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'Inert benevolence' towards languages beyond English in the discourses of English primary school teachers

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ABSTRACT

The UK, and perhaps particularly England, is often seen as a nation subscribing wholeheartedly to a monolingual mindset. The national curriculum remains resolutely monolingual, despite linguistic diversity in primary classrooms having increased rapidly. Current research and anecdotal evidence suggest that translanguaging in English schools is rare, despite the documented 'multilingual turn' in applied linguistics, and transnational practices are seen as being facilitated only within families. This study explores attitudes and practices towards supporting multilingualism and encouraging children's sense of transnationalism, rather than solely English language acquisition and assimilation into British culture. Forty semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers across England, and the resultant transcriptions were analysed thematically to explore the experiences and attitudes of participants. The data presented in this paper focuses on instances of what we have termed 'inert benevolence' and we identify a number of conscious and subconscious barriers to truly incorporating languages beyond English in classroom practices.

1. Introduction

Currently, over one in five primary school pupils are registered as speaking English as an additional language (EAL) in England (Department for Education, 2020) and internationally, children who are multilingual outnumber monolingual ones (Unsworth, 2013). Spolsky (2009) identifies education as one of the significant domains of language policy research, while the 'multilingual turn' (May, 2014), the 'lingua franca multilingualism' (Makoni & Pennycook, 2012) and similar publications have sought to redress the traditional focus on monolingualism, a construct perpetuated and re-invented by Western academia against a backdrop of many existing multilingual societies (May, 2014). Despite this scholarly reframing of the education context to include space for seeing linguistic diversity as a resource, the English policy documentation around multilingualism and transnationalism remains both inconsistent and fragmented. Amidst rising awareness of the complexities of a 'super-diverse' (Vertovec, 2007) society, English education policy surrounding multilingual children remains staunchly focused on a deficit model, rather than challenging the monolingual world view (Author 1 2019a) and allowing space for transnational identities to form. Governmental guidance, even for multilingual children, is universally and solely directed at English Language outcomes (DfES, 2007) and a swift transition to English as the sole language medium for education (Overington, 2012), very much construing linguistic diversity as a problem not a resource, to adopt the terminology of Ruiz's (1984) orientations to language.

The most recent official governmental educational guidance document for teachers working with multilingual children in the UK is now more than a decade old, despite an increase in relevant research publications around multilingualism. The very recent early drafts of a new National Languages Strategy (British Academy, 2020) still refrain from anything but the most inert positive mention of multilingualism. This shows an urgent need for a more in-depth understanding of how current policy serves the needs of those who are required to implement them, namely teachers. Whilst there have been a number of studies endeavouring to investigate these issues (Author 1, 2019a; Flynn, 2013), the qualitative work in the area has tended to be geographically limited in scope. This current paper, however, reports on a qualitative study which took a significantly broader approach, based on interviews with 40 teachers at the Foundation and Primary stage across England, covering varying career stages, geographical locations, and backgrounds.

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1.1. Concepts and terminology

Pajares (1992) acknowledges the array of terminology present in teacher research, including knowledge, belief, attitude, ideology, value, conception, to name but a few. Of particular interest to this paper is the focus on beliefs, which are different to knowledge. Whereas knowledge is typically linked to understanding derived from books or formal education (ibid.), beliefs are more likely to be derived from emotional experience and *habitus*, and are embedded as *doxa*, consciously or subconsciously, in a person's mind, informing both attitudes and practice. The APA Dictionary of Psychology (APA, 2020) defines attitude as a 'relatively enduring and general evaluation of an object, person, group, issue, or concept on a dimension ranging from negative to positive'. Attitude, in this paper, is thus defined as a stance that is the result of an ongoing relationship between beliefs and experience. It is also directional, i.e., for the purpose of this paper, teachers' attitudes towards multilingualism in the classroom are explored, which developed from beliefs and experiences linked to a number of related areas, including immigration, policy, time pressures, standard language, and many others. Practice, then, is defined in this paper as the actions teachers engage in. Within the concept of inert benevolence, exploring the relationship between beliefs, attitudes and practice is of particular importance, as it allows us to highlight what drives action in the school classroom – or indeed, what does not.

