BILINGUAL EDUCATION: ENABLING CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN MOZAMBIQUE

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ABSTRACT

This article shows how the use of local languages for teaching and learning is enabling classroom interaction and contributing to bridge the gap between rural bilingual schools and pupils' communities in Mozambique.

The evidence cited throughout the analysis is taken from my fieldwork experience as a researcher and evaluator of bilingual education policy and practice in Mozambique. The analysis draws on sensitising constructs from the social constructivist approach to classroom discourse and pedagogy and from the funds of knowledge perspective on educational change and school improvement.

The conclusion of the study is that bilingual education is a transformative force in Mozambique. Among other things, classroom interactions and the dialogue between schools and community actors tend to be more effective and symmetrical.

Keywords: bilingual education; constructivism; funds of knowledge; local languages; Mozambique

INTRODUCTION

Most of the current language policy decisions in many sub-Saharan African countries, which accord a privileged status to ex-colonial languages, as well as the common negative attitudes towards African languages still reflect the colonial legacy (Bamgbose 1991). This is also true of Mozambique.

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In fact, as during the colonial rule, Portuguese is still the only language to hold official status in Mozambique, whereas local African languages remain relegated to informal domains. In education, until recently Portuguese was also the sole language of teaching and learning. In contrast, the use of African languages in schools was prohibited and even punishable. Historically, the use of Portuguese as the State's language has been linked to an alleged desire to build a harmonious nation-state united around a common culture and a common language.

However, in the current international context of democratisation and liberalisation, the principle of 'political togetherness in difference' (Young 1993: 124) is also gaining momentum in Mozambique, and, in tandem with other forms of political change, is being translated into multicultural and multilingual language policy dispensations. The introduction of a pilot bilingual education programme in 2003, allowing for the use of local African languages alongside Portuguese in a few primary schools, can be regarded as an indicator of this ideological move.

As shown in Chimbutane (2011), the introduction of a bilingual education programme based on local languages is being taken by beneficiary communities as an indication of the State's recognition of their own existence as ethnolinguistic groups and also as a vital step towards the rescue and revival of their marginalized language and cultural practices. In addition to that, the use of local languages in schools is also contributing to the transformation of rural schools, from being islands detached from the communities they serve to settings where school/academic and local knowledge meet and cross-fertilise (Chimbutane 2011). This transformation is in tune with the 'funds of knowledge' concept regarding parents' and communities' role in educational change and school improvement (Moll 1992; Moll *et al*. 1992).

In this article, I show how the use of local languages for teaching and learning is enabling classroom interaction and contributing to bridge the gap between rural bilingual schools and pupil's communities in Mozambique.

The article is based on my fieldwork experience as a researcher and evaluator of bilingual education in Mozambique since 2003. However, the evidence cited throughout the article comes from the national evaluation of the bilingual education pilot initiative in Mozambique (CAPRA 2013), in which I took part as senior evaluator, and from a larger study on the purpose and value of bilingual education in Mozambique, conducted in two rural schools, fictionally called Gwambeni and Bikwani primary school (Chimbutane 2009, 2011). The CAPRA evaluation involved a sample of 16 bilingual schools across the country and included interviews with 11 School Directors, 11 School Adjoin Directors, 73 teachers, 87 students, 207 parents, 21 community leaders, 42 representatives of the Ministry of Education (at local and central levels), nine representatives of teacher training institutes and seven representatives of NGOs working in bilingual education. The classroom data for the study on the purpose and value of bilingual education was collected from grade four and five bilingual classes. The age of the pupils ranged from 9 to 13 years. They were

all native speakers of Chope (Gwambeni) and Changana (Bikwani). In addition to classroom observations, data collection included interviews and debriefing sessions with the teachers observed. During six months of fieldwork, 50 classes involving four teachers were observed; 12 teachers, 19 parents, five community leaders and six representatives of education authorities were interviewed.

The analysis offered in this article draws on sensitising constructs from the social constructivist approach to classroom discourse and pedagogy (Wells 1992; Maybin 2006; Mercer 2004; Howe and Mercer 2007) and from the funds of knowledge perspective on educational change and school improvement (Goldenberg and Gallimore 1991; Moll 1992; Moll et al. 1992; Martin-Jones and Saxena 2003; González *et al*. 2005; Moje 2008).

