

NB: This version of “Miss, who needs the languages of immigrants?” has not been copyedited and is not the final version that appears in the book *Education in a Global City: Essays from London* Edited by Tim Brighouse and Leisha Fullick and published by the Institute of Education.

“Miss, who needs the languages of immigrants?”

London’s Multilingual Schools

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Introduction

One of the most complex, unique and fascinating aspects of London is its linguistic landscape. Its streets are rich with evidence that London is inhabited by people who speak and read many languages. Multilingual cacophony fills the air in all public places. Newsagents throughout London display an impressive range of press in a variety of scripts used by European and world languages. Business signs, service information and adverts presented bilingually are a regular feature of the London scene. Some parts of London even have bilingual street signs: in China Town they are in English and Chinese, in Tower Hamlets in English and Bengali; St. Mary’s Hospital in Paddington has all its signs in English and Arabic, while in South Kensington the strong presence of the French speaking community is evident through its buildings including the French Cultural Centre, Lyceum and a number of French primary schools.

This chapter explores London’s linguistic wealth and the way education policies and practices have impacted on this wealth and on its many multilingual pupils. The chapter makes recommendations for a more inclusive model of engaging with multilingualism in London schools than the one that currently prevails. This model, which is based on the author’s own research and experience in London schools, wider academic research, case studies of good practice and relevant pedagogical theories, has as its basis the desire to create more opportunities for London’s multilingual learners in order to unlock more of their linguistic potential for their benefit and for that of London.

The Linguistic Wealth of London

A recent report by the Greater London Authority (GLA) estimated that one fifth of adults in London have a first language other than English. (GLA, 2006) The report suggested that this figure should be treated as an underestimate. It is based on a sample of 11.000 Londoners contributing to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Given the LFS only surveys people at work, it cannot be regarded as fully representative. Also, this figure is not inclusive of adults who identify English as their first language but regularly use another language at home and in the community. An example would be second or third generation Asian immigrants. The fact that local authority data from across London shows that the number of multilingual children in London schools is one third of the school population and the London Challenge figure for the multilingual students in inner London secondary schools is 52 per cent (Chartered

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Teachers Status Conference presentation, IOE, 2007) – would also suggest that the estimates for adults should be higher.

The DfES (Department of Education and Skills) school population data currently does not yet provide sufficient detail to help with the accuracy of these figures. It is based on a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ survey with regard to pupils being exposed to a language or languages other than English in their homes or communities. The most detailed insight into the number, variety and distribution of languages used by London pupils remains that provided by the Multilingual Capital Study (Baker and Eversley, 2000). According to this study, which is in need of an update, the number of home languages recorded by London schools is 360. With the introduction of the new DfES Guidance on collection and recording of data on pupils’ languages (DfES, 2006a) it is expected that more authorities will collect individual languages data from January 2007. However, collection of languages data remains voluntary for schools and local authorities. Therefore, complete data returns are not guaranteed even under the new Guidance, especially during the initial period.

Certain local authorities such as City of Westminster have been consistently collecting this type of data for a number of years. Westminster, at the heart of inner London, is in many ways representative of London language trends. It shows some of the most prominent features of multilingualism in London: an extraordinary linguistic variety, very random distribution and consistent increases in the number of speakers and languages. Westminster Language and Ethnic Minority Service records 143 languages used by Westminster pupils (Westminster EMA Annual Conference, 2006). In terms of the distribution of languages, the figures vary from 15.6 percent Arabic speakers, being the largest group of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), followed by Bengali speakers at 9.7 per cent, to the groups like Tigrinya, Twi-Fante/Akan, Gujarati and Chinese speakers who are the smallest groups represented; they each make only 0.4 percent of the total school population. (City of Westminster Data Department, 2007) In the recent past there have been even completely isolated cases recorded, such as one Maori speaker. (City of Westminster Data Department, 2003) In terms of the increase, in the last five years overall recorded numbers of bilingual pupils have gone up by more than 10 per cent. Currently, the percentage of bilingual pupils in Westminster primary schools is 69.4 percent and in secondaries 59.3 per cent. The joint percentage for primary and secondary sector is 65.2 per cent. (ibid, 2007, p 9, 10). In terms of the uniqueness of London’s position in the UK, at national level the same period has seen an increase of just over 2 per cent. Currently primary schools in England have 12.5 per cent bilingual pupils, while in secondaries this number decreases to 9.5 per cent. (DfES, 2006b)

Multilingual School Children

Pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) will vary greatly in terms of the linguistic competencies in their two languages, in some cases more than two languages. At present there is no one recognised definition of bilingualism. In the literature, there is a whole spectrum of definitions. At the maximalist end of the spectrum, bilingualism is defined as ‘*the native-like control of two or more languages*’ (Bloomfield, 1933), while at the minimalist end even the knowledge of a

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few phrases in another language will count as bilingualism (Diebold, 1964). The definition used in London and nationally for the purposes of collecting data and allocating Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) ¹ is as follows:

Bilingual is the term currently used to refer to pupils who live in two languages, who have access to, or need to use two or more languages at home and at school. It is not to mean that they are competent and literate in both languages.

