academic training plan (<http://www.ac-mayotte.fr/spip.php?page=recherche&recherche=paf+second+degr%E9>).

⁶ Cassagnaud (2010: 585): French has become ‘the language of bread.’

⁷ AEFÉ – *Agence pour l’Enseignement français à l’Etranger*: Agency for French Education Abroad.

far different from that perceived as a teacher of French. A sociolinguistic analysis will show that the concept of a multilingual stance can shed a worthwhile light on the way in which an adolescent pupil has to negotiate contacts between languages and cultures in their various socialization spaces. From this I shall outline some educational pathways that could serve for Mayotte.

A french school for multilingual pupils: fieldwork and methodology

Although Ethiopia was never colonized by France (the dominant language in Addis-Ababa has always been Amharic), the Lycée Guebre Mariam (hereafter the LGM), which is part of the AEFÉ network, was founded in the 1960s from a desire on both sides to offer education in French to pupils of all social classes. The intention here was for France to regain influence in a part of the world attracted to English and for Ethiopia to train future elites destined to serve the development of the country. In 2008, there were over 1,700 pupils at the school from three years of age upwards. Ever higher fees are tending to make it a school for the few, with sociolinguistic realities partly matching those of Mayotte: only 10% of pupils are French, 68% are Ethiopian, 22% are French-speaking Africans or other nationalities. Over 80% claim to be multilingual at home; many parents are not French-speaking. Just as recent research on the language practices of Mahorese pupils tend to show (Cassagnaud 2010), multilingualism is valued and legitimized in the language practices of LGM pupils, who are taught the French curriculum in a more or less contextualized way. The many cultural backgrounds and languages spoken outside the classrooms bring out the dynamics of contact between languages and cultures that are probably less visible in contexts which crystallize a tension between two cultures. Over thirty nationalities are represented in the LGM and there are many languages heard there: French, Amharic, other non-Ethiopian African languages and English to mention only the most common.

This initial presentation of pupils' language practices is based on a sociolinguistic questionnaire completed in March 2006 and March 2008 by a representative sample of 124 secondary pupils (first, third, fifth and sixth years of secondary school, between the ages of 11 and 16) and on ethnographic observations inside and outside class. The questionnaire, a fairly long one, dealt with the following topics: you and your languages at home, you and languages out of class at school, you and learning, you and your cultures, you and adults. It was completed by pupils I knew well, following a strict procedure, and followed up by interviews explaining the responses with 29 volunteer pupils of all levels. The analysis of this date was completed by observations and analysis of a large amount of pupils' written work.

Pupils' language practices

Research in interactional linguistics has shown that in an exolingual context a hybrid speech form is –a 'bilingual speech form' (Lüdi & Py 2003)– is often observed to emerge. Language alternation or code-switching in a single conversation has two major advantages: it recognizes the legitimacy of all languages, and so all cultural backgrounds, also allowing each one to express themselves and/or understand, even if the languages used are poorly known.

This was indeed my finding in my research: secondary LGM pupils claim to be bilingual in 77% of cases and show use of several languages outside the classrooms. However it is less the languages themselves than the mixing of them that is most striking, especially with pupils in the third year of secondary education (\pm age 13); such a mix carries prestige in their eyes because it means:

- they have a way of speaking common to all pupils and it also has a function of asserting identity: an identity can be built according to family origins and an identity according to the pupil group belonged to;
- they can have a different, non-classroom, form of communication: monolingual French is reserved for the classroom: its learning value is recognized, but there is no desire for it to be imposed outside it.

This is what Lidia, a pupil from Burundi in the fifth year of secondary school, multilingual at school and home, has to say:⁸

- L *et j'aime bien mélanger les langues /* and I like mixing up languages (*pause*)
 R */ pourquoi ?* (*pause*) why?
 L *c'est xxx / j'aime bien ça fait plaisir / on* it's (*inaudible*) (*pause*) I like it it's great
se sent comme + on est libre / c'est la + (*pause*) you feel like (*hesitates*) you're
multiculture quoi ! on parle + on arrive à more free (*pause*) it's (*hesitates*) like
parler trois langues + ou quatre / multiculturalism! you talk (*hesitates*)
 you end up speaking three languages
 (*hesitates*) or four (*pause*)
 R *tous vous sentez ça ? T'as l'impression* You all feel that? You get the feeling
qu'c'est vrai pour tout l'monde ? that's true for everyone?
 L *oui ! (...)* Yes! (...)
 R *une langue du LGM ? ou une manière de* an LGM language? or a way of speaking
parler + spéciale aux élèves du lycée ? (*hesitates*) just for the pupils in the
 Lycée?
 L */ le français c'est + transformer le* (*pause*) French is (*hesitates*) changing
français mélanger le français + l'objectif French mixing French (*hesitates*) the
je crois c'est + on veut pas parler le aim is I think (*hesitates*) we don't want
français / to speak French (*pause*)
 R *mmh /* mmm (*pause*)
 L *comme on fait avec les profs / on veut* the way we do with the teachers (*pause*)
parler français / déformer ça / c'est ça je we want to speak French (*pause*) twist it
crois la langue du Lycée / (...) / that's what I think the language of the
 Lycée is (*pause*) (...)
 R *et pourquoi euh + + pourquoi c'est + on* and why, er (*hesitates*) how come
n'a pas envie d'parler français / comme (*hesitates*) you don't want to speak
avec les profs ? French (*pause*) the way you do with
 teachers?
 L *peut-être parce que + depuis la maternelle* maybe because (*hesitates*) since
ou depuis le primaire / on essaie de nous preschool or primary school (*pause*)
apprendre / à + écrire ou à parler français they've been trying to teach us (*pause*)
+ correctement / to (*hesitates*) write and speak French
 (*hesitates*) properly (*pause*)
 R *mmh /* mmm (*pause*)
 L *donc peut-être que + on se dit que + la* so maybe (*hesitates*) we think (*hesita-*
cour de récréation c'est quand même le *tes*) when you get outside the classroom,
moment de + d'un peu changer / then's the time (*hesitates*) to change a
 bit (*pause*)
 R *mmh / vous êtes plus libre** mmm (*pause*) you're more free (*ques-*
tion tone)
 L *oui !* Yes!

⁸ Interview reference: L-buf-frki-2-25. R = Researcher.

At the LGM, this hybrid speech form is part of the construction of a shared identity in part by everyone: these are the pupils of a specific school, one which can be distinguished from other schools in the capital; most particularly it enables every pupil, of whatever nationality,⁹ to gain a command of forms of knowledge highly valued at national and international level, as Alegntaye, an Ethiopian pupil in the fifth year of secondary school,¹⁰ tells us:

[The interview deals with the fact the pupil ‘feels more comfortable’ because she speaks several foreign languages:]

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| A | <i>je j’pense que + je me sens un peu supérieure en fait / (sourire)</i> | I think that (<i>hesitates</i>) I feel a bit superior in fact (<i>pause</i>) (smiles) |
| R | <i>E mmh / et dans la vie pour toi qu’est-ce que ça change en fait ?</i> | mmm (<i>pause</i>) and what does that actually change in life for you? |
| L | <i>A dans ma vie ? j’sais pas j’m sens un peu égaux je sais pas / même s’ils sont plus grands tout ça j’pense que je suis + assez bonne assez savant tout ça / pour parler avec eux tout ça / j’pense que + j’connais aussi les choses /</i> | In my life? I dunno I feel (<i>hesitates</i>) a bit equal I don’t know (<i>pause</i>) even if they’re like bigger I think that I’m (<i>hesitates</i>) pretty good pretty educated and so on (<i>pause</i>) talking with them and all that (<i>pause</i>) I think that (<i>hesitates</i>) I know things too / |
| R | <i>alors que + si tu parlais les mêmes langues qu’eux tu sentirais pas ça?*</i> | While if (<i>hesitates</i>) you spoke the same languages as them you wouldn’t feel that? (<i>question tone</i>) |
| A | <i>/ normal + normal /</i> | (<i>pause</i>) right (<i>hesitates</i>) right (<i>pause</i>) |
| R | <i>tu penses qu’le fait d’être au Lycée ça change ?</i> | you think that being at the Lycée changes things? |
| A | <i>oui c’est à dire que + même si on vit dans un appartement / les voisins tout ça ils demandent des choses tout ça et je me sens un peu supérieure /</i> | yes I mean that (<i>hesitates</i>) even if you live in an apartment (<i>pause</i>) the neighbours and all that ask things and so on and I feel I’m a bit superior (<i>pause</i>) |
| R | <i>ouhai / d’accord / ben c’est bien / y’a une expression qui dit que + on a plus “confiance en soi” p’t-être que + t’as plus confiance en toi t’es moins +</i> | yeah (<i>pause</i>) OK (<i>pause</i>) that’s good then (<i>pause</i>) there’s an expression that (<i>hesitates</i>) you’ve got more ‘self-confidence’ maybe (<i>hesitates</i>) you’ve got more self-confidence you’re less (<i>hesitates</i>) |
| A | <i>mmh / on peut dire /</i> | mmm (<i>pause</i>) you could say that (<i>pause</i>) |

The hybrid speech form between peers lets each one create links between their various spaces for language socialization and French is part of the construction of a rewarding self-image, but in a multilingual configuration, a dynamic that is vital in adolescence. For most pupils therefore, it is not a culture-language but the language of adults and the school institution. Only 35% of pupils questioned said they had French cultural traits whereas 92% of them claim to be French-speaking.

Language skills and interactional processes

Besides the difficulties for a teacher of French relying on often implicit sociocultural referents that can be very remote from those of the pupils, hybrid practices develop a

9 Under Ethiopian law, foreign schools may only take non-Ethiopian children. The statutes of the LGM grant it an important distinction: Ethiopian pupils may register and have preferential rates.

10 Interview reference A-ctf-am-2-20.

particular sociolinguistic skill: while they give most an overall understanding and peer acknowledgment, the imbalance of linguistic skills may give rise to difficulties in precise understanding: a pupil may move from one language to another without the other person understanding all the details. In this case, LGM pupils show a number of possible attitudes:

- the interlocutor stops listening, conversation breaks off because of a failure to understand; this attitude has no advantage in a multilingual context, as there can be no communication, so the pupil cannot be integrated in the peer group, precisely because they are giving greater importance to a monolingual norm (in one language or another) than to the multilingual norm (interactional process);
- the interlocutor asks for the message to be adapted, with a different code-switch, speaking French, and also adapts by tolerating some gaps in understanding whilst getting the gist. This attitude may give rise to misunderstandings, but has the advantage of not cutting off communication and acknowledging the identity of each person as there is continual adaptation to the other one (speakers each find a dynamic balance between linguistic skill and interactional process);
- the interlocutor accepts the hybrid speech form even without understanding and does not ask for any explanation, judging that this may offend the speaker. In this case, far greater importance is given to acknowledging identities than to the informative content, and it is accepted that the information given is not imparted, not being understood (communication is highly dependant on the perception of the context of the interaction). Pupils sometimes, in defiance of all logic, give priority to what might be called multilingualism as matter of tolerance, as in the case of Ousmane, a Senegalese pupil in the fifth year of secondary school who says he is monolingual at school while putting the case for multilingualism in interactions between peers:¹¹

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| O | <i>c'est bien que ça s'ouvre / de vivre dans une société où y'a beaucoup d'ethnies ça permet de comprendre beaucoup plus de langues et de mieux se comprendre / (...)</i> | It really opens things up (<i>pause</i>) living in a society where there are lots of races and that lets you understand a lot more languages and understand each other better (<i>pause</i>) (...) |
| R | <i>// tous les Ethiopiens parlent l'amharique / c'est la même chose / (...)</i> | (<i>long pause</i>) all the Ethiopians speak Amharic (<i>pause</i>) it's the same thing (<i>pause</i>) (...) |
| O | <i>ils veulent parler français = des fois mais + même si on est là / ça vient l'amharique comme ça naturellement / c'est pas + ils font pas ça exprès c'est pour ça / par exemple on est en groupe /</i> | sometimes they want to speak French but (<i>hesitates</i>) even if we're there (<i>pause</i>) it's Amharic that comes out like that naturally (<i>pause</i>) it's not (<i>hesitates</i>) they don't do it on purpose that's not it (<i>pause</i>) for example there's a group of us (<i>pause</i>) |
| R | <i>ouhai*</i> | Yeah (<i>question tone</i>) |
| O | <i>on est en groupe tout ça / tout l'monde par exemple les Ethiopiens ils commencent à parler français et puis ils expliquent expliquent et puis / ils commencent à parler l'amharique / il fait pas exprès en fait / il s'en rend pas compte c'est ça / ouhai /</i> | We're like in a group (<i>pause</i>) everyone for example the Ethiopians start talking French then they explain explain and then (<i>pause</i>) they start speaking Amharic (<i>pause</i>) they don't do it on purpose (<i>pause</i>) they don't realize that's the thing (<i>pause</i>) yeah (<i>pause</i>) |

¹¹ Interview reference: O-seg-fr-2-30.

- R *et du coup quelqu'un qui parle pas l'amharique euh + comment il se sent ? / ou toi comment tu t'sens quand ça s'passe ?* and then how does someone who doesn't speak Amharic feel er (*hesitates*) how do they feel? (*pause*) or how do you feel when that happens?
- O *non / pas du tout / je sais qu'il fait pas exprès / desfois il n'arrive pas à bien expliquer en French et c'est euh + il se retourne en amharique ouhai / ça m'fait rien /* no (*pause*) not at all (*pause*) I know they're not doing it on purpose (*pause*) sometimes they can't manage to explain properly in French and it's (*hesitates*) they go back to Amharic yeah (*pause*) it doesn't bother me (*pause*)
- R *ça t'fait rien* / et y'en a un à qui ça fait quelque chose ?* that doesn't bother you (*question tone*) (*pause*) is there anyone it does bother?
- O *ouhai peut-être oui // ah certains ils disent "ouhai + on est tous en groupe pourquoi vous parlez + nous on comprend pas + " +/* yeah maybe yes (*long pause*) some'll say 'yeah (*hesitates*) were all in a group here why are you talking (*hesitates*) we don't understand' (*hesitates*) (*pause*)
- R *et qu'est-ce qu'ils répondent ?* and what do they say to that?
- O */ ils disent rien / ils disent rien / ouhai //* (*pause*) they don't say anything (*pause*) they don't say anything (*pause*) yeah (*long pause*)
- R *c'est vrai qu'c'est pas très facile hein !* it's not easy right!
- O *ouhai ! //* yeah! (*long pause*)

Stated practices and interactional norms: the multilingual stance

An analysis of all responses shows that one can claim to be monolingual and endorse hybrid practices but conversely one can claim to be multilingual without giving prestige to language mixing. It is therefore more a matter of a sociolinguistic stance, depending most importantly on the image a pupil has of the value of the language norms in force in the relevant group. In this sense, language practices and representations are linked.

		Multilingual stance	Monolingual stance
Bilingual speaker	Representations	Acknowledges everyone's right to code-switching and diversity of languages used.	Acknowledges that there is a wide range of languages present but considers that it is not a good thing to mix them.
	Practice	Switches between the languages found in the community.	Uses a number of languages according to the situation, but does not mix them.
Monolingual speaker	Representations	Acknowledges everyone's right to code-switching and diversity of languages used.	Acknowledges that there is a wide range of languages present but considers that it is not a good thing to mix them.
	Practice	Uses only the language known.	Uses only the language known.

A multilingual 'stance' may be defined as the envisaging as a prestigious language norm the plurality of languages used in an interaction. Conversely, a monolingual stance is found in some pupils who think it is not good to mix languages and

avoid such exchanges. As is shown in the table above, adopting a multilingual or monolingual stance is marked in pupils' practices and representations of languages. The concept of 'stance' makes it possible to get out of the impasse to which the concept of linguistic (bilingual or monolingual) skill can lead to allow proper room for the sociolinguistic factors in play in verbal interactions.

Prospects for education

Whereas multilingual norms are the most legitimate among pupils, teaching French is envisaged according to a single-language model and it is therefore important that pupils be able to move from one language norm to another in a non-conflictual way. In an endolingual context such as a French class (one must speak only in the target language), pupils must therefore be able to give importance to both the content of messages and to the sociocultural referents that are remote from them: hence the importance accorded to 'correct usage' is not the least of the features of French. To 'say it properly' is not the same thing as to 'say it comprehensibly,' particularly when one is used to basing one's understanding on asymmetrical linguistic skills. A study of pupil practices among peers in the classroom at the LGM moreover shows that pupils just as often use several languages to work together while trying to learn in French. If language practices among pupils are considered as a form of plural adolescent culture involved in the learning dynamic and having its own legitimate rules, some main rules can be picked out among peers at the LGM:

- the prestige of the plurality of 'ways of speaking,'
- concern for respecting the other person's 'ways of speaking,' sometimes to the detriment of precise understanding of the message,
- concern for respecting other peoples' cultural background while maintaining one's own identity space.

From the norm to error: linguistic or sociolinguistic criteria?

One can 'choose' to speak as an alloglot to claim a specific identity, a choice that can only be respected when it does not break the rules of the teaching contract, as can be seen in this extract:¹²

G-D	<i>quand c'était sam'di soir je me suis cassé / je suis parti (éclats de rires de la classe) / je suis parti à Londres /</i>	when Saturday evening came I cleared off (pause) I left (laughter from the class) (pause) I went to London (pause)
R	<i>à Londres ?</i>	to London?
G-D	<i>ouhai / on est partis moi / ma tante / ma sœur et ma mère puis quand / ma tante elle doit rester à Londres / que elle a la nationalité alors elle doit rester à Londres / puis quand je suis revenu je suis revenu avec sa valise sans faire exprès alors elle a pris ma valise et moi j'ai pris sa valise / alors euh / quand j'suis revenu jeudi j'ai foutu (sourires) / euh / je veux dire / j'ai fait rien /</i>	yeah (pause) we left, me (pause) my aunt (pause) my sister and my mother then when (pause) my aunt she has to stay in London (pause) she has nationality so she has to stay in London (pause) then when I came back I came back with her case but not on purpose so she took my case and I took her case (pause) so er (pause) when I came back on Thursday I did bugger (smiles) (pause) er (pause) I mean (pause) I did nothing (pause)
R	<i>t'as pu rien faire /</i>	there was nothing you could do (pause)

12 SPA Oral Teaching Corpus -1 « Je raconte mes vacances », March 2007.

If schools are seen as opposed to different sociolinguistic behaviour, there is a strong chance of this creating a disconnect with which adolescent pupils will have difficulty coping. Many pupils need to use multilingual language norms in order to develop skills in French. When they manage to do so, it is because they are able to move from one norm to another, and examination results at the LGM bear out this assumption that ‘multilingualism as matter of tolerance’ is not incompatible with learning on a single-language model. The term ‘multilingual assimilation skills’ may be used to refer to the ability to optimize transfers and to value ‘inter- and trans-linguistic movement.’ (Castellotti & Moore 2005: 108).

A qualitative study of four corpora of pupils’ oral and written productions (on topics discussed by pupils, their assimilation of overall discursive forms such as narration and their assimilation of the linguistic code itself) shows that pupils from non French-speaking homes assimilate the traditional forms of the narrative more easily when its constraints are explained and presented as culturally rooted in school culture and they are allowed to build links between this form of discourse and their own experience as a narrator. The few French pupils in my corpus seem to have difficulty over these questions when they have not been able to integrate in the peer group, a fairly common occurrence in their first months at the LGM.

On the other hand, while knowledge of the linguistic code poses no real difficulties for French children, this seems the most difficult thing for pupils who do not use French outside the classroom to acquire: the meaning comes over but they make little progress in assimilating forms of usage in French which ultimately do not greatly affect comprehension. In speech, recurring errors such as ‘je la donne’ (*I give her*), ‘je pars chez moi’ (*I’m going home*), ‘je vois la télé’ (*I see the TV*) do shock an interlocutor from metropolitan France but do not interfere with mutual comprehension. In writing, this can produce utterances of this type which, it must be agreed, do not comply with the standard French norm but which still convey meaning to a well-disposed reader. A standard French version and translation, which does not attempt to render the French errors, are given in brackets:

- (1) *Si j’étais un pays, je serai l’Asie car c’est la plus grande pays du monde.* (Si j’étais un pays, je serais l’Asie car c’est le plus grand pays du monde - If I was a country, I would be Asia as it’s the biggest country in the world)
- (2) *Si j’étais un langage je serais l’ahmarique parce que c’est ma lang générale* (Si j’étais un langage je serais l’amharique parce que c’est ma langue principale - If I was a language I’d be Amharic as it’s my main language)
- (3) *Si j’étais un langage je serais française parceque c’est le French que tous ma famille parle*¹³. (Si j’étais un langage je serais le français parce que c’est le français que toute ma famille parle - If I was a language I’d be French because it’s French that all my family speak)

Towards a reactive and mutually constructed teaching style

Rather than starting by thinking of the gaps in pupils’ French repertoire, it is more helpful to try to first see if they claim to be speaking French as an alloglot (multilingual stance) or as a happy or unhappy speaker of a language of which they do or do not have a command (monolingual stance). In the first case, care should be taken to build the learning process together according French its relative place among all the legitimate languages. This is the only way the threat of a colonizing

13 Written Teaching Corpus ‘portrait chinois,’ May 2007.

language may be averted and a healthy relationship to the acquisition of knowledge achieved. In the latter case, it will be even more important to value pupils' plural language repertoires, so allowing them to take on a multilingual francophone identity in French. The norms of school French may then be regarded as learning objectives to be built in parallel with each pupil's sociolinguistic experience. The former must be introduced to French as a legitimate non-exclusive language. Care will be taken to see that pupils also recognize their multilingual skills so as to go beyond seeing a mere lack of a linguistic skill. Naturally some pupils can manage their multilingualism in a satisfactory way in human and educational terms. Their tools and strategies are always innovative, surprising and hard for the teacher to spot. Teachers indeed are trained mainly to see errors and difficulties from a single-language stance. Alongside the importance of creating contextualized teaching tools, a reactive approach to teaching in French in a multilingual context necessarily involves self-questioning by teachers of their own sociolinguistic filters. Only from this sociolinguistic perspective can teachers and pupils achieve an effective encounter in the classroom.

It is therefore worthwhile regarding the linguistic gap as a form of sociolinguistic gap, reinforced by the non-transparency of educational norms conveyed by schools: grammars often explain a code presented as 'natural' when it is actually culturally marked. Native French teachers working in a multilingual context have to understand both what their adolescents pupils' language norms are and what their own norms are: those the school system demands they transmit as well as those of their own culture-language. Linguistic usage is a cultural attribute in itself. So their intercultural teaching tools are to be developed through a reactive process.

French in Mayotte: issues for schools

Pupils who are able to move from a multilingual stance to acquisition skills are the ones who can focus strategically and so as to fit in to the situation on the linguistic code (as norm) and/or the value of exchanges as matters of identity. If a pupil does not have this skill, they will find it hard to think of French as a language with a code to be learnt or have difficulties integrating in the peer group. They need to rely on these two language functions in order to learn. This is where action over teaching can be foreseen: French needs to be presented as a culture-language which does not preclude others, which does not contest the legitimacy of other types of speech forms less focused on the linguistic code, which has its own arbitrary legitimacy as a 'culture-language,' which also has a non-arbitrary legitimacy: to succeed in French at school, and more specifically here in a fast evolving Mahorese society.

These insights should not mask the in-depth work to be done by those actually involved in Mayotte, especially in the classroom:

There would appear to be three core parameters (...) for the development of such skills in learners: multilingual experience, metalinguistic culture and significant educational cultures in the relevant contexts. (...) Only a teaching framework which brings these three dimensions together can encourage a particular learning (and teaching?) stance, sufficiently diversified skills and special interaction rituals. (Castellotti & Moore 2005: 129).

