RESEARCH ARTICLE

Multilingualism as Legitimate Shared Repertoires in School Communities of Practice: Students' and Teachers' Discursive Constructions of Languages in Two Schools in England

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Abstract

The paper reports on the findings of a 12-month project within a broader research programme that looks at a group of East European students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in England. The data are derived from interviews with the students and teachers in two schools. The findings show that EAL students had a keen interest in English. This attitude contrasted with their reluctance to use and talk about their home language, as a result of language loss and fear of being bullied. Teachers' attitudes towards languages were also mixed, ranging from support for 'free use of languages', to 'restricted use of home language', and to 'use of English only'. The paper further argues that multilingualism can be theorised as legitimate shared repertoires of school communities of practice. Practical implications are drawn which suggest that students' and teachers' voices should be acted upon and translated into school language policies.

Keywords

Introduction

The number of children who speak English as an additional language (EAL) in English schools has nearly doubled in the past decade and is continuing to rise due to an unprecedented level of transnational migration (Demie, 2013). According to the Department for Education (DfE, 2013) statistics, over 1 million school children in England and Wales had English as an additional language in 2013. Such a large EAL student population inevitably has huge impact on the learning experience of both EAL and non-EAL students and poses enormous challenges for schools to provide adequate support. Previous research in this area has touched upon a wide range of issues such as language assessment (Gardner & Rea-Dickins, 2001; Leung & Rea-Dickins, 2007), classroom pedagogy (Conteh, 2012; Conteh, Kumar, & Beddow, 2008; Creese, 2006) and teacher training (Cajkler & Hall, 2009, 2012; Hall & Cajkler, 2008). The findings of this established body of research clearly point to great variability of EAL practices in school (Andrews, 2009; Leung, 2001; Wallace & Mallows, 2009), yet there is relatively little research that examines the voices on the ground that underpin these varied practices. Indeed, teachers within the English context are confronted with a key question on a daily basis: what role can and should English and home language play in helping EAL

learners to access the curriculum? The voices are diverse and there is no easy answer to this question, as it is a pedagogical issue as much as an ideological one (Leung, 2007).

The paper is intended to provide some fresh evidence to understand the complexity of this policy challenge. It is based on a 12-month project within a broader research programme entitled 'School Approaches to the Education of EAL Students' (see Arnot et al., 2014). The study follows a group of bilingual EAL learners in two schools in the Eastern region of England, one maintained primary and one maintained secondary, and examines their language development, social integration and achievement in school (see Figure 1). The paper focuses on the language aspect of the project. It problematises the idea of English schools as monolingual 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998) and further argues that multilingualism can be theorised as legitimate 'shared repertoires' of school communities of practice (Wenger, 1998: 82). Practical implications are drawn which suggest that students' and teachers' voices should be acted upon and translated into school language policies in order to provide transparent information on the language needs of both EAL and non-EAL students.

Figure 1 The 'EAL Triangle' (see also Arnot et al., 2014: 22)

(Figure attached at the end)

Literature review

EAL research in the past 30 years has mainly focused on two interrelated issues surrounding the role of English and the home language in the education of bilingual children. The first is concerned with the relationship between EAL learners' level of English and achievement, which has profound implications for policy making. In North America, Cummins's (1981, 2001) seminal work on bilingualism (see also Collier, 1987, 1989) suggests that there is a distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) which takes two years to acquire and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which takes five to seven years to develop. The implications of these studies are far-reaching as they provide significant evidence showing that there is a need for continuous language support over variable lengths of time to enable EAL learners to achieve to the best of their ability. In England, there has not been much research that looks specifically into the effect of EAL on achievement, but the series of studies conducted by Demie and Strand (Demie, 2013; Demie & Strand, 2006; Strand & Demie, 2005, Strand et al., 2015) have provided useful evidence on this issue. Drawing on longitudinal data of language development and attainment of EAL learners in an inner London borough, their findings by and large concur with Cummins's and Collier's research in North America, which indicate that EAL learners need five to seven years to develop full academic language proficiency and English language acquisition is

particularly important for EAL learners at the early stages of language development (Strand & Demie, 2005, see also Strand et al., 2015).