(City of Westminster, 2002)

This definition, by placing the emphasis of the criterion on ‘living in two languages’, allows for the inclusion of a variety of profiles of bilingual pupils. These different profiles can be divided into three main categories:

(1) Bilinguals born and educated in Britain

Britain experienced waves of immigrants from New Commonwealth countries in the 1960s. As a result there are presently many well established communities of, for example, Indians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in the UK. Certain Local Authorities have prevailing numbers of pupils from these backgrounds occupying particular geographical locations. In Tower Hamlets Bengali speakers make up almost one third of the whole population, while schools in the same local authority have even higher ratio of Bengali pupils. (DfES, 2006b) Children from these backgrounds are in most cases fluent speakers of their first languages, which they use in their family and community contexts on everyday basis, but for many of them their literacy development and formal learning happens in English only. Some of these children attend religious Islamic schools where they develop reading skills in Arabic, but only specifically for the study of the Koran. In the case of Bengali Sylheti speakers, Sylheti is not a written language, therefore their first language skills often do not include literacy in standard Bengali.

Baker elaborates on some wider social issues that are relevant to these groups. He uses the term originally coined by Ogbu in 1987, in the context of the United States. Ogbu terms minorities whose origins are rooted in slavery, conquest and colonisation, ‘castelike’ or involuntary minorities. ‘Castelike’ minorities:

... fill the least well paid jobs, are often given poor quality education, and are regarded as inferior by the dominant majority who sometimes negatively label them as ‘culturally deprived’, with ‘limited English proficiency’ with ‘low innate intelligence’ or pejoratively as ‘bilinguals’...Such a group experience disproportionate failure at school.

(Baker, 1996, p 362)

At the turn of the century Gillborn and Mirza identified at national level the biggest gap in the achievement of pupils between White British and Pakistani and Bangladeshi children with EAL. (Gillborn and Mirza, 2001) The DfES

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report Ethnicity and Education (2005) provides further evidence that this continues to be the case nationally. In London the picture is more complex. Looking at the average London figures no obvious EAL group of pupils is at the low achieving end. (Some of the Black Caribbean pupils, whose performance is below average classify as EAL, if they have French Creole as their home language, but this is a minority.) In fact Bangladeshi and Pakistani students in London achieve better than White British, on average. Once these figures are broken down there is 20 percent points variance not only between different local authorities, but even within the same families of schools, meaning schools matched on a number of variables. (London Challenge, 2006, p 23, 24, 25) Current data for City of Westminster identifies its substantial Bangladeshi school population as one of the underachieving groups. The attainment gender breakdown for this group shows the peculiarity of lower attainment by girls than boys. (City of Westminster Data Department, 2007) Westminster teachers who have discussed with the Local Authority targeted support for Bangladeshi girls have identified conflicting messages received in the community and at school in regards to women’s role in the family and wider society as a factor impacting on low expectations and lack of motivation. (City of Westminster Secondary EMA report, December 2006, unpublished) In terms of second language acquisition (English acquisition), it is puzzling that substantial groups of EAL children born and educated here often seem to plateau, having well developed Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and not very well developed Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) 2. Frequently children who are BICS proficient go unnoticed in the classroom in terms of needing further support. They are confident and fluent speakers of English, but they find academic writing very difficult, which is the main obstacle to their achievement within the education system. (Cummins, 1991, 2001)

(2) Recent immigrant bilinguals

This particular group covers many varieties in terms of language skills. Most of these children will be new to English, unless they are coming from countries which are ex-British colonies where English is still widely used in education. In some cases these children have studied English as a foreign language in their countries of origin.

The skills that these bilinguals have in their first languages can vary. Some have well-developed literacy skills in their first languages and (depending on their age) a sound knowledge of grammar. This especially applies to children arriving from Eastern European countries. At the other end, there are children who have no literacy skills in any language and who are new to schooling. These are children coming from countries like Somalia, which has not had compulsory education for over 10 years due to political conflicts. Somali children therefore tend to arrive with only oral experience and skill in their first language and no experience of formal schooling. In the period 2000 – 2004 inner London schools had been experiencing a big influx of “new to schooling” children. Westminster New to Schooling Working Party identified around 170

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such children in Westminster schools across Key Stage 2 – 5. The majority of them were Kurdish and Somali. (Westminster EMAS Annual Conference, 2004)

According to Cummins (1991), it takes up to two years for children to develop BICS, but it can take a further five years to develop CALP. Some children from different European linguistic backgrounds are greatly helped by the fact that Greek and Latin origins run through most scientific and academic vocabulary in the European languages. This is a significant additional point in terms of the transfer of skills between their first and second language. In some cases, this means that EAL beginners from this particular group find it easier to engage with an academic text or task, than with a language interaction within the BICS domain. The BICS domain in English is etymologically largely Anglo-Saxon based and therefore has fewer similarities with the European languages from other groups. ³ The second language acquisition and its dependence on the proficiency of the first language is complex and Cummins’ model when applied to specific groups of EAL learners has to be applied with flexibility.

There is also a distinction to be made between the acquisition of ‘*primitive and complex aspects of speech*’. (Vygotsky, 1962) Primitive aspects are the ones that every child acquires spontaneously in its native language through everyday activities. The way in which this language is acquired means that children will conjugate and decline correctly, but without any awareness of doing so. On the contrary, learning a foreign or second language requires a high level of conscious language use from the beginning. According to Vygotsky - *...with a foreign language, the higher forms develop before spontaneous fluent speech ...The child’s strong points in a foreign language are his weak points in his native language, and vice versa.* (Vygotsky, 1962, p 109) In practice, this is often manifested in requests by this group of children to be explicitly taught grammar.

(3) Settled immigrant bilinguals

Settled immigrant bilinguals, meaning those who have been here for several years, have acquired Basic Interpersonal Skills in English and they are at different stages of developing their Academic Proficiency Skills. In comparison to minority groups that have been in the host country already for several generations, they often have the advantage in the sense that even though they are struggling with establishing themselves in a new environment, they have not yet internalised the power structures of the host society:

Immigrant minorities tend to lack power, status and will often be low down on the occupational ladder. However, they do not necessarily perceive themselves in the same way as their dominant hosts. Such immigrant minorities may still suffer racial discrimination and hostility, yet are less intimidated and paralysed by dominating majorities compared with ‘castelike’ minorities.