Can the French educational system today find an alternative pathway in Mayotte, one which does not take as a reference either the single language school system which sometimes confuses assimilation and integration, or community values that do little to promote empowerment at society level? As is stressed by Allaoui this

third way is crucial for the future of the young of Mayotte:

A vital stage in the history of Mayotte has not been reached. We have had deep thinkers, a whole range of experts in every field but for serving the community as a social and societal organization system. In contrast, as regards this society being founded (in this societalization), those who must devise it or think how to serve it have not yet been recognized or recognized themselves. Just as the ways of devising it do not seem to be up to date. (Allaoui 2008: 134).

Mayotte in this way crystallizes an important question on teaching dynamics in France: while wishing to be democratic and citizen-focussed, it is often hard for the school system to find how this can be achieved (Dubet et al. 2010).

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Bilingualism on trial: Assessing the impact on pupil learning of bilingual teaching programmes in primary schools in New-Caledonia, French Polynesia and Guyana

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Introduction

At a time when in Mayotte, the political and educational authorities, researchers and teachers are questioning how to set up a linguistic policy for primary schools, one which respects regional languages while fostering the learning and command of French, the objective of this article is to present three examples of experiments in introducing languages of origin and local languages in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Guyana. The first two experiments underwent scientific assessment from 2004 to 2008 for preschool in New Caledonia and French Polynesia. This assessment was extended in 2009-2011 for primary school early years (CP and CE1¹, i.e. for children of 6 to 7 and 7 to 8), and also including the bilingual teaching systems in Guyana.

This chapter is made up of three parts. The first is a quick overview of the scientific literature on the main positive effects of bilingualism in the fields of school and language learning revealed by international research in psychology. The second part presents the school teaching systems for the promotion of local languages in New Caledonia and French Polynesia and the main results of their assessment from a psycholinguistic viewpoint. The third part presents the general framework of a research programme entitled *Ecole plurilingue Outre-Mer*, funded by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche for 2009-2011. The aim of this programme is to evaluate the teaching systems for the promotion of local languages, in primary schools in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Guyana, countries with some points in common with Mayotte.

Main positive effects of bilingualism in the fields of school and language learning

The positive effects of bilingualism on cognitive development and success at school

Historically speaking, the earliest work in psycholinguistics claimed that bilingual individuals were less successful at school when compared with monolingual subjects (Saer, Smith & Hughes 1924). At the time, reference was made to problems of cognitive overload (a bilingual child has twice as many forms to memorize) and of language confusion (a bilingual child may mix the two codes in their memory). Even today, all though these risks of confusion and cognitive overload have been scienti-

¹ A brief explanation of how French early years education is organized may be helpful: throughout this article the usual French abbreviations for the classes will be used. The *école maternelle* corresponds approximately to the preschool years: PS (Petite section, age 3/4), MS (Moyenne section, age 4/5.), GS (Grande Section, age 5/6); obligatory primary school classes start at the *école élémentaire* with CP (Cours préparatoire, age 6/7) and CE1 (Cours élémentaire first year, age 7/8). The first cycle (Cycle 1) comprises PS and MS; the second cycle (Cycle 2) comprises GS, CP and CE1. Ages of individual pupils may be higher because of *redoublement*, where pupils making insufficient progress are obliged to repeat a year.

fically ruled out, these ideas are still present in the mind of some some professionals and parents (Abdelilah-Bauer 2006). Be that as it may, such fears are contradicted by all the empirical data available since the 1960s (for an overview, see Bialystok 2001; 2009; Grosjean 2004; Hamers 2005; Hamers & Blanc 2000).

In their recent meta-analysis on the effects of bilingualism on child development, based on 63 studies involving 6 022 participants (children and adults), Adesope, Lavin, Thompson and Ungerleider (2010) show a beneficial effect of bilingualism on a number of cognitive skills: metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness, symbolic and abstract representation, attention control and problem-solving. For the authors, the simultaneous acquisition and management of two languages call on processes of inhibition allowing the bilingual individual to avoid interferences and develop skills in other fields. These skills give bilingual speakers a greater awareness of the abstract characteristics of language, their own learning process, control and distribution abilities suited to attentional resources, as well as better development of problem-solving abilities and abstract and symbolic representations.

In the light of the now widely proven benefits of bilingualism, what explanation can there be for the fact that in France's Overseas communities, which stand out by their linguistic diversity, results of primary school pupils according to national assessment protocols are lower than those of pupils in metropolitan France (for French Polynesia, see IGEN 2007). Among the many factors that go to explain these differences, the sociolinguistic context of the pupils' learning process plays an important role. Hamers (2005) advances three explanatory hypotheses based on the work of Cummins (1979; 2000), Lambert (1974) and Hamers and Blanc (2000).

Cummins (1979; 2000) proposes the *developmental interdependence* hypothesis and *double bilingual threshold of competence* hypothesis, according to which second language (L2) competences are partly determined by those already developed in the mother tongue (L1), at the time when exposure to L2 begins. A first threshold of competence must be reached in L1 to avoid intensive exposure to L2 leading to subtractive bilingualism. Moreover, if a second threshold of competence is reached in both L1 and L2, bilingualism has significant effects on higher cognitive competences and success in school. On this basis, where the language of origin is not adequately practised, pupils cannot reach the first threshold of competences, the threshold enabling them to carry out demanding tasks on the cognitive level (school tasks). The second threshold would therefore require both languages to be practised with equal intensity.

In the view of Lambert (1974), the value placed on the languages involved plays an important role. If the community and the family place positive value on both languages, the two languages and the two cultures will have positive and complementary elements for the child's development. The outcome is benefits not only on a linguistic level, but also on the cultural, social, economic and cognitive levels (additive bilingualism). On the other hand, when a community rejects its own sociocultural values for those of a more culturally and economically prestigious language, this language will tend to replace the language of origin and command of it will deteriorate. This situation will have negative effects on the linguistic, affective and cognitive levels (subtractive bilingualism). This phenomenon might explain the lower school performance of overseas pupils for whom French is not the language of origin.

Finally, the sociocognitive model of Hamers and Blanc (2000) suggests that social valuing of the mother tongue allows development of additive bilingualism on two conditions: both languages must be valued by those around the child and the child must have learnt to handle language in cognitive activities complexes which often include metalinguistic activities (Hamers 2005). Hamers concludes that the role of L1 in the child's cognitive acquisitions is not to be ignored and the valuing of both languages by society is a factor required for harmonious bilingual development. The author claims that schools have an essential role to play in this double validation by using both languages as a teaching medium.

Effects of bilingual teaching systems on success at school

International research carried out since the 1950s on bilingual systems promotion pupils' languages of origin agree on their positive impact (for an overview, see in particular UNESCO 1953; Peal & Lambert 1962; Bialystok 2001; Comblain & Rondal 2001).

The bilingual teaching systems seen as a reference point at the present time have been in place in Canada for over 25 years. There are fears over the effects on the children of the methods used (immersive, equal teaching time, etc.). Many also fear that children are unable to deal with learning two languages at the same time, that there would be interferences between the two, poorer knowledge of the mother tongue and that they would fall behind at school. However, research in recent years on English-speaking Canadian children immersed in French (for example, Genesee 1984; 1987; Hall & Lambert 1988; Malicky, Fagan & Norman 1988; Safty 1988; Geva & Clifton 1994, cited by Lecocq et al. 2007) suggests that these programmes are particularly effective. For example, in their longitudinal study in the East Canadian Arctic on Inuit pupils, non-Inuit pupils and mixed-race pupils, Wright, Taylor & Macarthur (2000) show that a curriculum exclusively in the dominant language (English), which is not the language of origin of the Inuit pupils, leads to subtractive bilingualism for these pupils, whereas teaching incorporating their language of origin ('heritage language') attenuates this phenomenon.

However, the vast majority of the research done to date to assess these programmes has dealt almost exclusively with English-speaking Canadian children immersed in French and the conclusions of such research are not easily transposed to bilingual teaching programmes currently organized in French communities (Lecocq et al. 2007). To the best of our knowledge, while some bilingual teaching programmes exist in a few French overseas countries, their effectiveness with regard to pupils' academic success and language development has rarely been assessed from a psycholinguistic viewpoint with quantitative methodologies. The results of research studies in New Caledonia and French Polynesia are presented below.

Bilingual teaching systems in New Caledonia and French Polynesia and their psycholinguistic assessment

Following on a process of political emancipation that started in the 1970s, New Caledonia and French Polynesia won the transfer of many non-sovereign powers, including education. Even if schools in these Overseas areas are still strikingly similar to the national model in terms of organization, teaching content, teacher training and educational support, these changes in status have made possible the institutional recognition of local languages and their gradual introduction in the curriculum (Fillol & Vernaudeau 2004).

In New Caledonia

In New Caledonia, the 28 Kanak languages have, with French, been recognized as languages of education since the 1998 Nouméa agreement. This agreement states that:

The Kanak languages are, with French, languages of education and culture in New Caledonia. Their place in education and the media must therefore be widened and undergo serious consideration. (...) For these languages to find their rightful place in primary and secondary education there shall be major efforts over the training of trainers.²

The Organic Law of New Caledonia,³ part of the Constitution, says with greater brevity: 'The Kanak languages are recognized as languages of education and culture.' The curriculum for state primary schools in New Caledonia passed in 2005⁴ provide for the teaching of Kanak languages and culture (the LCK programme – *langues et culture kanak*) to children whose parents have stated that they wish this, with seven hours per week in preschool and five hours per week in elementary school (for ages six and above). There is no exhaustive list of Kanak languages taught at primary level. There are nonetheless three conditions for LCK education being put in place at primary level: sufficient parental demand, a Kanak-speaking teacher being available and a financial and logistic commitment from the province. In 2009, LCK education involved around 1900 in state preschools (i.e. 20% of the total of 9200 pupils) in 13 Kanak languages (Nêlêmwa, Yuanga, Nemi, Fwâi, Pwapwâ, Haeke, Paicî, Ajië, Xârâcùù, Numèè, Iaaï, Drehu, Nengone).⁵

In February 2002, the government of New Caledonia launched an experiment on the introduction of Kanak languages and culture (LCK programme) in state primary schools (for a presentation of the theoretical background and practical organization, see Lercari 1994). The experiment was assigned the following aims: try out a training programme for Kanak language teachers, gradually introduce the teaching of Kanak languages in state primary schools and assess the effect of this teaching on the pupils' academic success (Fillol & Vernaudon 2004).

Between 2002 and 2004, eight trainee teachers (LCK trainees), with a degree in Languages and Cultures, speakers of Drehu, Nengone, Ajië and Xârâcùù, worked in 10 schools, teaching 210 pupils in all, in preschool classes (PS, MS, GS, ages 3 to 6) and the first year of primary school (CP, age 6/7). The LCK trainees worked either with half the class group, or with the whole class. The session, usually one hour per day, 90 hours through the year, was held exclusively in Kanak, away from the main class, with only the LCK teacher present. The official teacher remained in the original class with the other children who worked in small groups. The competences to be acquired at the end of cycles 1 and 2 (preschool and first two years of primary school) were inspired by the French preschool curriculum (MEN 2002). Cultural competences were also included, for example, making traditional toys (windmills, plaited birds, flutes, etc.), naming the main yearly festivals, etc.

An external assessment system, including a sociolinguistic approach (Pineau-Salaün 2005) and a psycholinguistic approach, allowed an evaluation of the impact of the experimental teaching of Kanak languages. The psycholinguistic approach,

2 Nouméa Agreement, orientation document, Chapter 1.3.3 Languages.

3 Organic Law n° 99-209 of 19 March 1999 on New Caledonia, Article 215.

4 Deliberation n°118 of 26 September 2005, Congress of New Caledonia.

5 Sources: Directorate of Education of New Caledonia.

presented here, assessed the overall impact of the LCK teaching on the language competences of pupils with Drehu as mother tongue or language of origin, both in Drehu and French (Nocus, Florin & Guimard 2007). More specifically, our aim was to check if the introduction of this system made it possible, making a comparison with pupils not involved in it, to consolidate their linguistic competences in Drehu (mother tongue) and promote their early acquisition of a command of spoken and written French (second language).

61 children in MS (ages 4-5) and 82 children in GS (ages 5-6), all Drehu speakers, took part in this study, either in an experimental group (involved in the system during the school year) or as a control group (the children were not involved in the system). We checked at the outset that both the experimental and control groups were equivalent as to their initial non-verbal cognitive competences. Both groups had family backgrounds in which Drehu, as mother tongue or language of origin, was used to some degree.

In-class assessments took place twice during the year: at the start of the school year (March and April 2004) and at the end of the year (October 2004). Pupils (experimental and control groups) were assessed in Drehu by two examiners who were speakers of the language and in French by two French-speaking examiners. In French, we used, in individual testing sessions, five tests from the Oral Language Assessment range (ELO – *Évaluation du Langage Oral*) by Khomsi (2001), which aims to check children's vocabulary and morphosyntax level in comprehension and production. There was also a phonology test, taken from a bank of GS-CP assessment tools (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, DEPP, 2001), which measures pupils' ability to identify rhymes. In Drehu, we produced 5 individual tests which assess, as in French, both the comprehension and production aspects of oral language. Finally, we added, at the end of the year, a test of letter/word/non-word recognition, which gives us a first indication of success in the field of writing. In addition, some of the GS pupils were also monitored on moving into CP and assessed in French, at that level, in fields covering spoken language, use of the written word (reading and writing) and transversal competences.

At the end of the study, it was possible to conclude that the Kanak language and culture teaching system had a positive effect for Drehu both in MS and GS. At both these levels, progress by the experimental group was statistically higher than in the control group for all Drehu production tests (vocabulary reception and production, morphosyntactic production). Further, no negative effect was measured on French in MS and GS, as the language performance of pupils in the experimental groups were, overall, equivalent that that of the children in the control groups. These results confirm those of Bialystok (2001) and Lecocq, Mousty, Kolinsky, Goetry, Morais & Alégria (2007) showing the positive effect of bilingual teaching programmes on the language introduced with no negative effect on French, including in a diglossic context (Perregaux 1994).

Finally, results show that at the end of GS, experimental group pupils have better results than those in the control group for recognition of written letters and words in French. Moreover, in CP, the experimental performed much better than the control group for three of the indicators selected (transversal competences, reading and writing assessed in French) with the same trend for oral language.

These results confirm that exposure to the language of origin (Drehu) at preschool level led to a higher degree of acquisition in transversal competences and in writing in French in CP and, as a secondary point, in oral language. On this basis,

there is confirmation of hypotheses of a medium-term effect of the LCK system on competences in French. Statistics (regression analyses) show, in addition, that in CP, reading performance in French are strongly predicted by performance in GS language tests in Drehu. These results support Cummins' hypothesis (1979) of an effect of bilingualism on high-level cognitive competences such as reading (especially Bialystok, Luk & Kwan 2005, 2005; Perregaux 1994).

In conclusion, this experiment which was concerned primarily with the effect of raising the status of Kanak languages for children who have them as mother tongues or languages of origin is an encouragement to set up this type of investigation with other vernacular languages and with larger numbers of pupils.

In French Polynesia

In French Polynesia, teaching of Tahitian was officially set up in primary and secondary schools from 1982 onwards. The 2004 Organic law of French Polynesia,⁶ extending the 1986 first statute of autonomy on this point, lays down:

French, Tahitian, Marquisian, Paumotu and Mangareva are the languages of French Polynesia. (...) Tahitian is a subject taught as part of the normal timetable of preschools and primary schools, in secondary schools and high education institutions. At the decision of the Assembly of French Polynesia, Tahitian may be replaced in some schools or institutions by one of the other Polynesian languages.

Primary school curricula allow 2 hours 40 minutes for the teaching of Tahitian or another Polynesian language. Since 2006, this has gone up to 5 hours per week in around twenty schools, as part of an experiment, *Enseignement des langues et de la culture polynésiennes à l'école primaire de la Polynésie française* (Teaching of Polynesian languages and culture in primary schools in French Polynesia – the LCP programme), which is seeking to strengthen the place of Polynesian languages and culture in schools. Around 1,500 are involved in this programme, in the following languages: Tahitian, Marquisian, Paumotu, Raivavae, Tupuai, Mangareva.

In 2006, the government of French Polynesia asked us to replicate the assessment done in New Caledonia on the LCP programme, on a taught language (Tahitian), at three school levels (PS, MS and GS) over three years. As in the earlier research, the postulate at the outset was that the pupils taking part in this programme were not only to make progress in Tahitian, but also see benefits for French and more generally in school competences.

421 pupils divided in to 3 cohorts at three levels (PS, MS, GS) from 13 preschools in Tahiti and Moorea took part in this assessment. For each level, 2 groups were formed:

- an experimental group involved from January 2006 to July 2008 in the LCP programme;
- a control group that was not involved.

Both groups came from family backgrounds where Tahitian, the language of origin, was used in varying degrees. They were matched on age, sex, non-verbal cognitive level and socio-economic origin.

Our assessment system comprised 5 sessions of data collection: in April 2006 (end of the school year), in September 2006 (start of the school year), in April 2007 (end of the school year), in September 2007 (start of the school year) and in April

⁶ Organic law n°2004-192 of 27 February 2004 granting autonomous status to French Polynesia (1). Consolidated version as at 27 June 2008. Article 57.

2008 (end of the school year). So PS pupils were followed up in MS and GS; MS pupils in GS and CP and GS pupils in CP and CE1. Pupils' competences (experimental and control groups) were assessed in Tahitian and French by around fifteen examiners, including Tahitian speakers. In order to explore French oral language competences, we used, as with the New Caledonia pupils, five tests from Khomsi's Oral Language Assessment range (ELO) (2001), measuring reception and production vocabulary, as well as comprehension sentence test and one oral cloze test. In addition for the purposes of this research, 5 tests were created to measure the same language competences, this time for Tahitian. The instructions for these tests were presented in Tahitian or French to the children and the items given solely in Tahitian. The teachers for their part filled in a questionnaire on the academic behaviour and competences of each child (Florin, Guimard & Nocus 2002). Likewise, the parents, with the help of the teachers where required, filled in a questionnaire collecting information on the family's socio-economic situation, the languages used at home and how they envisaged the teaching of Polynesian languages in school. At the second and third sessions, tests to assess command of writing and some number competences were added in GS and CP which we used as indicators of academic success.

The results of this research showed that, from the second session onwards, the programme had a large-scale effect on Tahitian for the three cohorts. More specifically, the experimental groups made more progress than the control groups, which-ever test in Tahitian was considered. Figure n°1 presents an example of results in expressive vocabulary in Tahitian for cohorts 1 and 3 during the 5 assessment sessions.

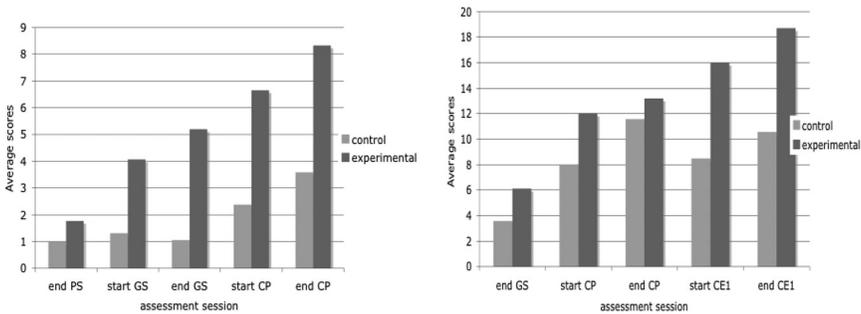


Fig. 1. Results in expressive vocabulary in Tahitian at the 5 sessions for cohort 1 (left) and cohort 3 (right).

For command of French, the results suggested a slowdown in the progress of experimental group pupils as against control group pupils halfway through the longitudinal study, then a speeding up towards the end, allowing them to catch up. At the end of the study, no difference remained between the groups in French. Figure n° 2 illustrates this result with expressive vocabulary in French for cohorts 1 and 3 during the 5 assessment sessions.

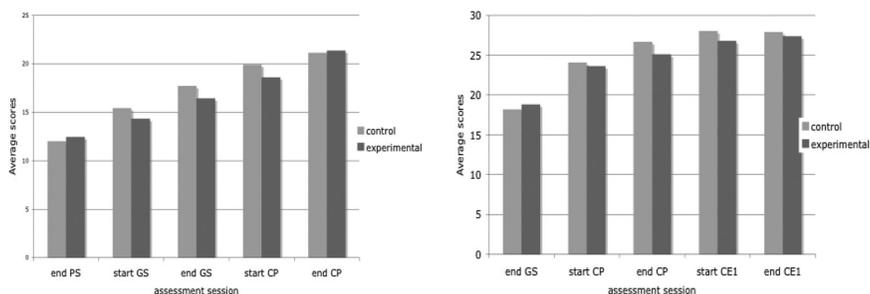


Fig. 2. Results in expressive vocabulary in French at the 5 sessions for cohort 1 (left) and cohort 3 (right).

So while it has not been possible to show any immediate transfer on to French, no negative effect could be observed, as at the end of the longitudinal study, the results in French of the experimental groups were equivalent to those of the control group children, despite there being less French teaching time per week (from 2 hours 40 minutes to 5 hours less). All these results follow the same trend as those obtained in the research in New Caledonia (cf. above). They are also in line with those of scientific literature on bilingualism. Bialystok (2001) shows that the competences of a bilingual are never strictly equivalent in both languages. Recent work on language development shows evidence of differences, marked in varying degrees, between bilingual and monolingual children on a syntactic, semantic, lexical and phonological level (Bialystok 2001; Bruck & Genesee 1995; Perregaux 1994). More specifically, the lexical stock of a bilingual child in each of the two languages is often more limited than that of a monolingual child. But with two linguistic codes, communication abilities are wider than those of a monolingual immersed in the same bilingual environment (Bialystok 2001; Bialystok, Luk & Kwan 2005). Moreover, below a certain age, the acquisition of morphosyntactic rules proceeds in more or less the same way in both languages, whether acquisition is simultaneous or consecutive (Bialystok 2001). In the early stages of their language development, bilingual children often mix lexical or syntactic elements from the two languages, but interferences soon fall off. Work by Green (1998) confirms that at the start of acquisition of the two languages, the bilingual child tends to present code mixing and language confusions. In his view, intrusions by the language which is not called on in the utterance situation are controlled by an inhibition mechanism in the frontal lobe. So code mixes observed at the start of acquisition are explained by a failure of this inhibition mechanism in a context where the child is already using all the linguistic (particularly lexical) resources available to meet communication needs. The regular use of this inhibition system by bilinguals has repercussions on their general cognition and explains their greater success in some tasks (selective attention, phonological awareness, creativity, symbolic substitution...) than monolinguals (Colzato *et al.* 2008: 310-311).

Moreover, there was an expectation of a transfer effect of bilingual competences on to number and command of writing tests done from the CP onwards. Results revealed that the effects were not immediate. More specifically, the data obtained in maths showed that, for cohort 2, the control group pupils made significantly more progress between the start and the end of the CP year, whereas those in the

experimental group performed less well at the end of the year compared with the start of the year. For cohort 3, the experimental group made up in CE1 the ground it had lost at the start of CP, even if it did not manage to catch up with the control group at the end of CE1. These results are therefore to be monitored carefully on account of the importance of this subject. It may be supposed that the results of cohort 2 are a temporary settling, comparable to that noted in French. This is apparently what is shown by comparing cohorts 2 and 3. In order to confirm this hypothesis, we also processed the results of pupils in cohort 3 in the national CE27 assessments. The results, illustrated in figure n°3, show that the two groups performed identically in French and maths (the differences between the two groups are not statistically significant).

