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# LINGUISTIC DILEMMA IN DIGLOSSIC POST-COLONIAL STATES: DESIGNING LANGUAGE-SENSITIVE PRIMARY CURRICULA

### Anotacija

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamos kalbos politikos alternatyvos, susijusios su pokolonijiniu pradiniu ugdymu kreolų kalba kalbančiose daugiatautėse Karibų valstybėse. Pirmiausia aptariami skirtingi anglų kalbos ir vietinių dialektų vaidmenys, t. y. anglų kalba – kaip mokymo kalba, kuri yra vartojama formaliajame švietime, ir vietiniai dialektai – bendravimo priemonė, vartojama vietos bendruomenėse. Straipsnyje pateikiamos teoriškai pagrįstos praktinės pastabos apie kalbos mokymą atitinkančią kiekvieną kalbos politikos alternatyvą. Šiame straipsnyje remiamasi dvišalioje Gajanoje vyraujančiomis kalbos politikos tendencijomis ir keliamas klausimas, ar švietimo politikos socialinėje plotmėje Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija turėtų jausti atsakomybę už vietos bendruomenės vartojamų kalbų puoselėjimą ar jas ignoruoti, visą dėmesį sutelkiant į ankstyvąjį anglų kalbos ugdymą. Klausimo prieštaravimo esmė yra tai, kokią įtaką ankstyviesiems akademiniais pasiekimams turėtų daryti anglų kalba pradinio lavinimo laikotarpiu, o gal prioritetą reikėtų suteikti vietinės kalbos mokymui, kuris skatintų socialinį teisingumą. Straipsnyje aptariamos trys kalbos politikos alternatyvos. Dvi iš jų atskleidžia kraštutinį požiūrį į nagrinėjamą klausimą, o trečioji palaiko nuosaikų požiūrį. Kiekviena kalbos politikos alternatyva vertinama remiantis trimis kriterijais: nuo to, kaip giliai įsišaknijusi ne vietinė kalba, kokie turimi ištekliai ir kiek bendruomenės vertina savo kalbas. Skiriamos šios kalbos politikos alternatyvos: (i) anglų kalbos vartojimas mokymo procese, (ii) pereinamuoju laikotarpiu abiejų kalbų (anglų ir vietos) vartojimas mokymo

procesė, (iii) dvikalbio mokymo politika. Visos trys kalbos politikos alternatyvos straipsnyje aiškinašamos remiantis pavyzdžiais, būdingais keletui daugiataučių valstybių.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: kalbos politika, užsienio (anglų) kalba, kalbos mokymo programa, kalbos vartojimas mokymo procese, daugiakalbystė, pokolonijinis ugdymas.

### **Abstract**

This paper examines language policy options as they relate to post-colonial primary education in Creole-speaking multi-ethnic Caribbean states. It first discusses the different roles of English and vernacular languages, the former as the language of instruction in formal education and the latter as interactional languages within local communities. It concludes with theoretically based practical notes on language teaching appropriate to each policy option. This paper uses as an illustrative example the language policies in bi-ethnic Guyana and addresses the critical issue whether the Ministry of Education, through social aspects of its policies, should take responsibility for community languages or ignore community languages in order to focus on early proficiency in the English language. The controversial decision is to what extent primary education should emphasise high English inputs for early academic attainment or prioritise community language inputs for promotion of social equity. This paper considers three language policy options, one policy option matching each of these extremes and one addressing the middle ground. Each policy option is contingent on three decision criteria: density of entry languages, available resources and the extent to which communities value their languages. These policy options are: (i) English language immersion, (ii) Transitional language policy and (iii) Bilingual policy. The three policies options are illustrated with comparative examples from several pluri-ethnic states. KEY WORDS: language policy; ESL; language curriculum; language immersion; plurilingualism; post-colonial education