In contrast with the overwhelming support for English language development, the views on the role of home languages in helping EAL students access the curriculum have been varied. Indeed, many researchers have consistently endorsed the role of home languages in the education of bilingual children (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Kenner & Kress, 2003). Yet, 'the mother tongue debate' (DES, 1985: 368) has never ended, as it is often related to educational legislators' ideological choices (Bourne, 2001; Leung, 2007). A review of the curriculum documents in the past 40 years seems to show inconsistency in government's position on the home language. This can be exemplified by two very influential education policy documents (see also Conteh et al., 2008) which differ in their approach to the home language. The Bullock Report (DES, 1975) entitled 'A Language for Life', which many see as 'far-sighted' (Conteh et al., 2008: 223), recognised bilingualism as an asset and recommended that opportunities should be created for bilingual students to celebrate their language and heritage in school:

> Their bilingualism is of great importance to the children and their families, and also to society as a whole. In a linguistically conscious nation in the modern world we should see it as an asset, as something to be nurtured, and one of the agencies which should nurture it is the school. Certainly the school should adopt a positive attitude to its pupils' bilingualism and wherever possible should help maintain and deepen their knowledge of their mother tongues. (DES, 1975: 293-294)

In contrast, however, the Swann Report (DES, 1985) entitled 'Education for All' insisted that the responsibility of maintaining the home language lies with the communities rather than mainstream schools, so 'emphasis must therefore […] be on the learning of English' (DES, 1985: 407). This position, which moves away from the recommendation of the Bullock Report, reflects a major ideological shift at the policy level:

> It has been suggested that mother tongue provision can help to ameliorate the difficulties facing non-English speaking pupils entering school for the first time. It must however be recognised we believe that such provision can at best serve only to delay rather than overcome the trauma for these pupils of entering an English speaking environment. … As far as provision for mother tongue maintenance is concerned we do not believe mainstream schools should seek to assume the role of the community providers for maintaining ethnic minority community languages. (DES, 1985: 408-409).

It appears, as Conteh (2012: 105) notes, that historically there have been 'confusions and conflicts' in policy discourses on languages, which inevitably have long-lasting impact on school practices. With no clear and consistent policy, the future of languages in England is likely to become even more uncertain and the status of minority languages deteriorating

further. The recent decisions by the exam boards to scrap GCSEs and A-Levels in a number of community languages in England is another telling example of the confusions and conflicts in policy discourses (Speak to the Future, Campaign for Languages, 2015). The decisions were reported to be based on practical reasons, yet they seemed to be also intertwined with the ideological struggles at both organisational and government levels.

Indeed, English schools can be conceptualised as multiple linguistic communities of practice (Eckert, 2000; Wenger, 1998). In schools where EAL learners account for a large percentage of the student population, the linguistic repertoires are multilingual by nature. Yet, these multilingual repertoires might not be legitimate forms of discourse of the school community. So the ways English and home languages are perceived, discussed and ideologically constructed in the school are important, as they can determine the ways teaching, learning and communication are conducted. In a school that is underpinned by a multilingual ideology, all children regardless of their language background are seen as legitimate members of the school community and are therefore entitled to full participation in all practices of learning. In contrast, however, in schools where English is considered as the only legitimate working language due to a prevalent monolingual ideology, many EAL children, particularly those at the very early stages of language development, are thrown in the deep end (i.e. mainstreaming) before they have acquired the skills needed for survival (i.e. English). This can be likened to a situation where the lifebuoy that can keep bilingual EAL learners afloat (i.e. home languages) is being taken away. Although bilingual assistance is provided in many English schools, this support has been dwindling in recent years as a result of the government's deep cuts in EAL funding. The situation is particularly challenging for EAL students who speak a minority language where bilingual teaching support is unavailable in the school. As Wenger (1998) argues, legitimacy comes with ability. The lack of full mastery of English constrains EAL learners' abilities and opportunities to participate in school practices of learning, which consequently determines their peripheral status within the school community.