The conclusion of the study is that bilingual education is a transformative force in Mozambique. More specifically, the use of local languages is enabling teacher-pupil interactions in the classroom as well as facilitating the mobilization of community knowledge to aid pupils' learning, hence contributing to narrowing the gap between rural schools and local communities.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY AND THE FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE APPROACH TO LEARNING

The social constructivist theory and the funds of knowledge approach to learning are both founded on Vygotsky's social constructivism, which, among other things, places the learner at the centre of the teaching and learning process.

The social constructivist theory of learning and knowing builds on the work of Piaget and Vygotsky (Wells 1992; Howe and Mercer 2007). According to Wells (1992: 292), this theory 'is rooted in a view of knowledge as personally constructed through social interaction and mediated by culturally inherited semiotic tools, the most important of which is discourse'. This theory underscores the centrality of talk, stressing that it is through talk that learners display what they have learned and what they can do. Thus, within the social constructivist perspective, learners are accorded an active role in the learning process, as it is assumed that they actively construct knowledge by combining what they already know and new experiences presented to them through their social interactions.

Funds of knowledge is a concept used to refer to 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being' (Moll *et al*. 1992: 133). These funds include knowledge and skills related to families' origins, occupations, and strategies used to adapt to, for example, social and economic changes (González *et al*. 2005; Moll 1992; Moll *et al*. 1992). The funds of knowledge principle is based on the view that the 'student's community represents a resource of enormous importance for educational change and improvement' (Moll 1992: 21).

As can be understood, the approaches outlined above share the call for educators to engage with and build on students' previous knowledge, including community knowledge, at the same time that they emphasise the role of this pedagogical practice in facilitating students' active participation and learning in the school context.

In light of the approaches outlined above, this article shows how the use of a language familiar to the children as the medium of teaching and learning facilitates the dialogue between teachers and pupils, a central element of Vygotsky's social constructivism, and enables the communities to effectively participate in the formal education of new generations. This is what leads us to suggest that mother-tongue- based bilingual education in Mozambique is contributing to minding the gap between schools and communities, a gap that is exacerbated when ex-colonial languages such as Portuguese are used as the sole languages of teaching and learning.

TOWARDS A MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY IN MOZAMBIQUE

The policies adopted in Mozambique have moved from the 'one language, one state' approach to one in which there are attempts to accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity. The two phases briefly described below substantiate this statement.

Portuguese as the sole language of education

At independence, Portuguese, the former colonial language, was declared *the* official language of the country. In contrast, no official status was granted to local languages, which remained confined to informal domains. That is, the Portuguese language maintained and even reinforced its privileged socio-political position at the expense of local languages.

The State's decision to maintain Portuguese as the official language was allegedly to ensure national unity. This decision was a follow-up of the vision pursued during the liberation struggle, when the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Mozambican Liberation Front, hereafter Frelimo) adopted Portuguese as the unifying language for fighting the enemy (Katupha 1994). This ideological stance was epitomised by the declaration of Portuguese as the *língua da unidade nacional* (language of national unity). In contrast, multilingualism had been conceptualised as the seed source of tribalism and regionalism, which should be combated.

Consistent with this general language policy, Portuguese was singled out as the language of teaching and learning at all levels of education. By contrast, the use of local languages for teaching and learning was not promoted until recently, since that would contradict the view of a new nation united around and through the official Portuguese language.

Portuguese and local languages as mediums of education

The 1990 Constitution marked the turning point in the State's view on the relationship between Portuguese and African languages. For the first time in Mozambican history, it is enshrined in the Constitution that the State promotes the development and increased use of national languages in public life, including in education (cf. RM 1990, Article 5). The spirit of the 1990 Constitution was maintained in the revised version now in force. The new text of the Constitution reads as follows: 'The state values the national languages as a cultural and educational heritage and promotes their development and increased use as vehicles of our identity' (RM 2004: 7, Chapter I, Article 9).

The introduction of bilingual education in 2003 can be taken as a consequence of the current openness of 'ideological and implementational spaces' in the country (Hornberger 2002).

The first bilingual education experiment was conducted from 1993 to 1997 by a project called *Projecto de Escolarização Bilingue em Moçambique* (PEBIMO) (Project of Bilingual Schooling in Mozambique). This experiment was conducted in the provinces of Gaza (Changana-Portuguese) and Tete (Nyanja-Portuguese) by the *Instituto Nacional do Desenvolvimento da Educação* (INDE) (National Institute for Educational Development). Despite constraints such as lack of expertise and interruptions in funding, this experiment was regarded as successful overall (Patel *et al*. 1997; Benson 1997; 1998). For example, Benson (1997, 1998) found that despite the early and abrupt switch to Portuguese, bilingual learners achieved much higher pass and retention rates (especially for girls) than learners who did not participate in the experiment in the same communities. There were also reports of greater classroom participation and productive, curriculum-based interaction between teachers and parents (Benson 1997; 2000; Patel *et al*. 1997).

