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‘Miss, who needs the languages of immigrants?’:
A study in attitudes and values attached to bilingualism
in England and Wales

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research questions and aims

This thesis has in its title words of a 15-year-old bilingual student that summarise her perceptions about the value attached to minority languages in England. As a Kurdish and Arabic speaker, a recent arrival from Iraq who is new to English and somebody with the ambition to work in tourism this student reflects on the usefulness of her two languages by saying: *“Miss, who needs the languages of immigrants? You need to be good at English, very good at English.”* Within 11 months of living in England this student has not only received, but has adopted a low value message in relation to minority languages or, as she terms them, ‘immigrant languages’.

Her question became to me the expression of the education system, which is failing bilingual learners: a question so simple and yet captivating in its grasp of issues of inequality, power and marginalisation. The fact that a young person at the time of choosing the direction of her future occupation in a global city such as London is not encouraged to explore how the skills she has in different languages can be used as resources, I consider to be issues of equal opportunity and social justice. In the case of younger bilingual learners, excluding language skills they have in languages other than English in their everyday learning creates predictable pedagogical difficulties which may result in patterns of educational underachievement.

Raymonde Sneddon in a recent presentation of her research with bilingual children at the Institute of Education (October, 2007) referred to being ‘privileged’ to work with children using their first languages and to witness their intellectual joy and challenge of ‘solving the puzzle’ that negotiating two languages presents to these children. The reality is that only a small number of bilingual children in schools

will themselves be privileged to operate bilingually in their mainstream classrooms and to experience the excitement, joy and stimulus of bilingual learning. When something that is an integral and essential part of one's experience and cognition is exercised only as a privilege of the lucky few who are selected for research purposes, or who belong to elite bilinguals educated in bilingual schools such as the French Lycee in London, then it becomes a type of educational and, ultimately, social inequality.

As a professional working with schools on improving the achievement of ethnic minority students, many of whom are bilingual, I have been advocating bilingualism as an asset, and exploring different ways of using bilingualism in learning as a unique intellectual resource. I shall argue in this thesis that mastery of two languages, any two languages, is a tool that advances one's thinking, adds another qualitative dimension to abstract thought and provides a metalinguistic insight into the totality of one's linguistic experience, including one's first language. Questions such as: is the language learnt in order to maintain family links or because it is to do with the identity of a particular ethnic group?; is that language a modern foreign language with a high status like French, a minority language with a low status like Kurdish, a recently revived indigenous language like Welsh, a classical language like Latin or a language created with a specific aim like Esperanto? – are marginal to my research. What I seek to explore and promote is the view that: every language and any language is a resource.

One of the main factors that prevents children and adults benefiting fully from all languages within their context is that many languages die out, on a societal level, or because of language loss on the individual level. The issues of language

death and loss are directly linked to researching attitudes to bilingualism. Personally, I am involved on an everyday basis with children, families and communities who live in an environment conducive to language loss. In my practice I observe their experiences and reflections on language loss or maintenance. I witness the processes of resisting or accepting language loss as necessary and natural. Witnessing language loss in my environment has motivated me to conduct research with the aim of gaining an insight into inequalities linked to bilingualism.

Engaging with bilingual parents, students and their teachers with little awareness of the benefits of bilingualism has initiated a search for factors that result in the low value attached to certain types of bilingualism. Working on the hypothesis that prevalent practice is influenced more by attitudes to bilingualism rather than relevant research and pedagogical theory, I have focused my research on attitudes.

This study has been developed with two aims. Its first aim is to gain an insight into the attitudes and values of politicians and lead professionals in the national educational institutions to bilingualism. Utilising this study as a vehicle to engage politicians and professionals with the opinions of students, parents and practitioners in education is the second aim of this research, but it is not of lesser importance to me as a professional in this field.

As a small-scale qualitative study, it focuses on the context of England and Wales. The main body of data consists of seven in-depth interviews. The data are analysed against the following research questions:

- What evidence is there of valuing bilingualism?
- What evidence is there of promoting bilingualism?
- What evidence is there that identified attitudes to bilingualism are

informed by relevant research and pedagogical theories?

