

Attitudes to Bilingualism

***'Miss, who needs the languages
of immigrants?'***

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Three studies

- with bilingual parents (in Essex and London)
- with headteachers (in London)
- with politicians and lead professionals (In England and Wales)

Student voice

- through on going consultation
- project work
- interviews
- embedded in the research design of my studies

Aims: Study with politicians and lead professionals

- gain an insight into attitudes to bilingualism of politicians and lead professionals in the national educational institutions
- utilise this study as a vehicle in the process of engaging interviewees with the opinions of students, parents, practitioners and researchers

Research questions

- What evidence is there of valuing bilingualism?
- What evidence is there of promoting bilingualism?
- What evidence is there that identified attitudes to bilingualism are informed by relevant research and theory?

Research design

- no initial questions
- Interviewees sent in advance a set of 10 statements to comment on:
'Bengali has no value. It is only valued amongst people who speak it. Employers want French or other European languages.' (Pimlico student)

Theoretical framework

Bourdieu's (1991) theory of misrecognition

The domination of cultural capitals of certain groups is often perceived by the dominated groups, whose cultural capital is devalued in the context of education and society as – natural, without recognising it as a social and political construct. Bourdieu terms this process *misrecognition* and the end result of it is *symbolic violence*.

A sample of findings:

'This student is right Bengali has no value.'

Conservative MP

- indigenous minority languages versus non-indigenous minority languages
- ***'our culture'*** versus ***'our economy'***

A sample recommendation:

- Policy development in the direction of greater 'ethnolinguistic democracy' (Fishman, 1989)
- For a society committed to racial equality and recognition of contributions of different racial groups, recognising languages as a significant part of that equality is essential.