The results of this experiment revealed the potential of bilingual education for improving the quality of education in Mozambique and, as a consequence, contributed to a shift in public opinion in relation to the role of African languages in education. The results of the PEBIMO experiment and of other studies led to the recommendation for the immediate introduction of local languages as mediums of teaching and learning in primary school (Stroud and Tuzine 1998). This recommendation was taken into account in the new curriculum that has been in force since 2003; hence the introduction of bilingual education in some selected schools since then.

The initial motivation for the use of local languages in education was to improve the outcomes of an education system based on Portuguese, a typical second language (L2) in Mozambique. The argument advanced was that the use of this language as the sole language of instruction was excluding the vast majority of Mozambican

children from learning, especially considering the situation in rural settings, where more than 90% of the children have their first contact with Portuguese at school[1] (Palme 1992; Hyltenstam and Stroud 1997; Stroud and Tuzine 1998). The high rates of school failure (dropout and repetition rates) were then used as evidence for this claim. Portuguese was, therefore, viewed as a barrier to learning. It was generally believed that this situation could be reversed through the introduction of a bilingual education programme based on pupils' first languages (L1).

As a consequence of the above language-in-education policy changes, since 2003 there have been two programmes in place at primary level in Mozambique: a monolingual Portuguese programme, which, given its representativeness across the country, can be regarded as the mainstream programme, and a bilingual programme, in which, in addition to Portuguese, 16 local languages are also used as a medium of teaching and learning. My focus here is on the bilingual programme, although I will also make some references to the monolingual programme.

Mozambique has adopted a transitional model of bilingual education. The programme in place has been designed so as to introduce basic literacy and numeracy in a local language and subsequently in Portuguese. In the first three years of schooling, in addition to being taught as a subject, a local language is used as a medium of instruction. This role is taken up by Portuguese at grade four. In the first three years of schooling, Portuguese is taught as a subject. The objective in the first two years is to develop oral skills (listening and speaking). Pupils start reading and writing in Portuguese at grade three. After ceasing their role as mediums of instruction, local languages continue to be taught as subjects up to the end of primary school.

In addition to Portuguese, 16 African languages are now being used as initial mediums of instruction in some selected rural schools in Mozambique. Therefore, although the programme is officially regarded as bilingual, which is true when considering each school individually, the *de facto* national education policy now in place in Mozambique can be classified as multilingual.

LOCAL LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION: OPENING SPACES FOR PUPILS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CLASSES AND FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES TO ACT AS FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Mother-tongue education and classroom practices

In this sub-section I show how the use of pupils' L1 is prompting high quality interactions in the classroom as well as allowing the mobilisation of community knowledge to aid formal learning.

Classroom Interaction

The nature of the interactions between teachers and pupils and among pupils themselves is one of the indicators that can be used to assess the quality of the teaching and learning environment in a classroom. Unlike Portuguese-medium classes, when pupils' L1 is the medium of teaching and learning in bilingual education classes, the quality of interactions can be regarded as supportive to pupils' learning.

Indeed, studies and evaluations of the Mozambican bilingual programme (CAPRA 2013; Chimbutane 2009; 2011; Benson 1997; 1998; 2000; Ngunga *et al*. 2010) converge in pointing out that in L1-medium classes, pupils feel at ease, participate in class and are visibly motivated to learn. They not only reply to the questions asked by teachers, but, when the opportunity arises, they also take the initiative to make conversational moves in whole-class exchanges.

The following extract was taken from a grade 5 Chope lesson on the degree of adjectives ('*mapimo ya sikombazumbelo*'). In this part of the lessons pupils were required to identify adjectives from sentences provided by the teacher (Mr M) and also produce their own sentences using adjectives.