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## **Introduction**

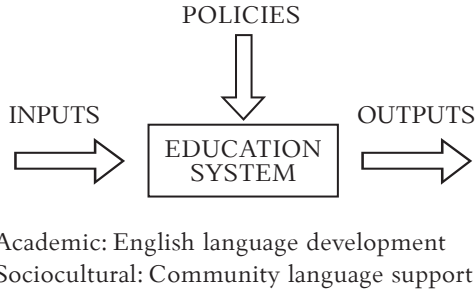
This paper examines language policy options as they relate to primary education in Creole-speaking Caribbean states. It first discusses the different roles of English and community languages, the former as the language of instruction in formal education and the latter as interactional languages within local communities (Béatrice Boufof-Bastick 2009, 203). The critical issue addressed in this paper is to what extent primary education in Caribbean states should emphasise high English inputs for early academic attainment or prioritise community language inputs for the promotion of social equity. The paper uses Guyana as an illustrative example and considers three language options in formal education, one policy option matching each of these extremes and one addressing the middle ground. These policy options are: (i) English language immersion, (ii) Transitional language policy and (iii) Bilingual policy. The three policies options are illustrated with comparative examples from several multi-ethnic states.

## 1. Unique sociolinguual features of Caribbean communities

Post-colonial Caribbean states have a rich and vibrant linguistic landscape with unique socio-lingual features expressed in a variety of community-bound vernacular languages (Jo-Anne Ferreira 2012; Bettina Migge, Isabelle Léglise and Angela Bartens 2010). As an illustrative example, we shall focus our discussion on Guyana, the only Commonwealth Caribbean state in South America, because this state has a strikingly plurilingual topography associated with a pluri-ethnic social make-up: nine small Amerindian tribes and two main ethnic groups from Indian and African ancestry. Guyana's pluri-lingualism is displayed by its diverse community-specific languages, namely Creolese and Amerindian vernaculars, each with its own lexical uniqueness and syntactic features, while uncompromisingly it endorses the colonial legacy of English as the official language. As such, Guyana diglossia is representative of the wider Caribbean context: on one hand, a high status official language serving international communication and on the other the lower status vernaculars assisting daily personal interactions and attesting to social inclusion. For the Caribbean child, the vernacular is their language of pre-school socialisation, a Caribbean anchor, whereas English is apprehended as a formal language of instruction, hence somehow challenging the homogeneity of their monocultural and monolingual community and giving way to a dual school/community compartmentalised sociolinguual setting.

While the sociolinguistic school/community duality exists for all children it undeniably manifests itself more acutely among children from non-Standard English-speaking communities, as those in Guyana's Creolese or Amerindian rural communities. This is the duality to which the child is confronted in their early years of primary education and this raises the question for educators to how best reconcile this duality with a psychopedagogically informed language teaching approach which supports both the child's affective needs in relation to their community language and their cognitive needs in relation to the language of formal education. It is this question which is now addressed through three language policy options: English immersion, transitional language policy and bilingual policy. To this end, these three language policy options are briefly

described with their philosophical and pedagogical concomitants and then evaluated in terms of their social and educational outcomes.



## 2. Considering three language curriculum options for diglossic states

Three language policy options – English language immersion, Transitional language policy and Bilingual policy – are open to diglossic communities. The first option is now considered.

### Basic pedagogical and philosophical premises of English language immersion programs

English immersion policy<sup>1</sup> assigns English as the sole appropriate means of communication in school (Merrill Swain and Sharon Lapkin 2005), that “the teacher or teachers use English for almost all interactions” (Patton Tabors 1997). This is the language policy which governs Guyana’s education programs (John Rickford 1983, 147; Charlene Wilkinson and Kencil Banwarie 2011). This policy negates the educational value of Creole spoken by many local communities. Conversely, it affirms the role of schooling in eradicating non-standard English-based syntactic forms and supports early proficiency in Standard English. The “English only” policy assumes that early English exposure obliterates Creole intrusions and in-

<sup>1</sup> Young children develop language through exposure; within limits, the bigger the input the faster language acquisition. Teachers are the major language input providers with whom children interact and interaction is a “natural” way by which children unconsciously develop their language abilities (Graham Hall 2011). This policy can be implemented with greater ease in the early years of formal education as the children’s verbal fluency in the home vernacular is still limited and the teacher thus becomes a major source of language input and a model.

