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Othering through language: English as an Additional Language in England's educational policy and practice

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Abstract
About one-fifth of the total school population in England was recorded as having English as an Additional Language (EAL) in 2018. This paper reflects on the problems presented by the lack of a comprehensive national strategy and guidance for EAL provision, support, and training, and how these issues reveal the existence of ethnocentrism within educational policy and practice in England. The findings are based on interviews with educational staff and participant observation in schools conducted in three schools in Manchester, UK between December 2019 and February 2020 as part of the Horizon 2020 MiCREATE project. The authors question whether categorizing multilingual pupils in opposition to monolingual English speakers serves any practical purpose or merely 'others' these children, and they call for broader recognition of multilingualism within the national curriculum and educational practice.

INTRODUCTION

England has a long history of migration, which is reflected in the diversity of nationalities, cultures, and languages present in the country and within its schools. Many pupils, whether born in England or coming from abroad, arrive at school speaking more than one language. English as an Additional Language (EAL) is a category used by the National Pupil Database (NPD), which is the register dataset for all state-funded school pupils in England controlled by the Department for Education (DfE). Schools collect information on pupils' first language and they are then 'recorded as having English as an additional language if [they are] exposed to a

language at home that is known or believed to be other than English' (DfE, 2020: 4). According to the official figures, there are 1.6 million pupils who use English as an additional language in schools in England (ONS, 2021), almost twice the number that was present in 2006. This accounts for nearly one in five pupils in England's schools, making EAL a key feature of the student body in many local authorities.

This paper reflects on the problems presented by the lack of a comprehensive national strategy and guidance for EAL provision, support and training, and how these issues reveal the ethnocentrism present within educational policy and practice in England. Based on findings from research conducted in Manchester as part of the European Union's Horizon 2020 project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE), the paper looks at how EAL practices construct understandings of multilingual children, which in many ways reproduce existing discourses around nationalism, ethnicity, inequality and disadvantage.

As a first step, the literature review considers the problems associated with the English as an Additional Language category in the context of England's educational policy and data. We then discuss the findings from our research activities with educational stakeholders and school staff, as well as participant observation in schools. The findings include a discussion about the diverse practices of EAL provision in the absence of a comprehensive EAL policy, some implications of the mainstreaming ideology, and the growing awareness of different pedagogies for multilingual education.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE: A CONTESTED CATEGORY

Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) sociological theory of capital and the dynamics of power in society illuminates how language can play a role in the organization of social order and the transfer of power between and within generations. Language can both form part of cultural capital thanks to its role in educational success and ability to mobilize authority, as well as playing a role in the accumulation of social capital, that is, the building of 'social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness' (Putnam, 2007: 137).

In his later work, Bourdieu (1991) expanded the discussion of language, giving it its own category of 'linguistic capital'. Linguistic capital allows for the reproduction of power through symbolic domination by those in possession of the 'right' language. Individuals' relational positions in the social space are determined through representations of identity in the form of language, dialect or accent, which are presumed to reflect one's social status. In educational contexts – which rely predominately on a linguistic exchange – the social and linguistic background of students can affect both their ability to participate and succeed and the way that they are perceived and evaluated by teachers (see Bourdieu et al., 1996).

For migrants, language can be one of the toughest obstacles they face, not only because of more technical problems with grammar or pronunciation but also due to identity loss (Espin, 2006). Learning to 'live in a new language' is not a neutral act, but rather something that 'implies becoming immersed in the power relations of the specific culture that speaks the specific language' (ibid.: 247). Therefore, operating in a language of the society one migrates to can position migrants in a less privileged place in the structures of social power relations, due to vocabulary and grammar difficulties and speaking with a foreign accent.

Language can therefore be a factor both in limiting the ability to form social networks with the host society, and in the embeddedness of social relations, which are the basis for the 'existence, creation, and reinforcement of social capital' (Schmitter Heisler, 2000: 83). Hence it is not surprising that language acquisition has been widely viewed as a key approach to the inclusion and integration of migrant and ethnic minority children in England (DES, 1985;

Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Townsend, 1971) and a central strategy for the integration and inclusion of migrants in Europe (Council of Europe, 2020; European Commission, 2013). The ideological underpinnings and the implementation of these strategies, however, are not without problems.