The literature review above suggests that government policy positions on languages are inconsistent and that school EAL practices are greatly varied. To develop a nuanced understanding of these challenges, this paper aims to examine the complexity of voices in two schools. It builds upon a well-established body of work conducted in policy (DCSF, 2009; DfES, 2002; Ofsted, 1999) and practice contexts (Bourne, 2001; Conteh & Meier, 2014, Leung, 2007; Safford, 2003), and through contextualised analysis of school voices, seeks to further our thinking on reshaping the relationship between policy and practice on school multilingualism.

The study

Two schools in the East of England, one primary and one secondary, were involved in the research. The profiles of the schools were not identical. Windscott Academy (pseudonym) is a medium-size secondary school located in a semi-rural area while Brenton Primary School (pseudonym) is a community school located in a socially disadvantaged area in a medium size town. What they had in common, however, was a diverse student population with over 20 percent of the students registered as EAL learners. Moreover, many students, both EAL and non-EAL, came from a disadvantaged socio-economic background. Thus both schools can be best described as characterised with social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007: 1024).

Data collection was mainly conducted through interviews with the key informants. A wide range of factors were taken into consideration in the sampling process with an intention to generate a diverse profile of participants. For student participants, these factors included disadvantaged background, different language background, new arrivals within two years and English ability; for teacher participants, the selection was based on an array of experience, responsibility, and subject of teaching. The original plan was to select an equal number of students and teachers from each school and where possible to include some parents in the research, but the sampling process was affected by limited access. It became clear in our communication with the schools that many parents did not want to reveal the immigration history of their family. As a result of this, our sampling was further constrained by the difficulty of obtaining parental consent. Despite the challenges, we managed to conduct 38 interviews with the students and teachers across two schools. More specifically, at Brenton Primary School we interviewed 13 students (eight EAL and five non-EAL students) and six teaching staff (including two teaching assistants and two senior management team members); at Windscott Academy we interviewed four students (including one non-EAL student) and nine teaching staff (including one teaching assistant and two senior management team members).

The student participants consisted mainly of EAL students with a range of language backgrounds in Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Bulgarian and Slovakian/Roma. Following consultation with the schools, we also decided to interview a few non-EAL students with some specific relevant questions. We were aware that non-EAL students do not represent a homogeneous group, so we did not aim to draw broad conclusions based on these interviews. Rather we sought to provide some complementary views from non-EAL students in order to develop an enhanced understanding of EAL students' experience in school. The subject teachers interviewed in the secondary school were teachers of Drama, English, French, History, and Science. All subject teachers, apart from the Science teacher who was on maternity leave in the summer term, were interviewed twice. The teacher participants had different roles and responsibilities, including senior managers, EAL coordinators, subject teachers, pastoral care teachers and teaching assistants. We were fully aware that the numbers are not balanced, nor are the samples representative of all students and teachers across England. Generalisations are therefore not possible. Instead, we aimed to achieve

'maximum variation' of the samples available (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011: 230) and capture the complexity and diversity of voices in the two participating schools.

All interviews were conducted on the school site, each lasting about 30-40 minutes in order to fit around school timetables. The interviews were conducted by two research assistants either individually or as a pair. The interviews mainly followed a semi-structured format and the participants were given sufficient time to express their opinions. All interviews were first transcribed verbatim and circulated to the research team for initial reading. Regular meetings were convened to share ideas which fed into the second phase of data analysis using N-Vivo. A preliminary coding framework emulating the 'EAL Triangle' was developed, the codes representing the main constructs that underpinned the interview questions. In the following, we present the findings in two broad sections, each focusing on students and teachers respectively. The subthemes within each section are organised based on the patterns emerging from the data, but in a way that aligns with the focus of the paper – how students and teachers perceived, discussed and discursively constructed the role of languages in the education of bilingual EAL learners in the school.