I perceive the value of this study on two levels. Within the context of my EdD (Doctorate in Education) research progression, this is the final study that completes the cycle of researching attitudes and values to bilingualism of different groups. My previous EdD studies focused on: bilingual parents (Mehmedbegovic, 2003) and mainstream headteachers (Mehmedbegovic, 2004). As a stand-alone study, this research provides an insight into the subject of attitudes to bilingualism of an under researched community: that of policy makers. As Walford points out, most studies, not only in educational research, but also in sociology, psychology and political science, primarily focus on children and teachers (Walford, 1994, p 2). It also raises wider questions of how power relationships and the economy dictate what knowledge, and in the case of this study more specifically, what kind of, and whose, bilingualism is validated and recognised as cultural capital.

Finally, this is a doctoral thesis based on a professional context. Therefore its relevance to my professional practice is made explicit throughout the study. The professional experience I have gained in this field is used alongside relevant literature as an additional tool in interpreting the data.

1.2. Key statistics

1.2.1. England

The statistics on bilingual pupils or pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) are often represented within the overall data on ethnic minorities provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). For researchers focusing specifically on ethnic minority pupils who are bilingual, this represents an obstacle in obtaining accurate and up to date data on ethnic minority pupils who are bilingual. The most recent research report: *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils*, DfES (2005) makes several specific references to EAL pupils. It states that out of 17 per cent of the school population in mainstream schooling classified as ethnic minorities 10 per cent are EAL pupils. The two single largest minority groups are Pakistani (3 per cent) and Indian (over 2 per cent).

An independent survey conducted by the National Centre for Languages (CILT) provides the figure of 702,000 bilingual children in England (CILT, 2005, p1). However, this figure needs to be taken as an underestimate because around one quarter of local authorities did not participate in the CILT's survey and in terms of responses from complementary and mainstream schools, which provide tuition in community languages, the response rate was only 18 per cent (CILT, 2005, p 4).

The DfES study referred to above provides interesting details on the uneven distribution of ethnic minority pupils ranging from 1.5 per cent in the East Riding of Yorkshire to 84 per cent in Hackney in London. This time EAL figures are not given separately. Not surprisingly London is where 44 per cent of all ethnic minority pupils in England attend school. This figure includes inner and outer London authorities. A figure on EAL students used by the London Challenge in a recent *Chartered Teachers*

Conference at the Institute of Education (February, 2007) indicates that 52 per cent of students in inner London secondary schools are bilingual. A figure used by the Greater London Authority (GLA) based on the data collection of inner and outer London local authorities indicates that one third of the London school population has English as an additional language (GLA, 2006).

The DfES has not so far published the data on minority languages, even though many individual authorities collect this type of data on an annual basis. For example, the City of Westminster recorded 143 languages spoken by its pupils, with Arabic and Bengali each featuring as the home language of over 11 per cent of Westminster's school population (City of Westminster, 2006). Figures that are frequently quoted for all of London are based on a study published in 2000 (Baker and Eversley, 2000). According to this study, which is in need of update, there are 360 languages spoken by children in London schools. Language Trends, a study published by CILT, uses the figure of 'at least 300 languages', but again considering the return rate of their survey, this must be significantly below the actual number (CILT, 2005, p 1). With the introduction of the new DfES Guidance on the collection and recording of data on pupils' languages (DfES, 2006), it is expected that more authorities will be collecting individual languages data from January 2007. However, the collection of languages data remains voluntary for schools and local authorities. Therefore, complete data returns are not guaranteed even under the new Guidance, especially during the initial period. It is expected that the school census in September 2007 will show how much new data on languages is being collected nationally.

1.2.2. Wales

According to a recent study, *The Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils in Wales*, funded by the Welsh Assembly and conducted by the English as an Additional Language Association of Wales (EALAW, 2003), there are 93 languages registered in use in Wales spoken by around 15,000 children, which is around 3 per cent of the total Welsh school population. This figure does not include children who are bilingual in English and Welsh. Prior to this study there was no national data collected. Two years on, the CILT study (2005) documents an increase in the number of languages, from 93 to 98, but their figure for the number of bilingual children is almost halved in comparison with the EALAW figure: 'at least 8,000 children'. The most likely explanation is missing data, due to incomplete data returns. However, there is a possibility that this may be due to bilingual children increasingly opting to identify English as their first language without identifying the use of other languages as well. This is one of the issues that will be dealt with in the data interpretation chapter.

1.3. Key concepts

In this section the definitions of the key linguistic concepts this study engages with are explored. They are: bilingualism, multilingualism versus plurilingualism and minority languages versus community languages.

The existence of multiple definitions of these concepts reflects the complexity and variety of approaches to relevant issues. Therefore this section is an exploration of the key concepts that underpin this study.