stils grammatically appropriate language behaviours from an early age. The primary school teacher thus stands as the language model, the user of school-specific language code which the child is directed to adopt. This directed language modelling assumes a child's intrinsic need to interact with their teacher and perhaps may prompt them to "impersonate" their teacher's speech. A major postulate in support of early language immersion is that it pre-empts interlingual English-Creolese interference and delineates what language use is appropriate in school. In other words, it postulates that the school takes no responsibility for the teaching of the community language(s). Thus, admittedly the success of English language immersion programs depends partly on the support from the community in promoting English and on the recognition of the differential value of English and Creolese; assuming a higher status to be conferred to English and conceding a lower status to be assigned to Creolese. A successful unilingual policy expresses the wish of the community for an academically oriented education which requires mindful conceptualisation and implementation of psychopedagogically informed programmes, such as those designed in Canada and New Zealand.

*Designing language immersion programs in plurilingual societies*

Language immersion programs have been implemented successfully in culturally and linguistically mixed societies (Yvonne Freeman 2005; Lindholm-Leary 2001; Merrill Swain and Robert Johnson 1997). Canada, for example, initiated innovative French language immersion education programmes for English-speaking elementary school students in the 1960's. Similar early education immersion programs, albeit in the indigenous language, were introduced in the Pacific, e.g. in New Zealand (Anne Meade and Valerie Podmore 2002) and Hawaii (William Wilson 1998) in the early 1980s. Both these socioculturally guided language programs were aimed to revive the Maori and Hawaiian vernaculars in indigenous communities, in an attempt to revitalise selected language-embedded cultural traditions among the young natives. The fervent Maori community support for Maori language programs, in what is familiarly called 'language nests', led to their extension through to 12th grade. The implementation of these immersion programs is consistent with a philosophical perspective of language as the major carrier of culture and that the culture embedded in the

language is highly valued as a distinct identity marker. Notwithstanding that this positioning on community language and culture maintenance may, perhaps, differ from that in Guyana with its seeming de-emphasis of local vernacular maintenance for English-dependent global education, the purpose of language immersion programs is to inculcate preferred high status language habits in young learners whose language patterns are not yet too deeply imprinted and to spur early proficiency in the language of instruction. Within this perspective, primary schools are expected to provide a language-rich learning environment and their teachers to be language models. A second option to be considered by the Ministry of Education is the introduction of a transitional language policy.

#### A transitional language policy for reconciling social justice and academic attainments

A transitional language policy requires the language of instruction to be gradually introduced in the early years of schooling. The community language is initially used as the language of class interaction and English is acquired as a foreign or second language. Gradually English is phased in and gradually becomes the language of instruction. The purpose of this policy is to provide an interim period when children use the community language in culturally relevant interactions, and learn the language of instruction as an additional language. Transitional language policies recognise the cultural value of the community language and also stress the role of formal education in bringing children into the English-speaking global community.

Transitional language policies have been implemented differently in linguistically diverse states to accommodate the various compositions of their base culture. Fiji and Australia in Oceania provide two illustrative contrasting examples of differently conceptualised and operationalised transitional language policies, namely, a culturally child-sensitive language policy in Fiji and a social justice-directed policy in Australia.

#### *A culturally child-sensitive approach to English acquisition: the Fiji example*

Bauan Fijian is an official language in Fiji. It is the mother tongue of native Fijians and expresses the “*vaka viti*” (Fijian way) clan-based lifestyle and cultural values; it is the expression of the Fijian cultural iden-

tity (Boufoyo-Bastick 2003a; 2010a; 2010b). English, by contrast, is the colonial language which has evolved as a lingua franca between two linguistically and culturally diverse communities, the native Fijians and the Indo-Fijians, the latter being descendants of Indian indentured labourers (Frances Mugler 1996, 275). English is the expression of Fiji's shared civic identity and is the common ethnically-independent language of instruction. Rural communities, however, speak either a Fijian vernacular or Fiji Hindi, called *Fiji Baat* (a Bojphuri dialect). So the first three years of primary schooling are associated with the acquisition of a new linguistic code. On entering Grade 4, children are expected to possess the basic language tools for English-only scholastic instruction. Unsurprisingly, this aim is differentially met at the end of Grade 3. Higher English proficiency is achieved in diglossic urban communities which can draw on higher out-of-school English inputs, compared to those monolingual island communities that have negligible English out-of-school inputs (Boufoyo-Bastick 2000; 2003a; 2010b; Lotherington-Woloszyn 1991, 148). Functionality in English remains limited among rural/island children for whom English is a foreign language, not a second language, and this is evidenced in their lower language attainments in national examinations in later years (Boufoyo-Bastick 2010b). In contrast, however, it demonstrates the vitality of the culture-embedded community languages.