1	Mr M:	I mani angawumbako cigava cimwanyani cidi ni	Who can produce another sentence containing an
		cikombazumbelo?	adjective?
		Emmm i mani angathumisako yo meza yile futshi, mas	Ummm who can use that same table again but using
		asithumisi kutshura	a word other than the adjective beautiful, since each
5		porque mazumbela ya comaha maan- matate.	thing has ma- many different characteristics.
			It's me, it's me! ((she doesn't let the teacher finish his
	Farida:	Ngani, ngani! ((não deixa o professor acabar de falar))	utterance))
		Mitipfisisile?	Did you understand?
10	Mr M:	Ngani! ((vários alunos falam ao mesmo tempo, a pedir a vez	It's me! ((many pupils speak at the same time,
	Ss:	e com as mãos no ar))	bidding for a turn and with their hands up))
		Sou! ((alguns pedem a vez em Português))	It's me! ((some bid for the turn in Portuguese))
	Ss:		((he points to Lito, perhaps because he hadn't spoken
		((para a desilusão de muitos outros, aponta para o Lito, se	yet, which makes many others feel frustrated))
15	Mr M:	calhar porque ainda não tinha falado))	The table has sides. ((he speaks
		Meza yiku ni makhona. ((fala muito baixo))	in a very low voice))
			What? ((he shows that he didn't understand what the
	Lito:	Hem? ((mostra não ter percebido o que o aluno disse))	pupil said))
		Meza yi ni makhona.	The table has sides.
20	Mr M:	Yi ni makhona. ((com um tom que mostra insatisfação, mas	It has sides. ((he says in a voice indicating that he is
		sem reprovar a resposta))	not happy, but without disqualifying the answer))
	Lito:	Emm cikombazumbelo cingava cidi kona aho? Atoyiwomba	Umm is there any adjective in that sentence? He has
25	Mr M	mazumbelo ya yona mas emm... ngu ti- ngu nzila	characterized the table but umm… in a di- different
		yimwanyani, mas hitilava ku didi dipswi dadimwedo diya	way, but we wanted that sentence to have one word
		dikombako	expressing a characteristic of… of it. Umm you, say a
		eeh mazumbelo ya.. ya yona.	sentence ((he points to a girl))
	S:	Emm hingawomba ((aponta para uma aluna))	That table… ((standing, in a very low voice))
30	Mr M:	Meza yiya... ((de pé, muito baixinho))	Speak so as I can hear! ((the teacher interrupts the
		Wombawomba nitipfa! ((o professor interrompe))	pupil))
		Ni co cicopi miwombawombi tipfala?	Why can't you even speak out loud in Chope? ((in
		((no seu discurso está subjacente uma comparação com a	his speech there's implicit comparison with the pupils'
		participação dos alunos nas aulas de Português))	participation in Portuguese lessons))
35	S:	Meza ayiya yikomile.	That table is short.

(Chimbutane 2009).

This extract shows how pupils from the bilingual programme are eager to participate in L1 and L1-medium classes. They volunteered themselves to respond, in some cases anticipating their teacher's call for participation (lines 7–8). The bid for the turn was so competitive that the teacher often had to find ways of managing turn allocation fairly, for example, by spotting the less exuberant or less vocal pupils (lines 14–16). Although in a few of the cases above, pupils' utterances comprised single words or phrases, there were also cases in which they produced complete and accurate sentences (lines 17, 21 and 38). These sentences were produced by the pupils' themselves, using their own ideas and words, which provides evidence of their creativity in language use.

In contrast, as shown in Chimbutane (2009, 2011), in Portuguese-language and Portuguese-medium subjects the teacher-pupil interaction is very limited. In these contexts pupils hardly understand basic instructions given by their teachers and barely speak in class. The extract below substantiates these findings:

> The reason why I like to teach in the bilingual programme has to do with the relationship I have with the pupils in the classroom. The pupils speak freely indeed, without fear. They can communicate their ideas. Whereas in the monolingual programme, sometimes the child has the knowledge about certain matters but s/he may not be confident to speak that language (she alludes to the Portuguese language). In contrast, in classes in Chope the pupils can even correct the teacher in the classroom (Chimbutane 2009: 344, appendices).

As illustrated by Ms Carla's comments, pupils consider their bilingual teachers to be friends and speak freely in the classroom. Based on her previous experience of teaching in the monolingual programme, Ms Carla reminds us of the communication difficulties faced by pupils in that programme. She recognises that sometimes pupils in the monolingual programme have knowledge about certain matters but cannot display this because they are not confident to speak Portuguese. Highlighting the relative confidence of bilingual education pupils, Ms Carla reveals that these pupils can even correct the teacher in the classroom. This can be taken as a step towards the 'democratisation' of the classroom; that is, pupils and teachers are on a more or less equal footing. In fact, as reported in Chimbutane (2011), pupils' propensity to challenge their teachers makes them prepare their lessons very well in order to be able to respond to pupils' queries and avoid exposing themselves to pupils' corrections, which may make them lose face publicly. This confirms the general observation that the pupils from the bilingual programme can temporarily challenge their teachers' epistemic authority in whole-class exchanges (Chimbutane 2011).

