

# New opportunities and challenges for EAL and bilingual learners

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*Jean Conteh*  
*j.conteh@leeds.ac.uk*



# Plan for the talk

1. Current contexts EAL in England, 2013
2. EAL/bilingualism in research
3. Language in the new primary curriculum
4. Towards a pedagogy and curriculum for primary EAL
5. Some conclusions

# 1. Contexts for EAL in England, 2013

# Migration in UK: from diversity to superdiversity

(Vertovec, 2007)

## *1950s onwards:*

- ‘New Commonwealth citizens’ – post-colonial migrations, the ‘myth of return’
- Refugees and asylum seekers from post-colonial conflicts

## *From 2000 onwards:*

- EU citizens – rights of residence and many social/educational entitlements
- Skilled migrants from everywhere: ‘circular migration’
- Huge growth in global media means relationships between here and ‘back home’ are very different from the past

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# Languages statistics from pupils in school (2011 Schools Census)

1. English	5,587,905
2. Punjabi	113,195
3. Urdu	103,730
4. Bengali	85,210
5. Polish	47,135
6. Gujerati	40,470
7. Somali	40,410
8. Arabic	30,530
9. Portuguese	22,660
10. Tamil	22,515
11. French	20,920
12. Turkish	19,690

# Who do we mean by 'EAL' learners?

- ***Advanced bilingual learners*** – learners who are usually second and third generation members of settled ethnic minority communities
- ***Pupils new to English*** - learners who are recent arrivals and new to English, some with little or no experience of schooling, others who are already literate in their first languages
- ***Isolated learners*** - Learners who are in school settings with little prior experience of bilingual pupils
- ***Asylum-seekers and refugees*** - learners whose education has been disrupted because of war and other traumatic experiences
- ***Sojourners*** - learners whose parents are working and studying and are in England for short periods of time (could also include migrant worker families and travellers)

# Prevailing myths about being bilingual

- Learning two languages confuses a child and lowers his intelligence.
- A child should learn one language properly first; then you can start teaching the other.
- A child who learns two languages won't feel at home in either of them. She'll always feel caught between two cultures.
- Real bilinguals never mix their languages. Those who do are confused 'semi-linguals'.

# Ambivalence towards success – Gladstone Primary School, Peterborough

Gladstone Primary school in Peterborough, which has 440 pupils, is ***dominated by*** students from the Punjab, with smaller groups from Afghanistan, Lithuania and Latvia. ***But despite the language barrier the school has scored highly in its Ofsted reports*** and the headmaster (*sic*) sees bilingualism as an advantage. Christine Parker, the head, told the Sunday Times: "More and more of the world is going bilingual. The culture at our school is not to see bilingualism as a difficulty."

It is thought the school, in the ***immigration hotspot*** of the agricultural area of the Fens, is the only school with no pupils who speak English as a first language.