*An English language policy for social justice: the Australian example*

The transitional language policy in Australia differs markedly from that of Fiji in its culturally inclusive approach (ACARA 2011; Boufoyo-Bastick, 1997; 2003b; Joseph Lo Bianco 2009). It rests fundamentally upon core Australian cultural values expressing social equity. This transitional language policy acknowledges the linguistic background of the child and the different language needs of native children and children from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB). The Australian transitional language policy is geared to non-native speakers and aims to remedy their English language 'deficit'. Their lack of English is perceived as a deficit since English is the language of instruction as from Grade 1, and academic attainments are contingent upon mastery of English. These NESB children receive ESL instruction in "sheltered" classes in which programs offered specifically to "Students with Limited English Proficiency" (SLEP) are

designed “to provide in-class or pullout instruction for any school-age children whose language competence is insufficient to participate fully in normal school instruction” (Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers 2001, 206–207). The purpose of these programmes is not so much to learn English as an end in itself, but to provide the learning tools to understand and communicate information (Richards & Rodgers 2001). From this perspective, the Australian SLEP programs can be said to be pedagogically grounded in Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and socially geared to provide a “level playing field”, that is to enable each child to have, what the Australians familiarly call, “a fair go” in an egalitarian multicultural society (Boufoy-Bastick 1997; 2003, 124).

These two brief descriptions highlight the different socio-educational interpretations of Fiji and Australia’s humanistically influenced English language policies. They both evidence a governmental concern for social fairness, albeit within a staunch monolingual framework. It is also this same social principle that has elsewhere mandated the implementation of bilingual policies.

#### Bilingual policies for revaluing local cultures within national and supra-national parameters

Most modern societies are multicultural. A functional, socially integrated, multicultural society recognises the cultural specificities and the differential learning needs of each constituent social or ethnic group. At first sight, these two principles of social integration and social specificity may be seemingly mutually exclusive but they are the ideological tenets of cultural diversity upon which bilingual educational initiatives are founded. (Ofelia Miramontes, Adel Nadeau and Nancy Commins 1997, 23; 2011). Bilingual language programs are social education programs aimed at partitioning language space into English and the community language. Their aims are twofold: on one hand, they aim to promote English for the purpose of maintaining a harmonious multicultural society through ease of inter-ethnic communication, and on the other, to maintain the community language(s) for intra-ethnic communication and cultural maintenance. These two fundamental aims informed the design of prominent bilingual programs, such as the Magnet School initiative in the United States and a core Asian value-anchored curriculum in Singapore.



*Supporting biliteracy awareness in the United States: the Magnet Schools*

US magnet schools<sup>2</sup> were open as bilingual schools for both monolingual English-speaking and non-English speaking children from pre-Kinderergarten through primary schooling. Understandably, they were initially established in school districts with predominantly bilingual populations, such as in California and the North-East. These were two-way immersion programs which focused on developing biliteracy in English and Spanish and which promoted an appreciation of both Anglo-American and Hispanic cultures (Note 2). In the districts in which they were established, these bilingual programs received warm support from both the language minority group and the English-speaking professional class. Nonetheless, the first language remained the medium by which literacy skills were first introduced, although pedagogic materials were available in both languages. The resultant material duplication had cost implications. Because these were “one teacher-one language” bilingual programs, costs were further increased by the need for a greater number of teachers. As a result of the higher program costs, priority was given to non English-speaking children and/or multi-grade classes had been opened. This enabled some “magnet schools”, such as the English-Creole school for Haitian immigrant children in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to sustain their bilingual programs into the higher primary school grades. In contrast to the selective costly US bilingual programs, Singapore runs cost-effective bilingual education programs which enhance the population’s current bilingualism.