The account presented above, which is in tune with findings from a number of studies and evaluations of bilingual education in Mozambique (Chimbutane 2009; 2011; Benson 1997; 1998; 2000; Ngunga *et al*. 2010), further substantiates the claim that the climate in L1-medium classes is conducive to pupils' participation and learning.

In contrast, instances of pupils' active participation in the classroom and the propensity to challenge teachers' epistemic authority only seldom occur in the Portuguese-medium programme. In this monolingual programme pupils are usually seen as passive, not intelligent and not motivated to learn. The critics seem to ignore the close relationship between such pupils' taciturnity and the Portuguese language medium. Indeed, an obvious question that can be asked is: how can one expect these pupils to participate in class and display knowledge if they hardly understand the language of communication?

The evidence from L1-medium classes indicates that the pupils from rural Mozambique are, by nature, as participative and as intelligent as those from the most prestigious urban schools. What this comparison tells us is that the language of communication can prompt or inhibit displays of knowledge and intelligence. This corroborates Mehan's (1984: 177) claim that 'intelligence display and language use are dependent on the context'.

Co-construction of knowledge

Co-construction of knowledge is one of the key constructs of the social constructivist theory. Building on the work of Piaget and Vygotsky, this theory 'is rooted in a view of knowledge as personally constructed through social interaction and mediated by culturally inherited semiotic tools, the most important of which is discourse' (Wells 1992: 292). In this context, studies following this approach highlight the need to accord learners an active role in the learning process as it is assumed that they construct knowledge by combining what they already know and new experiences presented to them through their social interactions (Wells 1992; Maybin 2006; Howe and Mercer 2007).

The following quote from a parent shows how bilingual education facilitates the link between community and school knowledge:

> Without bilingual education, many aspects of our culture were getting lost. Bilingual education allows the promotion of our culture. When a local language is used for learning there are also aspects of our culture which are brought to school, including histories, myths, legends and other forms of knowledge that the elders have about our *modus vivendi*. Bilingual education allows home and school to talk the same language and about the same cultural aspects. There is continuity between what the child learns at home and at school. Schools reinforce what parents teach the children at home (CAPRA 2013).

As can be understood from the above account, this father not only highlights the role of bilingual education in promoting and reviving local forms of culture but also its importance in linking community and school knowledge. This substantiates Chimbutane (2011)'s conclusion that while valuing the pedagogical outcomes of bilingual education, local communities focus more on the socio-cultural value of this

form of education. Above all, they view bilingual education as a pathway towards the upgrading and legitimation of their marginalised languages and cultures.

The central role accorded to talk in this framework suggests that the interactional environment attested in L1-medium classes is a good starting point to pupils' learning. As shown above, since learners have a good command of their L1, they can negotiate meaning in the classroom as well as display what they have learned and what they can do.

The sharing of a common language and culture is, above all, the condition that enables pupils to negotiate with and challenge their teachers on both language and cultural issues. This shows that, although less experienced when compared with their teachers, pupils are equally resourceful agents when they negotiate local knowledge in their community language. These instances of negotiation of knowledge are above all prompted by the pupils' familiarity with the languages and matters discussed, but also because teachers temporarily allow those instances to happen. These interactive spaces alongside the 'democratisation' of the classroom fit within the social constructivist pedagogy, particularly with regards to the perception of the teacher not as an infallible knower and pupils as active social agents who personally constructed their knowledge through social interaction, can judge the information in negotiation, hence opting to accept or challenge it.

Again, in Portuguese-medium classes, the majority of pupils from rural Mozambique cannot negotiate meaning with their teachers and hence personally construct knowledge because they do not have the language skills needed to engage with their masters in that imagined knowledge exchange. This makes them, at most, passive recipients of the knowledge imparted by teachers. As a matter of fact, in a context where the overwhelming majority of the pupils have their first contact with Portuguese when they enter school, how can one operationalise the social constructivist pedagogy?