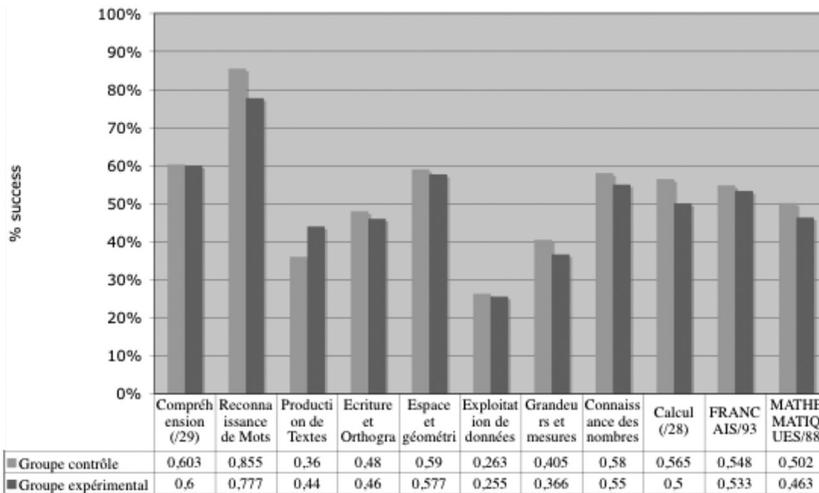


Fig. 3. Results in national CE2 (Grade 3) assessment for cohort 3.

Finally, regression analyses clearly showed that language competences in Tahitian, measured in CP, made a large contribution to reading performance in Tahitian in CE1. Correlation analyses showed interactive links between reading competences in French and reading competences in Tahitian. It would appear therefore that reciprocal transfer effects between Tahitian and French appeared towards the end of the study and that they were determined by early links between oral language competences and writing competences. Further research is required on this last result.

At the end of these two longitudinal studies carried out in New Caledonia and French Polynesia, we are now in a position to conclude that pupils involved in a programme promoting their language of origin ultimately perform as well in French as those in the control group and far better than them in their language of origin. These results strike us as very encouraging given that we have shown that secondary factors temper the expected effects (effect of the teacher, languages spoken at home, etc.). They support current research on bilingual development with the commitment

7 In this assessment, the competences selected, matching the range of competences to be acquired by the end of the second cycle, are, for French: comprehension, word recognition, text production, writing and spelling, and in maths: space and geometry, use of numerical data, scales and measurements, knowledge of natural whole numbers and arithmetic (MEN, DEPP, 2006).

of parents (cf. questionnaire for the families), without stigma from the ordinary class teachers. These bilingual programmes, which are known to meet a strong social demand, make it possible to achieve the original objectives of transmission of Kanak and Polynesian languages without having negative effects on French.

Presentation of the 'Multilingual Overseas Schools' research programme (*Ecole Plurilingue Outre-Mer* – ECOLPOM, 2009-2011)

As an extension of the research done in New Caledonia and French Polynesia between 2004 and 2008, a new research project, *Ecole Plurilingue Outre-Mer* (Multilingual Overseas Schools – ECOLPOM), funded by the French National Research Agency, was launched in 2009. It brings together four laboratories: the Education Cognition and Development Laboratory (*Laboratoire Éducation Cognition et Développement* – Labécd – EA3259) of the University of Nantes, the Centre for New Pacific Studies (*Centre des Nouvelles Études sur le Pacifique* – CNEP) of the University of New Caledonia, the Centre for American Indigenous Language Studies (*Centre d'Études des Langues Indigènes d'Amérique* – CELIA, UMR CNRS-IRD-Paris7-INALCO) and the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Social Issues (*Institut de recherche interdisciplinaire sur les enjeux sociaux* – IRIS, UMR EHESS-CNRS-INSERM-Paris 5). The objective of this interdisciplinary programme is to gain a better understanding of how early multilingual education may aid primary school objectives, promote the emotional and intellectual growth of pupils and strengthen the development of their language competences. The idea is to offer the same assessments in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Guyana, but taking account of the linguistic, cultural and social differences of each area.

This type of research is therefore being extended to Guyana where there is also a context of great linguistic diversity (Renault-Lescure & Goury 2009). The LCR programme has been on the ground since 1986 and only involves Guyanese Creole (with a French lexical base). It provides for 1 to 3 hours teaching a week in around one hundred classes, with a recent experiment in extending this to equal time. There are currently three training pathways: first degree and masters in regional languages and cultures at the University of Antilles Guyana and Capes (teaching degree) in Creole, and at the IUFM (Teacher Training Institute). The Mother Tongue Workers programme (*Intervenants en langue maternelle* – ILM), set up in 1998 as Bilingual Mediators (*Médiateurs bilingues* – Goury, Launey, Queixalos & Renault-Lescure 2000; Launey & Renault-Lescure 2004), was put in place on an experimental basis, with 16 mediators and a dozen schools, alternating class work and two or three annual group training courses in Cayenne, running till 2007. The number of ILMs grew in a more or less regular way, reaching forty for around twenty schools in 2008-2009, but when 30% of them (teaching assistants and assisted contrasts) reached the end of their employment contract, the cutback in staffing affected nearly half the schools involved and led to the disappearance of the teaching of two of the 'founding' languages, Kali'na and Wayana (in part). The languages currently involved are Amerindian languages (Palikur, Wayampi, Teko, Wayana), Creoles with an English lexical base (Nengee, with its variants Aluku and Ndyuka, Saamaka), an Asiatic language, Hmong and a South American language, Portuguese.

The ECOLPOM assessment comprises two complementary strands. The first, psycholinguistic, assess the overall impact of the teaching of languages on pupils' language competences, both in language of origin (Drehu and Ajië for New Caledonia; Tahitian for French Polynesia; Creole with a French lexical base and

Nengee for Guyana) and in French, and their academic performance and competences and their personal development. Linguists, psycholinguists and sociolinguists therefore studied how to devise assessment tools that would take account of the characteristics of the languages and the contexts. Whereas the previous assessments, carried out in preschool, were more to measure oral competences, here attention will more particularly be given to starting learning to read and write in both languages at the same time. The conative dimension (concept of self in languages) is also explored; in the previous studies, pupils were too young to answer questionnaires regarding this dimension. The second, sociolinguistic, strand seeks to determine if the strengthening of the teaching of languages of origin in school modifies families' linguistic practice, encourages a positive trend in linguistic representations of languages of origin and French and if it promotes closer ties between families and school.

The psycholinguistic assessment involved, at the outset of the research, 642 children, 143 pupils in New Caledonia (90 living in Lifou and 53 the northern Province), 246 pupils in French Polynesia (pupils in Papeete) and 253 pupils in Guyana (150 pupils from around Cayenne and 103 pupils around Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni).

The first results available for the psycholinguistic strand in New Caledonia and French Polynesia (Nocus, Vernaudon, Guimard, Paia and Florin, forthcoming) confirm that pupils make progress in the local language benefiting the experimental groups and that being taught in an experimental class does not hinder learning to read in French. Moreover, a positive effect of local language reading schemes has been observed. These provisional results are consistent with those from our previous research and with the data from international literature (Bialystok 2001; Lecocq et al. 2007; Perregaux 1994).

This latest research allows, amongst other things, rigorous verification in a francophone environment of Cummins's developmental interdependence hypothesis. The results of this work will be available in late 2011 and will provide the political and educational authorities of these communities with methods of assessment so as to optimize the development of the language and academic competences of pupils in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

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Achieving an intelligent use of mother tongues

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Accepted constraints

The thoughts which follow come against a background of two inescapable facts. Firstly, in France, French occupies an exclusive position in the public sphere; secondly there exist, as entities making up the nation as a whole, Overseas Departments and Communities, in which live French citizens whose linguistic and cultural profile contrasts with the prototype of metropolitan France. Noting the first fact as a constitutional constraint, and the second as a factual reality, we shall confine ourselves here to the linguistic aspect of these specificities, asking what positive conclusions may be drawn in the field of education, in Mayotte in particular, whose inhabitants voted in 2009 to become a department within France.

Article 2.1 of the Constitution ('The language of the Republic is French') precludes any *linguistic rights*, unlike the situation in some neighbouring countries (Bertile 2008): the burden of achieving understanding between the State and the citizen lies entirely on the latter, who has the task of mastering the national language.¹ Monolingual French-speakers have direct linguistic access to the public sphere, as do those with two languages, who may deplore this sociolinguistic inequality, and make reasonable claims, but they cannot protest that there is discrimination against them on account of the monolingualism of the State. The same does not apply to non-French-speaking citizens.

This situation disappeared from metropolitan France towards the middle of the twentieth century, so that it rarely figures in debates on society. It is however quite evident Overseas, giving rise to an inequality in relations with the authorities, justice, education etc., which can without exaggeration be termed linguistic discrimination if matters stay as they are. While Article 2 of the Constitution imposes a constraint on the citizen, it also lays an implicit duty on the Republic, to which it falls to ensure access to proper command of French for citizens for whom it is not a first language: hence the vital role of the school system.

This leaves the question of which paths are the most effective for schools and their pupils, and in the pupils' case, the least painful. Our view here is that full linguistic dimension of languages must be seen, going far beyond the role of an instrument of communication and of an identity marker. If each language is recognized as a complex intellectual construct, a better understanding is gained of problems over how French is acquired as a second language, and educationally productive and socially harmonious ways forward imagined. And where pupils, outside school, use a language other than French, that is to say, *another way of constructing meaning*, the question must arise of the place of this other language in the school system.

¹ In January 1790 the Constituent Assembly embarked on a programme of translations, before giving up under the pressure on the one hand of burdensome administration and the rise of Jacobin centralism on the other.

The avowed reasons for excluding mother tongues

French monolingualism is traditionally the norm in the school system: *nothing is made* of the mother tongue of non-French-speaking children.² This position may be justified by two types of argument. Firstly, concern for national unity, which is nowadays sometimes given the form of an apparently unanswerable syllogism: the school system must train children for citizenship and the values of the Republic; French is the language of the Republic; so the school system must speak French, the language of the Republic. Secondly, the good of those concerned: as a command of French is a precondition for success at school and in society, the school system must provide all children entrusted to it with the wherewithal to gain this command.

But as some children arrive in school not speaking French, the education system, acknowledging the difficulty, has devised specific methodologies and schemes. Under the Third Republic, the ‘Carré method’ was devised and implemented, then a variant of it known as the ‘direct method’ (Puren 2004: 241 sq.). The general idea was, so as to avoid a droningly repetitive teaching style, to reproduce in L2 (second language) learning the intuitive processes that led to the acquisition of L1 (first language, or if preferred: mother tongue³) outside school. Current FLE textbooks (*Français Langue Etrangère* – French as a Foreign Language) and FLS (*Français Langue Seconde* – French as a Second Language – or *Langue de Scolarisation* – Language of Education),⁴ and transition schemes for first-time arrivals such as the CLIN and CLA,⁵ all fail to take pupils’ L1 into account, in other words to act as if they had never developed language.

But a child arriving in school, even at a very young age, is not a blank page, be it for language or for other forms of knowledge. Every human society has an awareness of language, in the form of a particular language which is one of the representatives of this universal faculty. Through their L1, whatever it is, children have their first experience of language in general. Given the role of the school to support children’s intellectual development, it is good practice to base new knowledge on that already acquired.⁶ In the field of language, the issue is crucial until language is fully developed via L1, with stabilization generally taking place around the age of seven. If L1 is inhibited before that age – worse even if it is persecuted⁷ – then language development as a whole is obstructed, with consequences for all cognitive processes, and in particular the learning of the language of education. To this may be added discomfort over identity, as children come to feel that all their efforts to acquire language have served no purpose and that they have to start all over again from scratch: in other words that the diversity of languages is

2 ‘French alone shall be used in schools’ (Ministerial order of 07/06/1880, Art. 14).

3 For concision’s sake, the abbreviations L1 and L2 will be used throughout this article.

4 Unlike earlier ones, they were devised for contexts where learners could not avoid French by falling back on the linguistic territory of their origins: essentially permanently settled migrants, and inhabitants of countries where, as in Sub-Saharan Africa, the learners’ first language is not, or is only rarely, the official language of education.

5 Respectively: *Classes d’Initiation* (Initiation classes – in primary school) and *Classes d’Accueil* (Reception classes – in secondary school).

6 Jean-Pierre Cuq, one of the proponents of FLS teaching materials, in a video made in Mayotte, speaks of the *hidden curriculum* (as opposed to the school curriculum) to refer to all the knowledge built up in this way by children from their life experience.

7 In spite of some assurances, a body of evidence shows that this practice has not completely disappeared, most often taking the form of humiliating comments.

an area of conflict where, through their birth, they are on the losing side.⁸

Things are very different if they are given the opportunity to look in a positive way at diversity of languages, which is language's very mode of existence. Balanced bilinguals develop a richer and more complex conception of language than do monolinguals: their skills in two (or more) languages encourage a metalinguistic distance with regard to the specificities of each language and the unity of language, which affects all activities involving reflection and abstraction, and in particular mathematics and the learning of new languages. For around fifty years, a large number of studies show that such bilinguals perform better than monolinguals on many indicators of verbal and non-verbal intelligence: they demonstrate greater capacities of abstraction, memorization, creativity, transferring know-how from one field to another, etc.⁹ Some presence of the mother tongue therefore probably has, for mastering French itself, more advantages than immersion in French monolingualism alone.

The institution has another solid argument for keeping to the arrangements referred to in note 4: they are designed for foreign pupils, most often for teaching linguistically heterogeneous groups, and putting several languages to use in teaching is no easy matter.¹⁰ But this excuse does not hold water when dealing with homogenous groups, which is more the norm in large areas Overseas: even in a general situation of extensive multilingualism as in French Guiana or New Caledonia, many schools are found where all or the vast majority of pupils have the same L1, and, with a smaller number of languages, this is also the case in Mayotte where the two local languages, Shimaore and Kibushi, are spread over generally homogenous sites.¹¹ So a virtue cannot always be made of necessity. Article 2 of the Fundamental law implies that citizens must be French-speaking, but certainly not monolingual French-speaking, and should it prove that by training good bilinguals one trains good French-speakers, then excluding languages other than French is no more than a counterproductive symbol, to yield before a reasoned approach to bilingualism.

It was from Overseas, or what was Overseas at the time (Tunisia in point of fact) that the most serious and best-argued challenge to the Carré method came, in the 1890s, when Machuel and Perrin¹² maintained that the acquisition of the second language is facilitated by taking account of the first language. Advocating a 'natural method of comparison and translation,' they highlighted the profound differences between the informal learning of the first language and the academic learning of a second language, the teaching shortcuts (intelligibility of information or instructions) allowed by alternate use of one language or the other, and also the damage that can arise from failing to take into account of the emotional element and the capacities for abstraction offered by the use of any language whatever. Use of the pupils' languages, on a transitional basis, was grudgingly tolerated by the institution,¹³ and widespread

8 There is much evidence, literary or oral, and this malaise has been expressed by many Mahorese (researchers or elected representative), at the conference in May 2010 where this paper was presented.

9 There is plentiful and convergent literature on the subject and for an overview of the question, from a psycholinguistic viewpoint, see Hamers and Blanc (2000).

10 But it is not impossible, see § 7 on language awareness.

11 See in Laroussi (2009) the articles by Martine Jaquin « Répartition des langues à Mayotte: une approche statistique » p. 45-54, and Haladi Madi « Le paysage linguistique actuel de Mayotte », p. 55-66.

12 Louis Machuel, a teacher of Arabic, was the director of primary education in Tunisia. Alfred Perrin, former director of the Collège Alaoui in Tunis, is the author of « De la manière d'enseigner le français aux indigènes d'Algérie et de Tunisie », *Revue pédagogique*, 1894. See Puren (2004: 275 sq.).

13 Article 2 of the Deixonne Law (see § 3): 'Educational instructions are given (...) to authorize teachers to make use of local speech forms (...) whenever this may be profitable for their teaching, most particularly for the study of the French language.'

among teachers with knowledge of them, but in the field it was (and still is) most often proscribed by inspectors. It is in any event doubtful that making systematic use of teachers from outside, with no knowledge of the languages, is an effective means of teaching French and combating failure at school.¹⁴ It might be added that there are as many forms of non-French-speaking as there are languages other than French, and so as many forms of bilingualism as there are first language-French pairs, and that L1s show a greater or lesser degree of genetic or typological proximity to French: accordingly the most effective pathways for the acquisition of French are not necessarily the same when starting from a related language such as Catalan or Corsican, a very distant language (Amerindian, Melanesian, Bantu...), or from a deceptively close language such as a French Creole.¹⁵

The shortcomings of the LCR scheme

In 1951, the Deixonne Law allowed the teaching of *local languages and dialects* to be initiated. Highly restrictive at the outset (only four languages from mainland France, with requirements as to the minimum number of pupils, an explicit parental request, optional status outside the normal timetable, etc.), this was gradually extended to other languages, and given a new direction by the 1982 Savary circular, organizing the teaching of *Langues et Cultures Régionales* (LCR – *Regional Languages and Cultures*), ‘from preschool to University level, not [as] a subject on the margins, but [as] a specific subject.’ This principle was tantamount to bringing them into line with modern foreign languages (LVE – *Langues vivantes étrangères*): equal status in the curriculums and national examinations, training and qualification requirements for teachers through the creation of specialized Capes¹⁶ and CRPEs.¹⁷ The 2000 Code of Education abolished the Deixonne Law but kept its main provisions. There is therefore, or so it would appear, a framework for giving the languages of our Overseas compatriots a place in the school system, especially as Article 34 of the *Loi d’Orientation de l’Outre-mer* (LOOM – Overseas Orientation Law, 2000), lays down:

Regional languages in use in Overseas Departments are part of the linguistic heritage of the Nation. There will be a strengthening of policies promoting regional languages so as to facilitate their use. The Law of 11 January 1951 on the teaching of local languages and dialects applies to them.

Since the 1980s there has been Creole taught in the four Overseas Departments, as well as Tahitian in Polynesia, and four Kanak languages¹⁸ in New Caledonia. However the fact that the LCR came into being in metropolitan France has led to directions that require a radical rethink in Overseas contexts.

¹⁴ Some education officials wished to systematize this solution after the reincorporation of Alsace-Moselle in 1918, greatly irritating the populations concerned (Puren (2004: 309 sq.). For French Guiana, where there are large numbers of teachers from outside, see Puren (2005), Alby and Launey (2007). On Mayotte (and in particular the case of ICDMs), see § 5.

¹⁵ Where the vast majority of the lexis comes from French, but the grammar is totally different.

¹⁶ *Certificat d’aptitude au professorat de l’enseignement du second degré* (Certificate of Qualification for Secondary School Teaching). The first to come into being was Breton (1985). Currently there are Basque, Catalan, Occitan-langue d’oc, Creole, Corsican and Tahitian, with very few posts (1 to 4 depending on the language).

¹⁷ *Concours de Recrutement des Professeurs des Ecoles* (Recruitment Examination for School Teachers).

¹⁸ Among the 28 listed in the 1999 Cerquiglini report on ‘languages of France’: Drehu, Nengone, Paicî and Ajiï. In reality, flexible local adaptation allows for other languages.

Firstly, the Deixonne Law was passed in the wake of demands and political debate,¹⁹ with no prior sociolinguistic research (how alive are regional languages and to what extent are they passed on between generations? how are the regional language and French each used in social life? what are parents' expectations?) or educational or psycholinguistic research (what positive outcomes may be expected from this teaching?). Terse in the extreme and lacking detail on content, it would appear to be a concession of a symbolic presence in response to an equally symbolic exclusion. Specifically, the vital question is not asked: is it planned to teach L1 or L2? If the former, pupils are to be taught who have the regional language as L1 (coming to school without knowing French) or one of their L1s (coming to school already bilingual). So there is no learning of the language in the strict sense, but programmes like those known as *language activities* in early years (see § 5), or French teaching in secondary school (work on lexis and grammar, knowledge of literature...). In the latter case, programmes are devised for pupils who do not know the language: there is a progression from scratch, as with foreign languages. By 1951, regional language monolingualism had more or less disappeared from metropolitan France, and there was a sharp drop in bilingualism overtaken by monolingualism in French.

Support for pre-existing bilingualism and the training of a pool of new speakers are both legitimate objectives, but they do not call for the same methods or content.²⁰ With no clear choice, and the problem simply not put, LCR teaching played down the 'language' aspect and developed that of 'culture,' with a drift in the direction of folklore (provincial ethnology, rural traditions, festivals and dances, cuisine etc.). The somewhat critical diagnosis that could be made in the 1970s²¹ should no doubt be rather more nuanced today. By putting LCR on a similar footing to modern foreign languages, the Savary circular implicitly recognizes the fall in numbers of those with regional languages as L1, but at the same time helps rehabilitate the linguistic aspect through the need for learning in the strict sense; and the Capes syllabuses show that teacher training, for secondary level at least, has the same level of requirements in the discipline. Nonetheless the situation is no doubt very variable from one place to another, especially in primary schools.

There is a second issue overshadowing Overseas languages. Regional languages are a permanent source of passionate and barren argument, with confrontations on purely ideological ground between 'Jacobins' and 'regionalists,' between the value given to the unity of the Nation and that of the diversity of its components.²² The most recent episodes were in 1999 (on the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages) and 2008 (on their inclusion in the Constitution). In the case of the former, the ratification of the Charter was made impossible by Decision 99-412 DC of the Constitutional Council, and as regards the latter, Article 75-1 was effectively included in the fundamental law which lays down that: 'Regional languages belong to the heritage of France.' Nonetheless in metropolitan France,

19 After the Liberation deputies from Brittany and the South with a Resistance background proposed raising the status of their languages which should be part of the 'package' of rediscovered freedoms. But the urgency of the problems faced by the Fourth Republic delayed its adoption and watered down its provisions.

20 See Launey « L'exploitation pédagogique des langues maternelles » (Prudent *et al.* 2005: 219-240).

21 The diagnosis of Gardin (1975).

22 This finding on the place of regional languages in political debate is not to be interpreted as a challenge to legitimacy of their presence in the school system.

regional languages, being spoken only by bilinguals (early or new speakers), are thought of in terms of heritage, whether symbolic or as a matter of identity, and very concrete issues are forgotten, in terms of education, knowledge acquisition and access to citizenship, which are pressing issues Overseas.

Two lines of approach

The problems, and the steps taken to deal with them, are of a different order where the Creoles of Overseas Departments and other languages are concerned, for two main reasons: the rate of pre-school monolingualism, and the nature of the languages.

For Creoles, LCR syllabuses have existed since the mid-1980s, in the wake of the Savary circular. The traditional stigmatization of Creoles in schools had led many parents to speak only French to their children, so that some transfer the task of passing it on to schools, as is often the case in Metropolitan France. However, the rate of Creole-French bilingualism is still high, and, in many places, Creole plays an important socialization role within the pupil community both as a vehicular language and as a language of collusion, to achieve, rather than through French, the integration of children as happens in French Guiana for Brazilians or some Amerindians, or for Mahorese, Malagasies and Comorians in Réunion. While admittedly some tendency to drift off towards folklore can be found, there is also a clarification of the dominant objective: support for pre-existing bilingualism or bilingualism being built outside school. In Réunion, there are even cases of pre-school Creole monolingualism. In any event, anywhere that Creole can be treated as the L1 (or an L1) of the children, and especially where they clearly have a weaker command of French than of Creole, well-thought-out activities can be seen evolving which closely resemble those of the Mother Tongue Worker scheme in French Guiana (v. § 5): likewise in Guadeloupe (Bolus 2009), and Réunion (Georger 2006).