*Promoting core Asian values – anchored bilingualism in Singapore*

Singapore’s compulsory schooling for children aged 6 to 12 was introduced in 2003. Pre-schools for children between the ages of 3 and 6 are run by the private sector, e.g. community foundations, religious, social and commercial organizations. Schools teach two languages English and one of the three ethnic languages, Malay for ethnic Malays, Mandarin for

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<sup>2</sup> The US early childhood “magnet school” program, (Pre-K), aims to develop primarily listening and speaking skills, predominantly in both English and Spanish, that is to promote communicative language acquisition. These programs use a team of bilingual early childhood teachers trained in discovery-learning methods, such as the popular Montessori Method. The implementation of the bilingual programs range from ‘one-teacher, one-language’ to simultaneous translation of objects or commands. So children learn to recognise and respond appropriately to verbal cues.

ethnic Chinese and Tamil for ethnic East Indians (Boufoy-Bastick 1997). English remains the main language of instruction and the *lingua franca* between the three main ethnic groups. The ethnic languages are given mother tongue status, irrespective of the child's home dialect, e.g. Chinese may be Hakka or Hokien speakers but are taught Mandarin in school while Indians may be Urdu or Telagu speakers and are required to study Tamil. This policy serves three purposes: cutting teaching cost by providing one language teacher for each ethnic group in a school, fostering ethnic group unity in an ethnically diverse society and protecting selected core Asian values from the Western culture embedded in the English language (Boufoy-Bastick 1997). So the teaching of the ethnic language mostly serves a social purpose while the teaching of English serves an economic purpose, namely to ensure participation in the global economy. Singapore language primary curricula recognise English as the mandatory language of interaction between teachers and children. The mother tongue is given specific instructional time and it is developed through story-telling, games and songs. This policy gives recognition to English as the inter-ethnic language of instruction and values the three ethnic languages Malay, Mandarin and Tamil for enculturation into Asian core values. In sum, Singapore early childhood language programs are designed to prepare young children to internalise two cultural codes (East and West) and move with fluidity between them as determined by the social context.

Finally, if we are to consider these language policy options for a post-colonial Caribbean state like Guyana the issue is whether their Ministries of Education through the social aspects of their policies should take responsibility for community languages and if so what educational policy should be preferred. What need to be considered when choosing a language policy option are the social and educational implications. Socially, the maintenance of both languages through a bilingual policy, be it transitional or maintained into primary grades, acknowledges the specific linguistic code of the child's social network and their inter-relational and affective role as well as establishing English as the language of formal education. By contrast, an English-only language policy focuses on the academic returns from high English inputs and de-emphasises the interactional aspect of language. The choice is either to prioritise the social or the academic aspect of formal primary education.

## Conclusion

This paper highlights some critical issues with regard to language planning in diglossic societies and provides an overview of language policies implemented in different parts of the world. Three policy options were examined. The first option, the English-only language policy, suggests total language immersion in English and ignores vernacular language(s) for the purpose of speeding up English acquisition, promoting higher attainments in English for later academic achievements. However, the danger is that a strict “English only” language policy obliterates the community languages so might destabilise the community’s social fabric and jeopardise social harmony. This is an implicit devaluing of the community language and, to some extent of the local culture. This raises the fundamental question which is not so much whether a Ministry of Education seeks to maintain the language, but whether they seek to maintain the culture. The second language policy option is a transitional bilingual policy in primary education. The objectives of this policy are both psychological and educational. Psychologically, this policy recognises the child’s out-of-school inter-relational network which has been developed through the vernacular language and has met thus far the child’s basic communicational and affective needs. Although a transitional language policy can be operationalised in various ways to fit in with the local Caribbean context, it suggests maintaining the Creoles for informal interaction and acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills in English. In short, the transitional language policy uses a child-centred approach which fulfils a social and an academic objective, the former by valuing the community culture, the latter by providing the English input for higher academic attainments. The third option is a bilingual policy which bears resemblance to that used implicitly in homes where each parent is from a different language group. They raise their children to be balanced bilingual speakers. This childrearing behaviour is based on the principle of “one person, one language”, where the child learns to identify each parent with a distinct language code. Similarly, bilingual programs are based on a “one language, one context” principle and recognise the use of acrolectal English in more formal professional contexts and basilectal vernaculars for informal social contexts. Opting for a bilingual policy in primary education signifies designing sociocultur-

ally responsive language curricula for the promotion of social justice and national unity in diglossic societies.