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(Baker, 1996, p 362)

Supporting research evidence for this theory is provided in a study done by Corson in Australia. This study looked at the achievement of settled bilingual immigrants from Italy, Portugal and Macedonia in comparison to their peers, who were native English speakers. Children from both groups were from similar socio-economically underprivileged backgrounds and of similar abilities. The findings of the study were showing that EAL children outperformed native speakers in all language tests used and in school examinations (Corson, 1992).

For children, parents and communities of all three groups the issues of first or home language maintenance are challenging. Supporting children in developing as *additive bilinguals*, meaning bilinguals who gain linguistically and cognitively by acquiring another language, while maintaining and developing the use of their first language, has many obstacles. The most detrimental being the low status of many first languages (languages that are not categorised and taught as Modern Foreign Languages in the National Curriculum), which often leads to the loss of first language. This phenomenon is termed *subtractive bilingualism*.

Policy, Practice and Training

The extraordinary linguistic variety that it so much a feature of London classrooms has long represented an enormous policy and organisational challenge to the capital. London schools operate within the DfES current recommended model of practice which is based on the principles of inclusion and full access to the curriculum. These principles underpin the widespread practice of the provision of in-class support to EAL pupils. Although the conceptualisation of this practice is pedagogically and socially sound, it presents a range of issues for London schools and classroom teachers which are discussed below.

The first White Paper of the New Labour Government. (Excellence in Schools, 1997) acknowledged the existing inequalities in experiences and achievement of ethnic minority pupils, including EAL children. Two years later a review was undertaken of the only piece of legislation which had been addressing the additional needs of ethnic minority children for 33 years (Section 11 of the Education Act from 1966). Section 11 had over time been used to fund very different pedagogical and organisational models such as physical dispersal of EAL children in the 1960s known as ‘bussing’, and the establishment of separate language centres in the 1970s. (Clegg, 1996) The review in 1999 led to its rebranding and restructuring. It became the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG). In the year 2000 travellers were given a separate grant, and its current title is EMAG, Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant. The grant which had been supervised and distributed by the Home Office was finally placed under a more appropriate supervision and administration of the DfES in 1999.

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Currently, 85 percent of EMAG funding is devolved to schools according to a formula. Ethnic grouping data and English as an additional language data collection are requirements. Collected data are used for needs analysis and grant distribution. Schools have the autonomy to decide whether they employ qualified EAL teachers, bilingual assistants or home-school liaison workers. They also decide whether to buy back into the Local Authority Ethnic Minority and EAL advisory and support service.

One of the key issues with this grant has been its short funding cycle. A three-year funding cycle has pertained until recently, which has led to frequent restructuring and uncertainty about the long-term future of the work and is regarded by many as having seriously damaged the quality of provision in this field. Many teachers have left EMAG work, because of the lack of career path and high job insecurity. To recruit new teachers in this field has become increasingly harder. (OfSTED, 2001) This lack of a long-term financial commitment at government level makes it very difficult to have a long-term strategy at the local authority and school level and has been of a main point of criticism from OfSTED.

OfSTED recommended long term funding as the key to establishing consistent provision and tackling the problem with staffing. They also recommended the development of a national strategy and recognised training for specialist teachers. (OfSTED Report, 2001, p 40-41)

The Government acted upon the 2001 recommendations. The funding cycle was increased to five years; a primary EAL pilot that was initially implemented in 21 London schools is now being rolled out nationally and there is a pilot being developed for secondary schools as well. Two secondary programmes focus on more advanced bilingual students meaning those born here or having had seven or more years of education in the UK. These programmes focus on developing speaking, writing and thinking skills at a more academic level. And in 2006 an EAL New Arrivals Excellence Programme was announced as a response to managing increased migration from European countries. This two-year programme again will be initially developed in London schools. (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/naep)

However, there still remain serious immediate concerns with EMAG policy. The main one is that the future of EMAG funding after March 2008 is again uncertain. From evidence provided by the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) devolving most of the grant to schools has resulted in decrease of specialist staff in schools, replacing qualified with unqualified staff, increase in short term contracts and ‘a wide interpretation of the kinds of expenditure which relate directly to raising the achievement of ethnic minority learners’. (NALDIC, 2006a) Additionally, many schools and local authorities are not satisfied with the current formula. The main criticism is that it does not accurately capture the variety and complexity of needs EAL students have. (Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), 2005)

One common feature, which is very easy to identify in all the different models of implementation of Section 11 and EMAG, be it a withdrawal or mainstreaming model, is that the focus of additional language teaching has been about remedying

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deficiency. There is an array of deficiency based terminology still present in schools referring to speakers of other languages going through the natural process of acquiring English as their additional language. Descriptions such as “children with problems or difficulties in English”, “children with no language”, “severe EAL”, “children with bilingual problems” are not uncommon. This type of terminology indicates that the underlying perception of specific needs that bilingual children has been less about supporting them to develop as bilinguals and to draw on the wealth of their language experience in their mother tongue and in English and more about concentrating on what these children do not have – competency in English, making that the starting and the central point of their educational experience. From a pedagogical point of view this militates against setting a context in which children can succeed. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that London teachers work with best intentions for their pupils and there are many excellent projects supporting multilingualism currently running in London schools. 4

While in the field of education practice on the whole, there is a common understanding that successful learning always starts from drawing on previous experience, contextualising new knowledge and building on existing skills, much current practice means that EAL learners often find it difficult to benefit from any of these basic principals in relation to their first or other languages. Only a small minority of EAL learners in London learning their second or additional language and learning all other subjects in that second language will have their teachers acknowledge and make links with their skills and knowledge in these other languages. While recognising the progressive nature of much work developed in London the majority of practice makes no links between the languages that bilingual children bring with them and the language they are acquiring. (Based on lesson observations, focus discussion groups and interviews with bilingual students in inner London schools, in the period 1997-2007.)