The aim was to better understand teachers' *habitus* and *doxa* when working with multilingual children in the field of the British mainstream education system. We draw here on Bourdieussian structures to highlight the role of the broader society in shaping and denying individual agency in some of the situations teachers find themselves in. The inter-related concepts of *habitus* and *doxa* drawn from Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice, the 'practice' referring to the product of the series of expectations belonging to a particular arena, the *field* which, for the purposes of this paper, we can consider to mean the mainstream education system of the UK. *Habitus* is to be seen as a socially constituted system of dispositions (Weininger, 2005). Socialised norms and tendencies influence our behaviours and thought processes, often unconsciously, and condition our perceptions of events.

Doxa refers to the interaction between *habitus* and *field*, which produces a set of 'natural attitudes' (Vakalopoulos, 2022, 8) and assumptions that dictate behaviours and beliefs that come to be seen as normal and natural and therefore remain uncontested (Flynn, 2013). In the education field, for example, the notion of accepted classroom interactions and ritualised, authorised forms of language use in that space are relevant for our understanding of *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1991). The uncontested belief in the classroom is that the teacher has been given the authority and power to command the space and control language use within it. The *doxa* of the education field that brings about these beliefs then cannot help but shape individual teachers' own attitudes towards languages and subsequently, and connectedly, their classroom practices. Then, given that our *habitus* is formed by our relation to the every-day world which is 'continuously constituted' by all our interactions and those daily practices (Vakalopoulos, 2022, 3), we can see just how easily beliefs, attitudes and (teaching) practices are embedded through this cycle, potentially impacting on individual agency.

The subsequent aim, then, was to recognise the tensions between affect and agency that result in what we term *inert benevolence*, whereby teachers who may discursively oppose a monolingual policy still, in fact, end up maintaining one in the classrooms, or at the very least find themselves 'grappling with how they should translate [their support for multilingualism] into classroom practice' (Jaspers, 2020, np). The extent to which this inertia, set against an explicitly expressed benevolence or positivity about multilingualism, is driven by limited perceptual schemes within teachers' *habitus* (Vakalopoulos, 2022) is also worth exploring.

By seeking to situate these teachers' perceptions and experiences in their *field* the article highlights training needs and institutional and systemic pressures, making a significant contribution to the growing international knowledge base around multilingualism in schools. We propose suggestions for how schools in countries with a highly dominant majority language may continue to not only move away from the current deficit model around multilingualism, but also to not be content with stopping at a poorly articulated state of 'inert benevolence', as highlighted in this paper. Instead, we argue that schools should move towards a sustainable and purposeful asset model, which enables teachers to help children in using their full linguistic repertoire and transnational identity as a resource, thus maximising learning potential.

1.2. Discourses around multilingualism and translanguaging

In today's super-diverse society (Vertovec, 2007), the traditional notions of a single national language are gradually being replaced by a more holistic understanding of multilingualism as an ever-evolving and 'permeable' construct (Beres, 2015 p. 104). The languages a person speaks are increasingly understood as a fluid and interconnected (Garcia, 2009) holistic repertoire, with the two or more specific, named languages existing only in the outside observer's view (Otheguy et al., 2015).

Against this emerging backdrop, however, Heugh (2015) points out how each country's attitude towards multilingual education is shaped by its own historical and socio-political context, going so far as to say that "what multilingualism means has become a pressing educational matter of concern in the first half of the twenty-first century" (Heugh, 2018, p. 341). The flexible, holistic approach now familiar in academic, sociolinguistic circles, stands in direct dichotomy to 'normative, "monoglot" ideologies' (Blommaert et al., 2006, p.34), which remain pervasive in many educational systems, and will be further explored in the following sections.