1.3.1. Bilingualism

The centrality of the concept of bilingualism to this study is already established in the title of this thesis and the outline of research questions. Bilingualism is the phenomenon in focus, but its definition encompasses huge variations across different contexts. The common feature of all definitions available in theory and in practice lies in the recognition that bilingualism at the individual and societal level refers to the existence of two languages – meaning recognition that a number of individuals and communities use two languages in their everyday lives. In some cases, like the definition that is used in England and Wales for the purposes of collecting data and allocating the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) to schools and local authorities, the ‘existence’ of two languages is defined as ‘exposure to two languages; living in two languages’ (City of Westminster, 2002). This is a very inclusive definition which avoids complex and in some cases hard to measure aspects of language use: competency, proficiency, fluency and literacy. Even though this is a widely inclusive definition it is not vulnerable to criticisms such as the one applied to Diebold’s (1964) definition, which recognises everybody who has learnt a few words in another language as bilingual. Justly Diebold’s definition is seen as the minimalist

end of the spectrum of definitions aiming to capture the essence of bilingualism. Its main shortcoming is that it cannot be used to identify a specific group of people, i.e. bilinguals. It includes a vast number of people, because almost everybody today knows a few words in another language (Romaine, 1989). The reasons for which it is essential for England and Wales to have a broad, inclusive definition of bilingualism used in education are explored below.

The criterion 'living in two languages' allows for the inclusion of a variety of profiles of bilingual pupils. These different profiles can be divided into three main categories. First are bilinguals born and educated in England and Wales. They are children from well established immigrant communities, mainly originating from the Commonwealth countries: India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Lately, with the revival of Welsh, there are also children being educated bilingually in English and Welsh, in Wales. Second are recent immigrant bilinguals. They come from many different European, Asian, African and South American countries. They are mainly new to English and have various degrees of literacy in their first language. For example children coming from countries in conflict may not have had any schooling prior to their arrival in England and Wales. The third group consists of settled immigrant bilinguals. These children were not born here, but have been immersed in an English speaking environment for different lengths of time. They are at different stages of developing bilingualism depending on their backgrounds, support and abilities. They differ from bilinguals born here mainly by having had some of their formal education in a language other than English. Therefore, in many cases they have higher levels of literacy and background knowledge in that other language.

Having a definition that enables teachers and practitioners in education to identify all

these different cases as types of bilingualism is essential in order to: collect data that accurately reflect the full range of societal bilingualism; to recognise experiences and language practices which children engage with outside school; to identify a variety of needs in terms of language development and language support that these children may have and to allocate funds available for language support proportionally to identified needs, mainly by means of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant.

The application of an exclusive definition of bilingualism such as Bloomfield's (1933), which only recognises bilinguals with 'native like control of two languages', also referred to in the literature as 'balanced bilingualism', would on the one hand produce a very narrow picture of a highly bilingual context such as England and Wales. On the other, it would leave practitioners dealing on an everyday basis with highly complex issues such as: what is meant by native like control?; how is it measured?; what variety of a particular language is identified as standard?.

Fishman (1971) adds further to the complexity of the concept of 'balanced bilingualism' by looking at the different functions of the two languages in an individual case. His conclusions are that in societies with one dominant language it is rare that individuals will develop as balanced bilinguals. This is because they will use one language in mainstream education and at work, while another language is going to be used at home and outside formal situations. Therefore, different functions of the two languages will lead to the dominance of one of the languages in a particular domain – hence, unbalanced bilingualism.

A more recent attempt to define balanced bilingualism produced the terms: 'ambilinguals' or 'equilinguals'. These bilinguals are defined as those individuals who can function equally well in any context in either of their languages without

any trace of language A when language B is being used (Baetens Beardsmore, 2003, p 7). However, this definition is followed by a caution that such individuals are non-existent and that it is more realistic to consider ambilingualism as ‘roughly equivalent’ mastery of both languages.

The expectation of non-interference between the two languages also conflicts with a widely accepted agreement that bilinguals will interactively use both of their languages, drawing on both sets of vocabulary and grammatical structures (Sankoff and Poplack, 1979; Romaine, 1989). Contemporary theorists of bilingualism such as Ludi (2003) claim that bilingualism and monolingualism are not objective concepts, but purely behavioural norms and social constructs. This is best experienced in settings such as Switzerland where bilinguality is the norm: ‘everybody speaks their own language and understands the other’, which results in the ‘construction of a communication culture which certainly entails a higher acceptance of ‘mixed’ speech than in neighbouring countries’ - mixed speech meaning use of French, German and Italian in official and personal interactions (Ludi, 2003, p 186, 181). This model, also termed ‘polyglot dialogue’ (Posner, 1991), has been considered as one possibility for developing communication in the European Community. The advantage is that individuals would have the opportunity to address others in a language they feel most comfortable using. However, it assumes a high level of comprehension of several other languages, but not necessarily fluency in those languages.

