Multilingualism in African classrooms

Jason Anderson and Laurent Ahishakiye

Warwick Applied Linguistics

jason.anderson@warwick.ac.uk

laurent.ahishakiye@warwick.ac.uk

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Our introductions

Laurent's story

- I'm from Rwanda.
- Taught Kinyarwanda, French, and English in Secondary (Y7) in 2004.
- Became a teacher of English at the completion of my BA in English (2005-2009).
- An assistant Lecturer since 2011, Rwanda Polytechnic, Kigali, Rwanda
- Teacher trainer, ELT in low-resource contexts.
- MA TESOL alumnus, and now, a PhD student, Applied Linguistics, Warwick, UK.

Jason's story

- I'm from the UK.
- I trained to be a TEFL teacher in 1996 then a teacher trainer in 2003.
- I have taught English, trained teachers and developed materials for many countries worldwide (Africa, Asia, Europe).
- Now a lecturer and researcher at the University of Warwick, UK.
- I research multilingualism, teacher expertise, teacher education, and language teaching methodologies, particularly in the Global South.

Workshop focus

- to explore the impact of language in education policy (esp. role of English) on learning for (many) African multilinguals

- to reflect on how we can create inclusive multilingual classrooms in our teaching

- to learn about an important emerging multilingual pedagogy: 'translanguaging'

- to identify ways we can all learn together about how to teach effectively

- to consider sustainable directions for teacher education for English and maths teaching

Laurent's story 1: Learner experiences

or carry this around your neck!
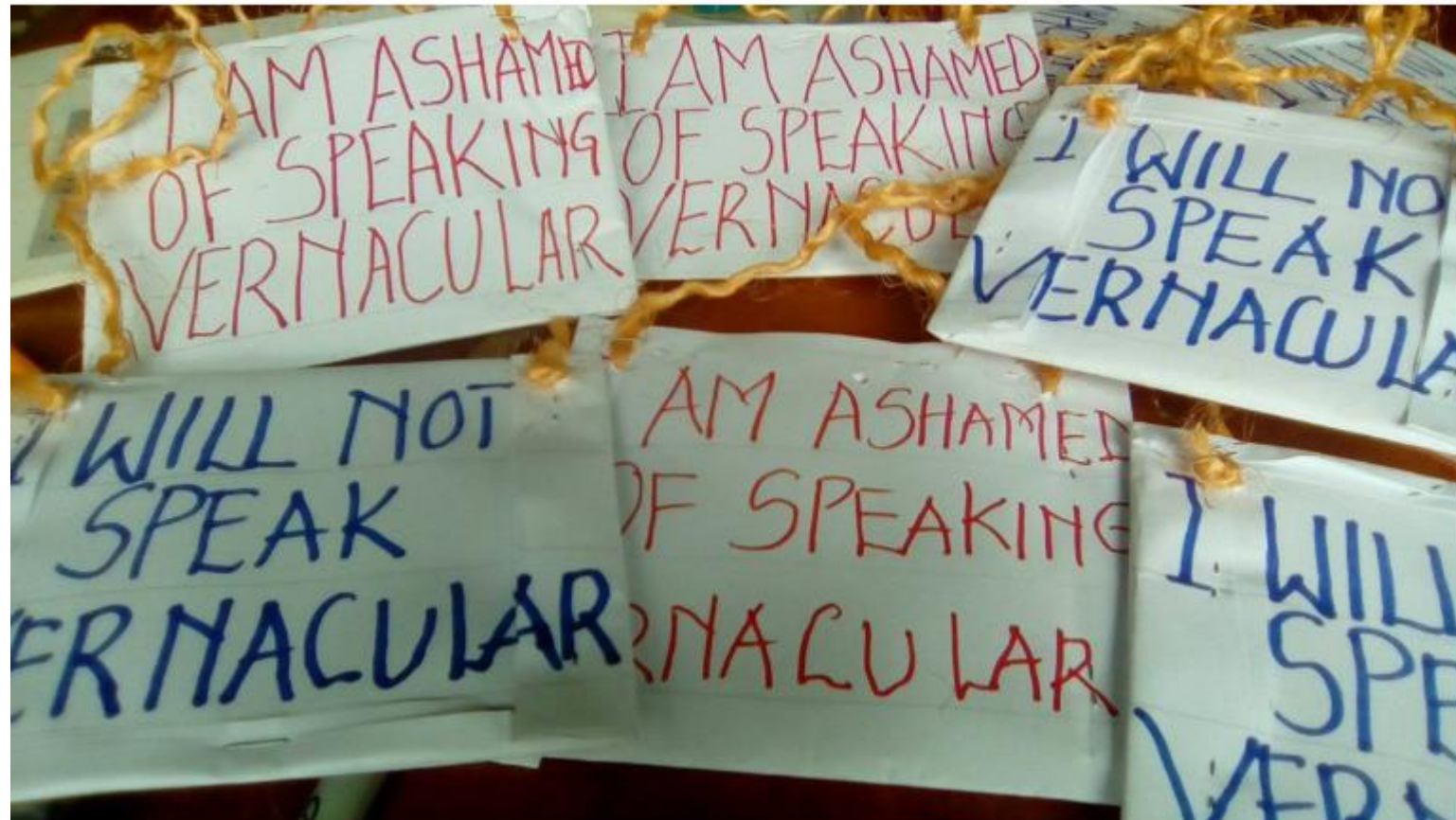
Implications of Laurent's story 1