The nature of the language is at least as important a parameter, and frequently neglected by the education system which, as seen above (§2) tends to regard non-French-speaking areas as an undifferentiated whole. The closeness of Creoles and French (at least in lexical terms) gives Creole-speaking pupils a facility –familiarity with vocabulary– while at the same time leaving them with a deep uncertainty: find the proper demarcation between the two languages, in a situation particularly prone to interferences and mixing. From a Creole viewpoint, this is not such a great evil: even if puristic attitudes are not rare, there is great tolerance, means of coercion are not harsh, and at least some Creole scholars maintain that by its very nature Creole is a continuum characterized by a scalar variation.²³ From a French viewpoint, as the school system sets very strict (lexical, grammatical, phonetic, graphic) norms, with the aim of leading pupils to master these norms, no great tolerance of deviation is to be expected. It is not however impossible to devise a teaching system from contact and variation in contexts where, to use Georger's terms when talking of children in Réunion, 'language usage is made up of French, Creole, and the contact of the two languages' (Georger 2006: 58), and where moreover the two coexisting linguistic forms show strong resemblances.

Matters are however different when there is large-scale pre-school monolingualism, along with highly contrasting languages: these two parameters are found in

23 Adopting a viewpoint which they term *interlectal*, see Prudent « Interlecte et pédagogie de la variation en pays créoles » (Prudent, Tupin & Wharton 2005: 359-378) or de Robillard « Créoliser la linguistique ? » (Idelson & Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrino 2009: 117-126).

the Pacific territories, in some areas of French Guiana, and in Mayotte. Allophone children are then faced with a language where there is no resemblance at all to what they know of language through their L1, and which leaves them pondering hard questions about language in general, and needing to completely restructure their habitual ways of conveying meaning. Those who overcome this difficulty become particularly high-performing bilinguals, but assessments show that they are rare.²⁴ The school system must not underestimate the specifically linguistic dimension of this difficulty, and act as if French was a sort of linguistic absolute acquired quite naturally by impregnation or the communicative approach. The truth is that French is a language with phonological or morphosyntactic specificities which are not self-evident, which implies, on the one hand, a need to create a better awareness among teachers of the difficulties this creates for their pupils (through sound initial or ongoing training in French as a second language), and, on the other, a counterpoint to French as language of education in the form of syllabuses which introduce the L1 or use it in a well-thought-out way. Several courses of action are possible, some tried and tested. Four can be cited here.

Mother tongue language activities in early years

The last fifteen years have seen the appearance, in all the areas mentioned, in an uncoordinated but convergent way, of mother tongue activities in early years (preschool and the second primary cycle, \pm age 3 to 7). Even when they exist explicitly in the framework of the Deixonne Law (in New Caledonia and Polynesia, where moreover they have the support of the local officials), they take a very different approach to LCR teaching as it is known in metropolitan France. It involves supporting allophone children in their language construction work through L1, developing 'language' activities similar to those schools run in French for standard monolingual French-speaking pupils.

Using nursery rhymes or rhythmical song games, children come to develop some form of phonological awareness, clearing a pathway for writing. They are led towards verbalization from familiar references (nature, social organization, techniques, plastic arts or music), or to an expression of past events or future plans. They become aware of vocabulary available to them and how it can be put to good use, and they expand this, for example by exercises on family relationships, colours, parts of the body, geometric forms, animal or vegetable classifications and taxonomies, etc. These semantic areas often have a different linguistic organization in L1 and French: mastering them in L1 allows the clarification of any discrepancies with French L2, and better development of children's metalinguistic capacities and command of French.²⁵ They come to know and possibly engage in the forms of oral literature such as riddles and tales, which have very underexploited educational potential (§ 8). This helps school become less alien to children, and in contexts where, as all teachers know, many of their pupils take refuge in a dumb attitude, mother tongue activities often have the effect of unblocking this.

24 In 2010, in French CM2 (age \pm 10-11) assessments, at national level, 73% of pupils had over 30 correct answers out of 60. In Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion (where the only regional language is Creole), this rate varies between 56 and 63%. In French Guiana, where there are many speakers of 'very different' languages (Amerindian, Bushinenge or black Maroon, Asiatic), it is 28%, and 16% in Mayotte. The weakest group (fewer than 17 correct answers) is 7% at national level, 11 to 18% in the first three Overseas Departments, 48% in Guyana, and 64% in Mayotte.

25 See by way of examples Lanier-Auburtin « *Contenus et outils d'enseignement en langue maternelle* » (Vernaudeau & Fillol 2009: 175-190); Geneix-Rabault « *Chants et jeux chantés pour les enfants en langue drehu (îles Loyauté, Nouvelle-Calédonie)* » (ibid.: 207-224).

The full-blown version of this kind of bilingual educational syllabus that exists a number of Latin American countries is not found in French Overseas communities:²⁶ to make bilinguals of children starting out as monolinguals, and achieve as far as possible a fit between the two languages or at least a harmonious transition, the first steps are in L1 (the only or very dominant language) in the first year, learning to write (or initiation) in L1, then there is an introduction of the official national language that increases over the years that follow, until it becomes the dominant or only language in the final year of primary education.²⁷ Overseas, there is a minimalist version (around one hour a week) in French Guiana, and (implemented on an even more restricted basis) in three classes in Mayotte, and an average version (five to seven hours a week), backed by legislation, in New Caledonia and Polynesia.

To avoid any misunderstanding, it is worth repeating here that these are L1 (mother tongue) programmes, not regional language programmes as such: there is no need for them to be applied to bilingual children. Where the situation allows, and groups are large enough, it is moreover possible to imagine the scheme being extended to migrants' languages, and in point of fact there is currently such extension in French Guiana, for Brazilian Portuguese and Haitian Creole. That being said, it remains true that the existence of non-francophone French children (and so an identical status of a regional language and mother tongue) is a good negotiating argument for winning teaching posts. It may be added that the mere presence of their language at school has an affirmative effect for children and their parents, bringing them closer to the school system: one of the immediate effects of introducing bilingual language workers in French Guiana was greater parental involvement in school life.

There are many difficulties,²⁸ but none of them are as insurmountable as adversaries of the experiment would claim. Firstly, these are often little-studied and underdocumented languages, requiring a language to be 'kitted out' with grammars or dictionaries, teaching materials, teacher training, etc., but commitment on the part of linguists, collaboration with educationalists and local élites can achieve fairly rapid production of effective educational aids and practice. Next, these are most often languages with a purely oral tradition, when writing is required for explaining grammar, but this is above all a problem for teachers during training, and only for pupils when learning writing; in any event, even if graphic standardization is always desirable, variation is not a major obstacle.²⁹ Again, the languages have a degree of internal variation (dialectalization), but once more the difficulty should not be exaggerated: speakers of such languages are used to this, know how to cope, and schools themselves have contrived (with some difficulties on occasion) to find strategies that smooth out and integrate dialectal diversity for languages such as Occitan-langue d'oc, Breton, Basque, Creole (or Creoles?). It was a pleasure for researchers at CELIA³⁰ to have Ndyuka and Aluku³¹ bilingual mediators accept that

26 Except apparently in Wallis, where there is such a progression, but fast-tracked solely in pre-school, all subsequent education being entirely in French: see Vernaudeau & Sam « La réforme plurilingue de l'école en Nouvelle-Calédonie, en Polynésie française et à Wallis et Futuna » (Vernaudeau & Fillol 2009: p. 35-48).

27 This makes bilingual teaching very different from that found in Metropolitan France (Diwan, Ikastolak, Bressola, etc., and in some schools run by the National Education system), where the language depends on the subject taught.

28 The same ones are encountered in setting up language awareness (§ 7).

29 As graphic variation in documents as late as the nineteenth century shows for French itself.

30 Centre d'Etudes des Langues Indigènes d'Amérique, Unité mixte de recherches CNRS-IRD-Paris 7-Inalco (*Centre for the Study of Indigenous American Languages, Mixed Research Unit*).

they spoke two variants of the same language rather than two different languages: all that was needed was to take a rational approach to this variation with them, explain and classify the differences, and have them admit (with good grace) that these differences did not interfere with intercomprehension. Although in principle work is being done on the mother tongue, which makes matters easier in linguistically homogenous schools, involvement of children in the group who do not speak it cannot be ruled out if in the place in question the language has a strong socialization role: so it is that Kanak children can be found learning a language which is not necessarily that of their parents, and children of European origin joining in the same language activities as their native friends.

These schemes have undergone assessment with consistent and generally positive outcomes for Oceania (Pineau-Salaün 2004, Nocus et al. 2005, Nocus et al. 2008). French Guiana is a latecomer in this respect (see however Crouzier 2007): at the ANR (*Agence Nationale de la Recherche* – National Research Agency) there is an ongoing project called ECOLPOM, combining studies on the Oceanian and French Guianese schemes, but it has been held up by the partial interruption of the experiment in 2009-2010 (see above). It would seem that all the misgivings over this presence of the L1 of the pupils at school prove to be unfounded. At all events, there is one argument that is null and void: the accusation of ‘closed off in their culture,’ often levied by many inspectors and some teachers, claiming that such programmes based on children’s own language and reference points delays contact with the outside world and their integration in the body of the nation. It is certainly reasonable that, where there is no knowledge of such realities, children at some stage must learn about winter, railways, apple trees, foxes, etc., but if right at the start of their school career there is nothing there of what is familiar to them, they will have the disturbing impression that the whole world is interesting, except for the part of the world where they live, and that the same is true of themselves. A knowledge of the outside world must come in time, but one built on pre-existing knowledge³². By ensuring comprehensibility in school, programmes of this type ensure better access to the outside and the universal, and consequently, follow the logic of integration rather than the of logic a closed-off identity, and the accusation can fairly be turned back on the accusers.

The training of teachers is obviously a prerequisite for success, as a command of a language does not in itself provide the skill to teach it. It is also necessary that these teachers be recognized as such. The Pacific communities are in a position to assign such tasks to teachers, qualified teachers or civil service primary teachers from the territory, and in Mayotte, if the wish was there, this could be the case for ICDM or IFPERMs,³³ speakers of the local languages. In French Guiana, children are being helped in their schooling by ILMs (*Intervenants en Langue Maternelle* –

31 These are two Bushinenge (or Maroon) groups, descendants of slaves who fled the plantations in Surinam and developed original cultures in the forest. They speak an English-based Creole.

32 I had the opportunity to see a Ndyuka language worker in Monfina, in an isolated part of the French Guianese forest, show children pictures of animals, first of all from the Amazon (jaguar, caiman, agouti, anteater...), to get the children to talk, with questions like ‘have you seen any?’, ‘do you eat them?’ ‘do you know what it eats?’, ‘does your father hunt them?’, etc., then African animals, this time taking the role of the one passing on knowledge ‘Look, that is a lion, you see.’ A perfect example of educational technique.

33 Respectively: *Instituteurs de la Collectivité Départementale de Mayotte* (Primary Teachers of the Departmental Community of Mayotte), and *Instituteurs de la Fonction Publique d’Etat Recrutés à Mayotte* (Civil Service Primary Teachers Recruited in Mayotte).

Mother Tongue Workers, originally called *Médiateurs Bilingues*, Bilingual Mediators); this involves children from the Amerindian (five out of six languages covered), Bushinenge (Ndyuka and Aluku, see above), and Hmong communities. As national civil service rules apply more strictly in an Overseas Department, and with no state school teacher qualification, they were first recruited in 1998 as Education Assistants under the Youth Employment Plan, then carried over on to a number of precarious roles, and at the start of the 2009 school year, the education authorities terminated the contracts of nine of them, on the grounds that they had had too many fixed-term contracts. These were in fact the oldest and best trained, as they had attended two or three one- or two-week training courses each year, with a linguistic component run by CELIA³⁴ researchers, and educational training from CASNAV³⁵. A few funded contract workers, poorly trained and poorly paid, working as language workers as an odd job rather than a proper job, did not make up for this haemorrhage, which seriously disturbed the year for some schools, including some important ones (Awala and Maripasoula in particular). At the time of writing (September 2010), it appears that the Ministry has finally created around forty genuine posts.

Reflective observation of languages (including L1s)

As from the age of 7 or 8 (CE1 or CE2, and throughout secondary school), children develop metalinguistic skills that schools must sustain and support: they may become explicitly aware of grammatical functions, and this awareness grows with the process of learning how to write their own and second languages, and in return helps this process. In the 2002 curriculum, with the watchword of *Maîtrise du langage et de la langue française* (Proficiency in language and French), support for this process was called *Observation réfléchie de la langue* (Reflective observation of language), complemented through contact with a foreign or regional language. In the 2007 curriculum, the focus has changed slightly:³⁶

Learning foreign languages may lead to comparisons which shed new light on the analysis of French: so there can be an examination of the way in which *taught foreign languages* convey number, identify plural indicators which can be heard and those that cannot, etc.

All linguists will agree with the idea that diverting focus to another language enriches an analysis of French. It should however be noted that the issue here is not regional languages (although they are mentioned elsewhere in the document), most importantly that the relation with languages is envisaged only as *learning an unknown language*, with the prototypical pupil still the French-speaking monolingual. The major weakness of the school system with regard to linguistic diversity is here strikingly apparent: how to *teach* a language is known well enough (even if language teaching methods are a subject open to debate), but here is no programme allowing *a language known already* by pupils as an L1 (regional or foreign) to be put to good use. The school system serves to let the young monolingual be enriched with new knowledge, but seems not to imagine that a young bilingual's prior knowledge of another language could be precisely what might shed this 'new light.' Overseas languages are a real treasure to be mined, with that very aim of mastering French.

34 On the origins of the experiment, see Goury et al. (2000).

35 Centre Académique pour la Scolarisation des Nouveaux Arrivants et Gens du Voyage (Academic Centre for the Education of New Arrivals and Travellers).

36 *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale* n° 5 hors série 5 April 2007 p.78. My italics.

In the Overseas communities there are two great language groups. Firstly the Creoles, which show human resourcefulness in constructing meaning when, enslaved in dire physical and moral conditions, and with no possible recourse to a first language (as the group of slaves is multilingual), an instrument for conveying meaning must be invented. The way in which these languages restructure a verb system from a heterogeneous set of auxiliaries or prepositions, for example, is a stroke of genius also deserving of reflective observation. Secondly the other languages –Amerindian, Asiatic, Melanesian, (Malayo-)Polynesian, Bantu– each in their way present some remarkable features, which can only broaden a conception of language, and which it is absurd to leave untouched. If I may, as one working more in the Amerindian field,³⁷ I shall cite just a few examples in the languages of Mayotte, of which I have only second-hand knowledge.³⁸

When considering ‘plural indicators which can be heard and those that cannot,’ pupils may be shown the set of prefixes in Shimaore, have it pointed out for example that in *nyumba y-angu* my house and *nyumba z-angu*³⁹ my houses, it is the class agreement (9/10 in the terminology of Bantu grammars) on the possessive has the plural marking, and not the noun itself (*nyumba*), and also made to establish a parallel with oral French where there is the same phenomenon as the plural –s is not phonetically realized. In a general way, a contrastive analysis can be made of the gender category as it exists in French, and of the system of noun classes found in Shimaore as in the other Bantu languages: this phenomenon has been given sufficient attention by linguists for there to be the resources to make it a field of knowledge in schools. But by only mentioning plural markers, the BOEN shows a highly impoverished conception both of the potential of reflective observation of L1 on foreign languages and of the intellectual interest of languages, two points we shall illustrate.

In Mayotte pupils generally have English lessons. The way of teaching this language is designed for French-speaking monolinguals, and there is nothing done to take advantage of the shortcuts the knowledge of another language might allow. For example, many French-speakers hesitate (and make mistakes) over English usage of the simple present and the progressive form: when would *Maman fait la cuisine* be rendered by *Mummy cooks*, and when by *Mummy is cooking*? Shimaore-speakers learning English and making use not just of French but the whole of their linguistic experience, especially their L1, will automatically make the connection between *Mummy cooks* and *Mama u-piha*, and *Mummy is cooking* and *Mama a-si-piha*. Many other similar cases exist, and linguists, and Mahorese educators, would do well to draw this to the attention of the system.

Some pupils in Mayotte learn Latin. Advocates of the subject point to two merits, one cultural and historical (contact with Roman civilization), and the other a purely linguistic one, in particular: Latin has a noun *declension* system, meaning that nouns have different forms or *cases*, depending on their function in a sentence: so *master* (or *lord*) is *dominus* when it is the subject or complement, *dominum* when a direct object, *domino* when an indirect object, *domini* to indicate possession, etc.

37 For Oceania, see Vernaudo « Observation réfléchie et comparée des langues océaniques et de la langue française », in Vernaudo and Fillol (2009) p. 191-206.

38 For Shimaore, through the works of Rombi (1983), Maandhui (1993) SHIME (1999), and an extensive Internet course; and for Kibushi, an indirect contact (works on Sakalave or Malagasy proper): Thomas-Fattier (1982), Rajaona (1972) and a few other available grammars or manuals. Any errors are my own.

39 Following the usual convention, I use hyphens (which are not part of ‘standard’ writing) to break words down into morphemes (radical, prefixes, suffixes).

The syntax of languages of this type⁴⁰ is contained in the morphology, and proper use (or close observation) of Latin declensions lead to an examination of the syntax of French itself. This 'Latin effect' is found in another type of language, those marking syntactic functions, not on the noun itself, but on the syntactically dominant verb category. So in Shimaore for example there is a multiple subject + object agreement in the transitive verb ('U-si-ni-ona' *you see me*; 'ni-si-hu-ona' *I see you*), which combines with the class agreement ('ni-si-wa-ona' *I see them*, if *them* refers to humans, but 'ni-si-zi-ona' when referring to goats for example).

Shimaore also has morphological variation in the form of *diathesis*, that is the generalization of the category of *voice*, that is an orientation of the verb in relation to those taking part in the vent referred to. So there is not only a passive ('u-ruma' *to use*; 'u-rum-wa' *be used*), a reflexive ('u-ona' *to see*; 'u-dji-ona' *to see oneself*) and a reciprocal ('u-saidia' *to help*; 'u-saidia-na' *to help each other*), but less familiar voices, a stative ('u-pasua' *to break*; 'u-pasu-ha' *be breakable*), an applicative (or 'prepositional') ('u-lisha' *to leave*; 'u-lish-ia' *to leave for someone*), a causative (or factitive) ('u-la' *to eat*; 'u-li-sa' *to feed*), and causative + passive combinations ('u-elea' *to be clear to*; 'u-ele-dza' *to make clear*; 'u-ele-dze-wa' *to have it made clear*), applicative + passive ('u-fanya' *to do*; 'u-fany-ia' *to do for*; 'u-fany-iwa' *have done for one*; 'a-fany-iwa shahula' *he had food made for him*). The absence of a detailed Kibushi grammar prevents a clear picture emerging, but in Malagasy there are even richer variations and combinations, with active forms, a circumstantial voice ('adidy mofo ny antsy' *the knife is that with which bread is cut*), and nearly thirty possible combinations (Rajaona 1972, section 2.3). This makes it absurd to speak in terms of 'instead of doing Latin, they would do better to...' precisely because engagement with and an interest in languages does not allow for exclusions. But educational exploitation of the grammar of such languages, by making children notice what is happening in their L1 without their necessarily being aware of it, can have retroactive effects on their command of French (and Latin if there is Latin). And it would be absurd to ignore the personal validation produced by syllabuses like these: the school system is recognizing that my language is beautiful, complex, worthy of interest, and the satisfaction this give to my sense of identity involves not the slightest aggression.

Language awareness

While early years activities are seen primarily as a programme involving the L1, it can be seen here that reflective observation of local languages can also be of interest to pupils who are not native speakers. So a relationship to languages can be imagined that does not necessarily depend on systematic learning, but observation, a search for information, intellectual interest. In Europe over the past twenty years the approach known as *awareness of language* has developed (Hawkins 1984). The line taken is in some way to overturn the curse of Babel, taking multilingualism as a source of intellectual pleasure, play activities, metalinguistic observations, and mutual interest in the respective languages. The aimed-for objectives are: attitudes (positive acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity, a desire to learn languages, a trustful approach to an unfamiliar language, curiosity over how languages work, interest in studying how they work); aptitudes (ability to learn languages, do work requiring analysis and discrimination, ability to live in a multilingual and

40 Latin is obviously not the only case like this. Along with many others, Russian, German and standard Arabic are among the 'major' languages taught at primary and secondary level which fall into this category.

multicultural society, use a number of languages even if imperfectly, to identify unfamiliar languages), and knowledge of the world of language (for example, that there are differences and similarities between languages, that every language involves variation, that the distribution of languages is not the same as that of nation states).

The methods adopted are exercises based on observations on a range of languages, in fields such as the relations between languages and cultures, the relation between the written and the oral, the relation between languages and history (evolution, borrowings...), sound and spelling, grammatical and geo-linguistic categories (languages in the geographic and political sphere), bilingualism, status of languages etc. Experiments show highly positive results on indicators such as appreciation of languages and coexistence, and with regard to the latter, real calming of inter-community tensions in mixed classes (Candelier 2003). Examples of teaching materials can be found in Perrégaux et al. (2003) or Kervran (2006), or on the *Jaling* website, and there are teams working or devising other materials in Reunion, French Guiana and elsewhere.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no language awareness experiments in Mayotte. As with the two approaches mentioned earlier, the environment is however very favourable, as multilingualism is a matter of everyday life, not just through French and the two regional languages, but also through several circles of multilingualism with which the Mahorese are in often very close contact. Teaching materials suited to this context could in this way bring into play: Arabic, with its obvious cultural importance; the languages taught in schools and colleges (English, Spanish), forms of Comorian whether very close (Shindzuani) or more distant (Shingazidja, Shimwali), which allow 'precision' work on dialectal variation⁴¹, and can nurture mutual interest between Mahorese children and their peers from the other islands; for the same reasons, Sakalave and Malagasy proper; Swahili (which can allow the idea of language families to be explored, and comparisons made with the relation between French and Spanish); Creole from Réunion (on account of the close contacts with Réunion, that it is known to emigrant children, and the value of consideration of Creole languages); possibly other Creoles from the countries in the region (Mauritius and the Seychelles), etc.

Making the most of orality

In all Overseas regions and communities, the oral tradition is very much alive, and most of the languages spoken there have little in the way of a written tradition, sometimes none at all. This situation is often used to disparage: a language only existing in oral form cannot be a 'real' language.

Such a viewpoint is not acceptable in linguistics, but it must be admitted that in the modern world the absence of a written tradition puts a language in a position of weakness. That is why speakers often demand written production in their language, which has the implication of orthographic normalization for which linguists are called in as experts. There will be no discussion here of all the problems (technical, educational, political or symbolic) related to a move to written language, but questions that are rarely asked as such need to be pondered: besides the 'minus side' of orality (no lasting trace, transmission exclusively between persons present...) is there not also a hidden 'plus side'? If so, we should examine how to derive educational benefits among people using writing to no great extent or not at all, or

41 See § 5 on Bushinenge.

do so in a second language of which they often have a poor command, and in restrictive contexts (at school, in administrative matters...).

While the written form has obvious advantages, societies with an oral tradition are able to develop coherent social relationships and robust knowledge. Greetings, rhetoric, poetry, nomenclatures and taxonomies, tales or mythical or historical narratives, genealogies –all these are normed oral forms still allowing creativity, developing memorization skills which are only fully put to use in societies with a written tradition in some professions (actors, musicians...), and ultimately in to a small degree in schools (recitations are rarely very long).