Most relevant to classroom practice is the current research and theory which focuses on ‘the threshold of linguistic competence in both languages’ (Cummins, 1977) as central to experiencing bilingualism as a cognitive advantage. The concept of the threshold will be explored further in the section on cognitive advantages of

bilingualism.

The discussion of these new approaches to bilingualism leads this section into the multilingualism versus plurilingualism debate.

1.3.2. Multilingualism versus plurilingualism

The concept of multilingualism is relevant in the case of this study because it is used by practitioners and policy makers within the education system. Within the context of schools, practitioners and policy makers in England refer to ‘multilingual schools’, ‘multilingual classrooms’ and ‘multilingual communities of learners’. In reality, this is a recognition of the fact that some or many students in these schools have a language other than English as a part of their lives, mainly outside the mainstream school. In Wales, the bilingual education agenda within the education system has far more presence than it does in England. However, bilingual education references in Wales are exclusively used in relation to Welsh-English bilingual schools. On the other hand in continental Europe, policies engage with the discourse of plurilingualism, which I turn to next.

The main distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism is that a multilingual approach is about having many different languages coexist within individuals or society with the ultimate aim of achieving the idealised competency of the native speaker (Council of Europe, 2001, p 4). A plurilingual approach, on the contrary, places the emphasis on the process of learning the language of home, society, other peoples; developing communicative competencies as a life-long activity; and in different situations flexibly calling upon different parts of this competence in order to achieve effective communication. Plurilingualism recognises

an all encompassing communication competence that is made up of different languages that one person has been exposed to and acknowledges the partial nature of the knowledge anyone can have of one language, be it their mother tongue or not. Therefore plurilingualism removes the ideal of the native speaker as the ultimate achievement and replaces it with the aim of an effective pluralistic communicator who draws on his/her varied repertoire of linguistic and cultural knowledge in a flexible, creative and individual way (Council of Europe, 2001, p 4, 5, 169). The emphasis in this process is on attitude formation and language and cultural awareness as essential to one's understanding of social and physical environment and ability to function effectively in the local, national and international environment (Tosi & Leung, 1999, p 17).

Apart from the European policy documents this debate can also be identified in the concept of 'truncated multilingualism' (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005; Blommaert, 2005; Haviland, 2003). The definition of this concept rejects the ideal of full and balanced competence in different languages as imposed by dominant ideologies and instead emphasises competencies that are organised around topics or activities with which speakers engage. Truncated multilingualism has its parallels with the earlier outlined emphasis on the dominance of one language in a particular domain (Fishman, 1971). However, Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck add to their definition the notion of 'space' (environment) as 'constitutive and agentive in organising patterns of multilingualism', often 'incapacitating individuals' with highly developed multilingual skills (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005, p 198). Professor Blommaert in his lectures at the Institute of Education often illustrated this concept with an example of a multilingual academic dealing with a plumbing emergency in a foreign country and not having the specific vocabulary required in

that situation.

Similarly to the emphasis that the Council of Europe is putting on overall communicative skills rather than competencies in separate languages, Jacquemet (2005) calls for rethinking the concept of communication outside national languages. He conceptualises contemporary communication as ‘simultaneous communicative frames’ based on ‘communicative practices of disorderly recombination and language mixing of globalisation’ (Jacquemet, 2005, p 274).

A plurilingual orientation outlined in the above referenced European policy documents provides a good starting point for rethinking communicative skills in education and practice. It is relevant to this study, firstly because it offers a tool to understand the linguistic reality in which most bilinguals operate. Based on my observations and personal experience it can be compared with an image of a lively, bubbling, hot spa that feeds on all our linguistic experiences: different words for the same concepts; different ways of expressing one thought, one feeling; different jets of vocabulary and grammar always interacting, comparing, finding its way in the different languages used. And sometimes, out of tiredness or in extremely emotional situations, this linguistic spa freezes and bilinguals or plurilinguals or truncated multilinguals struggle for words in any language. Interestingly, I have discovered after many years of using this metaphor that Jacquemet (2005) uses a similar one: ‘whirlpool of electronic, communicative turbulence’. In my opinion a plurilingual orientation provides the most accurate conceptualisation of the experience described.