Findings

Students' attitudes towards languages

Positive and interested attitudes towards English

It is clear from the interviews that EAL students had contrasting attitudes towards English and their home language. In general the EAL students in both schools whom we interviewed showed a keen interest in English and expressed a strong desire to acquire the language as quickly as possible. They cited various benefits gained from learning English such as helping them to 'make friends', 'think fast' and they felt that they needed to learn English. This attitude can be illustrated by the following quote of an EAL student from Brenton Primary School:

> No, I don't think I would like to learn Bulgarian. I would like to learn English because I am in England now and English language will go and help me. (EAL student, Year 6 Bulgarian, Brenton Primary School)

After gaining more confidence in the school, many students also reported that using English was a 'natural' thing to do. This was particularly evident among those who had been in England for more than one year. These children reported that they tended to use English as their main language. A Year 9 EAL student, for example, talked about his experience:

> R: … You find it easier to write in English then or …?
> S: Yeah.

R: Okay, and what about when you think in your head? Do you ever think in Latvian, or do you think in English?

S: In English.

R: In English. Okay. And what about when you do your homework?

S: I do it in English.

R: English as well. Okay. And what about your mother, what does she think about using Latvian at school? Have you ever spoken about that with her?

S: No. She knows that I'm alright with English.

(EAL student, Latvian, Year 9, Windscott Academy)

From seeing English as something 'useful' to finding it a 'natural' thing to do, many students also developed a sense of pride in the fact that they could achieve what their English speaking peers did. Again this was particularly evident among the students who had passed the initial period as new arrivals. The following extract from an interview with an EAL student interestingly illustrates his pride and desire to demonstrate his English ability:

S: Yeah, sometimes teachers say like, write it in Latvian, then translate into English.

R: Okay, so –

S: But I've never done that!

R: You've never done that, but you've heard them tell other people, or did they tell you?

S: They told me, if you want you can do it in Latvian, but I just didn't!

R: You didn't. Why didn't you want to do it in Latvian?

S: Because I learnt English really fast!

(EAL student, Latvian, Year 8, Windscott Academy)

Indifferent and resistant attitudes towards home languages

In contrast with their generally positive attitude towards English, however, the EAL students we interviewed seemed to show varying degrees of resistance to use and talk about their home language. Their attitudes also seemed to be related to a sense of 'fear' in an unfamiliar environment. A Lithuanian student at Brenton Primary School, for example, told us his experience of feeling 'nervous'.

R: Hmm hmm. How did you feel when they asked you these questions, did you like it, or...?

S: I felt nervous.

R: Did you feel nervous? Mm. What made you feel nervous?

S: That I got to speak in my language to say them.

R: Really? Did you prefer to speak in English then?

S: Yeah.

R: Okay. And why did you not want to speak in your language, what were you thinking?

S: Because for them it sounds really funny.

R: Oh okay. And so what did they say?

S: They couldn't say it right.

R: Oh. What did you think of that when they couldn't say it right?

S: I was laughing.

R: Really? And it made you feel nervous as well.

S: Yeah, and I'm learning to say like little bits like and they were like, "Oh whatever".

(EAL student, Lithuanian, Year 6, Brenton Primary School)

It is clear from the conversation that the student felt very uncomfortable about using his home language in front of his peers, because he was not sure what was expected of him. The feeling of 'nervous' could develop further into a sense of fear of being bullied by peers. A British non-EAL student shared her observation of school bullying:

R: What's the worst thing for such classmates [with EAL]? What really upsets them?

S: When they're getting picked on.

R: How do they pick on them? In what way? Because they can't speak English?

S: Yeah.

R: What do they do?

S: They just try – they like put on an accent or something to try and do their language.

R: Oh right, they mimic them? It's not very kind, is it?

S: No.

(Non-EAL student, British, Year 8, Windscott Academy)

At Brenton Primary School, there were also reported incidents about bilingual children being bullied for using their home language. Another non-EAL student, for example, reported an incident that happened to a Polish student for whom he felt very sympathetic:

R: What do you think is the worst thing for them? What really upsets them?

S: People who make fun of them just because they can't speak our language.

R: Really, do people do that?

S: Yeah, some people do.

R: No, really? Have you seen that?

S: No, not recently but some people do.

R: Have you heard of the things happening?

S: Yeah.

R: Really, can you tell me what happened?