Bailey (2007) argues that in translanguaging the focus is on the voice, rather than the language. Within the educational field, this is a particularly relevant distinction, since it affords the learner the opportunity to show what they know, rather than how well they can express it in the language of the classroom. The call for translanguaging spaces (Wei, 2018) as a core component of human rights and social justice is gathering momentum in research (MacSwan, 2017; Palmer & Garcia-Mateus, 2017; Wei, 2018).

Ruiz's (1984) proposal of three orientations to language for language planning and policy purposes are of great relevance to the study in investigating current attitudes and experiences and in proposing alternative ways of working with linguistic diversity in classrooms. Whilst the notion of language-as-right is clearly important since arguably children are being denied access to education in their home language (which is a stated right in Article 28 of the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child), further discussion of this aspect is beyond the scope of this current paper. However, the deficit model and transitional approach to languages beyond English currently prevalent in countries with a monolingual *habitus* (Gogolin, 1997, 2021), is a perfect exemplar of the language-as-problem orientation. Conversely, the adoption of translanguaging practices in education, wherever that happens, is a signal of a move towards seeing language-as-resource, and linguistic diversity in a classroom as a positive tool for learning for all, drawing, as it does, on all children's 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992).

1.3. The policy of multilingualism in schools

Despite more than 20% of primary school pupils speaking more than one language (Department for Education, 2020), multilingualism does not feature in English education policy, outside reference to pupils with English as an Additional Language being able to reach the required English language standards (DfES, 2007). Beyond this, children's multilingualism is systematically ignored (Mehmedbegovic, 2011), and multilingual families may struggle to identify appropriate ways to engage with schools (Blackledge, 2001) Ultimately, multilingual pupils and their families are viewed as Other, as part of a 'process of dominance and control, in which the person represented is reduced to an object' (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012, p. 299). Historically, although the Bullock Report (DES, 1975), adopting a language-as-right orientation, states that

No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he [sic] crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart (p. 286),

The 'Language for Life' in the report's title is still unarguably making reference to the English language, rather than to a home language. Tosi (1988) points out that one of the first government-funded projects linked to bilingualism, the Mother Tongue and English Teaching Project (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Rees & Fitzpatrick, 1981), viewed instruction in the home language as a transitory phase on the pathway to English-only instruction, rather than as a means to encourage and facilitate bilingual development. This transition model remains the typical approach taken in schools, with the responsibility for home language maintenance seen to lie firmly with local communities and families (Author 1, 2019a) and the primacy of English in the school context remaining uncontested ontologically (Hall & Author 1, 2020).

England is not alone in its lack of relevant policy in this context. Heugh (2015) comments on South Africa's 'systemic failure to engage productively with the linguistic and knowledge repertoires of students' (p. 380). This context is particularly relevant, as it shows that countries that have multiple 'official' languages are not immune to these issues, even though, traditionally, they are assumed to be much more advanced in engaging with educational policy planning which incorporates plurilingualism as a resource (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013; Peyer et al., 2020). Neither are countries such as Sweden, famed for its mother-tongue education system, immune from significant challenges in operationalising a facilitative and language-as-resource based provision (Reath Warren, 2013).

In recent years, incorporating multilingual practices has evolved into a social and educational justice issue, with research in this area highlighting the need to valorise home languages in formal education contexts (Duarte, 2020; Krumm, 2016; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008). The impact of the 'multilingual turn' (May, 2014) and an increase in a rhetorical societal positivity about the notion of multilingualism 'has made it increasingly difficult for teachers to impose monolingual or standard language policies without, at the very least, paying lip service to linguistic diversity' (Jaspers, 2020). However, with official policy failing to be representative of the reality of ever-more-diverse classrooms and this prevailing societal positivity, we turn to the classroom context to highlight current and emergent practices in engaging multilingual learners.