Secondly, the concept of plurilingualism has important implications for classroom practice in terms of assessment. It implies that the linguistic or communicative

competence of a bilingual cannot be reduced to a simplistic sum of linguistic competences measured in isolation in each of his/her languages. Grosjean (1985) pointed out that a bilingual person is not two monolinguals. Bilingual competence is not a sum of quantities but a qualitative difference.

Thirdly, plurilingualism recognises the reality of children and adults acquiring only partial knowledge of relevant languages. This reality need not be dismissed as a shortfall, but acknowledged as an important contributor to the enrichment of an ‘all encompassing communicative competence’. This type of approach encourages language and cultural learning, appreciation and awareness in formal and informal settings for bilinguals and monolinguals alike. It places value on all of our linguistic experiences and provides a formal framework for their recognition – a Language Portfolio, as proposed by the Council of Europe. According to this proposition, every child in Europe is entitled to a Language Portfolio in which can be entered anything significant referring to their engagement with other languages and cultures. This means that even if a pupil cannot use a language in conventional ways, it is still valuable to recognise that she/he has, for example, done a project on it and has certain theoretical knowledge about it; or if a pupil has spent a certain period of time exposed to it, within the family, community or while abroad; participated in an oral discussion involving several languages; analysed a linguistic feature in one language in relation to another language and similar examples (Tosi & Leung, 1999).

1.3.3. Minority languages versus community languages

While engaging with the values and attitudes attached to bilingualism, I have identified links between the encouragement and appreciation of language skills and the terminology used to classify different languages. In the context of England and

Wales there are three main categories used for languages other than English: Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), indigenous languages and community languages. Modern Foreign Languages are select European languages, such as French and German, that have the status of curriculum subjects within the National Curriculum and a history of being compulsory subjects, which will be further discussed in the following chapters. Minority languages which are indigenous to the British Isles, such as Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic, have recently been more present in the public, academic and research domains, especially with the successful and forceful revival of Welsh. Thirdly, there is the category of community languages. During the course of working on this study, especially in my data analysis, I have considered the implications that this categorisation has on the status and hierarchy of different languages. In this process, it became apparent that the use of the category ‘community languages’ contributes to low value attitudes attached to the languages associated with that category.

This is in conflict with the starting point of my study, in which I suggest that in cognitive terms every language is equally valuable. Even though in economic and cultural capital terms different languages have different values in a particular context and time frame, as discussed later. Therefore, I have found the use of the category of ‘community languages’ increasingly unsatisfactory. For this reason I have opted to use the term ‘minority languages’ and even more specifically ‘non-indigenous minority languages’ instead of ‘community languages’. Where the term ‘community languages’ is used, it is because referenced policy texts and documents use the ‘community languages’ category.

Having suggested that the category ‘minority languages’ is more satisfactory than ‘community languages’ I will now explain why.

1. Clarity: it implies the existence of minority groups of speakers as well as the existence of a majority language.
2. Accuracy: it accurately highlights and serves as a reminder that these languages are used by a small number of speakers within a certain context.
3. Direct link with the notion of ethnic minorities: discourse focused around ethnic minorities has a lot of weight in the European context. For example, certain countries have not been given consent to join the European Community because of their treatment of ethnic minorities. Discourse around minority languages in Europe is closely linked to the one around ethnic minorities, I suggest.
4. It is more in line with the terminology used in the rest of Europe: having worked on European projects such as Socrates and Multilingual Europe, I have experienced that using the category 'community languages' among colleagues from other European countries is like using the imperial system of measuring when everybody else is operating in the metric system. Referring to 'community languages' can be seen as equivalent to suddenly giving a figure in inches while all the materials and discussions are given in centimetres. It requires explanations and it regularly leaves European colleagues puzzled as to how and why it is used.

In the light of these four reasons, use of the term 'community languages' has become increasingly inappropriate as my research has progressed. One of the major issues is the polarisation between community languages and Modern Foreign Languages. The fact is that all languages categorised as community languages are in fact 'living' foreign languages and if classified accurately, should be termed Modern Foreign Languages, as they are in other European countries. Also, certain languages, even though they clearly are languages of ethnic minorities or immigrant communities living in Britain, are never referred to as community languages, French being the

prime example of this occurrence. These issues will be addressed in more detail throughout the analysis of the data collected.