1. What did he need as a learner?

2. How was this denied to him?

3. How do you think he felt?

4. What can you take away from this for your teaching?

Laurent's story 2: Teacher experiences

Implications of Laurent's story 2

1. What did he need as a teacher?

2. How was this denied to him?

3. How do you think he felt?

4. What can you take away from this for your teaching?

Translanguaging theory: A pedagogy for multilinguals

- multilinguals possess a single, integrated repertoire, rather than 'separate' named languages (e.g., García & Li, 2014)

- when we deny their right to use part of this repertoire, we deny their identities, their culture, and a significant part of their knowledge systems (Anderson, 2024)

- when we encourage and foster this repertoire, we leverage what they already know and can do, and build on it (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; García & Li, 2014)

- this is considered to be more effective pedagogically than trying to develop competencies in different languages separately (e.g., García & Sylvan, 2011; Makalela, 2015; Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022)

- 'translingual teachers', who can do this well, can potentially be more effective than monolingual teachers (Anderson, 2018)

Research from S. African and Ghanaian classrooms

- Probyn (2009, 2019) examines how translingual teachers teach effectively by integrating (sometimes 'smuggling') the community language into their classroom talk in S. Africa, subverting English-only policies to facilitate more learning.

- Makalela (2015) finds affective, social and content-related advantages of a translanguaging approach in S. African teacher education, when viewed through an ubuntu lens.

- Opoku-Amankwa (2009) finds monolingual English only policies suppressed learning in Ghana and argues for multilingual approaches.

- Rosekrans et al. (2012) document the historical suppression of mother tongue education in Ghana and reflect on a more recent progressive multilingual policy for literacies development and its promising potential for the future.

South-North interactions: How we can learn from each other (Jason's story)

- I went to Eritrea in 2007 expecting to train the teachers.
- I (re)learnt how to teach from expert teachers: e.g., Yohannes Tekie, Genet Ghebretensei and Tesfahannes Negash
- I *think* they learnt from working with me… but will never know.
- But Rwandan teachers benefited from what I shared from Eritrea (less so from the UK)

South-North interactions: How we can learn from each other (Jason's story)

- Expert teachers exist everywhere; their pedagogies have developed within a specific context in ways that are appropriate to learning goals valued in that context

- Rather than attempting to import pedagogies from other contexts (which has failed to work for over 100 years) we need to identify, document and learn from the practices of such expert teachers (Anderson, 2023)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CQw_IR5XFI

Teacher education: Sustainable suggestions

- The action research project by Lau (2020):

One of its recommendations sounds useful:

Researchers working on multilingual contexts should be aware of two competing desires:

(1) the ideological and political motivations to preserve and promote the country's ethnolinguistic realities and identities, and

(2) the longing to belong to the "global community" where English is believed to hold prominent linguistic currency. (p. 222)

- Other ways to create sustainable teacher education:

➢ Creating or reinforcing communities of practice (CoPs), Teacher Research Groups (TRGs), Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs),

➢ Meeting face-to-face, or Online via video-conferencing, social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook, etc.

Main purpose: Expertise is shared locally, where it is most likely to be relevant and appropriate.

Review and 'take-aways'

Please share your thoughts in the chat about what you have learnt from today and what you hope to implement in your teaching and collaborating.

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