1.4. Multilingual classrooms

Policy 'on paper' (Shohamy, 2006) and the reality of the classroom do not necessarily converge. Since classrooms are ultimately where policies are translated into practice, teachers have the potential opportunity to circumvent, challenge and contest language policies (Zavala, 2015). Teacher *habitus* and *doxa* are therefore closely linked to pedagogical practices (Borg, 2003), as discussed earlier, and the historical and current body of research evidencing teachers' traditionally lower expectations of ethnic minority students (Brophy, 1983; Jussim & Harber, 2005) illustrates the work that remains to be done to challenge current discourse. Young (2017) talks about 'deep-rooted language ideologies which perpetuate a monolingual habitus' (p. 11) amongst teachers in France. Pressures of a monolingually orientated curriculum are cited as a barrier to experimentation (Tinsley & Board, 2016). Similarly, in Conteh's research (2012), while teachers expressed surprise and were impressed when confronted with multilingual pupils' language skills, they cited the pressures of 'official knowledge' (p. 113) as the reason why multilingualism in the classroom could not be implemented. In the US, Gast et al. (2017) report how even after-school programmes explicitly aimed at multilingual youths may adopt an English-only policy, due to lack of funding and staff training. In introducing the concept of linguistic human rights, Skutnabb-Kangas (2008, 2017) argues that pupils have the right to linguistically responsive teaching, which combines the language of schooling with pupils being able to learn their own languages, too.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research setting and approach

This current study forms part of a larger, collaborative, international project, aimed at creating an international comparative overview of the attitudes, beliefs, experiences and training needs of Early Years and Primary teachers in the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Norway and Israel. The project adopts a sociocultural approach, seeking to understand how views, habits and needs are shaped via each country's respective policy and sociopolitical context. Specifically, questions in semi-structured interviews were intended to elicit teacher narratives to explore attitudes and beliefs, as well as facilitating reflection and in-depth engagement with the questions raised (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Understanding the links between teacher cognition, ideologies, and practice has long been a growing focus in language education (Borg, 2003), and although most of the teachers in the study were not specifically language teachers, the study borrowed from the existing field of literature in terms of identifying these cognitive links.

2.2. Sample

The data collection for this current study focused on teachers in England to guarantee a more homogenous sample in terms of training experience, and in acknowledgement of other UK nations having two official languages (Scots Gaelic, Welsh and Irish respectively, although we also recognise the presence and status of British Sign Language across all the nations). Forty teachers were recruited via convenience sampling, using a variety of social media posts and drawing on personal and professional contacts to publicise the call for participants across their networks. The final 40 teachers are practising all over England, in both rural and urban settings. While 40 teachers cannot be said to be representative of the teaching force as a whole, the geographical spread, and the range of age and teaching experience, as well as ages taught, ensure that views from teachers across a large variety of circumstances and experiences were captured.

2.3. Overview of participants

With 40 teachers, it is not possible to do justice to the complexity of their experiences, upbringing, training and other demo-

graphic information at an individual level while working within the space constraints of this paper. However, we present a basic overview here, and will go into further details in the following sections, as appropriate.

Of the 40 participants, 10% were male, a percentage only slightly under that of the proportion of men in the teaching profession at reception/primary school level, according to school workforce figures (National Statistics, 2020). Only two participants stated that they themselves came from a multilingual or migration background, both of them from within Europe. However, seven participants in total classed themselves as bi- or multilingual, typically due to later experiences in life, and all participants stated that they had learnt a language beyond their first at some point in their lives. Experience in the classroom ranged from newly qualified to 30 years, with a mean of 10.2 years' service. Most were classroom teachers, with a number of them having additional responsibilities as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator or subject lead. Four had specific responsibilities related to EAL or language education.

At the time of the interview, nine teachers worked with reception-age children (age 4–5), 20 in Key Stage 1 (age 5–7), and 23 worked in Key Stage 2 (age 7–11) - several teachers worked across key stages. The interview also asked teachers to talk about previous experiences, and 18 of the 40 teachers had worked across all three age groups at some point in their careers. The socio-economic area their schools served were fairly evenly balanced, with most catering to students from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, with three being classed as "high", and eight being classed as "low".