These virtues of orality are fully apparent in the tale. In all societies, including those where writing is present on a large scale, it has the appearance of an object of pleasure (and not for children alone⁴²), but it can also have an educational role. Those listening to a tale can allow their imagination to take flight, identify in a realistic or less realistic way with the characters, or learn and understand the operating codes of the society in which they live. By listening they can come to know and then master the forms of the narrative (logic of connections and repetitions), grammar (syntax, tenses and determiners, use of person markers) and a plentiful vocabulary: in short, a rich and structured form of language, going well beyond the communicative and utilitarian aspect. These skills are the very same as those of writing: appropriate use of vocabulary, verb tenses, pronoun reference, textual coherence with mastery of progression (temporal, causal, opposition relations...). Here again, tales offer a possibility of removing a block for some pupils inhibited by the constraints of school norms and a second language: some otherwise poor performers emerge as highly talented storytellers. It should be added that the process of absorbing and rendering tales is not 'by heart': variants are a substantial element of orality, in contrast to the fixed form of writing.⁴³

Working on tales may therefore be a worthwhile detour to enliven interest in school, reduce failure in school, reveal hidden talents, and even, through shared interest, nurturing a feeling of community and easing tensions⁴⁴. Mayotte, again, has great potential and there have been several publications, often bilingual, of Mahorese tales (as collections like *La maison de la mère* or *Furukombe*, or single tales like *Le coq du roi*). For the enterprise to be a success in schools, some precautions must however be taken. Firstly, it is preferable to remain strictly within an oral environment (a teacher telling a story orally is in a position of equality with and can motivate potential pupil storytellers, whereas a teacher reading from a book is in an unequal position that discourages non-reading pupils). Next, make things enjoyable (no immediate school work: several tales are offered over the year and they are allowed to mature and enter the pupils' minds to be retold later at the right time); lastly, allow pupils to speak if need be in L1, to free up their command of language, and doing so in French later, letting some develop interpreting skills.

42 An entire catalogue would be needed to cite all the organizations and individuals working in this field.

43 On these issues, see Platiel (1993).

44 There is no room here to describe experiments carried out in French Guiana, in particular, in a 'difficult' first year secondary school class, the improved results and disappearance of internal violence, via a project called *Demain le monde: nos origines par les contes* (Tomorrow the world: our origins through stories), which won first prize in a national competition (and did so in the education area with the highest school failure rate).

Prospects for Mayotte

In 2009 the Mahorese voted to become a department within France. In a preparatory document, entitled *Pacte départemental*⁴⁵ (Departmental Pact), the government had highlighted the need to gain a command of French to avoid failure at school and ‘exclusion in the world of employment,’ and made this commitment: ‘We shall combat this risk by giving you the means to speak French easily.’ The authorities are obviously taking their rightful role, but, on the one side, the Mahorese did not vote for the eradication of their languages, which may be covered by Article 34 of the LOOM and Article 75-1 of the Constitution (see § 3), and most importantly, the National Education system, with its specific mission, would be right in taking on the strictly linguistic dimension of the problem⁴⁶, taking on board the research and experience showing that support for bilingualism is more effective than the negation of the first language, and allowing the Mahorese to have the benefit of schemes previously tried out elsewhere Overseas. As a department, Mayotte will not have decision-making powers on the same scale as the Pacific areas, but the problem is not one of political structure: it is a matter of respect for citizens, educational effectiveness, and French Guiana, itself an Overseas department, shows that innovation is possible here too. No doubt Shimaore and Kibushi still need to be provided with grammars and dictionaries that can be used in schools, teaching materials, and most importantly with teacher training: this is an urgent task where there can be collaboration, as has been seen elsewhere, between linguists and educationalists (from Mayotte or elsewhere), and local political bodies like the *Bureau des Langues Régionales* (Regional Languages Bureau) set up on the island. The most urgent, and most useful, way to start would be by experiments in early years, this time with official support, training for teachers, an assessment process, and in enough centres for the assessment to be valid.

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45 http://www.outre-mer.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Pacte_departementalisation_Mayotte.pdf

46 This *Pacte Départemental* tells the Mahorese ‘It is not a matter of pitting a command of French against Mahorese culture’ (my italics): the language to language relationship is not posited, the difficulty of moving to French from a very different L1 is not recognized, and pupils’ languages are a negative quantity in terms of knowledge, as if all knowledge was legitimate and valued apart from this.

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Roll up, roll up for the Language Circus!

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As lecturers in a university of South-Eastern France, teaching French-English translation and British literature as well as running bilingual creative writing workshops, we have for the last five years upheld a central hypothesis to which we had until then –given our experience as students then lecturers in English departments of French universities– hardly given a passing thought. What this hypothesis amounts to is that you can't teach bi/multi-lingual students in the same way as you teach monolingual students –unless you consider, as we do in this paper, that everybody is bilingual but not everyone is aware of it... Multilingual subjects may have superior linguistic abilities, they are also likely to be concerned by loyalty issues relating to cultural or family identity that are less acutely felt in a monolingual environment. Consequently, in our bilingual creative-writing and translation workshops we no longer approach teaching English in the same way as the language has, for generations, been taught and studied in French universities and instead take into account the language(s) our students inhabit. This position has led us to consider three corollaries: that there is no such thing as total monolingualism; that what we call our 'first' language is in effect an abandoned tongue; and that all languages are foreign.

First, a few words about our method: in our workshops as well as in our descriptions of them, hyperbolic statements are welcome... Our workshops are indeed collectively created, partly fictional spaces devoted to creation and invention, including making generous use of figurative language. In this paper likewise liberal use is made of metaphors, with a preference for the most potentially striking images: it would be a pity indeed if, while in our workshops we tap into our students' imaginations as well as our own, we ignored in our academic writing the plentiful riches of polysemy, allusion and association. Without them, our observations would be hard put to reach our readers' pre-conscious nooks and crannies...

And now for some background information: in our attempt to fine-tune our teaching to meet what we think are our students' needs, we have gradually changed our pedagogic practices and opened creative writing and translation workshops in an academic context where they are as yet unfamiliar. South-Eastern France has, throughout its history, been a destination for migrants and a fair number of our students may be regarded as bilingual, the adjective here stretching to include loose forms of linguistic contact. For the purposes of our workshops, we soon decided that would be deemed multilingual any student bearing even slight traces, even if only lexical, of one or several languages other than French, whether or not such students

regard themselves as monolingual.¹ A few traces, all but invisible ‘remnants’: we are deliberately placing ourselves at one end of the spectrum; at the other end will stand those who keep the term bilingual for people who have complete and total mastery of each of their languages.

It should be remembered, moreover, that monolingualism only became dominant in metropolitan France relatively recently, that even now not everybody in France is monolingual in French and therefore that only a small number of our students are likely to feel that the term ‘bilingual’ is not for them –after all, and to keep the list short, who does not have a great-grand- or grand-parent who spoke or still speaks Corsican, an Italian or Arabic dialect, Armenian or French *and* Provençal...? We are getting older but our students aren’t: the great-grand- and grand-parents of yesteryear spoke a regional language along with Parisian French; for the past twenty years, university courses have embraced students whose parents or grand-parents came to France as migrants. And yet the two of us have studied and taught English as if we were, and were teaching, monolinguals. Never mind the fact that we have both studied at least one other language on top of French or English; or that a cursory glance at our class registers suggests our students’ families, in some cases, have only recently arrived in France. A common belief among language teachers may account for this: languages should not be allowed to mix and risk contamination but remain pure, with impassable borders, which is a point made by Gerhard Neuner in his discussion of foreign language didactics:

in most European countries, more than one foreign language is taught at school level. But in most cases the teaching of the foreign languages occurs in ‘separated watertight compartments.’ When introducing a second, third etc. foreign language the students are treated as if they had ‘no idea’ about foreign language learning.

Neuner suggests implementing a pedagogy in which this is reversed and barriers are lifted:

the current project is founded on an experience shared by all foreign language students: the linguistic data and learning processes are not perceived as separate but closely related. The aim of the project is thus to develop a didactic and methodological concept that will allow the learning methods and linguistic matter of the first foreign language to work hand in hand with those of the subsequent languages learnt. This leads to a far more efficacious and interesting approach to the second, third and so forth foreign languages.²

This, moreover, is similar to the way intercomprehension works, with people speaking to each other in languages of the same linguistic family. Scandinavians, for instance, are familiar with this mode of communication which has been taught in schools and is sometimes used, at least for simple exchanges. There is also the European experiment led by Claire Blanche-Benveniste, EuRom4, designed to teach people to communicate using several languages of the same family.³

1 Having asked all our writing-workshop students to complete a questionnaire on their language relationships, we were surprised to learn that none of them admitted to a ‘first’ language other than French, that at best another language (Arabic, Armenian, Malagasy or Comorian, among others) was placed on an equal footing with French, even though, as becomes clear further down the questionnaire, a different language is indeed used at home and French was only spoken when they started school...

2 G. Neuner, ‘The intercultural approach in curriculum and textbook development’, in *Living Together in the 21st Century: the Challenge of Plurilingual and Multicultural Communication and Dialogue*, Strasbourg, Council of European Publishing, 2001, p. 89.

3 C. Blanche-Benveniste 2002.

Such methods help break down the barriers between languages, while demystifying the myth of linguistic purity, which indeed is only to be found in myths and religions, as in the language that Adam supposedly spoke in the Garden of Eden. If at all, the expression ‘pure language’ should be set aside for proto-languages, such as the one that all Indo-European tongues are supposedly derived from: not a religious or mythical elaboration this time, but still a theoretical one. What English language teachers should rather be teaching, or teaching *as well*, is linguistic life and reality. The French language also, purists notwithstanding, is subject to change, including in its pronunciation. It caters to its users’ needs, needs that obviously are not the same in, for example, French-speaking African countries, Canada, or Mayotte.

Now, once we have explained to our students that our workshops stand on imaginary grounds where all participants are considered as multilingual, we go on to remind them that purity only serves the purposes of ideologues, with no regard for living things, and that in our workshops, students and lecturers alike will be regarded as linguistically mixed... This naturally affects our thinking about how to deal with mistakes in grammar and syntax. Incidentally, the long-standing heartache over issues of right or wrong, good or evil, black or white, is over and done with... Indeed, all teachers know, or suspect, that to a certain degree learners learn through imitation and identification.⁴ A learner’s desire to learn can thus be stimulated or inhibited, depending on the teacher’s relationship with the language they teach. When we first opened our workshops, forsaking our disposition to insist on correct or even faultless English from our students was not easy. As we have progressed, however, ‘language mistakes’ have come to be envisaged as nuances or shades on the broader spectrum of linguistic possibilities.

Living in a language can involve lightning flashes of self-expression, but it also means groping near-blind among words, trying out all kinds of options to get as close as possible to what one would like to say. This is particularly patent to poets, translators... or bilingual academics whose English sentences are sometimes fraught with French words that won’t translate, or for which there is no equivalent in the cultural environment they are taking their students to (the SNCF was never quite the same as the now obsolete British Railways, a ‘Unité de Valeur’ is not the same thing as a course of lectures or a module, the competitive exam *Capes*, or the final step before becoming a full professor in France, the *Habilitation*, do not even exist in the English academic world...). ‘This is fun!’ I hear on a bus in Canada one day. ‘Yep, but this is much funner’... As lecturers of English, we cringe at this ignorance of even the simplest rules of grammar! Still, who knows if fifty years from now –when our own teeth and words will have worked loose– it won’t be the accepted norm of expression; similarly, in France or Québec you’ll hear: ‘c’est quand même beaucoup moins pire, ça.’ And how long will it take French academics not to underscore in petulant red ‘like’ where ‘as’ is expected, obeying a grammar rule that more and

4 To read more on this subject please consult our articles : « Même pas peur », first given as a conference paper at a symposium on creativity entitled « Expérience esthétique et imaginaire : enseignement / apprentissage des langues et cultures et pratiques artistiques », organised by the Ile de France IUFM on the 24 and 25 May 2007 in Créteil (Saint-Denis site) and published in Joëlle Aden (éd.), *Apprentissage des langues et pratiques artistiques - Créativité, expérience esthétique et imaginaire*, Paris, Éditions Le Manuscrit Recherche Université (Coll. IUFM), 2008, p. 371-383, as well as « Du gravier ou du savon dans la bouche », awaiting publication, given as a conference paper at the International Symposium of the Réseau Francophone de Sociolinguistique et du Groupement d’Intérêt Scientifique « Pluralités Linguistiques et Culturelles » : « Langue(s) et insertion en contextes francophones : discriminations, normes, apprentissages, identités... », held on the 16-18 June 2009 at the Université Européenne de Bretagne – Rennes 2 par PREFics EA 3207 / UMR CNRS LCF 8143.

more speakers and respected writers disregard?

Our students, at least some of them, watch us, listen to us, keep a weather eye... In a fast-changing world languages change fast and along numerous tracks, and this is true of no language more than English. According to Gavin Bone, the champion of Englishness and inspirer of poets such as Philip Larkin, ‘Anglo-Saxon is a good language to write poetry in because it is impossible to be neat.’⁵ What do we set before our students’ eyes when, teeth clenched and claws at the ready, we crouch over the corpse of the language that we were supposed to teach? Languages are endowed with a liquid nature, they are not solids, and definitely not fortresses or strongholds. How sad for school to be a place where children bide their time before returning to real life! Here is a testimony from an experiment with some foreign-background 5 and 6-year-olds:

that a stranger should be standing before them with foreign languages seemed peculiar to them. Three Arabic-speaking pupils firmly said they did not speak any foreign language, and the researcher had the utmost difficulties getting a ‘hello’ in Arabic from them, as if the Arabic vehicular dialect they spoke at home was not, in their opinion, a true language. A Berber pupil identified Chinese as Arabic, which to him was the utmost example of foreign tongue. All in all, these children were not very open, least of all those who were of a foreign background. The evasive behaviour of the latter appeared to be related to the way foreignness is perceived in French schools. Our hypothesis here would be that the school system renders (national) identities legitimate and turns a blind eye to linguistic and cultural differences in students; as a consequence, students are prone to conceal them, as was noted above with the North-African children.⁶

To conceal and conserve: do these children think that there is no room at school for living languages, do they bury them deep in their pockets like small treasures? Certainly we have observed in our workshops that it takes considerable persuasion for some students to accept that deliberately and visibly hybrid productions are welcome; yet in ‘real’ life they may be quite at home with code-switching... Such discrepancies between school and life come as no surprise, particularly in the field of foreign-language teaching. Still, to press the point a little further, in France the way foreign languages are taught seems to tally very much with the way the French language itself is inhabited and experienced, that is, as a ‘pure’ language. Once again, the same taboos are at work with respect to regional languages, immigration and, more tenaciously still, language hybridity. In all these cases, it would seem the preconceived ideas go deep...

But before we move on: ...I am in England after several years’ studying English first at school, then at university. A colleague and I are in a bookshop and I stand petrified, my head crammed with prescriptive rules and legions of grammatical interdictions. I am struck dumb, at best mumbling the odd sentence whose grammatical correctness I have already checked mentally several times. Standing in this bookshop I do not exist, I am an invisible, inaudible wraith the shop assistant sees right through. Meanwhile my French colleague beside me is busy juggling with his English words like brightly-coloured balls. I hear his grammar errors, mispronunciations, gallicisms and other faux-pas, but he is completely at ease, a

5 G. Bone, “Strong words”, in W.N. Herbert & M. Hollis (eds), London, Bloodaxe, 2000, p. 149.

6 I. Aliaga, T. Creust, & P. Mesmin, « La diversité des langues, vecteur d’apprentissage », in G. Alao, E. Argaud, M. Derivry-Plard et H. Leclerq (éds), *Grandes et Petites Langues : Pour une didactique du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2008, p. 99.

dazzling street-vendor hawking his wares with the charmed assistant laughing, handing my colleague his change with a grateful smile –not for his purchase, but for the entertainment. When my colleague leaves the shop I am a shadow tailing him. He is a clown, a juggler, an acrobat with words, and since that day I have used him every day as an example to my language students. Stitched with French, patched with English, his tongue overflowed with life...

Similarly, here is another striking image: rather than the spectacle of stern teachers dourly biding by the book, what if we offered our students parti-coloured spaces where clowns in mismatched rags babble and chatter, tripping and tumbling on imaginary obstacles under the big top, playing dumb and feigning to do badly what others can do so well... Children in adult bodies, floundering toddlers, falling and blubbing and getting dirty; oafish in oversize shoes, their never-fitting clothes too tight or hanging off them, their askew-buttoned shirts adrift over their trousers... How conspicuously corporeal these bodies are! When they walk on their hands they tumble head over heels, when they play leapfrog they come aground on their buddies' backs... They are ludicrous... except to Fellini or Beckett or... Shakespeare, whose clowns' wisdom is safely kept back for audiences ready to look beyond appearances. On their faces they wear painted masks, gaudy and grotesque, marking their rightful status as circus members while pointing to their subversive stance in the outside world.

In our workshops then, we discourage monolingualism and welcome the linguistic half-breeds and hybrids who will soon be bent over their word patch-works, an eye on their desire to say things rather than blinking in the glare of the potential mistake. The myth of the pure language to be preserved and mummified has had its day. Incidentally, as R. Frydman puts it in the 2002 edition of the *Petit Robert* dictionary: 'following Edouard Glissant, I think tomorrow's world will be more and more creolised; the myth of racial purification is a scientific botch as well as historical nonsense.'

We also wish to express our sincere condolences to the myth of the first language. To declare that nobody has such a thing as a first language, that we all enter society with a second language, may –except in the view of psychoanalysts– be an overstatement, yet it is helpful in putting all languages on an equal footing, thus dispensing with the mother-tongue issue, along with that of a potential hierarchy between languages. Nobody comes first, standing with self-proclaimed authority before everybody else: all languages come second. Indeed, one receives one's language along with other hand-me-downs, be it a cousin's dress or an elder brother's shoes. If one ever had a first language, it was lost a long time ago. Strictly speaking, indeed, our first language was our baby-talk, which we usually start growing out of around the age of two. Till then a few ill-pronounced words, an indeterminate gesture, were still enough to be understood by and have our most simple though urgent needs satisfied. For a French infant, 'Da-da' in a forceful voice gets Mummy or Daddy down on all fours playing horsey; in English, the sounds 'ee-or' and a 'See-saw Marjory Daw' ride begins on the floor. But then one day, it's all over: 'che-val, and the plural is che-vaux;' 'come on, yel-low, not ye-yow!'... Babytalk should not be looked down upon, though: in *Langage enfantin et aphasie*, Roman Jakobson explains how rich babytalk is: 'if researchers were to collect the linguistic idiosyncrasies of a large number of children, they could devise a kind of grammar of all the possible transformations undergone, or which will one day

present themselves, in any human tongue...'⁷ Margaret Atwood evokes babytalk in her poem 'Marsh Languages':

The sibilants and gutturals,
 The cave language, the half-light
 Forming at the back of the throat,
 The mouth's damp velvet moulding
 The lost syllable for 'I' that did not mean separate,
 All are becoming sounds no longer
 Heard because no longer spoken,
 And everything that could once be said in them has ceased to exist.
 (...)
 Translation was never possible.
 Instead there was always only
 Conquest, the influx
 Of the language of hard nouns,
 The language of metal,
 The language of either/or,
 The one language that has eaten all the others.⁸

From the moment we started entertaining the assumption that if there ever was a first language, it has been left well behind, we began to think about its repercussions on our language didactics. More care and thoughtfulness are surely required if we consider that this is not the first time our students have faced a new language and that such languages are all, as it were, 'after-languages.' A little cautiousness won't hurt: who knows if while mistreating the new language, one does not run the risk of re-awakening the pain when baby-talk was superseded? Who knows whether, more generally, striving to learn something new reminds one subconsciously of how miserable it sometimes felt when learning to speak, walk and use a potty, making one feel nervous again? Both English and French have expressions referring to stumbling or tripping up over words: how anxious adults sometimes are about falling, not because it hurts more than when they were children, but because it reminds us of our vulnerability as children and of our early tottering steps as a toddler. As for potty-training... is there a link to be made between some people's fear of 'bad' language, such as 'the big job' or 'number 2,' between rude words and other dirty, impure, corrupting aspects of language? Running through all this lies, maybe, the same fear of reverting to infancy, of regressing and losing control and face, of letting go... and of being unable to return from those murky zones of dependence and powerlessness.⁹

Of course, there was more to those clumsy beginnings than we have so far allowed: they also brought the first exhilarating victories and careful risk-taking, the

7 R. Jakobson, *Langage enfantin et aphasie*, Paris, Minuit, 1969, p. 22.

8 M. Atwood, *Eating Fire, Selected Poetry 1965-1995* (1998), London, Virago, 2009, p. 323.

9 In connection with this, Claire Blanche-Benveniste observes: 'The EuRom4 experiment led us to reflect on the readability of the texts and on the techniques to improve it. Clearly "difficult-to-understand" words already make reading in one's mother tongue difficult (cf. Fukkink, Blok & De Glopper 2001). But such obstacles are increased in foreign-language texts, where one can only guess the meanings of certain elements, and which are therefore "highly unreadable" for beginners. *Difficulties which have long been overcome in their own language become un-surmountable barriers. Those who are usually "good readers" feel themselves to regress to the condition of inexpert readers, which is highly unpleasant and humiliating.* But this experience has proved a positive one because it has forced us to isolate what it is that makes for a competent reader. We have observed some efficient procedures for understanding texts in the three Romance languages, where numerous words are unknown' (*op. cit.*, our emphasis).

outstretched grown-up arms to envelop you after the wobbly run, obstacle races with fat pillows to cushion your fall. Maybe such things should be borne in mind by language instructors teaching younger children: what will stand in for a parent's propping legs or plump pillows? To illustrate this antithetical-dynamics of desire to have a go, yet fear of taking the leap for lack of a safe landing-place, here is another personal memory: ...I am a 5th-year Anglophone student in France. Being the only native speaker I am asked to declaim Blake's poem 'London,' whose final lines read: 'But most thro' midnight streets I hear / How the youthful Harlot's curse / Blasts the new born Infant's tear, / And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.' I read them in my best voice but stumble over the word 'hearse,' which I pronounce hæse, despite the fact it rhymes with 'curse' two lines up. Suddenly all eyes are upon me, endowed as I am with the authority of the native speaker. Was that a Freudian slip my reticent tongue made there, turning 'hearse' almost into 'arse'? Was I unconsciously testing how welcome I'd be if I trampled the myth of the reliable native speaker? Or maybe 'rehearse' had been on my mind, to repeat and reproduce, as in some language classes based upon the repetition of set phrases worn threadbare through constant imitation, and I was suddenly struck with the possibility of a double burial. Certainly the poem is in tune with this. It shows the ideological fetters of 18th century London and how the underprivileged were kept buckling under a spiritual yoke. There is no such thing as chance.

Once again, allow us to conclude this section with an image, this time of a motley parrot on his perch, standing for endless repetition, strict control and containment. At the beginning of *Under Western Eyes*, Joseph Conrad invokes one such bird so as to mock the Russians' reputedly excessive use of language:

What must remain striking to a teacher of languages is the Russians' extraordinary love of words. They gather them up; they cherish them, but they don't hoard them in their breasts; on the contrary, they are always ready to pour them out by the hour or by the night with an enthusiasm, a sweeping abundance, with such an aptness of application sometimes that, as in the case of very accomplished parrots, one cannot defend oneself from the suspicion that they really understand what they say.¹⁰

Now, to be totally honest, sometimes, out of sheer weariness, we would be happy to walk out of our bilingual creative writing workshops, in which we are for ever trying out experiments, as they hardly make for peace of mind. Still, positing that everybody, with very few exceptions, is multilingual, even if it means tracking long-faded memories, does have its own satisfactions, as specialists never have enough praise for multilingualism, especially in view of the intellectual advantages:

It has been observed that bilingual children obtained very good results in intelligence tests based on abstraction, generalising and mental development (Cohen 1991). These results were derived from the children's capacity to pass from one set of symbols to another by means of manipulating two different linguistic codes, by playing continually with two series of symbolism thus developing a mental agility that the monolingual child develops to a far less extent. Bilingual children have a rich and unique experience of interaction with the world via two linguistic systems (Vygotsky 1962).¹¹

Bilinguals have been found to be more aware of linguistic issues and better at

10 J. Conrad, "Under Western Eyes." Great Literature Online. 1997-2011 : www.classicauthors.net/conrad/westerneyes/westerneyes1.html (consulted April 2010).