Although the presence of multilingual and non-native speakers has characterized the population of England for centuries, this is not necessarily reflected in the national curriculum or the government's policy frameworks, which represent it as a monolingual state. The ideological position common in England's language policy assumes monolingualism as providing social cohesion and increasingly as countering religious and political extremism (Simpson, 2019). Within such a vision, speakers of languages other than English are excluded from the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006 [1983]) of the English nation. Although the Swann Report (DES, 1985) was meant to represent a landmark recognition of Britain's ethnolinguistic pluralism, it emphasized the learning of English and failed to recognize multilingualism as an asset or to consider multilingual approaches to education.

The aggregate EAL category has the potential of being used in the service of this exclusionary vision of 'the people' of England. In 2018, the attainment of EAL pupils received media attention when, for the first time, the average performance of EAL learners in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations taken at age 16 was higher than the average performance of non-EAL pupils. Media coverage, centred around the fallacious argument that improving outcomes came at the expense of 'white British' children, fuelled an 'anti-immigration rhetoric that argues that "white working class" pupils are being left behind' (Choudry, 2018).

It is important to recognize that not only does the EAL category encompass highly heterogeneous groups of pupils with varied skills and needs, but also that there is no standardized provision to support and evaluate their language skills. Moreover, the categorization itself can be viewed as constructing children with migrant backgrounds as deficient and on the fringes of the 'mainstream' classroom – as well as, effectively, British society. Many of the pupils who are exposed to a language other than English at home are British citizens or long-term residents. The EAL label can therefore be viewed as a form of 'othering' these children. Portraying them in opposition to those who use only English at home can result in the creation of hierarchies that disadvantage these pupils, characterized by systemic racism and discrimination based on the use of language, or 'linguicism' (see Olding, 2016, for a discussion of similar processes in the Canadian context).

Earlier critics have highlighted 'the political way the EAL evidence has been mobilised' to relay a particular policy story about 'the necessity of remedial policy interventions to address a deficit within certain minoritised populations' (Warren, 2007: 378). Consequently, racialized groups are constructed as targets for policy intervention, reproducing White middle-class social advantage in an institutionally racist British educational system. More recently, Pierlejewski (2020) has argued that the EAL label constructs a deficit in children through 'datafication', while giving no information about the whole, complex, embodied child. She points out that children's communication skills are assessed without using their home languages, subsequently revealing them as 'disadvantaged'. This has the effect of promoting White British culture and marginalizing those coming from other cultures, as well as exemplifying the move from child-centred to data-centred education in England.

LIMITS OF THE EAL DATA

As with most pupil personal characteristics recorded by the NPD, the analyses using the EAL data focus on exploring the relationship between the variable and pupil's attainment. Steve Strand and his collaborators (Strand, 2016; Strand & Hessel, 2018; Strand et al., 2015;) have

published regular analyses of the evidence from national data in England on the achievement of students with English as an Additional Language. Over the years, these analyses repeatedly show that although pupils who have English as an Additional Language have lower achievement levels on starting school, being bilingual is not a barrier to learning and, on average, EAL pupils 'catch up' with their peers by the age of 16 (Strand, 2016; Strand et al., 2015; Strand & Hessel, 2018). At first glance, this is a positive policy story; however, when we look beyond the aggregate, the data reveal a much more complex picture.

The Strand reports highlight that the EAL category does not provide any information about whether the student is a migrant or not, and nor does the NPD include variables such as nationality or country of birth that could be used to identify migrants. For example, the NPD can include both newly arrived pupils with no prior experience of English or even formal education, as well as those who are so-called second- or third-generation ethnic minority students who may be exposed to a language other than English at home but use English in everyday life and are fluent in it. Following the recommendation of the 2015 report (Strand et al., 2015), in 2016 the Department for Education introduced a requirement for schools to report EAL pupils' proficiency in English (PIE). The DfE's ad hoc notice based on this new data (DfE, 2020) found that the characteristics responsible for the largest difference in English proficiency were age and length of time in an English school. Higher English proficiency is therefore directly linked to pupils' attainment in school, which is shown by the difference in attainment of pupils with low and high levels of English proficiency in later key stages (grades).