*The Telegraph, Feb 24, 2013*

BBC News website

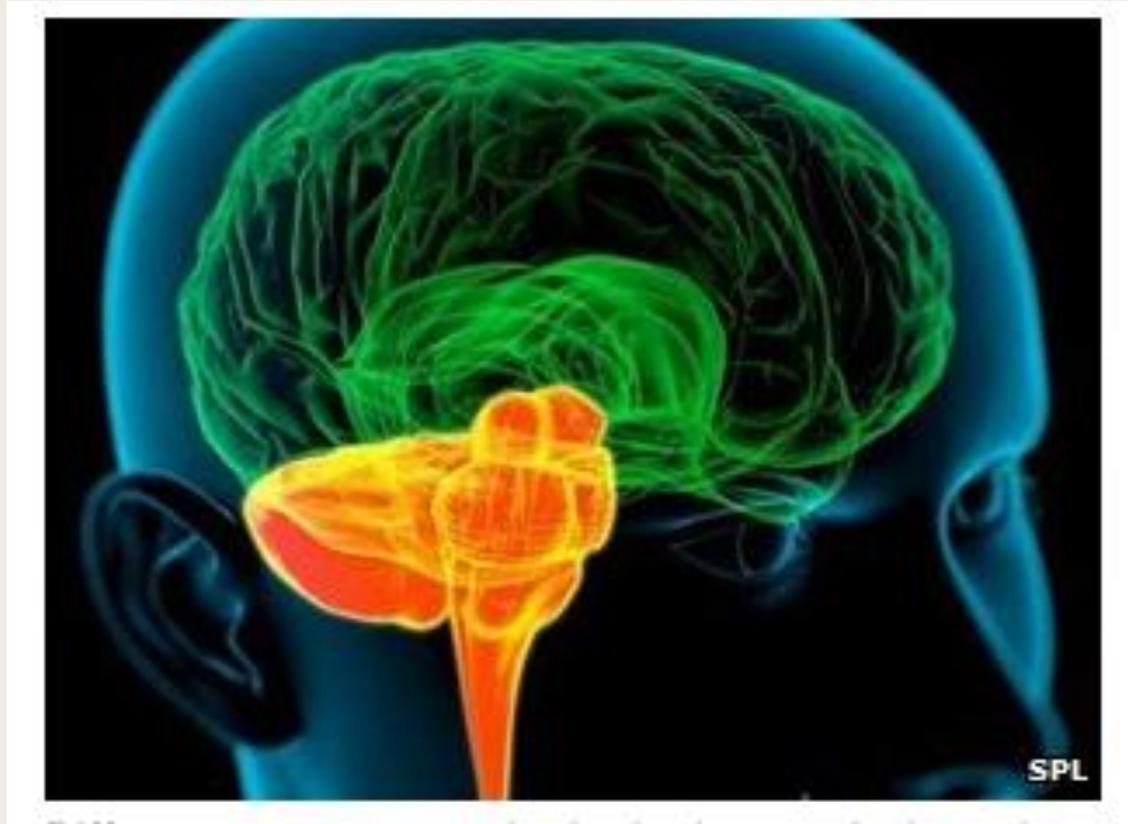
## 2. EAL/bilingualism in research

# The 'official position'

“ ... the focus you propose, on multilingual pupils, is a really niche topic and as such it is not something with which the Department would want to engage at the present time.”

*Senior Officer in the DfE Research Programme  
Team, April 2013 (by email)*

# Evidence from cognitive scientists



Neuroscience and brain imaging reveal ‘profound differences’ between bilingual and monolingual brains. Bilingual brains show more activity and linking across neural pathways.