11 Z. Dzięgielewska, « L'enseignement de la langue et l'enseignement des disciplines en situation bilingue », in *Living Together in the 21st Century*, 2001, p. 59-63.

considering linguistic matters; consequently, they are advocates of cultural relativity and know more about tolerance among different peoples. Here is Nancy Huston, who has frequently explored bilingualism and exile in her writing, on the subject of clichés and commonplace phrases: ‘...in a foreign language no places are ever common, all are exotic. ‘Can of worms’ seemed banal until I came across the French phrase ‘basket of crabs’... Bilingualism is a permanent intellectual stimulus.’¹² And on tolerance: ‘...someone who knows two languages automatically knows two cultures too, and is therefore aware of how tricky it is to move between them and how painful the relativising of one by the other. Such a person is highly likely to be more sensitive and ‘civilised’ and less categorically judgemental than im-patriate monolinguals.’¹³

Some caution is required though: maybe elitism such as is found for instance in highly selective European international schools runs behind Huston’s and other specialists’ assertions. Those schools probably have no time for di-glossia. No need to recall the fact that multilingualism is often synonymous with multi-tier organizations, something Christian Lagarde calls to mind when commenting on the phrase ‘languages’ hospitality’: ‘what actually stands behind this screen of scientific and politically correct terminology is nothing but the outcome of situations of inequality between languages that in points intersect with situations of social inequality.’ Lagarde also writes: ‘playing on words, I could say that while some languages can afford to be “hospitable”, others clearly need “hospitalization”, because they are ill, even dying.’

So, if we conceive of our workshops as hospitable havens for languages that, for some of them, are hardly more than hazy remnants in our students’ memories, are we not busy building a little nest of paradise that is hardly conducive to preparing them for the outside world? In this paradise, cocooned in optimism, the children of Mayotte could redeem a positive portrayal of their vehicular languages, along with a positive image of French. Likewise, the students in our English department would see French, English, their background languages or linguistic, possibly battered, patrimonies, in a flattering light. For the first few days of the workshop, this is indeed our goal. But relief and increasing confidence are soon swept away by uncertainty, as instructions about false-friend words, deep probing into semantics and connotations or writing poetry..., carry students away from surface meanings. Though the words are still there, unmoved, their meaning has become elusive, as in the following experiences in which one feels anything but secure: once indeed, while I was addressing in French a group of students studying translation, an English word cropped up mid-sentence; it sounded so appropriate there that I was no longer sure it was English, and yet I knew it wasn’t French. On another occasion, while debating something before an audience, I used one of the numerous English/French ‘false-friends;’ suddenly I could not remember which meaning, the French or the English, I was using, I no longer knew what I meant any more, nor even what I was saying at all! And while I had been presenting something completely impersonal, there I was face to face with myself, my whole attention focused on the word, my audience patiently waiting for me to continue while I sat blinded by the word, like a rabbit dazzled by a car’s headlights. One last example: one time I thought myself to be using an idiomatic phrase, only to realize all of a sudden that it was a translation from my other language, and again I feared being misunderstood, people were

12 N. Huston, *Nord perdu*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1999, p. 46.

13 *Ibid.*: 37.

staring, or so I thought, and I could not speak their language, and what I was about to tell them suddenly became vital, a matter of life and death... And then, blackout: I no longer remembered what I was about to say, as if a few seconds had been erased from my life; in Nancy Huston's phrase, I had lost the North, my bearings...

Once again, to be completely honest, maybe ours would be a happier job if we were not also writers of poetry and fiction. Writing non-academically, we came to realize that one's own language can become a total stranger: a language that formerly was supposedly familiar suddenly becomes, through a sustained writing endeavour, oddly different. We already knew better than to believe in the purity of languages and in the existence of first languages; now we have had to discard the unwanted, obsolete opposition between familiar and foreign languages. As a consequence, our workshops, led by two lecturers whose relationships with their languages have been so rich and varied –and bearing in mind the tendency of students to identify with their instructors– our workshops elicit mixed reactions. I remember one woman student for instance, who never came back to the workshop after a writing task that involved spending several minutes in front of a mirror peering at one's face: 'As you look, you realize you are not alone. Note and develop your observations.' I was trying to give them an approximation of what fiction writers may feel when a ghost from the past emerges amidst their words, long-forgotten people who would have used precisely the same words and who were now rising from the syntax like corpses from their graves. No need to say such instructions are slightly unnerving.

Albert Memmi writes: 'A man sitting astride two cultures (and two languages) is seldom comfortably seated.'¹⁴ For monolingualism –which is an ideological tenet, one of those myths that we live by without being aware of their grip– goes far beyond words, to encompass every cultural code: gestures, facial expressions, even silences... sometimes in a devastating ethnocentrism. What can be said about a Mediterranean judge who discredits a Northern mum because of her exterior coolness? What to do about the French teacher gently laying a hand on the head of a newly-arrived immigrant in a gesture of welcome, when the child's culture means he experiences this as humiliating? This is the kind of situation best described in terms of 'multi-modality,' and multilingual workshops may help take the edge off sometimes unsettling multicultural experiences in a safe, non-judgemental environment, thus preparing students for intercultural situations rife with potential discord. Besides, to study and retain till the end one's desire to learn and change, does one really need, literally as well as figuratively, to sit firmly ensconced on a chair? We remember Rimbaud's poem 'Les Assis' ('Those who remain seated'). Maybe identities are like languages: unstable, fluid, versatile, always ready to take on something new. Maybe identity stands half in half out, like our unruly clowns.

Deleuze and Guattari define neurosis as follows:

'when desire is no longer free and strains to keep everything else in rein'¹⁵ –like a motley parrot chained to its roost to give its lecture...? As an antidote, a short piece of nonsense may come in handy: 'There was an old man from Mayotte / Whose favourite phrase was "Why not?" / When they asked him the time / Or would he care for some wine? That merry old man from Mayotte.'

'Why not indeed?' Why shouldn't multilingual creative workshops be places

14 A. Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé*, Paris, Payot, 1973, quoted in *Ecrivains multilingues et écritures métissés*, p. 21.

15 G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Kafka, pour une littérature mineure*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1975.

where students or pupils can try on, through words and imagination, diverse, never fossilized, cultural and linguistic identities, custom-made and tailored in the fabrics of their diverse languages? What if they were slightly unnerving, even scary places where taboos are brought crashing down and barriers pushed back... They might also, as in Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed workshops, be places in which students are –in a non-threatening, confidence-building environment– invited to discard stifling myths and paralysing false choices and experience a playful, inventive, fully reconciled multilingualism, so as –like La Fontaine's reed that bends but never breaks– to resist the dying blows of a soon-to-be superseded monolingualism.

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The other side of the story. Colonial politics still shape attitudes to language use in school in Africa. Contrast between South Africa and Mozambique

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Introduction

In Africa with a few notable exceptions,¹ including Tanzania and to a lesser extent, Madagascar, (ex-)colonial languages generally retain a predominant place at all levels of the education systems,² the part played by ‘national’ languages differs widely: some countries ignore them while others seek to include them, and this divergence reflects different historical experiences. This is the case of the educational policies of South Africa and Mozambique, prior to Independence and subsequently maintained: in the former, use of African languages was promoted and even obligatory, in the latter it was non-existent, virtually forbidden. These policies informed the attitudes of the population in an essentially negative way, with the resulting paradox that the use of African languages in schools, for which there is provision in South Africa, is widely rejected while it is on the other hand popular with rural communities in Mozambique even though the implementation of the policy raises technical problems.

We shall briefly present these two situations in their historical context.

South Africa: the weight of the past

In South Africa, language policy in education features prominently in the ‘final’ 1996 Constitution (South Africa 1996d), the result of the transition negotiations between the African National Congress and the National Party.³ The preamble puts 11 languages on an equal footing, all declared official: two European languages (English and Afrikaans), and nine African. Particular emphasis is laid on the recognition and valuing of cultural and linguistic diversity. The Constitution fully recognizes the linguistic rights of the various ethnic groups of the country, including

1 Education is to be understood here exclusively as formal western-style teaching, under the state. Education, meaning the training of the new generations, includes many other forms, often termed informal or traditional (Dasen 2004). There is also, in some parts of Mozambique, Koranic teaching run by the communities involved independently of the state.

2 This policy contrasts sharply with that of North African countries which have their own written tradition and were better able to make a formal break with the colonial legacy and think afresh about the language of teaching. Nonetheless, their policy, based on ideology rather than educational rationale, flew in the face of the plural linguistic and cultural reality of the countries as was the case of ‘Arabization’ in Algeria (see inter alia Cherad 2010 and Benrabah 2011).

3 The linguistic policy of democratic South Africa has generated many studies, generally showing appreciation of the text itself and its intentions. See inter alia Alexander (1989 and 2003); Heugh (2002); Moyo (2002); Lafon (2006) which gives many references.

those of European origin, and avoids any explicit linguistic imposition.⁴ Article 29 stipulates the right of every child to receive education in the official language or languages of his/her choice, and the State's obligation to satisfy it 'where that education is reasonably practicable,' while laying down, for the first time in the country's history, a compulsory period of 9 years of schooling which hitherto had not applied to Africans (Motala et al. 2007: 2).⁵

The methods for achieving these aims are set out in following sector-specific texts –essentially the National Education Policy Act, 1996–; the South African Schools Act (SASA) 1996; the Norms and Standards for Language Policy in Public Schools in terms of SASA (1996); and the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (Department of Education 1997)⁶ –along with some provincial laws, as the nine provinces that emerged in 1994 enjoy a relative autonomy. This complex and sometimes contradictory web of laws, regulations, practices, etc., automatically applies to the approximately 26,000 public & state aided schools.⁷ The LiEP, which explicitly links language policy and racial attitudes, gives schools a particular responsibility through its own language policy for the fostering of a non-racial and open society (Preamble Art. 1.3). Schools are positioned as central to the building of the new society.

Who chooses the Languages of Learning and Teaching (LoLTs) and the subject language(s) in any given school? Since 1996 the decision has been decentralized as far as it possibly could be: it falls on each school, through its School Governing Body (SGB), in which Woolman & Fleisch (2009: 166) see for that reason 'a fourth tier of government.' Provincial ministries of education have the duty to check that schools' explicit decisions and practices comply with the provisions of the constitution, as well as sectorial, and in some cases, provincial regulations.

Regarding the language of learning, in addition to monolingual schools, regulations explicitly provide for bilingual schools which are of two kinds: (i) *parallel medium*, where there coexist in the same institutions cohorts of pupils with some using language *x* and others language *y*; (ii) *dual medium*, where, in a single class, some subjects are taught in language *x*, others in language *y* (unless the same subject is being repeated).

Alongside this, a large-scale reform affecting both the curriculum (*Curriculum 2005*) and the teaching approach (*Outcome Based Education, OBE*) was launched in 2000.⁸ All heavy-handed prejudices of the past, which ran contrary to the principles of the constitution, were to be purged. This model, termed 'colour-blind' and

4 It is only right to recognize that the balance of power between the various groups, linguistic diversity – no African language is the mother tongue of more than a third of the population – and the status of the different varieties – none has the prestige of an ancient written culture and religious validation – would not allow for any individual one to be given preferential status.

5 There had been plans to advance by one year as from 2011 the period of obligatory schooling by incorporating year 0, or *grade R* (for *reception*), but for budgetary reasons this measure was postponed. Since the start of the 2011 school year however all state primary schools must open a reception class, but this is not fully funded by the state and parents must pay to register their children.

6 The Ministry of Education website (<http://www.education.gov.za>) gives all laws and regulations in force and much other information. The texts cited here are available at the following addresses: <http://www.education.gov.za/dynamic/dynamic.aspx?pageid=329&catid=12&category=Acts&legtype=1>; <http://www.education.gov.za/Documents/policies/policies.asp>.

7 Without being able to exempt themselves from the provisions of the constitution, Independent (private) Schools are not necessarily concerned by these texts. This article deals only with state-controlled schools.

8 From the very outset there was a polemic over the relevance of such a methodology in the situation of South Africa. After much debate, OBE was revised in 2010 in favour of a 'back to basics' approach.

assimilationist (Marais & Meier 2008: 186), was aligned on that of western countries, Australia and New Zealand having had a decisive influence (see Carpentier 2005).

What is the actual situation in state schools? The use of a home language is explicitly recommended so as to avoid a linguistic disconnection between home and school and to lay claim to mother-tongue education. As for the eleven official languages, this recommendation appears, on the surface at least, to be widely followed for the first three years which make up the Foundation Phase⁹ as it applies both to the vast majority of European pupils, essentially English- or Afrikaans-speakers¹⁰, and to most African pupils whose first language is an African one: the former go to city schools using English while the latter go to township and rural schools. A growing minority of African pupils, including the children of the elite for whom English has become a home language without their necessarily abandoning an African language, go to English-speaking city schools. Where an African language is the LoLT in the Foundation Phase, English must be introduced no later than the second year, or even, as requested in a 2011 reform, in the first. As from grade 4 (\pm age 10), English becomes the LoLT and the African language is in principle maintained as a subject, in accordance with the policy of 'additive bilingualism.'^{11 12}

This situation obviously gives pupils who speak English and/or Afrikaans at home and who are for the most part white a considerable advantage as they are the only ones who can complete their studies in a language familiar to them. It had been seen as provisional pending the production of materials in African languages that the revived linguistic committees set up by the Constitution were to design. With this in mind, the new programmes, published in English in the early 2000s, were translated into all the other official languages,¹³ and educational publishers were pressed to produce text books.

However, contrary to expectations, African parents are not demanding teaching in 'their' language. Far from it: when given the choice, the majority opt for English as the LoLT as from the first year and even earlier, as evidenced by the proliferation of English-speaking nurseries in townships. Unexpectedly, a significant number of African pupils take Afrikaans as a second language at matric, the school-leaving qualification, rather than their home language, some by choice and others by force of circumstance. A majority of African parents and pupils show negative attitudes towards the use of African languages in schools, which can be better explained by the lasting stigmatization of Bantu Education. This legacy continues to provide a basis for the dichotomy between schools, a dichotomy in which language policy is a central feature.¹⁴

9 The strategy followed in Reception class as from the start of the 2011 year in schools has not been made explicit but is in line with the language policy of the particular school. However, in schools teaching in more than one African language, as is often the case in Gauteng, there are not always separate reception classes and children may be placed in a reception class using language y even though they are to take classes in language x later on.

10 A growing number of Afrikaans pupils attend schools using English.

11 The strategy takes its inspiration from the theory of transfer of capacity acquired in L1 to L2, developed by Cummins (1991) (cited in Hovens 2002).

12 The children of this elite are not necessarily monolingual: in some families they are brought up in a multilingual atmosphere where English is generally part of the equation.

13 *Curriculum Statement & Learning Outcomes*, by level and subject (see www.education.gov.za).

14 For a more detailed analysis, see Lafon (2008a & b).

Bantu Education (1954-1992)

The programme of the National Party which won the 1948 elections was focussed on the introduction of apartheid or 'separate development.' Each of the four racial groups identified (White, Indian, Coloured, Black) was to live in demarcated areas, with their own amenities. This ideological construct was based on the postulate of irremediable cultural differences between a hierarchy of 'races,' and on an unequivocal vision of the relationship between identity, community and language. Education was at the heart of this edifice. Not only was there to be discrimination in schools but, within the black and white groups, linguistic differences. From 1949 onwards, monolingual teaching in the mother tongue became compulsory for Europeans –putting an end to bilingual English/Afrikaans schools which had flourished in the past– as well as for Coloureds and Indians. A similar logic was to apply to Africans as from 1954, when, despite the opposition of vast sectors of society, Bantu Education (BE) was imposed.¹⁵ The government suspended subsidies to mission schools and took over the provision of education. The vast majority of Africans became confined to schools tightly controlled by the State.¹⁶ African languages were the compulsory languages for learning at primary level. At secondary level (standard 5 then standard 7, corresponding to the current Grade 9 –± age 15), there was a brutal shift– what was later called 'subtractive bilingualism' –to English and Afrikaans which were in principle to be used on an equal basis.

BE teaching was repetitive and dull. Programmes, at first narrowly utilitarian, aimed at meeting the immediate labour needs of the white economy and rural African communities (Nyaggah 1980: 65). For African parents, the rationale of BE was evident. It was defined by Luthuli as 'to isolate Africans and convince them of their permanent inferiority' (Luthuli 2006: 35).

In a particularly harmful way, African languages were associated with the setting up of 'pseudo-autonomous' Bantustans (Carpentier 2005: 36) which, under the policy initiated in the 1960s, were to group Africans on an ethnic basis. For Africans living in towns, who, as a whole, objected to being administratively assigned to a Bantustan, it was often the variety that they spoke which, in the eyes of the White authorities, formed the decisive criterion for their ethno-political classification. Instrumentalization of African languages was reinforced in KwaZulu by the introduction of a history textbook in Zulu, Ubanthu Botho, which promoted a monolithic vision of the Inkatha party in power (Golan 1994: 28, 29).

The common linguistic committees of the past were split and placed under the responsibility of the ministry in charge of BE (Heugh [2001]: 14). Terminology was developed so as to heighten differences between varieties raised to the rank of independent languages in a spirit of excessive purism, giving priority to internal lexical creations over borrowings seen as culturally suspect.

To crown it all, while BE led to a widening of access to school among Africans, the disparity in resources reinforced pre-existing inequalities. Between 1969 and 1976, when BE was at its height, for every rand spent on a black pupil, the State spent 15 for a European one (Carpentier 2005: 48) even though schools for Europeans had already benefited from considerable advantages during the colonial period.

¹⁵ On the way in which BE was introduced and reactions to it, see inter alia the collection edited by Kallaway (2002).

¹⁶ Only a few financially independent schools were able to continue (Behr 1978: 180).

Bantu Education became an emblem of apartheid and language policy was one core defining element. Use of African languages, which had hitherto flourished, leading, despite the moral rigidity of the missionaries in command of the presses, to the incipient appropriation of writing witnessed in the 1930s by the burgeoning of literature in the main vernacular languages (see Ricard 2004), became deeply unpopular. It was over the question of the language of instruction that opposition to apartheid crystallized. In 1976, in the then Transvaal (present-day Gauteng), Afrikaans was brutally imposed for some subjects at matric (school leaver's final exam) when, in many schools, this language had not been previously used as language of instruction. This triggered the revolt by Soweto students. The language question, now associated with inequalities in education and the political struggle, took centre stage. In 1979, in an ill-fated attempt at appeasement, the obligation to use Afrikaans was removed and the transition from African languages to English was brought forward by two years, now taking place as from the fifth year of school (Macdonald 1990: 2; Heugh [2001]: 14). The revolt, led by young people, only died down with the political aggiornamento of the 1990s, leading to the freeing of the Roben Island political prisoners and the lifting of the ban on the ANC. In the negotiations to introduce a democratic regime, the abolition of racial discrimination in schools was one of the major issues.

School dichotomy and language use

The transformation of the school system could not be delayed. Those in power wished to maintain the privileged schools, until then virtually reserved for Whites, in the state sector, rather than see them go private. In 1992, the last 'white' government granted these schools independent management so as to limit the hold the future (black) majority government (Woolman & Fleisch 2009 :4) would have on them. They were permitted to levy fees set by each School Governing Body virtually at its own discretion (van Rooyen & Rossouw 2007: 24). In 1994, the 18 separate education systems operating in South Africa were unified within a single national ministry alongside provincial ministries.¹⁷ With no regard for the discrepancy between schools the management model for all of them was made to replicate that of the privileged white schools (Macdonald 1990: 40).

State schools were distributed in 'quintiles,' based (at the outset) on objective criteria according to infrastructure.¹⁸ This categorization determined the amount of state subsidy, redirected towards disadvantaged schools. Since 2007, schools in the two lowest quintiles, and some in the third, have been made free (non-fee paying schools), with an undertaking from the State to allocate the school around 800 rand per pupil per year. But the significant private funding that formerly white schools now have completely neutralized this process, as is shown by Carpentier (2005: 313). He compares the resources of two schools in 1999, each having 1000 pupils. School A, a privileged school, where learners pay 2,500 rand a year, thus receives 2,500,000 rand, while the disadvantaged school B, which asks parents for 50 rand, receives 50,000 rand. State funding, apart from salaries, comes to 196,000 rand for school B and 28,000 rand for school A. There is still a difference of over 2 million rand for school A, which is already ahead in terms of existing inputs (infrastructure, cultural capital, etc). Amounts may have varied over time but the extent of the gap persists.

¹⁷ This included the racially discriminatory systems of white South Africa (European, different ones in each of the four provinces, Indian, Coloured and African, and each Bantustan's own system).

¹⁸ Parents' socio-economic categories were subsequently taken into account.

This situation has led to a dichotomy among state schools ('a bimodal system,' Pretorius 2008) between :¹⁹

- schools formerly reserved for Europeans, located generally in towns, with good infrastructure facilities, computer and documentation rooms in particular; teachers, mainly Whites and Indians, are qualified and the teacher/pupil ratio is often lower than the norm set at 35-40, as the schools can recruit extra teachers from their own budget. These schools, known as 'ex-model C,' account for over 20% of state schools;
- schools formerly for Africans, in townships or rural areas (ex-Bantustans and European farms); while some, especially in townships around big cities, are now decent, in particular those recently built to deal with rural exodus,²⁰ others, in rural areas, are still without water and/or electricity, toilets, fencing, caretakers, etc. All share the same constraints over resources. Despite budgetary efforts and private aid, many of them still lack teaching resources to say nothing of functioning computer rooms, and some have their facilities looted or vandalized.²¹ Pupils often come from very poor families and, in primary schools, many receive a daily meal (under a 'feeding scheme').²² Teachers and pupils are almost exclusively African (or, in some places Coloured). Some of them, products of the BE colleges (closed in 2002), are poorly trained, often with a low level of English –some have never been in extended contact with native speakers of English (Macdonald 1990: 39). Allowing for unfilled vacancies, sickness and absentees, the average teacher/pupil ratio is closer to 1 to 50 or 60 per class than to the ministerial norms.

Rejection of African languages

Language choices are part and parcel of the dichotomy between schools. Since 1992 African parents have been able to enrol their children in the schools of their choice, including ex-model C schools if they have the means or can claim fee exemption.²³ This has led to a rush by African pupils towards these schools, in a search for quality. This is a justified view, in terms of results at least. According to Bloch (2009: 59), the vast majority of matric passes come from around 20% of state schools, and this figure corresponds roughly on the one hand to the whole of ex-model C schools, and to a tiny part of ordinary or African schools, on the other. Rather worryingly, the vast majority of township teachers, even though they are prepared to acknowledge the relevance and importance of using the mother tongue, place their children in the former (Ngcobo 2001; interviews, teachers, Mlazi 2007, Mamelodi and Soweto 2010 & 2011). In these schools, even where learners are mainly, if not wholly, African, and in areas with the same language, and practically monolingual, English wins out with no other option being contemplated, if only

19 This is obviously not an absolute categorization but it sheds light on the debate. An intermediate category is currently emerging, made up of some schools in town centres formerly for Indians, Coloureds and Whites, but now abandoned by them and attended by African pupils from relatively modest families. These social changes have led the ministry to revise the criteria for the distribution of schools into quintiles.