S: With Darota, she speaks Polish, someone made fun of her just because she speaks Polish and comes from a different place.

R: Really? Oh dear. Who did that?

S: I don't know but –

R: You just heard?

S: Yeah.

R: And how do you think Darota felt?

S: Really upset.

(Non-EAL student, British, Year 6, Brenton Primary School)

It became clear in our interviews that some EAL learners were reluctant to use or even talk about their home language because they felt 'scared' and 'upset' for being bullied. This situation could be exacerbated by the gradual loss of their home language, which further demotivated them to maintain their mother tongue. For example, when asked whether he would like to use his home language if he was given the opportunity, a Year 9 Latvian student replied that 'it would not be helpful' and explained that he had lost the motivation to use it:

R: Do you think it's helpful in any way?

S: No.

R: No. And what about other people you know. Does it help them (?), Latvian or Polish or Lithuanian, do they speak different languages?

S: No.

R: No, okay. And would you find it at all helpful to use Latvian in the classroom, if you could speak or write –

S: No.

R: You wouldn't find it helpful –

S: Like it's hard for me to write in Latvian, because I've forgot, forget everything. Like I'm probably not even going to go back to Latvia, so I don't really see no point speaking Latvian.

(EAL student, Latvian, Year 9, Windscott Academy)

EAL students' attitudes towards the home language were also greatly influenced by their parents who seemed to have expectations of what language should be used, when and where. Some students indicated in their interviews that their parents urged them to use English as much as possible for various reasons, such as 'learn English to help mum', 'make friends', or even 'become an English girl'. A student from Brenton Primary School, for example, lamented that if her father knew that she used Slovakian in the school she would get told off:

R: Okay. But what would happen then, what would your parents say if you said, "I'm speaking Slovakian in the classroom, the teacher told me to use Slovakian words," what would they say?

S: I'd be grounded.

R: Would you be grounded? Really? And what do you think you'd, can you imagine, like tell me what they'd say, like your dad.

S: They would start shouting at me.

…

R: … And you said they want you to be an English girl?

S: Yeah.

R: Okay. Why do you think they want you to be an English girl?

S: Because they think that if I learn more English then I might learn my mum more English.

(EAL student, Slovakian, Year 6, Brenton Primary School)

Teachers' attitudes towards languages

The interview data also reveal a complex picture of teachers' attitudes towards languages, ranging from 'free use of languages' to 'use of English only' and to 'restricted use of home languages'.

'Free use of languages'

The teachers who supported 'free use of languages' argued that the home language can contribute positively to an inclusive environment for learning and can develop students' international mindedness. For example, a French teacher talked about the development of cultural openness within the school community of Windscott Academy:

> Well I think we try to encourage students not to be ethnocentric or xenophobic. We want them to, I think, as a whole close the divide between different cultures and different languages, and to help them embrace each other and to live in more of a peaceful community as a school and outside. (French teacher, Windscott Academy)

Similarly, the headteacher of the primary school also emphasised the importance of diversity to help children to achieve their potential in a diverse society:

> So we aim to be a fully inclusive school for all our children to be safe, happy, achieving their potential, and also to offer a curriculum that embraces the diversity of this community and the world. (Headteacher, Brenton Primary School)

Some teachers also believed that English and home languages were 'mutually enhancing', so students should be allowed to draw on both and to use any language that was helpful for their learning. For example, a primary class teacher and an EAL coordinator in the secondary school both spoke about the positive relationship between languages:

I think it's just so helpful for them that they've got these two languages that they can sort of communicate in. I think the stronger they are in their home language really helps them with another language. They kind of go hand in hand really. (Class teacher, Year 4, Brenton Primary School)

Well, the better their home language, the more understanding they'll be able to relate to the English. Because if they don't know what, I don't know, 'disappointed' is in Lithuanian, they're not going to know what it is in English. So you're only going to have to teach them the whole thing. So the better their grasp of their home language, the easier they should, in theory, be able to grasp English. (EAL lead teacher, Windscott Academy)

Some subject teachers also supported the idea of 'free use of languages', arguing that the home language could help bilingual children to access the curriculum in an effective way. For example, a science teacher described her positive experience with two Russian boys in her class.