# ‘Being bilingual boosts brainpower’

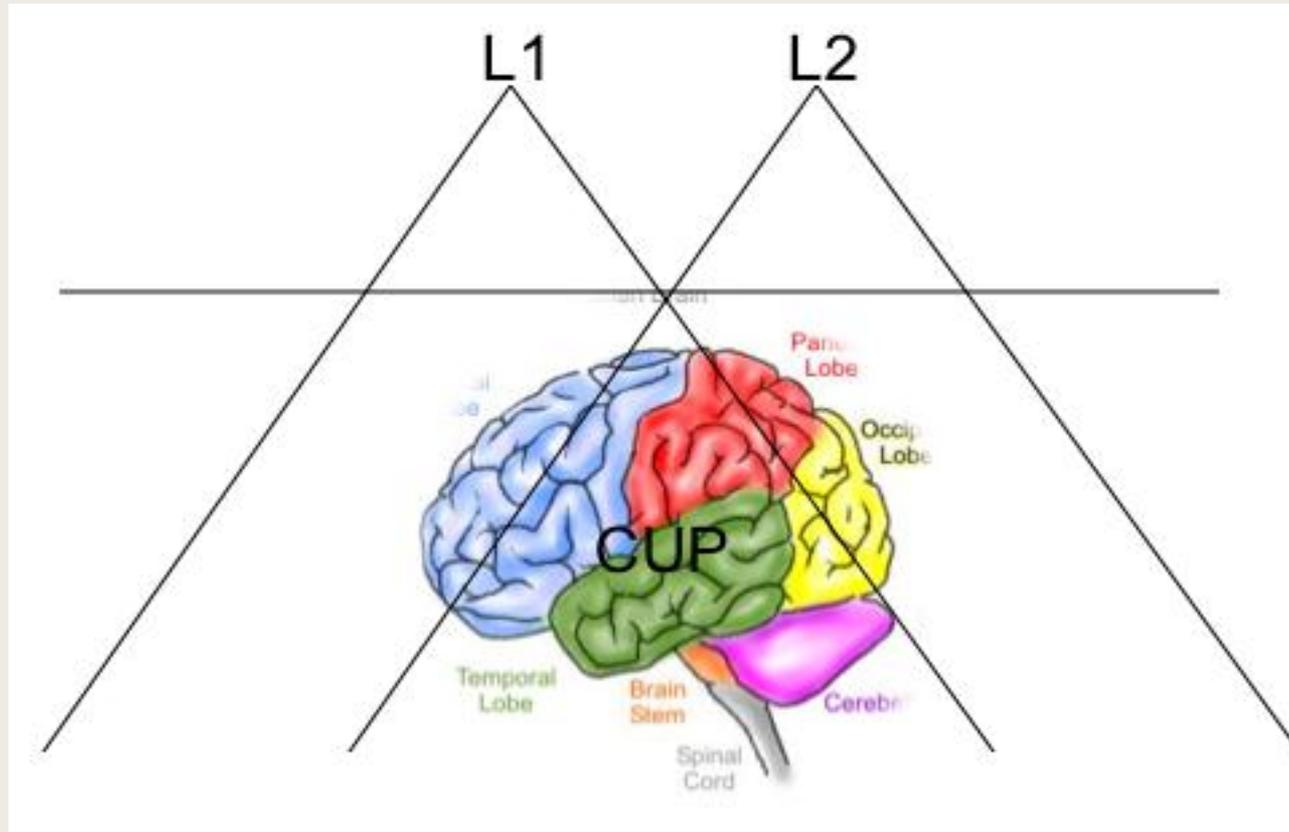
A study done at Northwestern University, Chicago, traced the pattern of brainwaves with scalp electrodes in 48 student volunteers, 23 bilingual.

Professor Nina Kraus, who led the research, said: "*The bilingual's enhanced experience with sound results in an auditory system that is highly efficient, flexible and focused in its automatic sound processing, especially in challenging or novel listening conditions.*"

Co-author Viorica Marian said: "*People do crossword puzzles and other activities to keep their minds sharp. But the advantages we've discovered in dual language speakers come automatically simply from knowing and using two languages.*"

BBC News, May 1, 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-17892521>

# Evidence from educationists



Observation and testing of bilingual pupils reveal ways in which they process their languages – Cummins concludes that a ‘common underlying proficiency’ is nurtured by and feeds their listening, speaking, reading and writing in all the languages they know and can use.

*(Cummins, 2001)*



# Research in a bilingual mainstream school – Wix School

- Bilingual education works – but you have to do your homework.
- Every school has to design their own bilingual model.
- A whole school approach is vital.
- Openness and curiosity towards other ways of doing things needs to be promoted.
- Expectations need to be managed carefully (parents, local authorities).
- All opportunities for bilingual activities in and outside the classroom should be utilised.
- Criteria for assessment of bilingual competencies and for inspection of bilingual education should be reviewed, since they were devised for a monolingual school system.

*Meier, G. (2012)*

# Complementary/supplementary schools

*Research shows the importance of complementary schools for bilingual learners. They provide:*

- sites of bilingualism
- safe spaces for learning and identity constructions
- a sense of belonging
- a community that supports them practically, socially, emotionally and spiritually
- support through strong ethnic identity and community attachment

*(Hall et al. 2002; Blackledge and Creese, 2010)*

# Use of home languages in school

- ✧ Children want to be able to use their home languages for learning in school
- ✧ Working in both languages can enhance children's learning, in the following ways:
  - Understanding a concept in one language can be used to help a similar idea in another language
  - **Mathematical concepts, in particular, are enriched by thinking in more than one language**
  - Bilingualism gives children a heightened understanding of how language works
  - **Bilingual activities give children the chance to draw on the full range of their cultural knowledge**

*(Kenner et al, 2008; Kenner and Ruby 2012)*

# New ways of thinking about language – ‘translanguaging’

*(Garcia, 2009)*

*Sameena (aged 8) explains how she ‘performs her identities’ in her mainstream numeracy lesson:*

‘We had to count in fives, so I did it in my head in Punjabi then I said it out in English .... eek, do, teen, cha ... twenty-five ... chey, saat, aat, nor .... thirty .... eek, do, teen, cha ..... thirty-five ...’