Examples of the inclusion of first languages in the curriculum can be found in many Redbridge schools. Newbury Park Primary School, has won the European Languages Award in 2005 for using 40 languages spoken by its pupils in the curriculum. (CILT website)Valentine’s High School in the same authority has over 70 percent of EAL students located in one of the most deprived areas of London. This school has turned around patterns of ethnic minority underachievement that have been a feature of the national scene for decades. The attitude of the headteacher, at the time, to first languages was: ‘*There is no inclusive curriculum if you don’t include first languages.*’ (A London Headteacher, in Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

Much work with multilingual learners in schools appears to be operating from the basis of cognitive theories of bilingualism which developed at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Approaching language competencies and skills in two different languages as separate is based on the model of Separate Underlying Proficiency (Cummins, 1980). This model is often represented by two separate balloons in one’s head representing his/her two languages. There is no bridge or link between them. They exist separately. It has to be acknowledged that this is not because majority of teachers are familiar with this or any other model of cognitive theory of bilingualism. (Again no criticism is intended to individual teachers. The system simply does not provide sufficient training on bilingualism.) It

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can be argued that the reason that most practitioners ‘act out’ the Model of Separate Underlying Proficiency is first of all because it comes naturally to monolinguals to engage with one language only. And then there are many other factors such as the challenge of supporting a child in using or maintaining a language that teachers themselves do not speak, the dominance of the National Curriculum and the prevalence of parents who want their children only to speak English.

Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) that go to work in London schools arrive having had very little input, often one lecture, on working with EAL learners. (Based on the author’s experience of providing training and support to NQTs in Westminster schools, 2001-2007) Considering the fact that during their teaching career in London they are not likely to teach one lesson without having EAL children in their class, this is a seriously insufficient preparation for the reality of London schools. This issue has been raised by NQTs themselves with the TTA (Teaching Training Agency) (TTA NQTs survey, 2003). The Teaching Development Agency (TDA), the successor to the TTA, has responded to these concerns by supporting the development of the Multiverse Website for NQTS which provides examples of good practice and relevant research findings. Individual PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) providers in London, such as the Institute of Education (IOE) currently provide two whole days of EAL training for PGCE students in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and are looking to develop an EAL module for PGCE MFL students.

However, according to a recent report current training and support still do not appropriately equip teachers: *‘Many class and subject teachers are struggling to offer the kind of language conscious pedagogy necessary to enable EAL learners to engage with the language and content of the curriculum.’* (NALDIC, 2006)

Currently there is an increased recognition that teachers in the capital need a distinct set of skills and professional knowledge in order to engage with ‘complex issues of diversity and pupil learning found in London schools’ (DfES, 2004). As a part of the London Challenge, the Chartered London Teacher Status (CLT) initiative, launched by the DfES in September 2004 puts a significant emphasis on the knowledge of the range of communities, cultures and subcultures in London and developing inclusive practices. (DfES, 2004) However there is strong focus on culture in CLT which has the danger of creating a culture- language dichotomy. Many London practitioners are already advanced in terms of accommodating multiculturalism as one of the defining elements of citizenship, education and everyday life, whilst multilingualism mainly manifests itself as part of the a school’s data. Often the fact that a school lists 40 languages spoken by 30 per cent of its pupils will not be visible in the classrooms, notebooks or schemes of work. It is a missed opportunity therefore that the Chartered London Teacher Status scheme does not specifically mention linguistic diversity. The importance of multiculturalism to excellent teacher practice in London is recognised but the recognition of excellent teacher practice in relation to multilingualism is left more open. Also, it is not ideal that EAL learners are mentioned under the point referring

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to ‘reducing individual barriers to learning’ and in the same sentence with SEN pupils. (DFES, 2004) Referring to bilingualism as ‘a barrier to learning’ undermines a natural process of new language acquisition and can perpetuate attitudes to bilingualism as problem rather than resource.

For practitioners at the senior level and headteachers, the situation is somewhat similar. There is no compulsory EAL module in the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) training. Even though there is a compulsory module on racial and cultural diversity, again it cannot be taken for granted that multilingualism will be sufficiently covered under these two headings. The data and evidence collected in a study of four London headteachers provides an insight in absence of professional development specifically addressing multilingualism. (Mehmedbegovic, 2004) Securing sufficient input on multilingualism for future headteachers currently going through training and for existing heads through professional development is of vital importance in the system where headteachers have almost unlimited autonomy to decide how to utilise funds allocated to schools for bilingual children. London schools cannot afford a leadership vacuum in this area as without good leadership existing pockets of good practice in using first languages in the curriculum and supporting children to develop bilingually can easily be lost. This is a serious issue for the leadership of schools in London which need heads who will champion good practice that enhances English acquisition and multilingualism.