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### DIGLOSIJOS DILEMA POKOLONIJINĖSE VALSTYBĖSE: PRADINIO MOKYMO PROGRAMŲ RENGIMAS ATSIŽVELGIANT Į KALBĄ

#### Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje pabrėžiamos kai kurios svarbiausios problemos, susijusios su kalbos mokymu visuomenėje, kuriai būdingas pakaitinis bendrinės kalbos ir dialekto vartojimas, atsižvelgiant į kalbinę aplinką, bei pateikiama įvairiose pasaulio dalyse įgyvendinamos kalbų politikos apžvalga. Straipsnis analizuoja tris kalbos politikos alternatyvas. Pirmoji alternatyva, t. y. vien tik anglų kalbos vartojimo politika, akcentuoja mokymą tiksliai anglų kalba ir atmets vietinių dialektų vartojimą siekiant kuo greičiau išmokyti anglų kalbą, kuri užtikrintų aukštesnius akademinis pasiekimus ateityje. Tačiau kyla pavojus, kad griežta kalbos politika „tik anglų kalba“ sunaikins tarmes ir taip destabilizuos bendruomenės socialinę struktūrą

bei sukels pavojų socialinei darnai. Tai netiesioginis vietinio dialekto ir, tam tikru požiūriu, vietos kultūros sumenkinimas. Iš čia kyla esminis klausimas ne apie tai, ar Švietimo ir mokslo ministerija siekia išsaugoti kalbą, bet ar ji siekia išlaikyti kultūrą. Antroji kalbos politikos alternatyva yra pereinamasis dviejų kalbų vartojimas pradinio ugdymo laikotarpiu. Šios kalbos politikos keliami tikslai yra psichologiniai ir auklėjamieji. Psichologijos požiūriu, ši kalbos politika pripažįsta, kad už mokyklos ribų vaikas bendrauja ir sąveikauja vietiniu dialektu, kuris patenkina jo pagrindinius komunikacinius ir emocinius poreikius. Nors pereinamojo laikotarpio kalbos politika Karibų kontekste gali būti įgyvendinama įvairiais būdais, vis dėlto laikomasi nuostatos, kad kreolų kalba būtų vartojama kasdienėje neformalioje aplinkoje, o raštingumo bei skačiavimo įgūdžiai turėtų būti lavinami anglų kalba. Kitaip tariant, pereinamojo laikotarpio kalbos politika remiasi į vaiką orientuotu požiūriu, kuriuo įgyvendinami socialiniai ir akademiniai tikslai. Pirmuoju atveju puoselėjama bendruomenės kultūra, antruoju – anglų kalba vartojama siekiant geresnių akademinų rezultatų. Trečioji kalbos politikos alternatyva – dvikalbio mokymo politika, kuri labai primena situaciją, kai abu tėvai šeimoje kalba skirtingomis kalbomis. Tokiose šeimose augantys vaikai geba kalbėti dviem kalbomis. Šis vaikų auginimo elgesys yra grindžiamas principu „vienas asmuo – viena kalba“, t. y. vaikas išmoksta atpažinti savo tėvus pagal vartojamą kalbą. Panašiu principu, t. y. „viena kalba – vienas kontekstas“, yra grindžiamos ir dvikalbės programos, pagal kurias ta kalbos atmaina, kuri yra artimiausia literatūrinei anglų kalbai, vartojama formaliose profesinėse situacijose, o labiausiai nuo jos nutolę dialektai – neformaliose kasdienėse situacijose. Dvikalbio mokymo politikos pasirinkimas pradinio ugdymo laikotarpiu rodo sociokultūrinio elemento įtraukimą į kalbos mokymo programas skatinant socialinį teisingumą bei nacionalinę vienybę visuomenėje, kuriai būdingas pakaitinis bendrinės kalbos ir dialekto vartojimas, atsižvelgiant į kalbinę aplinką ar socialinę situaciją.