# Research into EAL in schools - some key issues

- Awareness of the importance of inclusion and access to good models of language, but lack of clarity of the distinctions between EAL and SEN, and of clearly-identified criteria for identifying the language, rather than the learning, needs of pupils.
- A strong culture of support and pastoral care in many schools and sometimes strong and imaginative community links
- Bilingualism acknowledged as an asset in most schools but only as a support to English language learning, not as a means to promote and enhance learning
- Little evidence of an EAL pedagogy:
  - little or no mention of ways of actually *teaching English* to new arrivals;
  - little awareness of how to embed learning within the curriculum;
  - only isolated examples of subject teachers working with EAL specialists.

### 3. Language in the new primary curriculum

# Some concerns (from a recent Westminster Education Forum event)

- Only statutory requirements will be taught, especially if the testing regime is expanded.
- Teacher subject knowledge is weak – especially grammar at Y5 and 6 – this could lead to rote learning.
- Oracy is seen as a rehearsal for writing rather than an important aspect of learning in its own right.
- Provision for SEN and for EAL are not clearly differentiated – responsibility is given to individual schools to adapt what appears to be a ‘one size fits all’ curriculum.
- There seems to be an implication that children should be taught more of the same until they ‘get it’, particularly in KS1 phonics.
- There is no real sense that different approaches may be used to respond to children’s diverse needs and learning styles.
- Challenges in continuity, especially KS2 to KS3.

# The 'new' model of inclusion: 'EAL' in a '*monolingualising curriculum*' (Heller, 2007)

- Teachers must also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Monitoring of progress should take account of the pupil's age, length of time in this country, previous educational experience and ability in other languages.
- The ability of pupils for whom English is an additional language to take part in the national curriculum may be in advance of their communication skills in English. Teachers should plan teaching opportunities to help pupils develop their English and should aim to provide the support pupils need to take part in all subjects.

*(Primary National Curriculum, p. 8)*

# Languages in the 'new' curriculum in England

## **Foundation Stage (3-5 years, not compulsory):**

- Seven areas of learning, including Communication and language and development
- Literacy – early training in sound recognition and discrimination as preparation for phonics teaching

## **Key Stage One (5-7 years):**

- Rigorous, discrete training in systematic synthetic phonics (SSP)
- Structured, skills-based approach to teaching literacy

## **Key Stage Two (7-11 years):**

- teaching of literacy continues
- Introduction of 'PFL' (usually French, German, Spanish, could include Latin and Greek)

## **Key Stage Three (11-14 years):**

- Compulsory 'MFL' – comes to an end at 14
- Preparation for GCSE English, taken at 16

# The 'ladder of attainment'

Foundation Stage (3-5 years, not compulsory):

- *FS profile – 17 scales, 9 levels*

Key Stage One (5-7 years):

- *Phonics 'screening check' at end of Year 1*
- *Summative assessment at 7 in reading and writing*

Key Stage Two (7-11 years):