20 The newcomers generally settle in the 'informal settlements' proliferating around the townships, rather than in the older districts, hence the need for new schools.

21 Violence and theft of equipment is a recurring problem in the townships.

22 This scheme is restricted to primary schools.

23 When a school has places, it is obliged to admit children from poor backgrounds when their parents live or work nearby, by granting full or partial remission of fees.

because the majority of teachers are non-Africans.²⁴ As teaching languages (LoLT), African languages remain confined to dysfunctional schools. Moreover, Afrikaans is still most often the second language offered as a subject, with only a minority of schools offering an African language.²⁵ In an attempt to retain parents and avoid closure on account of a lack of learners, some primary schools in townships even choose English as the LoLT from grade 1 (\pm age 7), as this gives an image of quality. And logically enough, to prepare children, private preschools and nurseries boasting of being English-medium are flourishing.

This negative view also proceeds from the lack of progress on the many technical problems faced by African languages for use: choice of a variety when there is often no prestigious variety, discrepancy between school language and spoken language (regional dialect or urban language), the purist approach of the linguistic committees which seek to outlaw borrowings in favour of obsolete terms, marginalization of local vernaculars that are however used in spontaneous code-switching accepted in class but not approved in examinations, and multilingualism in urban areas that make use of the mother tongue problematic.²⁶

So the use of African languages in school remains inextricably associated with poor quality teaching in underperforming schools, whereas English seems to be a condition, if not a guarantee, of better education without the corresponding gain that might have come from the generalization of teaching African languages to all.²⁷

Mozambique: The revenge of the native

Almost uniquely in Africa, the colonial and postcolonial history of Mozambique is characterized by a policy of denigration of local languages and cultures. This was the case of the colonial policy through the promotion of the Portuguese language and way of life through 'assimilation' but also that of the Frelimo party in the first decade following Independence obtained in 1974.²⁸ It was only after the promulgation of a new constitution in 1990, in the context of peace negotiations with Renamo (*Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana*), that it was possible to develop educational programmes using local languages. When an experimental 'bilingual education' model was set up in 2002 using local languages as the language for early literacy in primary schools, this programme, despite its many faults, was adopted by the communities concerned and this ensured not only that it was maintained but extended.

We shall examine the key points of this change.²⁹

24 It is right to note that some ex-model C schools tried to introduce African languages as teaching languages but drew back in the face of the difficulty of making a choice given their diversity and the reluctance of African parents, some of whom saw in this move an attempt at re-segregation (Pillay 2009 :81).

25 This is gradually changing. African languages are then offered as 'First Additional Language' (FAL), which is very close to 'Home Language' (HL) level. FAL is designed for native speakers.

26 On account of space constraints, it is not possible to illustrate these points here. See inter alia Webb et al. (2010).

27 There is practically no teaching of African languages for non-native speakers (Second Additional Language, SAL).

28 The *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* came to power on Independence in 1974 after a ten-year liberation struggle.

29 The setting up of the bilingual programme is described in greater detail in Lafon (2008b).

The legacy of assimilation³⁰

For reasons which have as much to do with practicality as with ideology, Portugal promoted the so-called assimilation policy in Mozambique, during the period of colonial consolidation.³¹ There were considerable advantages to assimilated status. Besides clerical posts in the administration or in private companies, the assimilated were exempted from forced labour, could travel without permits, were subject to Portuguese courts rather than traditional justice and, most importantly, their children had access to European schools (Honwana & Isaacman 1988: 81 and 91; Moreira 1997: 46). By means of these advantages, the colonial power hoped to win support among the population. To a great extent this calculation proved sound, even if it was also from this group that emerged in the early 20th century the precursor of the nationalist movements, most particularly the Negrofilo association run by Joao Albasini (Honwana & Isaacman 1988: 12-13, 28, 55 and 209; Moreira 1997: 49, 96, 103).

The assimilated were descendants of Portuguese and local women, and/or had been to mission schools and were converted. While the first group were mainly to be found in the areas of the early colonisation in the Zambezi valley, in the 20th century the educated African elite were mainly from the South where the port of Lourenço Marques (Maputo) had been elevated to capital status.

The assimilated were characterized by their adoption of European manners. 'Being assimilated means resembling the Whites' commented Moreira, referring to the first quarter of the 20th century (1997: 50, 103).³²

They had to abandon the most obvious features of traditional practices, particularly polygamy and *lobolo* (payment to the bride's family), initiations, participation in ancestor worship, thus cutting themselves off from their own cultural environment. This came to include, in the latter stages at least, as denounced by Mondlane (1979: 43), the use of African languages. While the Protestant missions from the former Republic of Transvaal that were active from the mid-19th century in the South had used African languages in their schools,³³ producing a tiny bilingual elite able to read and write in both Ronga and Portuguese,³⁴ the colonial power's longing for tight control led it to put severe limitations on them. In 1907, in a protectionist reaction to British economic and political domination, the use of languages other than Portuguese was restricted to the first three years of primary

30 See Newitt (1995) for a history of the country; on assimilation, see in particular Mondlane (1979), Moreira (1997) and the biography of Raúl Honwana annotated by Isaacman (Honwana & Isaacman 1998). Stroud (1999) has a detailed analysis of the role of Portuguese in post-independence national construction.

31 There were two main phases to the colonization of Mozambique. As from the 16th century, the Portuguese crown set up some strongholds on the coast of the north central region and in the estuary and along the course of the Zambezi, making the island of Mozambique the capital. It was only at the end of the 19th century that, confronted with the competition between colonial powers for the sharing out of the continent, Portugal, after long pacification campaigns, managed to establish its control over the whole of what is now Mozambique. Even so, until the mid-20th century, only the South was under its direct authority and that was where the policy of assimilation was in the main developed. The exploitation and administration of vast areas in the centre and north of the country were farmed out to chartered companies with international capital.

32 All translations from Portuguese are based on the author's own.

33 Basically the Swiss Mission, the story of which is found in Harries (2007).

34 Evidence of this is a few bilingual newsheets from that time, most particularly the Negrofilo association's *o Brado Africano*.

schooling, whilst writing in 'Bantu language' was even banned from 1929 (Moreira 1997: 47; Cahen 2000:4; Stroud & Tuzine 1998 in Cumbe & Machanga 2001; Linder 2001: 159). In the 1930s most of the foreign (Protestant) mission schools were transferred to the Catholic Church, deemed more docile, and with which a concordat had been signed in 1940. African languages had no place in their curriculum. As Mondlane observed, 'schools for Africans are primarily agencies for the diffusion of Portuguese language and culture' (1979: 54). This was the death knell for the appropriation of writing in the vernacular which, as was the case in South Africa, appeared to be well under way.

In this way, by adopting the Portuguese Christian way of life and the exclusive use of Portuguese, a fraction of the population became elevated above the indigenous masses, benefiting from a status close to that of the colonists and administrators from the metropolis. The numerical impact of this policy should not be overestimated: just prior to Independence barely a third of children went to school (Gomez 1999: 70-71) and Portuguese was the mother tongue of only about 8% of a population in which less than 10% were literate (Lopes 1998: 465). But this was enough to establish, both among this elite and among the mass of Africans in contact with it and who aspired to escape from an unenviable fate, the prestige of western culture and in parallel, nurture disdain, if not contempt, for local practices. The revocation of assimilation in 1961, with the abolition of forced labour and the extension of citizenship to the entire population (Gomez 1999: 54; O'Laughlin 2000) actually helped to generalize this ideology, if not its practices.

From the inception of the liberation struggle, Frelimo opted for the exclusive use of Portuguese, for at least two reasons: Portuguese appeared to be the only potential common language for activists from diverse and widely separated areas brought together fortuitously by colonization; and many party officials, themselves assimilated, were, by reason of their personal history, ill-at-ease in the face of African languages and cultures. This policy was pursued after Independence and Portuguese from the outset proclaimed as the 'language of national unity.' It was now a matter of strengthening national unity in a particularly unstable country (Stroud 1999: 345) as well as maintaining a linguistic border with English-speaking neighbours (Rothwell 2001). This was a common enough attitude in Africa, but there developed alongside it, in a one-party Marxist-inspired regime, a strange obsession with modernization and the regime settled down to the task of the construction of the 'new man.' Traditional practices were seen as conflicting with a vision of progress reduced to a mere adoption of a western way of life and thought and their very existence was challenged. For Frelimo officials and the state apparatus, 'African languages and cultures [remained] an expression of obscurantism and possible sources of tribal division' (Balegamire et al. 2004).³⁵ By their use of Portuguese alone, they could further prove their commitment to the project of nation-building (Stroud 1999: 354). The use of African languages was banned from all official functions, including the courts (Isaacman 1983: 115).

There seems to be little room for dispute that this attitude of systematic denigration of African practices in the name of modernism came from the adoption and deepening of the ideology of assimilation by the urban classes and the bureaucracy. As Mudiue writes (1999: 37): '(...) Frelimo's modernism was rooted in the policy of assimilation which denied the country's cultural and linguistic

³⁵ This policy shares much with that of Arabization in independent Algeria, described by Cherrad (2010), with the notable difference that in Mozambique the language used is that of the colonizer.

diversity. It aimed at creating the new man, a socialist man (...) supposed to emerge free from any culture and history, other than a perception of the past as hostile.' In this context Gevray speaks of 'blank page' ideology (in Hall & Young 1999: 219).

To make its project a reality and 'raise' the cultural level of the masses, the regime put in place an extensive education programme in which adult literacy training was an integral part. This programme naturally made exclusive use of Portuguese.

Aggiornamento

The civil war, originally stirred up by Ian Smith's Rhodesia with the aim of weakening a regime likely to support liberation movements, was widely supported in some parts of the country especially on account of the frustrations caused by the 'modernization' policy.³⁶ Renamo's programme included a return to practices banned by Frelimo, including the use of African languages,³⁷ and won the support of the traditional chiefs. Schools, seen as instruments of the Frelimo state, were one of the main targets for attack.³⁸ Literacy campaigns, because of insecurity, general disorganization of the state and diminishing enthusiasm, came to a virtual end. With the negotiation process starting in the early 1980s, a new constitution allowing for a multiparty state was proclaimed in 1990 (Governo de Moçambique 1990). This marked a cultural and ideological *aggiornamento* which gradually affected official discourse and education practice. So from the early 1990s onwards, the use of African languages has been accepted for adult literacy, in actual fact widely left to non-state operators (churches, NGOs). A bilingual experiment limited to two African languages ran from 1993 to 1997/98.³⁹ In 1997, it was announced that the experiment would be extended nationwide. This is a 'transitional' model, with the local language used as a medium of instruction for the first three years before being gradually replaced, from the fourth year, by Portuguese, introduced orally from the first year. Fifteen languages covering the whole country were chosen, two languages per province, and the programme was to be launched in 22 pilot schools in linguistically homogeneous areas, out of the 8,000 that were in the country at the time. The model was to spread by 'vertical expansion': each year a higher level was to open –the fourth year to be reached by the start of the 2006 school year– and two new first classes in each school involved.

This strategy was accompanied in 2003 by the localization of part of the content as an aspect of curriculum renewal (*Novo Currículo*).⁴⁰ Local communities were called on to contribute, under a provision for 'life skills.' In principle African languages should also be offered as subjects in monolingual Portuguese education.

Here as elsewhere, the basic motivation seems to be failure in school: between 1992 and 1998, the average rate for repeating in the first five years remains stubbornly at a quarter of pupils (Balegamire et al. 2004) and it is clearly apparent that at the heart of the problem is, in rural areas, a lack of knowledge of the teaching

36 Renamo was set up in 1976 with the support of the Rhodesian secret services (Hall & Young 1998: 117 sq.).

37 Renamo used national languages, in particular Ndau, the language of the majority of its officials (Stroud 1999: 360; Hall & Young 1999: 174).

38 In 1992, only 3,384 primary schools were operating; by 1980 there were 5,730 (Matusse 1994: 548).

39 This was *Pebimo*, *Programa de Escolarização Bilingue em Moçambique*, described by Benson (2000 and 2001).

40 This is part of a vast decentralization reform, in which increasing responsibilities in all fields are left to local level, including planning and development.

language not only on the part of the children but also the teachers,⁴¹ as is noted by Conceição et al. (1998). 'The question of language is a decisive factor in the teaching and learning process [o processo de ensino-aprendizagem], (...) in that the majority of Mozambican pupils (...) speak a mother tongue other than the medium of instruction.' The Strategic Education Plan 1997-2001, published in 1998, implicitly recognizes the fact (p. 21). This is also claimed by Dias, who casts Portuguese as a vector of inequalities at school, in a work which caused something of a sensation when it appeared (Dias 2002).

Popular enthusiasm in spite of everything: 'expansão selvagem'

This change of direction is a real revolution in a country where the colonial language had acquired symbolic status and become a manifestation of national unity. It overturns beliefs and practices of a teaching profession indoctrinated in the catechism of the inadequacy of African languages for the modern age and triggers scepticism among much of the middle class. It is indeed stipulated that bilingual education is not to be compulsory and parents are free to ask for their child to be transferred to a monolingual class.

However, from its very inception, the experiment elicited enthusiasm and pride from the communities concerned, leading to its extension from 22 to 32 schools.⁴² By 2005, 4200 pupils were involved in BE. This unplanned extension process ('expansão selvagem' in INDE's parlance⁴³) has since speeded up. Estimates are that in 2010 over 200 out of total of around 12,000 schools were involved, with the participation of some 28,000 pupils.⁴⁴ The programme is however suffering from many weaknesses, in particular as regards (i) the choice of languages, which is partly arbitrary, (ii) problems and disputes over how they are taught in terms of both spelling and terminology, (iii) lack of books and teaching materials⁴⁵, (iv) lack of training among teachers, (v) an absence of monitoring and support from the centre, difficulties only resolved occasionally thanks to the support from NGOs, INDE's capacities being overwhelmed by the scheme's very success. This innovative experiment faces a background of minimal human, logistic and financial resources. This is worsened by a great widening of access to primary education (between 1997 and 2003, the number of children at school rose from 1.7 to 2.8 million – MEC 2005) entailing, as the authorities themselves admit, a lowering of an already very modest quality. It might appear paradoxical to prioritize African languages when the most basic conditions for teaching Portuguese are not met. It is by no means sure that the bilingual education situation is worse than that of monolingual education. Balegamire et al. (2004) point out however that it is harder to have funds allocated to the bilingual programme paid out. The programme on the other hand facilitates

41 The same applies to literacy training: in 1998 barely 42% of an estimated population of 17 million was regarded as literate (*Recenseamento geral da população de 1997*, according to the *Istituto de Estatística* website).

42 At the request of local communities, Mwani was added in Cabo-Delgado and Ndau, originally chosen only in the provinces of Manica & Sofala, in Inhambane (information obtained from A Dhorsan).

43 Founded in 1978, the *Instituto Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* is tasked with educational research, in particular curriculum design. The INDE has borne responsibility for the bilingual programme during its experimental phase.

44 According to a 2009 statistical survey, communicated by INDE V Bisquet.

45 Until the start of the 2010 school year, no text books were available in languages other than those supported by Progresso, and teachers worked with photocopies of the first, unamended, version. On Progresso, see Lafon (2004).

parental involvement, with the removal of the linguistic obstacle, and is therefore better socially integrated. Lastly, and so long as the experiment remains limited to rural areas, there are not, as there are in South Africa, significant differences between schools, based on the language of instruction.

The widespread and consistent popular support in rural areas stems, in our view, not so much from improved educational or professional outcomes, which, in any event, take time to verify, as from the satisfaction of seeing one's language and culture acknowledged and validated by a system that had rejected them. This programme signals the long-denied acceptance of a plural identity, integrating those that were excluded from the modern nation. In fact, even if it remains superficial, the discourse has changed. African practices and traditions are no longer a laughing stock for the urban elite, Bantu linguistics has its place in the University and is an integral part of teacher training, and a revision of the constitution has been announced which accommodates African languages (Lafon, forthcoming), as the 2004 constitution in force reproduces earlier provisions on language (Governo de Moçambique 2004). These subtle changes undoubtedly mark the beginnings of a new balance in the dialectic between assimilation and Africanity. However, this programme has its own limits: the extension to urban areas looks problematic especially on account of their multilingual nature. Moreover, the teaching of African languages as subjects in monolingual Portuguese education still lags behind. Despite being envisaged in 1997, nothing has come to fruition. It would however allow for a better integration of the whole of the population.

Conclusion: what can be learnt for Mayotte?

Highly contrasting popular reactions in South Africa and Mozambique to comparable educational strategies reflect first and foremost, it would seem, a desire to break away with a legacy of imposition. As shown by Bunyi for Kenya, the population is basically taking a stance counter to colonial policies: 'there was a push from ordinary Kenyans for everything that had been denied them by the colonialists' (Bunyi 1999: 342).

So in South Africa the use of African languages still brings to the mind of many the hated apartheid Bantu Education policy, a memory from which the country is still unable to free itself. Because of this, and with African languages still confined to dysfunctional schools, parents are reluctant and call on the contrary for an early use of English. In Mozambique on the other hand, the introduction of African languages in schools, breaking markedly with earlier practice, arouses enthusiasm in the communities concerned.

What will happen in Mayotte, with its highly complex educational arrangements? There coexist, in the field of education, the French metropolitan school system which is now generalized and uses French exclusively, and the traditional Koranic system using Arabic besides spoken use of local varieties (Shimaore and Shibushi); the population is vaguely aware of experiments in using 'national' languages during the 'revolutionary' periods that shook Madagascar and the Comoros themselves in 1974 or the more stable ones run in nearby English-speaking countries, Tanzania and Kenya, not to mention the modern Koranic system based on Arabic, envisaged at one stage in the Comoros. Politically, the situation is complex: the quasi-unanimous wish for becoming part of France as expressed in the 2009 referendum on departmentalization does not negate a claim to belong to the Muslim community or the acknowledgment of the cultural and human links with the

neighbouring islands of the Comoros and Madagascar.

In this context, the linguistic options for schools may easily express political positioning. The moral emerging from the concrete cases reported here suggests that, in order to go beyond possible conflicts of allegiance and avoid choices proceeding from partisan preferences, focus must be kept on the educational and cultural realities, with some flexibility to adapt to situations which may vary from village to village and even school to school, with a constant care for educational quality.

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Home language surveys as a starting point for language policy development in education in Suriname

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Introduction

In spite of socio-historical differences between Mayotte and Suriname, the resemblance of sociolinguistic situation and educational challenges in both contexts is instructive in many respects. Suriname is a former colony of the Netherlands. In spite of its small population of about four hundred thousand people, Suriname shelters around twenty different languages (Carlin & Arends 2002). Dutch has been the official language in Suriname since 1667. The relatively rich ethnolinguistic diversity in Suriname has enabled Dutch to maintain its status as the national language of the country ever since. In spite of cultural nationalist movements arising in the South American context, attempts to replace Dutch with a local language have not been successful because there was no widespread public support. Some small groups of Creole speakers especially campaigned to make Sranan, an English-based Creole, the national language of Suriname but because of internal ethnic conflict (St-Hilaire 1999) and Suriname's cultural dependence on the Netherlands, this endeavor has not been successful. Nevertheless, some researchers still claim that due to the low international and regional status of Dutch, Sranan is a potential substitute for Dutch in the Surinamese context (St-Hilaire 1999). In spite of various voices in different ethnic communities, Dutch, however, over the years seems to have strengthened its position in all societal and educational domains. There are, nevertheless, a number of educational issues surrounding the learning and teaching of Dutch in schools. Given the low proficiency levels of pupils in Dutch in certain regions of the country, policy makers wanted to further investigate the current sociolinguistic situation in Suriname. For that purpose, the Surinamese Ministry of Education got in contact with the Dutch Language Union (*Nederlandse Taalunie*), which assigned the Department of Culture Studies of Tilburg University to conduct a home language survey in all schools in Suriname. A total of 22,643 pupils in classes 4 and 6 of primary schools, and classes 2 and 4 of secondary schools participated in the research. On the basis of this rich database, language repertoires, language proficiency, language choice, language dominance, and language preference patterns of pupils have been documented. For each ethnolinguistic group, language profiles have been constructed and the vitality of each group's language has been calculated. In this paper, we will discuss a selection of relevant empirical results with regard to the development of a language policy in education in Suriname.

Sociolinguistic situation in Suriname

Suriname is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the region with large populations of East Indians (Hindustanis), Javanese, Creoles, Maroons, and small groups of Amerindians as well as immigrants of Chinese, European and Lebanese

origin (DeSales Affigne 1997). According to St-Hilaire (2001) the heterogeneity of the population has historically been a factor undermining nation-building in Suriname. Sarnami speakers from Hindustani origin are the largest group followed by Creole speakers (ABS 2005). However, no group has an absolute majority status, which intensifies competition among ethnic groups. In this ethnically and linguistically diverse society, Dutch functions as a *lingua franca* for people from different backgrounds. In the face of strong ethnic competition in the political system, the different ethnic groups of Suriname, by subscribing to a common, ethnically neutral *lingua franca*, have partially overcome traditional cultural and linguistic divisions to form a multi-ethnic national culture. Next to Dutch, Sranan is another *lingua franca* spoken by various people but it does not have the status of being 'neutral' for many people. In spite of its widespread use, Sranan has historically been regarded as the cultural property of the Creoles (St-Hilaire 2001). The Creoles tend to consider themselves as the original Surinamese and regard the Asians as foreigners, which contributes to ethnic and political competition between these groups.

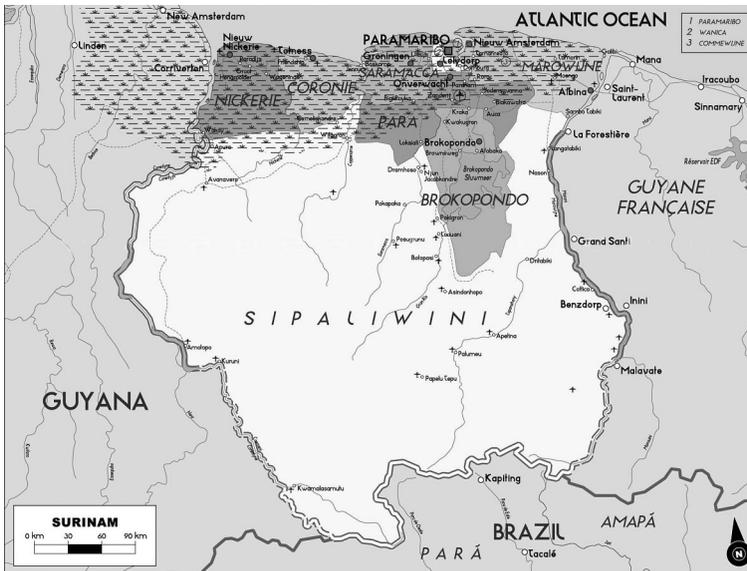


Fig. 1. Map of Suriname.

Historical competition between Creole and East Indian people increased when Creole nationalists wanted to impose Sranan as the national language in Suriname. As the East Indians have gained demographic strength in the capital city Paramaribo, they have countered the demands of Creole cultural nationalists to promote the Sranan language and associated culture. In spite of the Creole nationalists' struggle to make Sranan the national language in Suriname, Creole people themselves are deeply divided concerning the role of Dutch in the society. A small group of people want to make Sranan the official language in society (Van Eersel 1997). However, given the historical status of Sranan as a highly stigmatized language, achieving the status of 'official language' might not be easy. In the first place, most of the Creoles themselves do not hold onto Sranan as a home language.