The need to maximise the L1 teaching and learning environment

Despite the positive outcomes discussed above, the potential of teaching in a language that is familiar to the pupils still needs to be maximised through, among other things, the use of up-to-date pedagogical practices. For example, despite some improvements, classes are, in general, still teacher-centred, with relatively limited space for the pupils to express themselves, even though they are eager to participate in classroom exchanges. Moreover, although some teachers bring references to local culture and knowledge into the classroom talk, many do so only on rare occasions.

These features suggest that teacher training colleges still need to prepare teachers to fully explore the L1 climate to the benefit of pupils' learning. These include the consideration of challenging tasks, ones that appeal to pupils' creativity

and intellectual engagement (Howe and Mercer 2007). Based on the above considerations, Chimbutane (2011) suggests that, despite the lively, interactive climate in L1 contexts, there is still a need to investigate how much learning is in fact taking place in these contexts. This echoes Stubbs's (1975: 239) statement that public pupil talk should not be equated with learning. In fact, although it can give a strong indication, participation *per se* is not a sufficient criterion to gauge pupils' effective learning, the same way silence in the classroom may not mean that pupils are not learning at all.

The use of local languages in education and community participation

Community members as funds of knowledge

More recent studies on the relationship between pupils' community and school socialisation are concerned about the exploration of intersections between the two fields and about mobilising community/local knowledge to aid formal learning (Moje 2008). This is the view taken, for example, by studies falling within the funds of knowledge perspective (e.g. Goldenberg and Gallimore 1991; Moll 1992; Moll *et al*. 1992; Martin-Jones and Saxena 2003; Moje 2008).

The evidence produced below illustrates how the use of local languages as medium of teaching and learning is prompting an effective participation of parents and other community members in formal education as funds of knowledge. Parents and other community members are called upon to help pupils explore curricular topics of local relevance at home and are invited to schools to talk about some of these topics using the language they have mastered. These include cultural, historical and professional topics relevant for children's social integration.

> Parents help their children with homework. For example, in the case of folktales, a parent may help the child to identify and tell a story. The child can write the story down or memorise it so that s/he can retell it in class. Parents may also help the children to correct pronunciation errors. Those parents who can read and write in local languages can even help the children to correct writing mistakes (CAPRA 2013).

As suggested above, the fact that education is in a community language, coupled with the exploration of themes of local relevance, provides the perfect space for parents to serve as intellectual resources for their children, as they help them with their homework and give talks at school. However, as can be understood from the last part of this quotation, illiteracy among many parents prevents them from fully exploring the enabling spaces opened up by bilingual education. The following account not only corroborates this observation but also indicates that even the literate parents

would better serve as funds of knowledge if they used the same orthographic system as the one used in schools:

> If the literacy programme offered over here were in Chope instead of Portuguese, parents would have better chances to help their children at home. This would allow parents and children to learn to read and write using the same standardised orthographies. This would help avoid the contradictions which sometimes occur between the children and parents who learnt how to read and write in churches or by making approximations between Portuguese letters and those in Chope. Literacy in Chope would be a way of harmonising the use of orthographies at school and at home. That way parents could help and would never contradict the children at home (CAPRA 2013).

The two accounts presented above suggest that, unlike in the Portuguese-based monolingual programme, bilingual teachers now view parents in rural areas as valid intellectual partners in the education of the pupils.

Bilingual education is also contributing to changing the way local communities view schools and teachers. As in other traditional models of education, a salient feature of the Portuguese-monolingual educational provision in Mozambique has been that knowledge has been cascaded in a unidirectional and unchallenged fashion from the top to the bottom levels of the educational structure. Within this setup, especially in rural areas, schools and teachers have been constructed as the sole custodians of legitimate knowledge, with little if anything to learn from the local communities.

However, as Chimbutane (2011) argues, the use of local languages in education is destabilising this status quo by nurturing a new order in which the flow of knowledge is two-way. Teachers are no longer *the* unchallenged experts, but co-actors who can also learn from their pupils and from the communities. For example, faced with the need for technical terms in local languages, teachers have turned to experienced community members to learn specialised terms that they have then adapted to their teaching needs. Community members with recognisable proficiency in local languages are also invited by language experts to help find solutions to the complex challenges encountered in bilingual education, including that of coining technical terms and improving the orthographies of those languages.

> We often go to community members, especially the elder ones, to ask their help in finding appropriate terms for referring to certain scientific or linguistic concepts. For example, unlike in Changana, in Chope we don’t have terms to refer to months. We borrow terms from Portuguese or Changana. With the help of communities, we may find appropriate terms to refer to months. It is well possible that there are terms to refer to months in Chope but we don’t know them. So the communities can help the school to find those terms (CAPRA 2013).