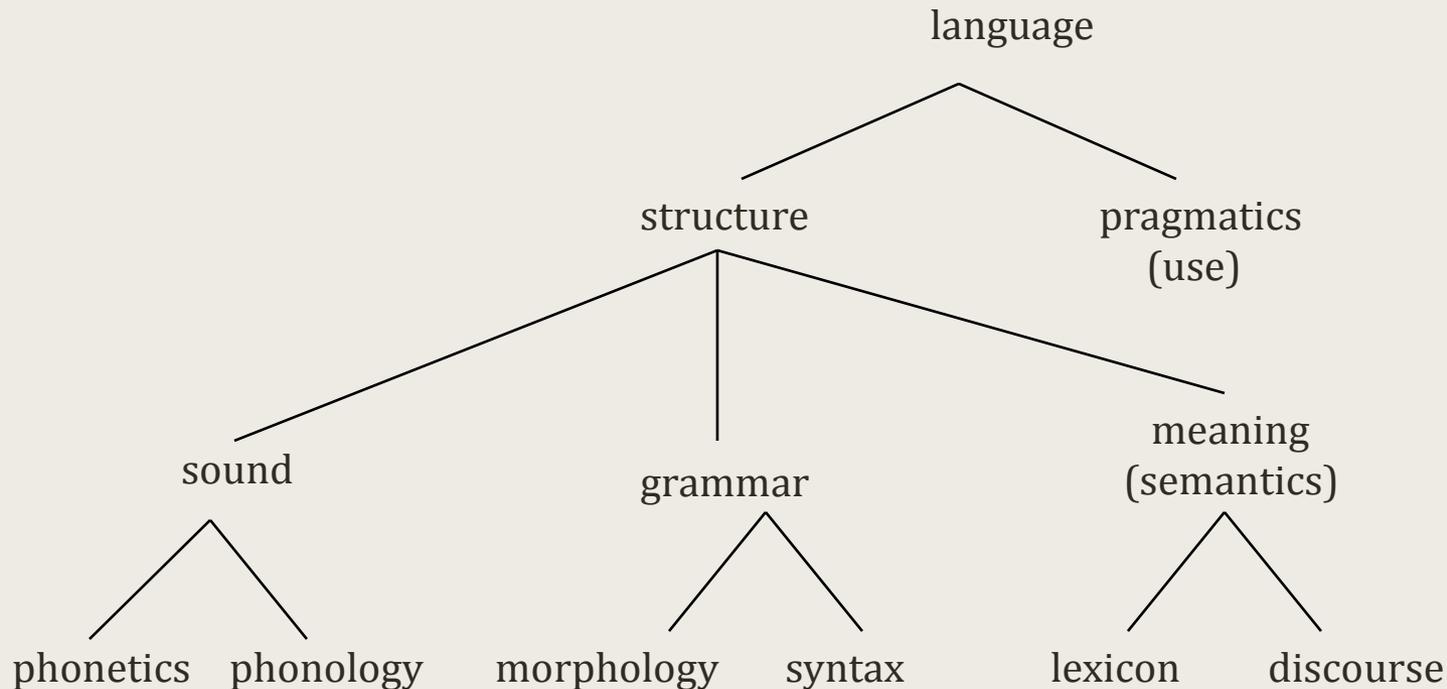
- *External summative assessment at 11 in reading and writing (SATs) ('SPAG' test)*

Key Stage Three (11-14 years):

- *Preparation for GCSE English – 20% for spelling and grammar*

# A traditional model of language

(from David Crystal's *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*)



# 'Naming the parts' - terminology and definitions

- The surest way to identify nouns is by the ways they can be used after determiners such as *the*: for example, most nouns will fit into the frame “The \_\_ matters/matter.”
- Nouns are sometimes called ‘naming words’ because they name people, places and ‘things’; this is often true, but it doesn’t help to distinguish nouns from other word classes. For example, prepositions can name places and verbs can name ‘things’ such as actions.
- Nouns may be classified as **common** (e.g. *boy, day*) or **proper** (e.g. *Ivan, Wednesday*), and also as **countable** (e.g. *thing, boy*) or **non-countable** (e.g. *stuff, money*). These classes can be recognised by the determiners they combine with.

The (determiner) word (noun) 'culture' (noun) has (verb, simple present) a (determiner) number (noun) of (preposition) meanings (noun). On (preposition) the (determiner) one (adjective?) hand (noun), it (pronoun) .....

***What kind of information does this grammatical analysis give you?***

*In other subjects, 'language' is chiefly regarded as subject-specific vocabulary:*

- 'record findings using simple scientific language'
- 'pupils use the language of position'
- 'analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design'
- use simple compass directions (North, South, East and West) and locational and directional language [for example, near and far; left and right] ...

## 4. Towards a pedagogy and curriculum for primary EAL

reading and phonics  
academic language  
literature and language

# Languages and discourses

Linear (grammatical and sentence level) structures arise out of the vertical constructions of discourse.