In terms of the development of EAL practitioners, it has taken several decades to achieve an appropriate offer of nationally recognised accredited courses. The OfSTED report *Managing Support for the Attainment of Pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups*, (OfSTED, 2001), recognised that the lack of standardised qualifications as one of the key difficulties in recruiting specialists in this field. Therefore many schools employ non-specialist staff or divide the time allocation amongst mainstream staff. In addition there is a growing concern with the fact that the EAL community of teachers is increasingly becoming an aging professional community, because younger colleagues are not choosing to specialise in this field regarded as unstable employment, uncertain future and with limited career opportunities. (NALDIC, 2007)

Since the publishing of the OfSTED report in 2001 the DfES has promoted a nationally recognised course in Ethnic Minority Achievement. The Institute of Education and University of Birmingham have both been supported by the DFES to run EMA courses. The course at IOE has attracted a lot of interest amongst London EAL practitioners who welcome the opportunity to have a longer- term professional development leading to a recognised qualification and possibility of continuing their studies at the masters level (MA). However, many interested teachers do not get the opportunity to enrol on the course mainly for two reasons, the cost of the course and time off work they need to attend lectures.

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Creating Favourable Conditions for Multilingual Pupils in London

The title quote for this chapter: “*Miss, who needs the languages of immigrants?... You need to be good at English, very good at English.*” was a reply of a 14 year- old student in a London school, when asked if the fact that she was fluent in Kurdish and Arabic was going to help her pursue a desired career in tourism. (Mehmedbegovic, 2004) Since it is very unlikely that this student has arrived from Iraq with the view that Arabic is not needed or useful, it makes one question what factors in her new environment make this student see, only within 11 months of living in London, the languages she brings as redundant.

This section will explore a range of issues and attitudes to multilingualism that impact on both children and adults, and the processes of language maintenance and language loss in the multilingual communities. It will also review the implications of these issues for developing an education policy for London which values and celebrates the multilingual wealth of the city.

Valuing Bilingualism and Minority Languages

Britain as a country, in comparison to some other European countries, for example the Scandinavian countries, Belgium and Switzerland, does not have a culture that supports or values bilingualism in individuals or communities. Even Britain’s native bilingual communities, such as Welsh speakers, have gone through a whole history of language rights denial. It was only in 1993 that the Welsh Language Act was passed which for the first time since Welsh was banned in Wales in the 16th century, guaranteed a ‘basis of equality’ between English and Welsh. (An earlier act of this nature was passed in 1967 but it was much more limited in scope.)

In London many immigrant communities maintain their languages through obtaining funding for mother tongue education. In general mother tongue schools are largely unrecognised by the mainstream system and the work done by children in these schools receives very little recognition outside their communities. Research conducted with Bosnian parents living on the outskirts of London confirmed that even the recent experience of individual communities is that of the education system which still takes no interest in supporting first language maintenance. (Mehmedbegovic, 2003) But there are signs that this attitude of official non intervention in community language maintenance which has prevailed since the Swann Report (DfES, 1985) is changing. Funding has been made available for a Mother Tongue Resource Unit based in London, which supports around 2000 supplementary schools and the current Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, Lord Adonis, has recognised and praised the role of supplementary mother tongue schools. (www.dfes.gov.uk/speeches/2006/)

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The Nuffield Enquiry that researched UK’s capability in languages, identified the fact that there is a lack of routes to qualified teacher status and into mainstream teaching for community languages teachers as a ‘policy failure, inappropriate in a democratic society and costly in social terms’. The members of the Enquiry perceived this situation as resulting in the perpetuation of ‘under-class of language teachers and by extension of languages’. (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 37)

There is no doubt that at the time of teacher shortage community schools could become an important recruitment pool for trainee mainstream teachers. There are 2000 registered supplementary schools, majority of which are based in London. These schools probably have at least 4000 languages teachers who are native speakers of 360 languages. It is likely that many of these teachers would welcome the opportunity to teach in mainstream schools and gain qualified teacher status. Recruiting these teachers could ease the work force issue that is going to arise from the implementation of the National Languages Strategy in the primary sector. (Hansard records, 2002) In this way there could be a considerable investment in developing the skills and qualifications of London’s multilingual ethnic minorities. The expected benefits would be that London would have a teaching force that is more representative of the communities it serves, and it would earn the city a pride of place at the European and global scene in terms of the range of languages it offers and perhaps even the possibility of ‘exporting’ interpreters and linguists in the future.

The Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) published a report in 2006 on Community Languages in Secondary Schools. It provides case studies of schools in four cities, including London, which have different levels and types of provision for teaching community languages. As the main point for the success of these initiatives the QCA researchers identified full support of the senior management in creating an environment where teachers and students have positive attitudes to linguistic diversity. They acknowledge that bilingual students often need encouragement to study their mother tongue, because they and their parents may lack awareness of the benefits first language maintenance brings or may perceive European languages as having more status in the school system. (QCA, 2006, p 2).

In fact many secondary schools in London offer entering students for GCSE exams in first languages. Schools are keen to facilitate this partly because it can serve to improve their performance in the league tables. Since only a small number of London schools offer GCSE courses in first languages for many of these students support is provided outside of the system through mother tongue schools. In addition there are signs that schools are using the autonomy and flexibility they have to shape their curriculum to offer languages such as Chinese, where economic imperatives provide a good rationale for making radical curriculum decisions. And in this context it is welcome that, following the Nuffield Report Goldsmiths College in London introduced a PGCE in community languages in 2002.