The notice was limited, particularly since there was no standardized measure of English language proficiency and assessment was a 'judgement' made by schools and recorded on a 5-point scale (DfE, 2020). Moreover, the data were not made available within the NPD for research use. Nevertheless, it was a welcome improvement. In 2018, however, the requirement to record PIE in the school census was removed. This was lamented by the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC, 2018), the national subject association for EAL, and Strand and Hessel (2018) have urged schools to continue to record PIE. With its clear link to attainment (Strand & Hessel, 2018), data on English language proficiency can provide the insight necessary for identifying needs and targeting support, curriculum planning, and teacher development. In Wales, the data on pupils' proficiency in English has been collected since 2009, allowing for detailed cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses of the relationship between English proficiency, pupil demographics, and educational achievement (see Strand & Lindorff, 2020).

The removal of this reporting requirement in England was followed by the removal of EAL from the school inspection framework of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) (NALDIC, 2019). Coupled with the abolishment of the role of the National Lead for EAL, ESOL and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller within OFSTED (NALDIC, 2021), this highlights the broader issue of EAL not being treated as a policy priority. The lack of an overarching vision and strategy for educational policy in England, alongside the absence of a specific EAL curriculum (The Bell Foundation, 2022a) and guidance for the provision of support (The Bell Foundation, 2022b) for learners who use EAL, can lead to their educational experience becoming an afterthought when budget decisions are being made and schools face other challenges.

METHODOLOGY

The study we conducted is part of a pan-European project on Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE), which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. The project's overall objective is to foster the inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by taking a child-centred approach

to their integration at the educational and policy levels. It aims to enhance understanding of children's experiences of life in new social environments, investigate school peer dynamics of integration processes, increase teachers' and educational staff's capacity for diversity management, and develop tools for migrant inclusion and integration policy recommendations that take a child-centric perspective. Primary research activities with educational staff, newly arrived migrants, long-term residents, and local children were conducted in schools in six countries (Slovenia, Denmark, Spain, United Kingdom, Austria, and Poland).

The interviews with educational staff were conducted as part of the primary research activities focusing on the educational community and school systems in Manchester (and elsewhere) as part of the UK strand. This involved 34 interviews with representatives of 12 schools, one focus group with members of the school community (i.e. parents), and an analysis of the existing visual displays, curriculum, and teaching materials in two schools. The schools were selected based on the diversity of their student population on the advice of the Manchester Metropolitan University outreach team. Following this, qualitative research with newly arrived migrants, long-term residents, and local children was carried out in six (primary and secondary) schools across Greater Manchester from November 2019 to December 2020. All schools were attended by a high number of migrant children and children from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds. Data were collected at varying stages over 29 days of participant observation, seven focus groups, and 51 autobiographical interviews, some of which were facilitated through art-based activities such as drawing.

The present paper is based on interviews with educational staff and participant observation in schools conducted by the authors between December 2019 and February 2020 in three of these schools: one primary (PS1) and two secondary (SS1 and SS2). Seventeen interviews were conducted with educational stakeholders who shared their views on the challenges of integrating migrant pupils and the approaches that have been developed across schools and amongst individual teachers to address the limitations of EAL provision. The interviewees included two headteachers, three EAL and SEN (Special Educational Needs) coordinators, and two subject teachers from the three schools, as well as one stakeholder from NALDIC. The participant observations were conducted over a total of 15 days between December 2019 and February 2020. They involved the researchers' presence in the school environment during classes and other activities (singing and physical education sessions, breaks, lunch) to assess the factors influencing the integration processes and to examine the migrant children's conceptualizations of well-being and their needs and life satisfaction.