Interaction serves to provide learners with opportunities to create these vertical constructions ... the basis on which the learner is subsequently able to produce a meaning.

... it is through this co-building of a conversation between learner and partner that children ... learn both the language system and the cultural ways of making sense of experience ...

(p. 49)

Gibbons, P. (2006) *Building discourses in the ESL classroom*.  
Continuum

# Revisiting BICS and CALP

***Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are characterised as:***

Communicative language: conversational fluency, which develops first in face-to-face, highly contextualised situations.

***Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) comprises:***

***Cognitive language*** ... language for doing cognitively demanding things: investigating, classifying, analysing, hypothesising and generalising exploring ideas and solving problems.

***Academic language*** ... formal language for taking part in discussions, arguing, and writing reports, essays, formal letters, etc.

(DfES, 2006:9)

# Knowledge about language (KAL)

## *Knowledge about Language - when learning a new language, children:*

- reinforce and reinterpret knowledge and understanding gained in learning their first language(s);
- develop insights into the nature of language and its social and cultural value;
- begin to increase their understanding of how language works;
- compare the new language with English or another language and reflect on similarities and differences;
- become aware of rules or patterns in language and begin to apply their knowledge when creating new language.

## *Knowledge about language supports children in:*

- communicating effectively in speech and writing;
- applying their prior knowledge, both to understand and to generate new language;
- becoming aware of pronunciation and intonation and how these influence meaning;
- investigating how languages work and how users adapt language in formal and informal contexts.

## **KAL strands in the KS2 *Languages Framework***

- Yr 3: ‘..foster interest in the similarities and differences between languages..’
- Yr 3: ‘.. Use context of what they see/read to determine some of the meaning ..’
- Yr 4: ‘..recognise and apply some simple patterns ... begin to share knowledge about language ..’
- Yr 4: ‘make sensible predictions based on previous knowledge and language cues ..’

## **KAL – implicit or explicit?**

- For most of us, KAL of our first language is largely implicit; it is often only when we begin to learn another language that the need for KAL becomes explicit.
- The evidence shows that bilingual individuals are much more aware of KAL, especially in the newer languages in their repertoires.
- For teachers of EAL pupils, KAL is a valuable aspect of their professional knowledge and expertise.

# Decoding depends on KAL – some of it implicit

- **Graphic cues** – what words look like
- **Phonic cues** – how letters match to sounds
- **Grammar (morphological and syntactic) cues** – how words work in phrases, clauses in sentences

# Full comprehension needs KAL +

*To fully comprehend what we read, we need everything we need to know to decode ...*

*PLUS:*

- What words mean (in different contexts) - semantics
- How whole sentences work as part of texts – text structures
- Whole-text features – punctuation, layout, format, etc
- Knowledge about the world and how it works – good comprehenders bring lots of social, cultural and other kinds of knowledge (i.e. of discourses) to the text.

# The 'simple view' of reading (Rose Review, 2006)

Reading involves two main processes:

- Decoding the words
- Comprehending the whole text

Decoding needs to be taught before comprehending

# The 'Many Pathways to Literacy' model

- ✧ Bilingual learners live in '*simultaneous worlds*' of language use and experience where literacies are performed in different ways for different purposes
- ✧ Literacy learning is *syncretic* – learning to read in one language and script facilitates the learning of others
- ✧ Literacy practices are *social, cultural* and always connected with issues of *power*.

*Gregory et al. (2004)*

# A different view of phonics

*Based on a case study of Saida, a 9-year old, newly-arrived pupil from Bangladesh, and research with other children, Eve Gregory draws the following conclusions:*

- EAL/bilingual learners are often very good at phonic decoding (this is borne out by the Year 1 phonics screening check).
- Many new arrivals can decode successfully because of the ways they have been taught to read in their countries of origin.
- Pupils with such early literacy experiences need strategies, which are grounded in their early experiences, to develop the full range of skills to become good readers.
- Young, bilingual learners need experiences of meaningful English text in order to develop their repertoires of words they understand and to gain a 'feel' for what sounds are 'allowed' in a language.