Yeah. I've seen that [teachers completely banning the use of home languages in the classroom]. I just think it's ignorant. It's being ignorant to their own background. … So for example in my Year 11 I have two Russian boys and they sit at the front of my class. And they'll sit there and as long as they're doing their work, because they're doing work at the minute, and they'll sit there and they're talking in their native tongue and they're not hurting everybody, they're not hurting me, they're getting on with the work, so I don't have a problem with that, I really don't. (Science teacher, Windscott Academy)

'Use of English only'

In contrast to the liberal attitudes towards languages, however, some teaching staff insisted that an 'English only' policy should be adopted in English schools. A teaching assistant, for example, stated clearly that 'It's got to be basically English, if they're in an English school really' *(Teaching assistant, Year 6, Brenton Primary School).* The French teacher at Windscott Academy also lamented in her interview: 'I have unfortunately heard teachers say, (bangs on desk) "English please. Only in English please"'. A senior management team member at Windscott Academy also admitted that she was aware of different voices in the school and was open to the idea of a strict English-only policy.

I'm always cognisant of, 'Mm, we need to think carefully about this' but I'd love to hear the other side of the argument that says, 'Right, you should have a policy that says, "Only English is to be spoken"'. (Headteacher, Windscott Academy)

The bilingual Polish PE teacher's view provided an additional dimension to our understanding of the 'English only' ideology. He rarely used Polish to communicate with the EAL students except when interpreting for new arrivals from Poland. He was very clear about his role in the school which was to help the EAL students to develop their English skills. He wanted to serve as a role model for the students who he believed needed to use English as much as possible in order to integrate into the school community.

> Well you know, the funny [thing] is I'm the best person to say … not 'Speak your language', 'Speak English' (laughs). Even today I had to cover for science and some – two Lithuanian students say – started speaking in Lithuanian. I said, 'Speak English' you know and this is quite funny because I'm Polish, I'm a foreigner as well. But I try, 'Why we should speak English?' I said: 'Because I don't feel comfortable and the people around don't feel comfortable when you're speaking your own language and maybe if you will start speaking English, we can join the conversation because it may be an interesting conversation. So that's why you should speak English and you're going to learn how to speak English'. (Polish PE teacher, Windscott Academy)

'Restricted use of home languages'

Apart from the maximalist views in support of 'free use of languages' and 'use of English only', more neutral views were also expressed by some teachers who recommended a certain form of restricted use of home languages. According to these teachers, the question was not about whether home languages should be used or not, but rather how they can be used in an effective and appropriate way. For example, a class teacher at Brenton Primary School suggested the following:

> I think it [the home language] should be used in the classroom but it should be restricted use in the classroom, because if you want the child to learn English if you have somebody in there that is constantly speaking their own language they're never going to learn, because they'll always revert back and ask all the questions and everything else in their own language. (Class teacher, Year 6, Brenton Primary School)

The 'restricted use' view seemed to also reflect the ideological struggle that many teachers had. A drama teacher's comment clearly demonstrates this dilemma - she did not want the EAL students to lose their heritage, but at the same time she expected them to be able to speak good clear English when they came to the school:

> I think if they're entering an English school then they should be able to speak English. Obviously I wouldn't ever say, you know, give up on your culture, that wouldn't be right, but they definitely need to be able to speak English in an English school. (Drama teacher, Windscott Academy)

In the same vein, the dilemma is well illustrated in the following comment by a teaching assistant who believed that different languages should be used in different domains:

> It is quite interesting that other children will ask the child who's from Poland or whatever else, they will actually ask them what does that mean in Polish, which is good, but I think once they're here and once they have the basis of the English language, once it's very basic, but you can work on that. I don't think you should have somebody in all the time in their own language, but I do think social wise I think they need that. (Teaching assistant, Year 6, Brenton Primary School).

It is apparent that these teachers were generally positive about the home language and the 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007: 1024) that characterised the schools, yet they believed that it was important that the EAL students were able to 'catch up' with other students and follow the national curriculum and assessment.