EAL PROVISION AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

In 2018, of the total state school population in England and Wales, 1.6 million pupils were recorded as having English as an additional language (representing about one-fifth of the total school population) (DfE, 2020). Despite the size of this figure, the EAL categorization is a problematic one – not just in terms of acknowledging the wide variety of children with migrant backgrounds, but also in how this variety is reflected and addressed throughout the educational process. Schools in England (which are governed separately from schools in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) do not follow a specific EAL curriculum; instead, the Department for Education expects EAL teaching to be carried out as part of the national curriculum. Accordingly, the Teachers' Standards state that it is the responsibility of all teachers, whatever their subject, to 'adapt their teaching to the strengths and needs of all pupils' (DfE, 2011: 11).

While such an approach is laudable, it is at the same time too broad and fails to recognize the unique needs of learners using EAL. At the same time, it places the responsibility on the teachers' shoulders but with little provision of further guidance or training. A recent report issued by The Bell Foundation – a charity which aims to overcome children's exclusion through

language education – acknowledges that 'the most potentially damaging feature of EAL policy in England is the absence of any national oversight or provision of professional qualifications, staff development and specialist roles for teachers and other school staff working with children with EAL' (Hutchinson, 2018: 9).

Educational practitioners worry that this lack of an overarching vision risks making many pupils for whom English is not their first language vulnerable to lower educational attainment. Mistry and Sood (2010) highlight the highly differential practices in EAL provision, and the challenges and anxieties experienced by educational staff due to a lack of cultural awareness and experience in supporting EAL children, particularly in schools with a largely monocultural staff. One of our interviewees, a representative from NALDIC, believes that the current policy framework 'ignores these kids' and warns that 'it is very, very easy for bilingual and migrant children to fall through the gaps'. The association he represents thus seeks to support teachers 'to make sure they know [the risks encountered by EAL students], by making these children and their experiences visible, by supporting their learning, by advocating for them at school and [the] regional level'.

Reflecting the concerns about a common framework for EAL provisions expressed above, some representatives of the schools we visited also claim that the mainstream curriculum is not adapted to the needs of EAL pupils. The Maths teacher at one of the secondary schools (SS1) notes in particular the lack of diversity in the curriculum as she raises a set of rhetorical questions:

> In Performing Arts, do they [the pupils] have a look at a play written by an Asian person or a Romanian person? Do they learn Romanian traditional dance or do they just do the classic British ones? In History, when they learn about the war, do they learn about British people or do they learn about German, French, Italian, Romanian? I am not sure this is done. Black History Month was great and my Black students were very interested, but they also asked 'Why aren't we doing that all the time?'

The teacher's reflection points to the fact that the diversity evident in the schools in Manchester and in society at large is not reflected in the national curriculum. As such, the teaching programme can be seen as creating space only for a certain (White British) ideal of citizenship, with other experiences being rendered additional in relation to the core curriculum.

An English teacher from the same school noted the need to equip the migrant children with skills that are more practical, since they often come to the school late in their development and with very little knowledge of English. She argues that disciplines such as technology, textiles, sewing or cooking might be better suited for them:

> It would make them feel accomplished and make them feel like they're doing something. I'd love to take them to town and say 'Here's a fiver, you've got to feed four people. Go!' Life skills: open a bank account, write a letter of application, search for a job that you've got the skills to do, rather than analyse Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Although there are certainly good intentions behind this reflection, the comment could also hint at the fact that some teachers perhaps view these pupils as not being capable of excelling academically and therefore in need of a more appropriate 'technical' education that will provide them with 'practical' skills. Although practical classes of the kind described could be beneficial for a wide range of pupils, singling out migrant children as their target demographic may suggest a certain vision of social hierarchies and the position of migrant children within them.

Some of these calls have been heard, for example with decisions taken by SS1 to provide specially tailored certificates in Maths for migrant pupils with low English levels. The subject teacher describes how this is contributing to the overall progress of Year 11 students:

> They have recently done a qualification called Entry Level Qualification, which is not a GCSE but below that. Every single student in the class, even those with very low levels of English, as is the case of a Somalian boy, have now got qualifications in Maths. We've adapted our curriculum to meet the needs of our students and through doing this, their Maths and their English have improved because it was accessible.