*Gregory, E. (2008) pp. 123-129*

# Academic language - can you fill the gaps?

The word 'culture' has a number of meanings. ...., it refers to higher forms of refined sensibility and their products in the forms of art, music, literature and comparable activities. ...., it is now used ..... to refer to the rules and habits ..... bind a particular society together. ...., there has been greater interest in the academic world in cultural products - popular fiction, fashion, the mass media and so on - ..... may not aspire to the status of great art ..... are also important ..... reflections and developers of values.

The word 'culture' has a number of meanings. **On the one hand**, it refers to higher forms of refined sensibility and their products in the forms of art, music, literature and comparable activities. **On the other hand**, it is now used **frequently** to refer to the rules and habits **that** bind a particular society together. **More recently**, there has been greater interest in the academic world in cultural products – popular fiction, fashion, the mass media and so on – **that** may not aspire to the status of great art **but** are also important **as** reflections and developers of values.

Baldock, P. (2010) *Understanding Cultural Diversity in the Early Years*. Sage.

## 5. Some conclusions

# EAL pedagogy? Some ‘myths’ about language teaching and learning

- Languages should be kept separate in the classroom, or learners will become confused (*this is sometimes called ‘language interference’*)
- Children will ‘pick English up’ naturally in the classroom, they do not need to be explicitly taught (*this is sometimes called ‘immersion’*)
- It is impossible, or very difficult, to learn a new language beyond a young age (*this is sometimes called ‘the critical period’*)
- Language diversity is a ‘problem’, and it is better if children speak English all the time in classrooms (*Safford and Drury, 2013*).

# What is important in a primary EAL pedagogy?

- Rich opportunities for using language in different ways, particularly through *talk*.
- An emergent approach to *planning*, where future activities are based on responses to earlier ones.
- Responsiveness to the *developing interests* of the children.
- A *dialogic* character, in the full sense of the term.

## *An 'EAL pedagogy' needs to:*

- Take what children say seriously; treat it as evidence of their best efforts to say something important.
- *Be based on listening carefully to what children say, to try to fully understand the points they want to make.*
- Be responsive to each individual child's ability and response to the overall learning objectives.

# Features of dialogic teaching

***Dialogic teaching*** is an approach and a professional outlook rather than a specific method. It requires us to rethink not just the techniques we use but also *the classroom relationships we foster, the balance of power between teacher and taught and the way we conceive of knowledge.*

## ***Dialogic teaching:***

- Attends as closely to the teacher's talk as to the pupil's.
- Is a comprehensive approach to talk in teaching and learning across the whole curriculum.
- Is grounded in research on the relationships between language, learning, thinking and understanding

*'What ultimately counts is the extent to which teaching requires pupils to think, not just report someone else's thinking'*

# What is dialogic talk?

*Alexander (2010: 6) argues that dialogic talk is NOT:*

‘the ‘speaking and listening’ component of the teaching of National Curriculum English under another name’,

*but it IS a pedagogy based on empowerment between teacher and learner, rather than teacher-directed question and answer, which:*

‘harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend pupils’ thinking and advance their learning and understanding’.

# 'The importance of teaching' (2010) – a hopeful philosophy?

... education provides a route to liberation ... (it) allows individuals to choose a fulfilling job, to shape the society around them, to enrich their inner life. ***It allows us all to become the authors of our own life stories.***

(p.6)

# Finding the spaces for EAL pedagogy

Successful practitioners in EAL contexts are well used to supporting their learners in becoming ‘authors of [their] own life stories’ .

They take opportunities where they find them to construct ‘safe spaces’ (Conteh *et al* 2007:10) where pupils can make links between their different learning contexts in home, school and community and construct the positive identities and sense of belonging that enhance their chances for success.

The key to this is the relationships that are co-constructed in the classroom conversations between learners and their educators

Cummins (2001) argues that it is only when the '*deep structure of relationships between educators and culturally diverse students*' (p136) becomes oriented towards '*empowerment*' rather than reproduction of the status quo that the culture of the classroom can be transformed and genuine equality of opportunity can become a possibility.

**For further discussion, please get in touch:**

**[j.conteh@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.conteh@leeds.ac.uk)**