Modern Foreign Languages and Minority Languages in the National Curriculum

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Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) were for the first time introduced as a compulsory part of education in 1989 (*Orders for Modern Languages*, DES) which brought Britain more into line with the European standards. Apart from introducing modern languages as compulsory it also classified languages in two categories. The first category listed the languages of the European Community; category two listed a mixture of international and languages spoken by ethnic minority groups in Britain (community languages) (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish and Urdu). Schools were obliged to offer one of the languages from the first category, while other languages were optional. Children who wanted to study more than one language had to do so outside the National Curriculum. No flexibility was given to schools to make their choice in order to reflect the linguistic heritage of their students. This policy was short lived and after only 14 years it was abandoned. Foreign languages have not been a compulsory subject beyond KS3 since 2003.

This decision, which was criticised by many as reinforcing the dominant monolingual culture in England, came at the same time as the rest of Europe was subscribing to a ‘the Mother Tongue plus two languages’ European language policy. (Council of Europe, 2003) According to the Dearing Report, which evaluated the position of MFL in the education context, reported that the number of students taking GCSE in languages has fallen from 80 percent, (while it was mandatory) to 51 per cent. In some schools where languages have fallen to a very low level a realistic expectation is that it will take up to three years to improve practice and increase the number of students obtaining GCSEs. Aside from numbers, studying MFL has become another aspect of the social divide. Pupils with free school meal entitlement are significantly less likely to gain a language GCSE. (DfES, 2006c, p 3, p 4, p 23)

The impact of England’s monolingual culture on economy and society was well documented in the Nuffield Enquiry Report which revealed that 20 percent of potential orders were lost due to a lack of skills in languages. A one percent of increase in export is worth 2 billion pounds to the UK economy. In terms of specific industries, tourism relies on nearly 20 millions customers a year from non-English speaking countries having sufficient proficiency in English while key staff at a London airport were found not only unable to respond to a request in another language, but unable to distinguish if the request is in French or Spanish! (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 23).

The fact that England, unlike any other European country, has categorised languages into Modern Foreign Languages, with high status and educational value, and world languages/ minority languages/community languages, with low value, has been one of the main obstacles to remedying the under utilisation of the existing linguistic skills. It is increasingly obvious that abandoning this division on MFL and other currently spoken languages makes sound economic and social sense and would be a significant step towards having an equal opportunity system applied to languages. That does not mean that some languages will not be seen in a particular time frame or setting as more favourable, which is not an issue. The issue is the institutionalised hierarchy of languages, which needs to be removed.

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Another significant development is the National Language Strategy in the primary sector (DfES, 2002). This opens up the possibility of having languages available in primary schools and this time schools can decide which language they will offer. All languages are seen as equally appropriate for achieving the language learning aims of the Strategy. Giving a language the status of a mainstream subject taught within the National Curriculum will positively impact on the status of that language in the wider society. Therefore, communities that use that language will be more motivated in terms of language maintenance.

A welcome pointer to the future is that with the change of Government in June 2007 it has been proposed that schools will be given more flexibility to shape their curriculum and will be encouraged to offer languages perceived to be of economic importance to Britain, such as Mandarin and Urdu. (www.dfes.gov.uk/pns)

Valuing English

There are 700 million speakers of English today, 300 million speak it as their first language, 300 as their second language and 100 million as a foreign language. It is used in 60 out of 150 countries as the official or semi-official language. (Figures as given in May, 2001) English dominates science, the Internet, air-traffic, pop-culture and the film industry. (May, 2001) Therefore, it is difficult to argue against the view that many monolingual English speakers perceive themselves as well equipped linguistically for the modern world with no need to invest time in learning another language. Often this attitude reflects onto speakers of other languages. Research which was focused on the attitudes of Bosnian parents, found that that five out of ten parents considered English more important than Bosnian. In some cases this was expressed in a very strong manner: ‘*You are nobody if you don’t speak English*’. None perceived their language more important than English. (Mehmedbegovic, 2003) Considering the fact that the respondents had spent only 12 years in this country and 12 years ago Bosnian was the only language used and needed by these people, the transformation of their value system, especially bearing in mind that they arrived as adults, is significant. Bourdieu (1991) terms this process *misrecognition*, which refers to the acceptance of the greater value of the dominant language as natural, without recognising it as a social and political construct. The end result of this process is *symbolic violence*, which minority groups often comply with and in a way even support, due to the misrecognition that their linguistic capital is of a lesser value and that it is natural to lose it and replace it with the one that has more value, in this case English.

Treveor McDonald, Patron of the National Centre for Languages (CILT) and a chairman of the Nuffield Enquiry has raised the issue of ‘our haste to ensure they (multilingual school children) acquire good English’ which frequently results in missing the opportunities to ensure they maintain and develop their skills in their other languages too. He calls for a culture shift from ‘English only’ to ‘English plus’ that brings a range of educational benefits, enhanced communication skills and an openness to different cultural perspectives. (CILT, 2006, p 2) It only needs to be added that shifting to ‘English plus’ thinking and culture is as relevant to English native speakers and monolinguals as it is to multilingual children.

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A Future Model for London Multilingual Schools

This section will set out principles which should underpin practice that has the potential to move London schools that are multilingual in their intake towards becoming schools that are multilingual in their ethos and classroom practice. These principles are: making bilingualism an integral part of teaching and learning; encouraging biliteracy; advancing a multilingual ethos into a plurilingual ethos and ensuring relevance to monolinguals.