3. Data collection

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in whichever way was preferred by the respective teacher, including face-to-face, video messaging, and by telephone. Although Seitz (2016) argues that a close relationship between interviewer and interviewee is more difficult to establish in online interviews, there appeared to be no discernible barrier in practice, and some of the longest interviews were in fact conducted via audio only.

Interview questions aimed to draw out teachers' attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and pedagogical practices in relation to multilingualism, typically with an invitation to share examples or stories of practice. As Grossman et al. (1989), p. 31) state, the distinction between knowledge and belief is "blurry at best", so focusing on stories of professional practice within a semi-structured interview schedule helped explore relationships between experiences, attitudes, and understanding, rather than seeking to establish causality.

Interviews lasted from 20 min 46 s to 1 h 21 min 59 s, with an average length of 45 min 13 s, providing just over 30 h total of audio data for analysis. Interviews were transcribed in a denaturalised way, including breaks, emphasis, and all utterances (Bucholtz, 2000), but are presented in this paper in a more naturalised format for increased readability.

3.1. Ethical considerations

Institutional ethical guidelines as well as BERA guidelines (BERA, 2018) were followed in approaching and seeking informed consent from participants, following institutional approval of the study. Research that focuses on personal and professional experiences are inherently difficult when it comes to offering anonymity to participants (Caine et al., 2017). However, since the data presented below only refer to aggregated statistical results in terms of gender, teaching practice, etc., and the quotes make no reference to schools or individuals outside the teacher's pseudonym, participants will be anonymous unless they choose to share their participation themselves.

3.2. Approach to data analysis

We adopted a thematic analytical approach to the discursive dataset for this paper, following Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2021) process, involving a phase of familiarisation with the dataset, which led to the focus on expressions of what we term *inert benevolence*, followed by initial deductive coding to generate themes from relevant sections of the discourse. Inter-rater discussion led to reviewing and refining of those themes in subsequent re-coding exercises.

While the interviews in their entirety covered a variety of aspects, the analysis presented here draws on themes generated that linked specifically to benevolent and positive affect, attitudes and practices expressed by teachers. Attitudes and affect can be seen in the linguistic choices made by participants (consciously or not) when describing the classroom contexts, parental engagement and children's abilities (cf Halliday, 1961, 2003 for more of the importance of choice in any act of communication). Interviews were therefore read with attention paid not only to what was said, but also how it was said.

After drawing out those expressions of benevolence, we focused on the broader context of the interview to assess the extent to which the positivity had been and could be acted upon, i.e. whether the benevolence was 'inert'. For example, the moments of contradictions in the teachers' talk allowed us to observe how much individuals were grappling with the issues. We considered discursive disclaimers and rationalisations for decisions taken to explain how *inert benevolence* manifests itself in the *habitus* of the teachers.

It is worth highlighting that, in focusing on inert benevolence, we exclude, in this paper, many concrete examples of good practice, and the purpose of this paper is not to paint a bleak picture of the teaching profession. All teachers we spoke to felt positively towards multilingualism as a skill, and many had examples of taking a multilingual register, bringing in specialist support, supplying key documents, etc. What we sought to highlight in our data analysis is a detailed and thoughtful account of the conscious and subconscious barriers, pervasive in teachers' accounts.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Attitudes

Teachers were asked to give a brief background to their school, the catchment area, and the number of students who might be classed as multilingual. Schools ranged from only having a handful of multilingual children to those where the vast majority of children fall into this category. Similarly, diversity amongst staff was varied, although this did not necessarily mean that schools were more open to encouraging multilingualism. As John explained:

The working language of the school is very much English and we try to avoid […], it's almost discouraged from using a language that not everybody else understands because at one point it was an issue amongst staff speaking different languages in the corridor that not everybody understood and it creates – it's not that it's creating suspicion or tension but it's just wasn't a good model [for] the children 'cos we want them to speak […] as much English as possible.