On the one hand, this is good evidence that schools are looking for ways to recognize the skills of EAL students, but at the same time, it may suggest that there is a 'cap' or limit to what they can do, by noting that the qualification is below GCSE level.

For younger pupils at the primary school (PS1) we visited, a focus on spoken language across the curriculum has proved an effective, and at the same time subtle, means to provide an inclusive environment for migrant pupils with lower levels of English. The school acknowledges that spoken language is often neglected in favour of reading, writing, and Maths, and has decided to emphasize it by nominating a spoken language leader who has set up a successful debating team. The school also uses poetry regularly as a learning tool while offering students an officially recognized speaking certificate. According to the headteacher, without developing the spoken language, it is impossible to see progress in reading, writing, or Maths:

> Our spoken language leader has done wonders in developing spoken language throughout the school. The debate team has won the national debating competition in the last four years, going down to London, to the Houses of Parliament, and our children [are] debating there, including international new arrivals who participate in that!

In parallel with the schools' efforts, NALDIC has also produced guidance to help teach multilingual learners. The association recognizes that EAL pupils have distinctive and different needs from other pupils 'by virtue of the fact that they are learning in and through another language, and that they come from cultural backgrounds and communities with different expectations of education, language and learning' (NALDIC, 1999: 8). Reflecting on the principles of EAL teaching, the NALDIC representative we consulted tells us: 'We can talk about principles such as inclusion, valuing what learners bring with them, valuing their experiences, having higher aspirations and so on. But these should be common to any educational setting or discipline'.

MAINSTREAMING AS AN IDEOLOGY

Since the mid-1980s, across the UK, the key principle that informs the education of EAL students is that 'they should be educated in the mainstream classrooms alongside their peers to avoid segregated provision and to guarantee equal access to the curriculum' (Harris & Leung, 2011: 251). The Bullock Report (DES, 1975), and later the Swann Report (DES, 1985), recognized that multilingual children were now a part of British society, despite still propagating a vision of that society as reliant on monolingualism. Later, the findings of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) on teaching English as a second language (1986), the Kingman Report (DES, 1988), and the Education Reform Act (UK Government, 1988) paved the way for 'universalism' in education; this entailed a mainstreaming view of EAL provision

(Leung, 2016), with English becoming a core subject in the national curriculum with the same attainment targets for all students, including those who use English as an additional language. The current Statutory Guidance for the National Curriculum in England (DfE, 2014) maintains this vision, noting that participation in the mainstream classroom for pupils with EAL 'may be in advance of their communication skills in English', while putting the onus on the teachers to 'plan teaching opportunities to help pupils develop their English' and support them to take part in all subjects.

In the schools we visited, a lot of the support given to EAL students takes place in class. Thus, children are rarely separated into groups and if so, only for targeted interventions for speaking and listening exercises. At PS1, for example, children coming from places such as Afghanistan, who sometimes lack any prior school experience, are selected for an intensive twenty-minute session on spelling at the beginning of each day before they are reunited with their classmates. The importance of mainstreaming and the challenges resulting from this are formulated by one of the EAL coordinators at SS1:

> We're trying to move from a separate school within a school to mainstream. Everything has to happen in lessons, with the teacher, in collaboration. The hardest thing is to change the culture and here it took a few years to do that. But staff now understand that the rate of progress of students accelerates with mainstreaming (Head of EAL department, SS1).

Another EAL teacher at PS1 reflects on the shift from segregation to class support for EAL students that she has witnessed in the two-and-a-half decades she has spent in the school. She notes that there is more integration of EAL students than in previous years, with a lot of the support taking place in class and only limited targeted interventions for speaking and listening exercises:

> Previously, we used to take groups out and do [things largely] similar to what they do in the mainstream class. Now I go and support these children in the class, doing the same work as the teacher is doing with the rest of the pupils. Obviously, we do it a bit more focused and explain to them a bit more as they are going along.