Finally, I have questioned the value of this change of terminology in my thesis. My conclusion is that, within the context of what this study is aiming to uncover and achieve, it is crucial that these issues are addressed. Especially at the stage of finalising the data analysis, I find it unavoidable to emphasise, that the current classification of languages contributes to the way languages are valued and perceived. In the case of many non-indigenous minority languages this classification actually adds to their devalued status. On a wider level it results in institutionalised socio-linguistic discrimination. Therefore, my proposition is that all languages which are not indigenous to Britain are referred to as Modern Foreign Languages or just Modern Languages in the context of the education system and National Curriculum, while in the wider context of ethnic and linguistic societal diversity all these languages are referred to as ‘minority languages’, including languages like French.

Having explored key concepts, I will proceed by exploring the existing evidence supporting the argument that languages are an individual, national and global resource, in Chapter 2. The Research Design will be outlined and discussed in Chapter 3, while Chapters 4 and 5 provide the interpretation of the relevant document and interview data. Concluding comments and recommendations will be presented in Chapter 6.

2. Languages as an individual, national and global resource

In the introduction to this study it is argued that: *every language and any language is a resource*. This chapter will present evidence in support of that position.

2.1. Bilingualism as an individual cognitive resource

The cognitive abilities and curriculum knowledge of bilingual children are still too often judged based on their competency in English. From my professional engagement with schools in inner London, I am aware of individual students and teachers who recognise that bilingual children, especially beginners in English, are inappropriately placed in low ability sets. Access to Gifted and Talented identification and provision is often not even considered, because of no or limited English. This conflicts with the principle of equality of opportunity and it is a form of discrimination. In some cases I have worked with bilingual students who perform within the top range of ability levels on non-verbal tests and I have seen them go through cycles of motivation loss, disaffection and finally truanting from school, due to being frustrated by not being able to realise their full potential. Similar observations are raised by Blommaert, Creve and Willaert (2005) who deconstruct the processes in which children's literacy skills in other languages are not recognised as adequate or useful in learning Dutch in Belgian classrooms. These school practices present themselves as lacking awareness of the relationship between bilingualism and cognition.

Cummins (1976) has offered a theoretical explanation of the relationship between bilingualism and cognitive advantages that has to be fully proved by future research, even though some evidence already exists. There are studies that have provided evidence on the relationship between bilingualism and mathematical abilities. Li,

Nuttall and Zhao (1999) conducted a study with two groups of Chinese-American students - one group, bilinguals literate in both languages and the other group, not literate in Chinese. The group of students literate in Chinese achieved significantly better results in the mathematical tests for university entry. This study suggests that investment in first language maintenance and development, especially the literacy aspect of it, has positive implications for performance in mathematics.

According to Cummins the crucial elements that provide conditions for benefiting from the cognitive advantages of bilingualism are: first of all, exposure to two languages which provides broader linguistic experiences with the access to a wider range of thinking modes; secondly, switching between the two languages which exercises flexibility in thinking; and thirdly, the conscious or subconscious comparison of two languages, resolving interference between languages, using the knowledge of one language to advance the other which result in a high level of metalinguistic skills (Cummins, 1991, p 84). This last point reflects the Vygotskian view that bilingualism enables a child to see his/her language as a particular system and to approach the language in a more abstract way and in terms of more general categories (Vygotsky, 1962, p 110).

Recent research conducted in London classrooms is rich with evidence in support of the points made above. Wallace reports on literacy practices of four primary age bilingual children, who 'reveal a wealth of experiences of literacy ... which find little place in mainstream schooling' (Wallace, 2007, p 6). Sneddon's findings on language practices of Gujarati-English 11 year old speakers provide evidence on the creative use of linguistic experiences in Gujarati (Sneddon, 2007, p 3). Currently, research in progress conducted by Kenner, Gregory and Ruby (2007, p 4) in Tower Hamlets

with Bengali-English speaking children is generating evidence that ‘working in both languages can enhance children’s learning, through conceptual transfer, use of translations, developing metalinguistic awareness and drawing on cultural knowledge’.