The implied conclusion that having multilingualism present in school would not be 'a good model' was one of the more overt representations of a monolingual mindset present in the data. The perception of the dominant role of English is very deeply embedded as part of the *habitus* of most teachers in this study and the

naturalisation of this *doxa* has significant implications for practice. Preventing multilingual staff and pupils from using all their languages positions school as a space that is very much different from today's society. Eve in her interview justifies her views that foregrounding English is more important by considering her role in preparing children for their future lives:

I think it's wonderful that they have that language and if we had all the time in the world, then I'd love for them to get [support in that language], but I think it would be more important for them to have that grasp of English so that they can progress in England.

While time pressures are obviously an issue, the assumption that a child's future will be in England – or even an anglophone country – is by far not a given in today's 'super-diverse' world (Vertovec, 2007), but is a rhetoric that is supported by current exam systems and embedded in the curricula of the mainstream education *field*.

In terms of their own language skills and competences, all teachers had some experience with language learning, with seven classifying themselves as bi- or multilingual. In five of these instances, the languages were Western European, and typically involved a period of working or studying abroad. Two teachers came from heritage language backgrounds themselves, speaking Hungarian and Arabic respectively.

Because we explored teachers' own histories, we had the opportunity to trace and highlight developmental journeys, which allows for explorations of how individuals' *habitus* can differ (Vakalopoulos, 2022) despite similar *fields*. Keira, who is very positive about the multilingual pupils in her school, states that she had to overcome initial insecurities:

When you're on teaching practice and you're going into a class and you've got this register full of names and you're not sure because they're not standard names, who it is, who they are, whether boy, girl, or whatever it is, and that throws you a curveball when you're just training. But it's important because each one of those people is a person and you know they matter.

Close analysis of Keira's account highlights that, despite the positivity, terminology like 'standard names' and 'those people' still implies a certain othering, even several years after the incident she describes, and despite positive language when talking about her multilingual pupils, and the value of multilingualism. A similar attitude is displayed by Naomi, who states 'they never cease to amaze me how quickly they adapt, especially the children coming from different cultures. It's just been a case of getting on with it as best we can'. Such language, while ostensibly praising pupils, inadvertently seems to highlight a scenario where success is ultimately up to the children's ability to adapt quickly, and integration is presented as a unidirectional practice, at the expense of home languages.

One teacher used the example of pupils working hard and adapting as a reason to not provide multilingual resources. When asked whether, in his view, school libraries should include books in pupils' home languages, he disagreed, explaining

I think if we want them to have good command of English and good use and be fluent enough, I think it would undermine some of the efforts of trying to use as much English as possible and read as much as possible.

The notion that the development of one language automatically occurs at the expense of developing another reveals a lack of understanding of multilingual development, part of the *doxa* that is deeply embedded in a monolingual *habitus*. Furthermore, it is important here to note that 'read as much as possible' is, in fact, shorthand for 'read in English as much as possible', ultimately placing less value on literacy skills in the home language (Author 2, 2021). Elsewhere in the interview, John comments positively on the advantages of multilingualism, with specific focus on future employment, focusing on pragmatic rather than emotional links to home languages (Author 2, 2020). It may be that, by helping teachers understand the emotional importance of home languages and challenging explicitly the perceptions perpetuated through teachers' current *habitus*, such attitudes might be changed.

It was clear that, for some respondents, the interview itself led to a reflective process. The interview included a number of statements which participants were asked to engage with, similar to those adopted by Pulinx et al. (2017). In response to 'home languages should be taught in school', Kacey, for example, stated that 'the home language should be at home and the English should be in the classroom'. However, when asked whether home languages should be prohibited, she explained:

if they've only got their home language and they're not particularly proficient in English, then you are ostracising them and not allowing to let them sort of grow in any way shape or form, and you're probably gonna demoralise them. If there's other children in the class that speak their language I've got no reason why, and, in fact, other children in the class would be good to learn their language or bits of their languages.