Although meso-level practitioners, such as the linguists involved in bilingual education, have more technical expertise than local-level practitioners, they either

do not speak the languages they are required to work with or, when they speak them, they usually do not have full command of them. This situation leads these experts to negotiate with the locals, who are usually more proficient in their languages, in order to find joint solutions to the complex challenges encountered in bilingual education, including that of coining technical terms.

In turn, parents and other community members are also learning technical terms and new genres in their own languages from teachers and pupils. For example, teachers are contributing to the dissemination of the standardised orthographies of local languages in the communities and also to the dissemination of education for health discursive practices in local languages, especially in the context of HIV/AIDS education and prevention. As found in Chimbutane (2011), parents and other community members are also learning technical terms from young pupils that they had never thought existed or were possible in their native languages. This is what can be called symmetrical collaboration among social networks for the purpose of enhancing teaching and learning experiences (Moll *et al*. 1992). The extract below substantiates this point:

> After the interview, Ms Tânia offered an interesting account. In an emotional way, she reported that, since she studied through the medium of Portuguese, she had never imagined that there were Changana equivalents to 'addition', 'subtraction', 'division' and 'multiplication', used in mathematics. Laughing, she said 'I did not know of the words 'addition', 'subtraction', 'division' and 'multiplication'. I learned them from him (she meant her son who is in grade 5)'.
>
> This account reminds me of a similar one from a mother from Gwambeni, when my colleagues from INDE and I had a meeting there with parents in 2003. In the same vein as Ms Tânia, that mother said 'up to this age of mine, I did not know that there's a 'zero' in Chope', in a clear reference to the number zero, which is important in mathematical operations (Chimbutane 2011: 116).

In both cases mentioned above, the mothers involved reported that they had learnt the new technical terms in their languages from their own children. That way, the pupils are acting as vehicles of knowledge transfer between the fields of the school and the community. The emotional reaction from the two women can be better understood when framed against the long standing ideological assumption that African languages are incapable of conveying technical and scientific knowledge, an assumption that still prevails across Africa. In this context, when they heard the above terms from their children, they may have reconsidered this ideologically based representation of African languages and, as a consequence, they may have begun to readjust their own values regarding their languages. This is one of the transformational effects of bilingual education in Mozambique.

Community empowerment

In addition to cooperating in the transfer of local knowledge and skills to schools, parents and other community members are also overseeing and influencing the form of the language and curriculum content that the schools are passing on to their children.

As in other multi-ethnic and multilingual societies, the challenge faced by decision-makers is not only in terms of which languages should be used in education but also in terms of which varieties of those languages should be legitimated. Although in a few cases there seems to be a consensus in terms of the varieties that should be legitimated by local schools, in many others that consensus has yet to be reached. Some communities or community-based organizations have been negotiating with education authorities and language experts over the language varieties that should be used in local schools or the orthographies that should be adopted.

In this regard, Chimbutane (2011) reports about a community which influenced change in a counting system used in a local school because they perceived it as a South African variety of Changana, that is, not as a Mozambican variety of Changana. After some negotiations, which involved education authorities, language experts and representatives of the local community, the school eventually abandoned that counting system in favour of the one most commonly used in that region. Veloso (2012) also shows how the Ibo community in Cabo Delgado province negotiated with linguists and local education authorities on the definition of the Mwani variety that should be used in local schools there.

Community involvement in education also includes their participation in the definition and implementation of what is called *currículo local* (local curriculum), which consists of teaching local knowledge (local history, geography, agriculture, fishery, crafts, etc.) for 20% of instructional time (INDE/MINED 2003). This portion of the curriculum is expected to be developed locally with community participation, a move that is part of a process of decentralising curriculum development and monitoring.

Community members are not only invited to participate in the definition of relevant local knowledge to be integrated into the school curriculum but also to help implement that curriculum, for example, through their participation in workshops aiming at presenting and discussing selected topics with the pupils and the teachers. Among other things, this is expected to help expand pupils' knowledge and skills by linking between community and school-based contexts for learning.

Although the definition and implementation of the local curriculum are also expected to occur in the Portuguese-based monolingual programme, the operationalisation of this innovation seems to be relatively easier in the bilingual programme. This is because, unlike in the monolingual programme, in the bilingual programme community members can pass and discuss local knowledge straight in the language that they speak best, that is, without the mediation of interpreters. In

addition to that, since, in general, community members and learners/teachers involved in knowledge exchange are from the same language and cultural background, the interactional flow is much more effective – there is no need for conversions and adaptation efforts to a second cultural setup.