Yet despite these testimonies and successive legislative, curricular, advisory, and quality assurance documents, some authors claim that successful mainstreaming of EAL students has not been achieved (Andrews, 2009). Moreover, it has been argued that the mainstreaming of EAL reflects a particular ideological articulation of the notion of equality in education. While mainstreaming can provide a better curriculum environment for English language development, Constant Leung argues that it can also be seen 'as a tacit endorsement of the maintenance of English-medium education' against 'the introduction of multilingual education or any other curriculum provision where pupils' first languages could play a more prominent part in the classroom' (2016: 166). Reflecting a neoliberal agenda that has permeated school education more generally in the last decades, Leung also shows that while the mainstreaming of EAL reflects the responsibility of society to ensure equality of access, it is still 'up to individuals to avail themselves of the opportunities available' (ibid.).

Where targeted interventions did take place in the schools we observed, the differences concerning English competency were often very stark between pupils, further complicating the task of the EAL teachers. In SS1, one of the authors, who engaged as an EAL tutor himself, was able to witness the real struggles with learning English encountered by some of the newly arrived pupils:

> In a class comprised of around eight pupils, some of which were assisted by the EAL staff, I decided to sit at the same table with two siblings, both in Year 8, recently arrived from Pakistan and whose level of English was very poor. Armed with an English-Urdu dictionary, I and another tutor went through some basic reading exercises, which involved getting familiar with the school values. I used a lot of hand signs, dictionary entries, encouragements and back patting to help one of them read through basic sentences such as 'I believe in myself' or 'I try my best'. He only has one week to acquire a basic English vocabulary before he is thrown in the mainstream class. (Fieldnotes)

A similar situation was noticed by another author of this paper who attended an EAL class at SS2, where the English competency levels were again very different from student to student. The class was attended by four students: S1 (Y8), S2 (Y7), and twins S3 and S4 (Y10). S1 is Pakistani and has moved around a lot due to the nature of her parents' work. She has lived in countries such as Germany, France, and Brazil and was due to leave England after the school year ended. S2 is Spanish, of Ghanaian heritage. S3 and S4 are Pakistani twins who were newly arrived in the UK and had only been at SS2 for three weeks.

> In the class, [the teacher] talked to the students about Elizabethan and Tudor times. The children practised reading and speaking, learned vocabulary particular to the topic, and practised writing. S1 and S2 seemed to have very good comprehension and readily volunteered with answers. S1 was far more advanced in writing than the rest of the group and instead of writing individual sentences volunteered to write a whole paragraph. S2 had no issues with comprehension, vocabulary, and speaking, but seemed to be slower at writing. The twins (S3 and S4) seemed the quietest and never volunteered with answers but when asked by the teacher they were consistently able to provide the correct answer. S3 seemed a little more confident than S4 but he was still very quiet. Both S1 and S2 volunteered in helping the teacher explain the vocabulary to S3 and S4, for example by taking out personal items (glove, earrings) to demonstrate the words to the twins. (Fieldnotes)

This instance demonstrates not only the great ways in which students try to help each other in lessons, but also how very different the levels and needs of students in these additional classes are. S1, for example, seemed almost too advanced for the class and was occasionally getting frustrated with its basic level. On the other hand, S3 and S4 were struggling and could have benefited from even more targeted support. Moreover, this vignette highlights both the incredible diversity of migrant students in the schools involved in our research – ranging from new arrivals with Yoruba/Ido backgrounds who were fluent in English, to children of elite transnational workers who had received prior education in English, and students with no prior knowledge of English at all – and the way that the EAL label places pupils who have highly heterogenous characteristics and competencies within a single category.