The way Kacey expresses her answer, especially her self-interruption ('and, in fact') illustrates an ongoing thought process brought on by asking the question. Kacey's answer was indicative of the 'grey space' occupied by the home language in formal education contexts, seen also in other studies (Author 1, 2019a). On the one hand, teachers felt little responsibility for encouraging home language development per se, on the other, they were aware that an inclusive environment would be an environment where multilingualism is actively facilitated. Where this awareness was not met with the possibility of concrete development or the support of institutional policies, it led to an attitude of inert benevolence - a positive mindset towards multilingualism in principle, but one which neither policy nor practice had any real power to turn into concrete action and support.

4.2. Practices

Teachers argued that they did not necessarily have the training needed to turn their positive attitudes into practice, or to shift deeply embedded perceptual schemes towards something that could change their *habitus*. As Amanda pointed out:

We're having more and more [multilingual pupils] in our school, coming in the area. Which is great for the kids but you kind of feel like they've come to our country and they're getting a second rate education now because we've just got not got a clue how best to support them, or it's a service that we have to pay an awful lot of money for.

After revealing a sense of ownership of England ("our country"), Amanda cites both lack of training and financial considerations as barriers to support her multilingual learners adequately. Harriet highlights similar issues, first explaining how the school strives for an inclusive ethos, before focusing on difficulties imposed by curriculum pressures.

We try and do a lot in classes as well about learning about other countries […]. More recently with the curriculum talking about British values and beliefs […] and the controversy I suppose around what's appropriate to teach, but we do try and link that in with actually British values are (.) values and (.) you know regardless of whether you are from Britain or you are from (.) Syria or if you're from Portugal or Brazil or wherever (.) you know we share (.) a set of values and- and that's the ethos of [our school]. […] I think we probably could make more of it [our linguistic diversity]. You're tired slightly, aren't you, by curriculum and challenges, and expectations of where you need to get to.

Classroom practice therefore revolves around both opportunistic and planned support for multilingual students, with those who have peers speaking the language being at a distinct advantage.

Looking at learning spaces, several teachers reported on inert nods towards diversity, including multilingual welcome signs, flags, or certain classroom vocabulary being displayed on walls:

I wouldn't say [multilingualism] is something that, as you walk around school, is glaringly obvious, other than the fact that we try to celebrate the children's backgrounds in terms of we've got the flags hanging in the hall, […] that you know where every child's come from in the world. […] I wouldn't say that classrooms are multilingual, you know there's not signs - displays aren't multilingual. (Nancy)

An important point with regards to displays of this kind is that they originate from the school, rather than from the children themselves. While this virtue signalling of diversity is a step in the right direction, it is all-too-often static and inert (e.g. a multilingual welcome sign), highlighting a rhetorical value (Bourne, 2001), rather than mirroring the fluidity and dynamics of classroom communication.

Being aware of the balance of being supportive without othering children was raised by Dean:

I think it's important that we support [children with English as an additional language], but there hasn't been any over the top kind of welcome or support, because I don't think the children would necessarily want that?

Similarly, Nancy pointed out: 'I would like to think that we'd like children to be working with peers of a similar age similar groups [sic], and not be *isolated* because of their language'. The fear of segregation due to multilingualism is a historical concern in policy discourse in England, highlighted, for example, in The Swann Report (DES, 1985). While more recent research points at opportunities to support multilingualism within the classroom (see e.g. Heugh 2018), it seems that these have not yet filtered down into the collective conscience.

In contrast to Dean and Nancy, Andrea supports the idea of dedicated teaching spaces, even though they presumably also lead to some segregation. We could find no evidence of multilingual pupils being actively supported in using all their languages in the classroom, other than as a means to accessing the curriculum in English (e.g. translating for peers). Andrea's words, and the paucity of dedicated, trained EAL staff available, highlight both the pressures teachers feel under, and the lack of training they have to work with multilingual students, all of which were further highlighted by Cathy, who stated she never received any training:

When we've had Polish speakers […] we try and put, I guess, instructions and things within their language that's around the class but when you think of a day-to-day basis we don't really do that much, you just hope that they pick up English fairly quick. […] It all comes down to time, time you know trying to translate things and find stuff out, which sounds really naff excuse but, yeah, it comes down to time.