Recognising bilingualism in mainstream schooling and making bilingualism an integral part of teaching and learning

A bilingual child brings to school a resource for herself/himself, an additional dimension to linguistic and cognitive functioning that the use of two languages creates and s/he also brings a resource for everybody else in the classroom. At the moment these resources bilingual children bring to schools resemble the emperor new clothes narrative. The majority of teachers ‘do not see them’ (minority languages) as something that can be used for any proper, curriculum related learning; headteachers and local authorities ‘do not see them’ because they are not going to help reach their targets; the Government ‘do not see them’ because they are not on the agenda; parents ‘do not see them’ because of the pressure to acquire good English and lastly children ‘do not see them’ because they are not important in school. The only difference between the invisible resources of bilingual children and the invisible emperor’s new clothes is that the emperor had nothing on while everybody pretended that he was draped in the finest robes. In the case of bilingual children, educators and policy makers have pupils coming to schools with treasure boxes full of linguistic resources and yet they are made to feel their treasure is valueless, in fact, a burden. Eventually many children abandon their linguistic treasures not even noticing they are being ‘robbed’.

Failing to recognise bilingual children as resources in schools was also criticised by the Nuffield Inquiry. According to their report, bilingual children are still seen in schools ‘rather as a problem than a resource’, while on the whole ‘multilingual talents of UK citizens are under-recognised, under-used and all too often viewed with suspicion’. The report points to a lack of co-relation between demand and supply in language acquisition and utilisation. Bilingual children in the UK speak languages that are of great importance in international and economic affairs of the country, yet the existing skills in these languages go unrecognised, are under-deployed or dismissed as a problem. (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 36)

A London Headteacher stated: ‘*Educators focus on teaching and learning – bilingualism doesn’t come into play. I don’t think people think about it.*’

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(Mehmedbegovic, 2004) In the most simple terms the first principle of good practice, would be the exact opposite to this statement: There is no teaching and learning for bilingual children (or adults) where bilingualism *doesn't come into play* or to use a more appropriate phrase, where bilingualism is not an integral part of it.

There is considerable empirical evidence to support this principle in the field of neuropsychology. Researchers have been working on identifying the differences between monolinguals and bilinguals in terms of the left and right brain hemisphere use. The outcomes have resulted in the agreement amongst most researchers that the brain functioning of bilinguals differs to the brain functioning of monolinguals. However, there are disagreements on how they differ. The empirical evidence covers differences in a variety of variables, such as: visual presentation and processing, audio processing, cortical activity of each hemisphere, levels of the right hemisphere engagement, levels of lateralisation and heterogeneity in the hemispheric organisation. (Hammers and Blanc, 1989, p 42) The main point of this empirical evidence is that the bilingual brain operates, processes, and therefore, learns, differently to the monolingual one.

Obviously the crucial question is: how do London schools which have 40 or more languages represented implement this principle? First of all, bilingual children and their parents need to be given clear, affirmative, consistent message by the school and their teachers in terms of a healthy bilingual linguistic diet. It should be a part of the Healthy School Initiative. As well as using every opportunity to say: It's good for you to eat fruit and vegetables every day; it should also be said: It's good for you to speak, read and write in other languages. This basic principle became clear while doing a focus discussion group with a group of Bangladeshi boys in Pimlico School. One boy identified bilingualism as the reason of their underachievement, while another student stated: *'I don't think having two languages is a problem. I read in a scientific journal that it develops your brain.'* (Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004, p 14) Schools should not have 14-years old students left to their own initiative to look for answers whether bilingualism is good for them or not. Students (and parents) should be explicitly told.

While some teachers believe that bilingual children are only interested in learning and achievement in English and in the author's experience some bilingual children are initially surprised when given a task in their first language and then embarrassed and unwilling to do it in most cases, this is a temporary phase. Where home languages are a part of teaching and learning throughout schooling, starting with early years, with the aim of supporting bilingual children in developing their full potential and positive attitudes towards this specific intellectual potential that they have, the impact of it will be evident in improved results across the curriculum as a whole. 5

Encouraging biliteracy

Many bilingual children currently in schooling have not developed and are not developing literacy in their home languages. In some cases there are valid reasons

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such as some of them speak a language which is not written (Sylhety). In most cases children will only develop full literacy skills in their home language if they attend a mother tongue school. The attendance of mother tongue schools varies from community to community and also it is different for the same community in different settings. For children that attend mother tongue school it is very supportive if their mainstream teachers are aware of it and these children are given recognition for their efforts and the extra time that they spend in school. Also biliteracy can be supported within mainstream schooling by giving children opportunities to produce their written work bilingually. Charmian Kenner has documented a number of successful ways of developing biliteracy in London schools. (Kenner, 2000, Kenner, 2004, Kenner, Gregory and Ruby, 2007) Strategies promoted by Kenner are based on giving bilingual children and parents the lead and the expert role in the classroom, while teachers join in as learners. These strategies also impact on developing the ethos of collaborative learning, where children experience the shift in power and authority from teachers to pupils or parents. 6

According to Cummins encouraging biliteracy enables bilingual children to benefit in the following ways:

“ ...1) the application of the same cognitive and linguistic abilities and skills to literacy development in both languages; 2) transfer of general concepts and knowledge of the world across languages ...; and 3) to the extent that the languages are related, transfer of specific linguistic features and skills across languages.”
(Cummins, 2001, p 191)

Children will neither fully benefit from these advantages, nor from higher utilisation of the overall potential that bilingualism offers, if they do not develop biliteracy. However biliteracy will not develop just by being immersed in a particular language community. It cannot be assumed that these types of transfer described above will occur automatically. Cummins advocates ‘*giving this process a helping hand*’ by providing opportunities for children to read and write and to acquire academic registers in both languages. Also, explicit teaching focused on contrasting and comparing the two languages gives children the tools to become conscious users of their two languages, which leads to a greater metalinguistic awareness. It is important to emphasise that teachers can facilitate this process without being speakers of particular languages. 7