Discussion

The paper investigated how students and teachers discursively constructed languages in two schools in the East of England. The findings reveal a complex picture of voices which reflects the 'confusions and conflicts' in policy discourses on the education of bilingual EAL students in England (Conteh, 2012: 105). It is clear from our findings that the EAL students were keen to learn English and were reluctant to use and talk about their home language. These contrasting attitudes can be explained by EAL students' recognition of the value of different languages. For example, the Latvian boy at Windscott Academy saw 'no point of speaking Latvian' since he thought that he was 'probably not even going to go back to Latvia'. In contrast, the Bulgarian student at Brenton Primary School thought that 'English will go and help me'. Some EAL children also experienced home language attrition and as a result felt even more aligned to English. Schmid (2011) observes that language loss is very common among bilingual children who have resided in the host country for a longer period of time. They tend to use the language of the host country as the main language, which by and large accords with our finding about the EAL students who had acquired a level of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1981, 2001).

Language and identity are also interrelated (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). The way bilingual EAL children perceive, discuss and use the home language can reveal how they see, think about and identify themselves. The Lithuanian student at Brenton Primary School, for example, felt 'nervous' and was not comfortable about using his home language in front of his peers. His reluctance echoes Pagett's (2006: 137) observation that EAL children may show resistance to use their home language because they would prefer to 'appear like everyone else' in the school setting where English is the dominant institutional language.

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Studies conducted by Li (2011) and Creese and Blackledge (2010) also illustrate this resistance, but from a different angle. Their research shows that bilingual speakers in complementary schools manipulated their home language in a playful way, and through translanguaging displayed their resistance to their heritage. The EAL students we interviewed also showed varying degrees of resistance to their heritage language, which might indicate an on-going process of negotiation of linguistic, cultural and ethnic identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). EAL learners' indifferent and resistant attitudes towards their home language can also be explained by their fear of being bullied by peers. Two non-EAL students in the study, for example, reported incidents where their bilingual peers felt very 'upset' when they 'got picked on' and 'were made fun of'. Our data on social integration in the larger research programme also confirm that a wide range of anti-social behaviours such as bullying and exclusion existed in the school, which might affect EAL students' attitudes towards English and the home language (Arnot et al., 2014).

Teachers' attitudes towards languages were also very mixed. In general, their views ranged from 'free use of languages' to 'use of English only'. For example, the French teacher and the EAL coordinator both talked about the benefits of using the home language in learning. Nonetheless, their views contrasted with that of the science teacher and the Polish bilingual PE teacher who preferred to use English as the only medium of instruction in the classroom. Despite having different attitudes, teachers seemed to share a common concern for student achievement, but in different ways. Those who supported 'free use of languages' argued that English and home languages can play a complementary role in learning, a view which receives strong support in the literature (Gregory & Williams, 2000; Kenner & Kress, 2003). Those who supported 'use of English only', however, were concerned that the home language might interfere with EAL children's English language development, hence jeopardising their opportunity to learn and achieve.

It is clear from the findings that teachers' perspectives were hugely diverse, echoing Leung's (2001, 2007) assertion that 'the mother tongue debate' (DES, 1985: 368) is pedagogical as much as ideological. Indeed, in the English school context in particular, pedagogy is ideological. In the past 30 years, practitioners and educational policy-makers have been unable to agree on whether the home language can or should have a role to play in the education of bilingual learners (Conteh et al., 2008; Leung, 2001). There are various ideological choices. For example, if multilingualism is to be seen as an asset, then opportunities should be created for bilingual children to celebrate their heritage language and culture in school, as recommended by the Bullock Report (DES, 1975). However, if monolingualism is to be seen as the desired social norm, then the responsibility of teaching and preserving the home language lies with the community rather than the school, as recommended by the Swann Report (DES, 1985). There are many more multilingualism practices in school which are underpinned by different ideologies. At the policy level, therefore, it is very challenging to make universal recommendations on pedagogy with an 'ideologically laden process' (Leung, 2007: 257) of policy-making.