Studies that focus on the relationship between thought, word and meaning, again a key factor in Vygotsky’s developmental theory (1962), shed light on differences between monolingual and bilingual children. A number of linguists have used Piaget’s (1929) ‘sun-moon problem’ to test the ability of children to separate word from meaning and relate to the idea of word as arbitrary. This test consists of changing the names for sun and moon, getting children to decide which appears in the sky at night and finally what the sky is like at night: dark or light? In studies conducted by Cummins (1978), Bialystock (1988) and Eviatar and Ibrahim (2000) bilingual and monolingual children alike accept with ease a name change, and that ‘sun’ would be what we see at night, but bilingual children are quicker in making the final conclusion that the sky remains dark at night. Feldman and Shen (1971), Rosenblum and Pinker (1983), Ricciardelli (1992) and Ben-Zeev (1977) conducted further studies asking children to use new names or nonsense names. All of these studies provided evidence that bilingual children either demonstrate higher flexibility in use of newly agreed names or offer more abstract explanations for changing conventions.

The evidence of children approaching language and other academic content in a more abstract mode was recorded by two Canadian researchers, Lambert and Tucker (1972), observing and testing a group of 6 year old children educated mainly in their second language. In this longitudinal study children observed demonstrated a high level of interest in comparing their two languages, approaching their second language

as a code and using their first language as the basis for relating and translating both academic content and linguistic input. Therefore, the researchers proposed that the acquisition of the second language had benefited not only competency in their first language, but also their mastery of the academic content (Lambert and Tucker, 1972, p 82).

Research evidence referred to thus far leads to looking for evidence in terms of what the use of two languages means in the complex and invisible world of brain function. Uncovering the findings that neuropsychology has to contribute to having an insight into bilingualism supports the evidence provided by linguistic and sociolinguistic studies. Neuropsychologists have been working on identifying the differences between how monolinguals and bilinguals use the left and right brain hemispheres. The outcomes have resulted in consistent agreement that the brain function of bilinguals differs from that of monolinguals. However, there are disagreements between individual studies on how they differ. The empirical evidence covers differences in a variety of variables, such as visual presentation and processing, audio processing, cortical activity of each hemisphere, levels of the right hemisphere engagement, levels of lateralisation and also heterogeneity in the hemispheric organisation (Hammers and Blanc, 1989, p 42).

Lack of agreement on how the brain function differs in monolinguals and bilinguals is largely based on the fact that individual studies have provided contradictory evidence. Some of the first studies conducted by Pintner and Keller (1922) and then Saer (1923), which were strongly criticised for not taking into account the socio-economic backgrounds of their subjects, had reached conclusions that have led to a deficit view of bilingual children in schools and society. On the other hand, studies conducted

more recently provide a fair amount of evidence not only supporting the view that bilinguality can result in cognitive superiority, but also the view that it can result in a deficit model. In some cases one study provides both types of evidence. For example, Ben-Zeev (1977) reports identifying delay with reference to vocabulary and grammatical structures, while seeing advantages in terms of word manipulation, classification, structural analysis and non-verbal tasks in a study comparing Spanish-English bilinguals with English monolinguals.

In the light of this evidence there are two questions that need to be addressed:

1. What theoretical framework and model of bilingualism can accommodate contradictory evidence regarding the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism?
2. Is there a consensus among researchers as to whether the cognitive advantages of bilingualism outweigh the disadvantages, even though there are still many unanswered questions in this field?

The most widely used theoretical framework is that of the Interdependence Theory in conjunction with the Minimal Threshold of Linguistic Competence model of bilingualism as developed by Cummins (1976, 1979, 1981, 2001). The Interdependence Theory, based on the concept of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) or the integrated source of thought for both languages, accommodates the process of skills and knowledge transfer between the two languages, which is closely related to positive findings on enhanced skills and cognition. As an interviewee in this study reflected on her own experience of being a bilingual learner: '*Transfer of skills is an amazing process!*' (Interview data, Welsh bilingual professional). Hammers and Blanc (1989) give an interesting perspective on this theory by defining the second language as 'a function of competence in the mother tongue' (Hammers

and Blanc, 1989, p 53).

On the other hand, the Minimal Threshold of Linguistic Competence conditions this positive transfer of skills by suggesting that it is necessary to obtain a certain secure level of proficiency in both languages in order to experience the benefits of bilingualism. Without this, delays and deficits in language development and use may occur. Bialystock (1987, 1988, 1991), whose work has focused on language and cognitive development, has contributed several studies supporting the view that the level of bilingualism determines its effect on development; the higher the thresholds the more positive the effects.

Cummins (2001) has reflected on the fact that both of his hypotheses have been misinterpreted and misused by policy makers and practitioners, and by those who are pro-bilingual education as well as those who are against bilingual education.