The allocation of 20% of the school curriculum to local knowledge and skills contributes to an upgrading and legitimation of this form of socio-cultural capital, which makes teachers and pupils seek to mobilise it from community sources and legitimately use it in the classroom. One of the strongest messages passed on to the pupils is that local knowledge is as legitimate as school-based knowledge. As documented in other parts of the world, the incorporation of local knowledge in formal education renders the curriculum relevant and facilitates pupils' learning (Moll *et al*. 1992; Martin-Jones and Saxena 2003).

Therefore, the use of local languages in the school domain is contributing to empower local communities. Since they are experts in these languages and the associated cultural capital, they can more efficiently participate in the definition and implementation of the local curriculum, in the development of technical terms and in the supervision of the local knowledge and language varieties passed on to local children. In the end, community expertise gives them ownership of the programme and authority in their negotiation bids with the representatives of educational institutions.

CLOSING REMARKS

Drawing on social constructivism and on the funds of knowledge approach to education, the analysis offered in this article demonstrates the transformative power of bilingual education in Mozambique. The use of pupils' L1 is opening up spaces for teacher-pupils interactions in the classroom as well as facilitating the mobilisation of community knowledge to aid school learning.

Given their familiarity with the local languages of education and the cultural practices mediated through those languages, pupils feel at ease in the classroom, which prompts their active participation and their propensity to challenge their masters' epistemic authority. This leads to the conclusion that, unlike in Portuguese-medium classes, the climate in rural L1-medium classes is conducive to learning, which may contribute to improving the quality of primary education in rural settings.

The use of local languages for teaching and learning is also opening up productive, curriculum-based spaces of interaction between teachers and parents. Since they are experts in those languages and the associated cultural heritage, parents and other members of the community can legitimately participate in formal education as funds of knowledge. They are called upon to help the children with their homework and also to participate in the definition and implementation of curricular topics of local relevance. They are also important resources in local language development

processes, including that of coining technical terms and improving the orthographies of those languages. It is based on these processes that beneficiary communities view bilingual education as a pathway towards the upgrading and legitimation of their languages and cultures, which have been marginalised since colonial rule.

The fact that pupils, parents and other community members can legitimately influence educational processes based on their linguistic and cultural capital is changing their view about rural schools and teachers. Schools and teachers are no longer viewed as the sole custodians of legitimate knowledge, with little if anything to learn from the local communities. On the contrary, in those settings teachers are now viewed as co-actors who can also learn from their pupils and from the communities; in the same vein, schools are taken as sites where formal and local knowledge can converse in a productive way. This collaboration between school and community actors can play a key role in the State's bid to enhance the relevance of education in Mozambique.

Despite the attested positive results of bilingual education in rural Mozambique, the potential of teaching in a language familiar to the pupils still needs to be maximally exploited. Indeed, despite some improvements in language practices in the classroom, there are still some traditional pedagogical habits that constrain pupils' learning, including the use of teacher-centred pedagogy and lack of consistence in teachers' engagement with students' previous knowledge. The suggestion is that the education system should invest more in teacher training with the view of helping bilingual teachers to capitalise on the enabling L1 climate to the benefit of pupils' learning. For example, teachers should use this perfect environment to help pupils develop creative thinking and intellectual engagement to respond to challenging problems and tasks.

In summary, the evidence provided in this article substantiates the transformative role of bilingual education. As a matter of fact, in contrast with Portuguese-based monolingual education, when local languages are used for teaching and learning, interactions between teachers and pupils and between school and community actors tend to be more effective and symmetrical, pedagogical practices tend to be less authoritative and local communities start to consider the added value of using African languages in formal education. The use of African languages in schools is also opening up spaces for community participation in formal education of new generations, as local communities can easily act as funds of knowledge. Community participation in bilingual education is, therefore, contributing to empowering the locals, as they feel that education authorities are finally listening to what they say in their own languages. It is based on these observations that I conclude that bilingual education is enhancing pupils' participation in the classroom as well as contributing to bridging the gap between schools and rural communities in Mozambique.

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ENDNOTES

1 According to the 1997 and 2007 national censuses, 96% and 91.7% of the rural population had a local language as their first language, respectively. The same censuses indicate that only 25% (1997) and 36.3% (2007) of this rural population could speak Portuguese (Chimbutane 2012).