The findings can be further theorised by conceptualising schools as communities of practice for learning (Eckert, 2000; Wenger, 1998). Students and teachers in English schools share a common enterprise of education. Through mutual engagement in various educational practices, they aim to achieve the goal of raising achievement for all, both EAL and non-EAL students. To participate in the social practices in the school, EAL students need to draw upon English as well as their heritage languages which thus constitute a multilingual 'shared repertoire' (Wenger, 1998). Nonetheless, multilingualism might not be 'authorised' as the dominant discourse of the community and different languages may have different statuses . In most cases, English is at the top of the hierarchy while home languages are much lower down. As Wenger (1998) argues, dominant discourses can legitimise or de-legitimise certain institutional practices. Moreover, they can reinforce or threaten participants' membership which is usually reified through competence. When the core competence is defined by the English ability rather than by 'multi-competence' (Cook, 2007: 16), bilingual EAL learners are destined to remain at the periphery of the school community. In order to gain or retain their legitimate membership, EAL students have two choices. They can either conceal their heritage language identity or negotiate their English speaker identity through developing their English language ability. In our research, the EAL learners seemed to be doing both. They were keen to learn English as quickly as possible, particularly for those who had passed the initial period of settling in. At the same time, they also tended to avoid their home language because they feared that their peers would 'pick on them', 'put on an accent' and 'try and do their language'. This is a telling example showing that as heritage language speakers EAL learners can draw attention to their identity as 'the other' and elicit rejection from peers with a dominant language background (see Pagett, 2006).

The onus of gaining and retaining a legitimate membership of a school community of practice does not solely lie with the individual, but with the school as a whole. In many cases it is not up to the students to make the choices on whether they can be legitimate members or not, so the school has a very important role to play to induct the EAL newcomers by creating 'multilingual communities of practice' (Back, 2013: 383) where they can fully participate in the practices of learning in the school. When multilingualism is considered as the norm rather than an abnormality, both English and home languages can be seen as shared linguistic resources that belong to all, including EAL and non-EAL students. From a critical stance, therefore, multilingualism can be theorised as legitimate 'shared repertoires' (Wenger, 1998) of the community and can serve as a mediating cultural tool to empower individuals. For bilingual children, this empowerment is derived from the discourse of acceptance of bilingualism as normality and from the creation of an equal discourse space for participation. For monolingual children, the empowerment entails a process of self-emancipation through acknowledging difference as a social norm in super-diverse society. Indeed, 'multilingual school community of practice' is a conceptual model that needs to be cherished, as it captures the 'linguistic landscape' (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009: 1) of many English schools today.

Conclusion

As we have argued throughout the paper, the confusions and conflicts in policy documents on the education of bilingual students can shape and reshape the way languages are perceived, discussed and used in the school. As Leung (2001: 38) explains, 'It is taken as axiomatic that official policy discourse reflects an ideological selection of ideas and at the same time it legitimises the practices associated with the selected ideas.' However, sociological determinism has been strongly criticised by researchers (Daniels, 2012). Indeed the voices on the ground need to be heard and acted upon. In this paper, we argue this can be achieved through school language policies. Language policies are constitutive of language ideologies, representing a constellation of beliefs, values and attitudes (Spolsky, 2003). It is clear from our study that different ideologies co-existed in the community, which necessitates the creation of a 'dialogic space' (Wegerif, 2007: 4) as well as an 'ideological space' (Dassonneville & Dejaeghere, 2014: 580) where ideological struggles and conflicts can be externalised and negotiated. Different schools have different cultures, structures and practices. A policy that works in one school may not work in another, so school language policies should be seen as cultural and historical artefacts that reflect the shared history of teaching and learning in the local school context. They need not be rigid administrative tools, but rather by way of being a sounding board, to provide transparent information on the language needs of both EAL and non-EAL students within a specific school community. When students' and teachers' voices are channelled into school language policies, we believe that there is enormous potential to impact on policy more widely by communicating school voices to educational legislators. From this perspective, we can argue that school language policies can mediate the mutual shaping of the institutions of government policy-making and school EAL practices. (7,941 words including references)

Acknowledgements

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