MULTILINGUALISM BEYOND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE HERITAGE

There has been a 'multilingual awareness' within the British education system ever since the 1970s. In the 1975 Bullock Report, bilingual language use came to be seen as part of a child's language repertoire: 'No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he [sic!] crosses the school threshold, and the curriculum should reflect those aspects of his life' (DES, 1975: 543). Arguing that bilingualism challenges ethnocentrism, Jill

Bourne (2001: 262) believes nevertheless that offering bilingual support to EAL pupils immersed within a monolingual curriculum effectively requires that 'different cultures, including differing ideologies and practices of teaching are also brought into [the] classroom, along with the different languages'. Thus, despite official discourses which insist on 'valuing' the languages children bring to school, it may actually be 'much harder to introduce these languages into the routines of classroom practice in a way which does not challenge the construction of reality in that classroom' (ibid.: 258).

We use Bourne's categorization of provisions made by schools and local authorities in relation to languages other than English to reflect on how well the schools we visited address this issue. She distinguishes between three types: 1) supporting language awareness in a multilingual classroom (which makes the school and all pupils receptive to the 'mother tongues' and easily fits within an already established UK school culture); 2) bilingual support for curriculum learning (enabling full access to the curriculum through bilingual support); and 3) community language teaching (which offers out-of-school learning). We focus on the first two types of resources, since community language teaching takes place outside the school environment.

Supporting language awareness in a multilingual classroom

In two of the schools we visited, language awareness is highlighted through multilingual welcome boards whereby both pupils and parents are greeted in a range of languages in the school lobby. For example, at PS1, the board features a map of the world and the message 'Welcome' written, often by the pupils themselves, in a dozen different languages. Other generic posters in one of the classrooms at SS1 translate into Arabic, Romanian, Spanish, and Italian various religious and citizenship concepts and characters such as 'prayer', 'Bible', 'Heaven and Hell', 'Buddha', 'Prophet Muhammad', 'Europe' or 'monarch'. Research has indicated that where students are included in the creation of this 'vernacular' environmental print their biliteracy is supported (Dressler, 2015).

Aside from these display materials, most of these schools have dictionaries and multilingual books for the use of EAL pupils. At PS1, an entire section in the library is dedicated to languages and is comprised of dictionaries, grammar and spelling books, and dual-language books. Similarly, SS1 has an impressive range of dictionaries in several languages, which are stocked in the EAL department but often used during mainstream classes. Furthermore, on its website PS1 prides itself on being home to 27 different languages spoken by its pupils.

It is worth highlighting that this celebration of languages other than English could lead to what Roxy Harris (1997: 14) defines as romantic bilingualism, a widespread practice 'based on little or no analysis or enquiry, of attributing to pupils drawn from visible ethnic minority groups an expertise in and allegiance to any community languages with which they have some acquaintance'. Indeed, the discussions of one author with a Roma student from Romania seem to indicate the stigma associated with speaking the Romani language at SS1:

Researcher: You are Roma, but you don't speak Romani. Why?
Student: I don't speak it, my parents don't speak it either. We only speak Romanian in the neighbourhood.
Researcher: Would you like to speak it?
Student: It's beautiful […] I have friends and classmates here who speak Romani, but they speak Romanian to me.

Multilingual support for curriculum learning

When it comes to bilingual support in practice, Bourne (1989) distinguishes between individual support (during the class) and whole-class work. In our research, we observed that in the majority of cases, it was during individual support sessions that a language other than English was used. The EAL Coordinator at PS1, who speaks both Urdu and Punjabi, often joined mainstream classes to assist one or two students in their native language. She told one of the authors that often with newly arrived pupils she could only communicate in these two languages.

Other teachers, even when they do not speak a particular language, go the extra mile and learn some words, sometimes for strategic reasons, as is the case with the Maths teacher at SS1. An Italian migrant herself, she learned to count to ten in Romanian, often uses the Romanian equivalent for words such as 'bigger' and 'smaller', and has even picked up some swear words from her students – which she now makes sure are not used in her classroom again. She believes that this strategy 'does make students see you in a different way rather than just saying it in English all the time. You're making an effort for them, and they need to make an effort for you'.

In other mainstream classes, in contrast, teachers discourage bilingualism, even amongst the students, echoing Bourne's (2001: 258) argument that doing the opposite could be 'tantamount to admitting that they cannot carry out their fundamental role competently'. This was illustrated in one of the classes at SS1, where pupils who speak the same language amongst themselves (Punjabi or Romanian, for example) all sat at the same desks. This eventually led to teachers separating them, since they risked being disruptive to the rest of the class. In the EAL department, however, pairing pupils who share the same native language together was more productive, since pupils could help each other with comprehension of the tasks set in English.