Advancing a multilingual ethos into a plurilingual ethos

The basic line of the multilingual ethos is opposite to the attitude that multilingualism is a private matter of the ethnic minority communities. Multilingualism should be seen as fundamental to the fabric of this society in the same way that different cultures and religions are. The principle of providing basic knowledge on the diversity of faiths and their differences could also be applied to languages. For example, language awareness units with information on languages spoken in Britain, their origins, scripts, differences and similarities could easily be

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made a part of the citizenship scheme or National Literacy Strategy. Within the National Secondary Strategy there is already an element of it that can be further developed. The English strand of the Strategy recommends for all students, native speakers and EAL, that they carry out investigations and projects around different languages in etymology and morphology and make parallels between different languages. (DfES, 2000)

In fact, the European Council has advanced the development of a pedagogical approach to this issue and it would be beneficial if practitioners were to engage with its recommendations on a wider scale. One of the propositions of the European Council is that every pupil should have a Language Portfolio in which to enter anything significant in the experience of or engagement with other languages and cultures. This means that even if a pupil cannot use a language in conventional ways, it is still valuable to recognise that he/she has, for example, done a project on it and has certain theoretical knowledge about it. Or if a pupil has spent a certain period of time exposed to it, within family, community or while abroad; participated in an oral discussion involving several languages; analysed a linguistic feature in one language in relation to another language and similar examples. (Tosi and Leung, 1999)

The central point of the approach of the European Council is that education should see developing communication skills as its aim, where communication is seen to encompass the standard state language, home languages, European languages and other world languages. Very importantly, *attitude formation, language and cultural awareness are the priorities* in this process that develops *individual’s understanding of the physical and social environment and ability to function effectively in the local, national and international environment.* (Tosi and Leung, 1999, p 17)

As one of the most diverse cities in the world London could take the lead in following the European thinking which has shifted towards developing the concept of *plurilingualism*. The main distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism is that a multilingual approach is about having many different languages co-exist within individuals or society with the ultimate aim of achieving the competency of ‘the native speaker’. A plurilingual approach, on the contrary, places the emphasis on the process of learning the language of home, society, other peoples; developing communicative competencies as a life-long activity; and in different situations flexibly calling upon different parts of this competence in order to achieve effective communication. At the same time plurilingualism recognises an all- encompassing communication competence that is made up of the different languages that one person has been exposed to and a partial nature of the knowledge anyone can have of one language, be it their mother tongue or not. Therefore plurilingualism removes the ideal of the native speaker as the ultimate achievement and replaces it with the aim of an effective pluralistic communicator who draws on his varied repertoire of linguistic and cultural knowledge in a flexible, creative and individual way. (Council of Europe, 2001, p 4, 5, 169)

Ensuring relevance to monolinguals

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One aspect that is often lacking in a model of good practice for bilingual pupils is the principle of making it relevant to monolinguals. The fact that London is so highly multicultural and multilingual makes it, if not essential, then at least justifiable, that every pupil and citizen engages with it. In the past the Inner London Education Authority had as one of its policy statements that *all children should have the opportunity to learn how other languages work and be encouraged to take an interest in and be informed about the languages spoken by their peers and neighbours* (ILEA, 1982). Currently, The National Secondary Strategy is promoting the engagement with other language systems on the premise that one has a greater understanding of the functioning of his/her own language system and metalanguage when there is a point of comparison. The linguistic potential of London, with around 360 home languages registered merely in London schools (Baker and Eversley, 2000), is a significant resource. Conditions need to be provided for future generations to develop attitudes that will enable them to make this potential beneficial to the city as a whole.

Today nobody is truly monolingual. We are all exposed to different languages in education; on holidays; through film, media, music; we use computer languages; we are exposed to signs and print in different languages on an everyday basis etc. Any monolingual pupil in London schools would find many experiences and elements s/he could write in her/his Language Portfolio. The job that needs to be done is starting to recognise the contribution, in some cases a modest contribution and in others, significant, that all these other languages and types of communication make to monolinguals' communication skills and knowledge.

London has been described as ‘a mini-version of the world, most ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan city in the world, where the globe is on the doorstep – Planet London’ (Time Out, May, 2006). London thrives on its diversity. It is an essential component of its character and appeal. The way London has embraced its cultural diversity inspires the thought that it cannot be too long before London also wakes up to the potential of its linguistic wealth.

Notes:

1. Government funding given to schools and local authorities for addressing the needs of EAL and ethnic minority students.
2. BICS are the language skills that develop in everyday communication supported by face to face interaction; non-verbal cues; motivation and need to communicate and the fact that they are always context embedded. CALP, on the other hand, is the area of context reduced language proficiency and includes the use of subject-specific vocabulary and register and deployment of higher order language skills, such as analysis, synthesis, critical literacy, creative expression. (Cummins, 1979)
3. For a detailed discussion on Anglo-Saxon and Greek –Latin etymological division of the English language, see Cummins, 2001.
4. 2001 OfSTED Report and 2006 QCA Report listed below contain examples good practice.

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5. Cummins refers to around 160 studies conducted in the last 40 years in different countries all of which provide evidence that bilingualism has positive effects on overall cognitive development and academic achievement. (Cummins, 2001)

6. Newbury Park School in Redbridge has been awarded European Language Award 2005 for developing a toolkit that can be used by all teachers in school to promote and teach basics of 46 languages spoken by their pupils. The toolkit is available from the school's website and they welcome visitors.

7. Teachers are often concerned about being able to work with languages they do not understand. CILT newsletter regularly publish case studies of schools which successfully remove such barriers.

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