The Creoles have long embraced assimilation to Dutch as a group ideal. During the past two decades, greater numbers of East Indians, Javanese and Maroons have also adopted this ideal (St-Hilaire 2001). There are, of course, certain causes of this situation. When Dutch was made compulsory in education, Sranan was strictly prohibited in the schools (Ramsøedh 1995). Accordingly, Sranan became an indicator of low social status and lack of education and as a consequence Creole parents prohibited their children from speaking Sranan at home (Meel 1990, cited in St-Hilaire 2001). This contributed to higher rates of language shift to Dutch among Sranan speakers. Parents who wanted to avoid this negative association with Sranan used Dutch at home.

A number of factors contributed to the spread of Dutch in Suriname. As reported above, being a 'neutral' *lingua franca* with a high social status allocated to it, Dutch became deeply rooted in society. Urbanization also contributed to linguistic homogenization of the country. Dutch plays an important role in the construction of 'nation' in multi-ethnic Paramaribo (Saint-Hilaire 2001). Dutch is the medium of interaction in most domains in major urban centres. In spite of group specific ethnic practices, all groups are converging to a single national multi-ethnic culture whose medium of expression is Dutch. Although ethnic divisions remain, Surinamese of diverse ethnic backgrounds are able to communicate, with increasing proficiency, in a language perceived as ethnically neutral, allowing for increased multi-ethnic dialog. If a common language and territorial control are the principles defining a nation, then the use and spread of Dutch in Suriname indicate the formation of a nation. Yet, there are still groups of people whose access to Dutch is limited. Especially in the interior, the Maroons rarely achieve full proficiency in Dutch. By providing a thorough analysis of the speech community formation of the Trio speakers in the interior, Carlin (1998) shows that Dutch is used only in the classrooms and that in all other domains of social life Trio is the only mode of interaction in the community. The use of Dutch among Aluku speakers is also estimated to be less widespread. Given the lack of empirical data concerning language use and choice among pupils in schools, the current study aims at providing some sociolinguistic evidence for policy makers and educational specialists.

Research Design

As reported above Dutch is the medium of instruction in all schools in Suriname. However, given the difficulties surrounding Dutch language acquisition and school failure among certain groups of pupils, both educational specialists and the public started discussing language education in schools. The Dutch Language Union in cooperation with the Surinamese Ministry of Education organized a conference on 'Dutch as a language of instruction and a subject in Suriname' in Paramaribo in 2005. As a result of this conference, educational specialists and policy makers recognized the need for sociolinguistic data on pupils' language use, choice and dominance. In this section, we will focus on the research goals and research methodology of the language survey carried out amongst primary and secondary school pupils in Suriname.

Research goals

The home language survey is part of the Language Policy Project in Suriname, which is carried out in cooperation with the Dutch Language Union and the Surinamese Ministry of Education. The research is coordinated by a research team at

the Department of Culture Studies at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. The aims of the project are to gather, analyze and evaluate survey data on the use and status of Surinamese languages at home and at school. The project is being carried out in all primary and secondary schools in Suriname, covering classes 4 and 6 in primary education as well as classes 2 and 4 in two (lower and higher) types of secondary education. In addition to the pupils of these schools, the teachers were also included in the survey. The project's methodology is based upon earlier large-scale home language surveys among primary and secondary school children in the Netherlands (Extra et al. 2001) and in a number of European cities (Extra & Yagmur 2004). Our survey is based on multiple language questions tapping language use, choice, dominance, preference and repertoire both at home and at school. In doing so, we aim at establishing and comparing multiple language profiles of major communities in Suriname. For each language community, the language profile will consist of four dimensions, based on reported language proficiency, language choice, language dominance, and language preference. Based on this data, we will construct a (pseudo)longitudinal language profile across school years (implicating age groups as well) and a language vitality index for each language community. In addition, a school language profile will be constructed on the basis of the data on participation in language instruction on the one hand and expressed needs for such instruction on the other. Besides this, we will present information on language use and choice patterns of pupils with each other both in the class and outside class, as well as language use and choice patterns of pupils with teachers both during the lessons and during the breaks.

In line with the aims of the project, the main goal of our language survey is to acquire insight in both the distribution and vitality of languages used in the homes and schools in Suriname. The value of such insight derives from four perspectives:

- taken from a *phenomenological* perspective, home language data raises the public awareness of multilingualism as an inherent characteristic of society and schools in Suriname;
- taken from a *demographic* perspective, home language data plays a crucial role in the definition and identification of multilingual school populations in Suriname;
- taken from a *sociolinguistic* perspective, data on the distribution and vitality of home languages offer a valuable basis for cross-linguistic comparison of groups of pupils in Suriname;
- taken from an *educational* perspective, home language data is an indispensable tool for educational planning and policy development in multilingual Suriname.

Research method

The data has been collected by means of a specially designed questionnaire for pupils in primary and secondary schools in Suriname, as well as by means of two questionnaires for all teachers in these schools. In this section, we will go into the design of the pupils' questionnaire, and the collection and processing of the data respectively.

Design of the questionnaire

As far as the design of the questionnaire was concerned, a number of conditions needed to be met. A first prerequisite was that the questionnaire should be appropriate for all pupils and include a home language repertoire question for identifying

all the languages spoken by Surinamese children. On the basis of this language repertoire question, main language groups can be identified and home language profiles can be constructed. As mentioned earlier, this language profile consists of four dimensions, based on reported language proficiency, language choice, language dominance, and language preference. In designing the questionnaire, extensive document analysis has been conducted into similar types of home language surveys in multicultural contexts.

A second prerequisite of the questionnaire was that it should be both short and accurate. It should be short in terms of time demanded from teachers and children during school hours, and it should be accurate in terms of an appropriate and transparent set of selective questions which should be answered by the individual children, if need be together with the teacher. On the basis of the piloting of the questionnaire, it became clear that pupils could fill in the questionnaires accurately on their own with the guidance of the teachers. The survey for the pupils consisted of 21 questions. Given the large size of the resulting database, a third prerequisite of the questionnaire was that the answers of the children could be controlled, scanned, interpreted, and verified as automatically as possible. In order to fulfill this demand, both hardware and software need to be appropriate for such a large scale study. Manual data processing costs time and labor, which reduces the feasibility of such large scale studies. The structure of the student questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

Questions	Focus
1-7	Background information (school, age, gender, district, city, type of school and class, place of birth)
8	Home language repertoire question (which languages are spoken at home)
9-10	Language proficiency & language choice
11	Languages used by parents in speaking to children
12-18	Languages used at school with teachers and fellow pupils, languages learnt at/outside school and languages demanded by pupils from the school
19-21	Language used most, language dominance, and language preference

Table 1. Outline of the student questionnaire.

In compliance with the privacy of individual pupils, the database only contains home and school language data at the levels of districts, schools, and grades; no data can be traced back to individual pupils. The language profile, specified by questions 8-10 and 19-21, consists of the following five dimensions:

- Language repertoire: the number and type of (co-)occurring home languages;
- Language proficiency: the extent to which the pupil can understand-speak-read-write the home language;
- Language choice: the extent to which the home language is commonly spoken with the mother, father, younger and older brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, neighbors, and best friends;
- Language dominance: the extent to which the home language is spoken best;
- Language preference: the extent to which the home language is preferred to be spoken.

Taken together, the four dimensions of language proficiency, choice, dominance and preference result in a language vitality index. On the basis of questions 12-18, a school language profile can also be specified. This profile provides information about the available language instruction in and outside school, as well as the need expressed by the pupils for instruction in a given language. The questionnaire was piloted in a number of schools in various districts in Suriname before the main study.

Collection of the data

Data collection was organized, monitored and carried out centrally by the Working Group on Multilingualism of the Dutch Language Union in Suriname. The collection of the data would not have been possible without the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, school directors and individual teachers. All school directors were informed about the scope and aim of the survey and received the questionnaires through the current communication channels of the education sector. Data collection took place in October and November 2007. The completed questionnaires were finally checked and packed for shipping to Tilburg University for processing and statistical analyses.

Processing of the data

Given the large scale of the conducted survey, the collected data needed to be processed in an efficient manner. For this reason a special commercial software packet (*Teleform*) was used for all aspects of data processing. *Teleform* automatically scanned the forms, interpreted the hand and machine printed text on them and, in case of un-interpretable data, called for verification of the forms. After the verification process, all answers were transmitted to a database that was accessible by SPSS. Before the data could be prepared for analysis, a number of coding stages needed to be completed, in particular with respect to given references to countries and languages. The last stage of data processing was transforming the outcomes of the analyses into tables and figures for all languages.

Results

In doing the statistical analyses, we wanted to find out the extent of multilingualism among school children and teachers. In this paper we only report the findings on pupils, both in primary and secondary schools. In this section, we mainly present information about the types and ranking of the home languages referred to by the pupils. In the following tables, we present, firstly, the distribution of languages spoken by the pupils in the home context (Table 3). In order to show the extent of language use, choice and preference, we present cross-linguistic cross-tabulations for the first fourteen language groups (Tables 4-8).

Pupils' home languages

Given the large scale of the research, it is necessary to describe basic traits of the research group. As already indicated, all pupils in two primary school classes (referred to as Primary 4 and Primary 6) and two classes from two different types of secondary schools, the lower level LBGO and the higher level MULO (referred to as Secondary Low 2 and 4 and Secondary Medium 2 and 4 respectively) participated in the research. From each level, all second and fourth year pupils took part in the research. In Table 2, the distribution of pupils across classes is given.

	Frequency	%
PRIMARY SCHOOL		
Primary 4	7,417	32.8
Primary 6	6,920	30.6
SECONDARY SCHOOL		
Secondary Low 2	798	3.5
Secondary Medium 2	3,440	15.2
Secondary Low 4	589	2.6
Secondary Medium 4	3,195	14.1
Unknown	284	1.3
Total	22,643	100.0

Table 2. Distribution of pupils across classes and school types.

As seen in Table 2, a total number of 22,643 pupils participated in the research. They come from all districts in Suriname. A majority of the pupils, 14,337 (63%), attend primary schools. Table 3 below contains an overview of all home languages mentioned by the pupils in primary and secondary education.

A great majority of the pupils are highly accurate in reporting the languages spoken in their homes. Only a very few number of pupils reported made up languages, such as Brabbel (jabber), Draaitaal (inverted language), Pinapa and Petaal (pupils' 'codes' in which e.g. all consonants are replaced with 'p'). In order to trace some of the more unfamiliar languages, we first checked the Internet version of Ethnologue (<http://www.ethnologue.com>; see Lewis 2009) and if the named category was not found we did a Google™ search on the Internet. When we examine the distribution of languages, Dutch (89%) turns out to be the most widely used language in Surinamese homes, followed by Sranan (61%) and Sarnami (30%). English (20%), Javanese (15%), Aukan (11%), and Saramaccan (10%) are spoken in many homes as well.

Cross-linguistic Comparison

On the basis of the home language data, we made a cross-linguistic and pseudo-longitudinal comparison of the four dimensions of language proficiency, language choice, language dominance, and language preference. For this analysis, these four dimensions have been operationalized as follows:

- Language proficiency: the extent to which the home language under consideration is understood by the children;
- Language choice: the extent to which this home language is commonly spoken with the mother;
- Language dominance: the extent to which this home language is spoken best;
- Language preference: the extent to which this home language is preferred to be spoken.

Language	Freq.	Language	Freq.
Dutch	20,137	Guyanese	3
Sranan	13,761	Wayana	3
Sarnami	6,853	Matuari	3
English	4,606	Greek	2
Javanese	3,497	Urdu	1
Aucan	2,561	Armenian	1
Saramaccan	2,200	Bahasa	1
Spanish	359	Iraqi	1
Portuguese	325	Latin	1
Chinese	313	Flemish	1
Paramaccan	250	Indian (from India)	1
Arawakan	212	Malay	1
Aluku	162	Inuit	1
Cariban	160	Creole	1
French	68	Gambian	1
Trio	35	Scottish	1
Papiamentu	16	Sinti	1
Matawai	13	Swahili	1
Arabic	11	Tagalog	1
Kwinti	11	Hakka	1
Swedish	10	Manouch	1
Gabonese	6	Brabbel	1
Lebanese	5	Draaitaal	1
Iranian	4	Sign language	1
German	3	51. Pinapa	1
Indian	3	52. Petaal (unidentified)	1

Table 3. Home languages reported by the pupils.

The operationalization of the first and second dimension (language proficiency and language choice) is aimed at a maximal scope. Language understanding is commonly the least demanding of the four language skills and the general trend is that the mother acts as a major gatekeeper for intergenerational language transmission. The final columns of the tables to be presented on these four language dimensions contain mean scores for the 14 language groups in a decreasing order. From the analyses on the basis of the four language dimensions mentioned above,

we finally constructed a cumulative Language Vitality Index (LVI) for each of the 14 language groups under consideration. The LVI is based on the mean value of the presented scores for the four obtained language domains.

In Table 4 we present a cross-linguistic and pseudo-longitudinal overview of the first language dimension, that is to say, the extent to which the languages under consideration are understood by the pupils.

Language Group	Primary 2	Primary 6	Secondary 2	Secondary 4	Average
Dutch	97	97	98	99	98
Sranan	89	94	96	96	94
Sarnami	88	92	94	95	92
English	80	88	93	95	89
Aukan	82	89	87	93	88
Javanese	81	86	87	89	86
Saramaccan	80	85	87	90	86
Chinese	74	79	81	83	79
Paramaccan	61	68	63	88	70
Portuguese	60	73	69	77	70
Caribbean	67	63	68	68	67
Aluku	59	63	63	71	64
Arawakan	59	50	56	55	55
Spanish	31	48	63	70	53

Table 4. Proficiency in language understanding per language group and class (%).

On average, all languages are understood reasonably well to very well. On the basis of cumulative percentages, it appears that Dutch, Sranan, and Sarnami are understood best by the pupils in these language groups. Dutch is the official language in Suriname and it is expected that all pupils have high levels of understanding skills in the language. Sranan is a local *lingua franca* understood by most Surinamese residents. However, not all pupils indicated Sranan as a language spoken in their home context. Among the pupils, who indicated Sranan as a home language, the majority reported that they understand Sranan very well. Sarnami, on the other hand, emerges as a highly vital language. The majority of its speakers reported that they understand the language very well. By comparison, the obtained scores for Spanish and Arawakan are considerably low. A possible explanation for Spanish could be that rather than being a home language, it is a language learned at school by these pupils and less used in daily communication at home.

Table 5 gives a cumulative overview of the reported oral and literacy skills per language group. These averages are based on all the pupils' reports across four classes.

Language	Total # pupils	Understand	Speak	Read	Write
Dutch	20,137	98	97	97	96
Sranan	13,761	94	89	68	51
Sarnami	6,853	92	86	45	36
English	4,606	89	83	79	72
Javanese	3,497	86	74	33	22
Aukan	2,561	88	81	50	50
Saramaccan	2,200	86	77	49	37
Spanish	359	53	48	45	43
Portuguese	325	70	62	46	36
Chinese	313	79	75	38	34
Paramaccan	250	70	53	31	24
Arawakan	212	55	34	29	23
Aluku	162	64	45	31	23
Cariban	160	66	56	32	22

Table 5. Oral and written skills per language group (in cumulative percentages).

On the basis of the figures presented in Table 5, it is clear that a predictably decreasing order of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing skills and a predictably large interval between oral skills on the one hand and literacy skills on the other, can be observed for almost all language groups. Literacy skills are mostly acquired in the schools. Because Dutch and English are offered as school subjects, literacy skills in these languages are reported to be very high for Dutch and reasonably high for English. By comparison, both for understanding and speaking skills, the obtained scores for Arawakan, Aluku, and Spanish are rather low. Relatively low reading and writing skills are reported for almost all languages with the exception of Dutch and English. Reported literacy skills in Sranan are also relatively high: 68% for reading and 51% for writing. Table 5 offers information that is highly relevant for developing a language policy in education. Speakers of Sarnami, Javanese, Aukan, Saramaccan, and Chinese report very high understanding and speaking skills in their home languages; however, they at the same time report very low literacy skills in these languages. If being able to read and write in these languages is considered important in view of, for example, pupils' educational success, one could consider offering literacy programs in these languages.

In order to understand the extent of Dutch language use with different interlocutors in the home context, Table 6 offers a cumulative mirror-like overview of the reported choice of Dutch as a language of interaction with different interlocutors at home.

Language	Total # pupils	Mother	Father	Siblings	Average
Dutch	20,137	85	77	80	81
Sranan	13,761	84	76	78	79
Sarnami	6,853	75	63	74	71
English	4,606	81	73	81	78
Javanese	3,497	95	85	82	87
Aucan	2,561	59	54	63	59
Saramaccan	2,200	53	51	59	54
Spanish	359	80	79	77	79
Portuguese	325	73	70	77	73
Chinese	313	44	41	74	53
Paramaccan	250	63	56	64	61
Arawakan	212	90	80	81	84
Aluku	162	62	55	62	60
Cariban	160	81	70	68	73

Table 6. Choice of Dutch as language of interaction with different interlocutors in the home context across language groups (percentages).

The most frequent choice of Dutch in interaction with parents is reported in the Javanese group (87%) followed by Arawakan (84%) and Dutch speaking group (81%). The concept of ‘mother tongue’ is not empirically confirmed by the data. In all the groups, Dutch is more commonly spoken with the mother and comparatively less with the father. In line with the sociolinguistics of language choice, it is apparent that Dutch has become the language of interaction between mothers and children, which indicates that mothers are the gatekeepers for Dutch language use in the home context.

In Table 7 we present a cross-linguistic and pseudo-longitudinal overview of the third language dimension, i.e. the extent to which the languages under consideration are spoken better than Dutch or as good as Dutch. On the basis of the pupils’ reports across different classes, we will establish the extent to which the reported home language is spoken best by the pupils.

Language	Primary 4	Primary 6	Secondary 2	Secondary 4	Average
Dutch	32	30	19	17	25
Sranan	18	21	18	19	19
Sarnami	38	41	33	35	37
Javanese	8	5	3	2	5
Aucan	41	43	34	39	39
Aluku	5	5	3	0	3
Paramaccan	13	9	6	18	12
Saramaccan	41	44	34	32	38
Arawakan	18	22	5	10	14
Caribbean	27	24	6	12	17
Chinese	23	40	37	25	31
Portuguese	14	15	10	9	12
Spanish	16	4	1	0	5
English	13	12	12	11	12

Table 7. Language dominance per language group across classes in the reported home language (%).

Language dominance is not measured by actual language competence tests but on the basis of pupils' self-reports regarding the languages they spoke the best. On the basis of the findings presented in Table 7, it appears that relatively low dominance scores are again reported for Aluku, Spanish, and Javanese. The highest dominance scores are reported for Aucan, Saramaccan, Sarnami and Chinese. The dominance scores for Dutch (25%) is average in comparison to other group scores. For the remaining groups, dominance scores below 20% are reported. More or less across all groups pupils from Primary 6 classes report the highest dominance scores for Dutch.

Language vitality

As mentioned at the beginning of the results section, we constructed a cumulative Language Vitality Index (LVI) for all language groups on the basis of the four analyzed language dimensions (i.e. language proficiency, language choice, language dominance, and language preference). The LVI is based on the mean value of the presented scores for each of the four language dimensions referred to. This LVI is by definition an arbitrary index in the sense that the *chosen* dimensions with the *chosen* operationalizations are *equally* weighted. Table 8 gives a cross-linguistic and pseudo-longitudinal overview of the language vitality per language group and class.

Language Group	Primary 4	Primary 6	Secondary 2	Secondary 4	Average
Dutch	78	76	47	43	61
Sarnami	65	66	44	45	55
Chinese	53	55	43	36	47
Aucan	61	50	33	30	44
Sranan	47	51	35	32	41
Saramaccan	58	39	25	17	35
English	44	32	32	24	33
Javanese	43	39	23	23	32
Portuguese	34	30	18	20	25
Cariban	43	26	15	13	24
Paramaccan	33	11	13	13	18
Arawakan	26	9	11	8	13
Aluku	23	6	12	6	12

Table 8. Language vitality per language group and class (percentages; average LVI in cumulative percentages).

It is interesting to note that the highest values for language vitality emerge for the youngest children in Primary 4 classes. Because children are immersed in Dutch when they come to school, language vitality of the home language decreases over the years. The lowest language vitality indices are found for Aluku, Arawakan, Paramaccan, Cariban, and for Portuguese. On the other hand, the highest language vitality indices are found for Dutch, Sarnami, Chinese, and Aucan. The other groups, such as Sranan, Saramaccan, English and Javanese, occupy the middle position on the vitality ladder. On the basis of language choice and proficiency figures of Sranan, it can be argued that Sranan is a *lingua franca* in the public sphere rather than a home language.

Conclusions

In line with the goals of our research, we wanted to document the linguistic diversity in Suriname. It appears that multilingualism is an inherent characteristic of Surinamese society. Multiple languages are used in the homes and schools of Suriname. Urban centers have the richest diversity with respect to different languages and cultures. The capital city Paramaribo has the largest and most diverse population and Dutch is the most commonly reported home language. The interior of Suriname has the smallest population and in that region access to Dutch is also most limited. In general, Dutch is the most widely used home language in Suriname. Sranan appears to be a *lingua franca* in less formal public domains (shops, neighborhood, and so on). Most possibly, due to its (historical) low status and association with Creole groups, Sranan is not acquired as a home language by the majority of the pupils. Even the pupils, who reported Sranan as a home language, do not use Sranan in interaction with their parents. Sranan is mostly used with neighbors, peers and friends. The use of Sranan is more widespread among boys than girls. In terms of ethnolinguistic vitality, Sranan turns out to have a very low vitality compared to Dutch, Sarnami, Aucan and Chinese.

Sarnami has the highest vitality after Dutch. The pupils from that group are also highly proficient in Dutch. Aucan (a Maroon language) is the most vital among the Creole languages. Given the proficiency levels of the pupils in Dutch, as well as the highest vitality of the language, Dutch remains to be the primary school language in Suriname. Combined with the results of the teacher survey, Dutch is deeply embedded in the society and especially in public institutions. Dutch has a very high status and it is associated with social prestige and high education. Contrary to some socio-political claims suggesting Sranan as an official language, Sranan is not a home language. It is an informal *lingua franca* with low prestige. Regarding the language of instruction in schools, Dutch seems to be the only viable option under the current circumstances. It is the home language of most of the pupils and it is widely used in society. Language use, choice and preference patterns clearly indicate that Dutch is the most widespread language among all ethnic groups. Under these circumstances no other language can replace it as a national language. However, introducing major home languages as auxiliary languages of instruction or as school subjects is always possible provided that there are sufficient financial and manpower resources. At the moment there are, however, a number of limitations for using Aucan, Sranan or Sarnami as auxiliary languages in the schools. These include the widely scattered nature of pupils with various language backgrounds across regions and schools, the lack of qualified teachers and the availability of teaching learning materials in these languages. Another pressing issue is the limited academic development of (most of) these languages, leading to a lack of scientific and didactic terminologies and concepts needed for organizing teaching/learning processes.

In principle, we would fully support the use of various home languages in education. However, the concept of home language versus ethnic heritage language does not always overlap as emerged in our data. Dutch appears to be the home language for most children. In cases in which a language other than Dutch is the home language, that language can be used as an auxiliary language in order to facilitate teaching-learning processes for more effective acquisition of Dutch. Our findings definitely do not provide any supportive evidence for the use of Sranan or any other language as a sole or additional medium of instruction in the schools in Suriname. It will, however, finally be the responsibility of the policy makers in Suriname, i.e. the Ministry of Education, to use the outcomes of our research as a basis for developing a language policy in education that starts from the undisputed status of Dutch as a language of instruction and at the same time adequately deals with the fact that Dutch is not the only language in Surinamese homes, schools and society.

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