In one example, the bilingual support did not only arise from classroom interventions, but evolved from student evaluations of their language needs. Thus, SS1 developed its own materials for the EAL assessments and enabled students to take GCSE exams in their first language. The outcomes are already very positive, as the head of EAL told us:

> Five years ago there was no GCSE in the first language, the schools didn't have that within their policy. When I arrived, I said that we need to make sure we include their own languages in the GCSE. And the gains are amazing.

These instances illustrate the efforts that some schools and teachers make to incorporate multilingualism into their pedagogical practice, even though in some cases pupils in other classes may be forbidden to speak any language other than English. This highlights the continued lack of official support for teacher education and guidelines around multilingual education, despite useful resources being developed independently (see Conteh, 2019). The level of complexity of educational environments in highly diverse settings makes it imperative to recognize and take advantage of educational opportunities in such learning contexts. Education policy and teacher training need to be grounded in recent research on language and multilingual pedagogies (see e.g. Conteh, 2018; Little et al., 2014; Raschka et al., 2009; Tien, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to reflect on the issues presented by the lack of a comprehensive national strategy and guidance for EAL provision, support, and training, and how these deficiencies reveal the ethnocentrism within educational policy and practice in England. Language is often seen as an important cultural component in the construction of nation-states as 'invented homelands' (Kaufman, 2001) or 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 2006 [1983]), symbolically

holding them together. The idea of a nation as a limited community bound by a shared language is challenged by migration and cultural diversity. Despite often being well-intentioned, integration policy and practice can reproduce nationalistic discourses (see Larin, 2018) and, as in the case of England, promote a monolinguistic vision of society that privileges White British identity.

Differences in educational attainment are always of serious concern, as they affect the life courses of pupils. Hutchinson (2018) shows how perceptions that children with EAL are a drain on the system or that they systematically outperform other children are incorrect, highlighting that the reality is more nuanced. Children who use English as an additional language, as a group, are extremely heterogeneous; they include those who are British citizens who speak another language at home as well as refugees fleeing war and persecution. Several scholars have pointed to the need for more research and policy attention around the link between English fluency and attainment at school (Demie, 2018; Demie & Strand, 2006; Strand et al., 2015), and how diversity in school groups reflects multiple methods of language acquisition, ways of learning, cultural practices, and the provision of support.

In line with previous evidence, we found that pupils with highly differing levels of language competency, cultures, and socioeconomic background were all labelled as EAL. This echoes the concerns of Warren (2007) and Pierlejewski (2020) that the EAL category functions as a means of rendering these children as a racialized group with a deficit to be addressed, reproducing the White middle-class advantage and marginalizing those from other cultural backgrounds, all the while ignoring the needs of the whole, complex child.

This begs the question of whether giving a child the EAL label serves any practical purpose for schools or provides any useful information for analysis and research. Many of the pupils who are exposed to a language other than English at home are British citizens or long-term residents. In the absence of information on the level of their English language proficiency, categorizing them in opposition to monolingual English speakers does little but 'other' these children.

Nevertheless, some of the teachers and educational practitioners we interviewed are aware of this dynamic and have taken active steps to create inclusive classrooms through their own inventiveness. Organizations such as The Bell Foundation and NALDIC provide invaluable resources for teachers and educational practitioners, while the curriculum and overarching guidelines are sadly deficient. Without a strong commitment to education that recognizes the multilingualism of England's classrooms, the educational experiences of many pupils can easily become an afterthought when schools face financial constraints and teachers lack appropriate training or experience. This will require the promotion of good practice that allows children's cultural heritage and educational capital to be recognized and valued, such as making provisions for pupils to take GCSEs in their first language, improving the diversity of the teaching workforce, and including pedagogies for multilingual education within the national curriculum and teacher training programmes.

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