Cathy's comments further enforce the make-do attitude many teachers have been forced to adopt, highlighting pressures of time and the curriculum, mirroring previous research (Conteh, 2012; Tinsley & Board, 2016), and necessitating a closer look at training needs identified by participants.

The pervasive deficit model of multilingualism in the English curriculum became obvious in the way teachers talked about the training, and their classroom contexts. Harriet, for example, when asked about multilingual pupils in her classroom, stated 'I don't remember there being any children without English', focusing on whether pupils spoke English, rather than whether they *also* speak another language, thus revealing a monolingual mindset. Overwhelmingly, the parts of the interview that discussed training needs were steered by teachers towards how to work with students who struggle with the English language, rather than multilingualism more broadly, demonstrating a habitual perception regarding the dominance of the majority language. This is unsurprising, given the similar emphasis in the curriculum, but urgently highlights the need for change in both policy and practice, in order to address the deficit perspective, explicitly focus on developing practices that seek to shift the prevailing *habitus* of the *field*, instead beginning to focus on multilingualism as a social justice issue (Duarte, 2020; Krumm, 2016; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008).

5. Conclusion

While overwhelmingly, the teachers in our study shared a generically benevolent viewpoint towards multilingualism, when we looked in detail into the language used, it was clear that teachers' contributions were influenced by curriculum pressures, as well as, in some cases, pervasive and *habitus*-driven language linked to the othering of multilingual pupils, or a generic deficit model of multilingualism. This is in no way intended to detract from good practice, nor indeed, to say that we ourselves would be entirely free of similar linguistic conventions that prevail in policy texts as well as general speech, since these are highly normalised ways-of-being in countries with a highly dominant majority language, that are deeply embedded in the *habitus* of many members of these societies. We do argue, however, that these conscious and subconscious barriers warrant further introspection, as they may prevent teachers from shifting their perceptual schemes and turning their inert benevolence into concrete, research-informed practice. It is interesting to note that this inert benevolence could also be said to rule England's policy context: while the most recent attempt at composing a National Languages Strategy (British Academy, 2020) makes positive mention of multilingualism in principle, there is still no concrete dedicated space for actively fostering multilingualism within the English national curriculum, beyond the notion of foreign languages education, and no significant centralised governmental guidance on EAL has been produced since 2009. While the study is situated within the context of England, the meaningful engagement of pupils' multiple languages in the classroom is a global issue, as highlighted in the literature review, and as such, the study has global ramifications in its implications and recommendations.

Even over the course of a single interview, many participants stated that the space to reflect on the affordances of multilingualism, and ways to integrate them in the classroom, was helpful, echoing the work of Barros et al. (2020) and Gorter & Anocena (2020). As such, we propose that professional conversations to create reflective spaces where staff are able to explicitly acknowledge and explore their *habitus* and *doxa* and their beliefs and attitudes towards multilingualism, could be a powerful tool for staff development, in the absence of the availability of more structured and long-term teacher training opportunities (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

By developing policies to include practices which not only encourage a multilingual world view, but actively facilitate multilingualism through targeted activities which enable students to make use of all their languages - and have them valued - in formal education contexts, the curricular deficit model perpetuated for so long by the monolingual *habitus* could be addressed, seeing multiple languages, not as distinct and separate languages in one body, but as a holistic, single identity, which needs to be respected and nurtured. Allowing and enabling children to draw on their full linguistic repertoire in order to succeed (Kenner, 2000) will facilitate teachers to move on from a state of enforced inert benevolence, to a position where they are able to act on the growing demand of those that view multilingualism in schools as a social justice issue. Importantly, such policies would not only support multilingual children, but help to prepare all children to live and thrive in a multilingual world.

Declarations of Competing Interest

None.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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