Quality education through the medium of English: What does (or can or should) this mean for the Pacific region?

Fiona Willans
fiona.willans@usp.ac.fj
Quality education through English?

Part I: the terrain

1. How does language fit into discussions of quality education?
2. How does English fit into discussions of Pacific approaches to education?

Part II: the case of USP

USP’s current English Language Proficiency strategy
Quality education remains on every agenda …

Incheon Declaration

Education 2030:
Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all

… but all mentions of language have been removed
Isn’t language relevant?

- Which language(s) should children learn in?
- Which language(s) should/can teachers teach in?
- Which language(s) should/can materials be created in?
- Which language(s) can information be accessed in?
- Which language(s) tell us whether children have learnt anything?
- Which language(s) should be learnt as school subjects?
- Which language(s) should be learnt about, appreciated, played with, etc?
How does **English** fit into discussions of Pacific approaches to education?

- Awareness of many problems inherited from colonial systems of education
  - vs.
  - Awareness that languages such as English are key to development
    - +
    - Pragmatic and political realities of linguistic diversity

- Mother tongue(s)
  - or
  - English

- Limited attempts to critique assumptions about ‘multilingualism’, about ‘languages’, and about ‘English’
Limited critical engagement with language in education:

Or perhaps in the home
But our other languages are important too

Can we find space for them here?

And therefore primary ed

Really? Can we study them here too?

Any space here?

And therefore in secondary ed

So it's also needed at university

Are there any jobs?

English needed here
The case of USP

and its English Language Proficiency strategy
USP as a linguistically diverse institution:

- 12 member countries, speaking 200+ languages
- Highly multilingual classes for face-to-face teaching
- Students studying by distance through e-learning

“The multi-cultural nature of the staff and student body give USP an exceptional character. It is a quality institution producing degrees comparable to those awarded by universities in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Graduates from USP are found in important executive positions throughout the public and private sectors in all member countries and in numerous countries around the world.” (USP website)
USP: a quality institution

**English-medium**

**ECE, PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION**

- Influence on the way English is taught in schools
- Entry levels of basic English proficiency
- English for Academic Purposes preparation
- Strategies to help students learn content through English
- Assessment of grammar & punctuation as well as content
- Communication in English as a graduate outcome

**ENROLMENT**

**GRADUATION**

**THE WORKPLACE**

Which of these do we mean by ‘quality education through English’?

Um ... can we do all of them?
Should we be …

... by changing what happens at this point …

... and then working out what to do in between?

... trying to respond to problems recognised at this point …

Entry levels of basic English proficiency

Communication in English as a graduate outcome

ECE, PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Workplace

Enrolment

Graduation
... and this becomes fairer?

... so that this becomes easier...

... feeding this in much earlier...

English for Academic Purposes preparation

Strategies to help students learn content through English

Assessment of grammar & punctuation as well as content

... and this becomes fairer?

THE WORKPLACE

ECE, PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

ENROLMENT

GRADUATION
USP’s strategy towards being a quality English-medium institution

- Reintroduction of ELSA test
- Core course in Academic English
- Fair & effective teaching practices in all disciplines
- Fair & effective assessment practices in all disciplines
- Additional sector-specific English courses
- Enhancement of teacher training AND influence on curriculum

**ECE, Primary & Secondary Education**

**Individual**

**Institutional**

**Regional**

**Enrolment**

**Graduation**

**The Workplace**
A call to arms:

• for the educational use and teaching of language(s) to be a serious topic within discussions of ‘quality education’

And watch this space:

• for the launch of the ‘Language Matters in Pacific Education’ interdisciplinary research group