Cummins perceives his Threshold Model to be necessarily speculative, because of huge variations that will depend on the environment, individual learners, languages and teaching methods. However, as the factor most relevant to practice and policy making in this area, Cummins highlights, ‘the well supported finding that the continued development of bilingual children’s two languages during schooling is associated with positive educational and linguistic consequences’ (Cummins, 2001, p 175).

Cummins’ message to policy makers implies an answer to the second question: is there a consensus among researchers? The following quote from Bialystock captures what I see as the consensus in this area of research:

“...bilingualism never confers a disadvantage on children who are otherwise equally matched to monolinguals and potential benefits weigh in to make bilingualism

a rare positive experience for children.”

(Bialystock, 2006, p 598)

The role of bilingual children as linguistic resources within their communities and schools as highlighted by one of the interviewees: *‘In schools where you have 36 languages, you have 36 resources. They (teachers) have fluent speakers of 36 languages!’* (Interview data, English lead professional) - has enthused researchers as well. Lambert and Tucker (1972) write about Saint Lambert School children ‘being empowered’ in their families and communities by developing competence in French as their second language, in the context of Canada where the relationship between Anglophones and Francophones is complex and burdened with tensions of the historically unequal status of English and French. These researchers recorded frequent gestures of recognition that these children received from native speakers of both languages, English and French, having been called upon as ‘valuable linguistic mediators’. They described this process as having a snowball effect in terms of real life opportunities to develop their linguistic skills. Saint Lambert’s children emerged as experts in their communities. These children felt they could teach French to other members of their families and they reported having requests to do so. In the words of the researchers ‘they apparently become disseminators of French and a language resource for people around them’ (Lambert and Tucker, 1972, p 196).

2.2. Bilingualism/multilingualism as a national resource

One of the most prominent linguists in advocating bilingualism as a national resource is Joshua Fishman. His writings advocate the importance of multilingualism in the United States, but at the same time criticise the neglect that languages other than English suffer in that environment. Fishman (2006) identifies minority languages as key in the functioning of internal services (in the areas of health, education, welfare, civil rights, voter registration, job training, immigration and naturalisation services, disaster relief, social security advisement etc.) and external services (military, security, foreign policy goals, commercial advancement, scientific progress, consular presence, US Information Agency services etc.). In this light he finds it as ‘scandalous and injurious to waste native language resources as to waste our air, water, mineral, animal and various non-linguistic human resources’. As ‘partners-and -culprits’ in this ‘wasteful and self-defeating’ treatment of available linguistic resource Fishman names federal and local governments, industry and commerce and higher education. He particularly criticises universities for their ‘continuing deafness, blindness and general ineptness relative to languages in their backyard...’ (Fishman, 2006, p 417).

Fishman’s view is challenged by the English-only US movement. This movement was founded by Senator Samuel Hayakawa in 1983 following the failure of his proposal to recognise English as the official language of the USA in the Constitution. Even though unchallenged in practice, English should be defined and protected as such by the Constitution. The reason that the issue of language is not regulated by the Constitution is explained as the inheritance of the English approach, which is not to use political means in regulating language use (Edwards, 1994, p 167). The English-only movement was on the rise in the USA in the 1990s and nowadays is even gaining supporters among non-native English speakers. It claims among its

‘spiritual’ founders leading political figures in American history, including several American presidents. President Reagan, for example, labelled bilingual education that is openly dedicated to home language maintenance as being against American values (in Crawford, 1989).

This kind of debate suggests that linguists and academics tend to approach linguistic diversity as a resource, while politicians approach it as a problem. This antagonism of views between linguists and the ‘powerful’ is also evident in the British context in the interview data collected for this research. The only area where politicians do not doubt the benefit of maintaining minority languages, including the politicians interviewed for this study, is economics. If more language skills mean more business and wider markets, then they are desirable. Grenoble and Whaley identify economics as ‘the single strongest force influencing the fate of endangered languages’ (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998, p 52). More business, through the use of different languages leading to capital accumulation on a macro level and improved standard of living on an individual level recur as the main factors identified in favour of first language maintenance in the data collected in my studies with headteachers, bilingual parents and children (Mehmedbegovic, 2003, 2004; Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004). In the case of London, the fact that there are 360 languages spoken (Baker and Eversley, 2000) was used in the bid for one of the most important sporting events which comes with huge economic benefits and prestige: the Olympic Games in 2012.

Unfortunately, this particular detail about the bid which could have influenced a positive change in attitudes towards minority languages was not reported in the local press or TV news.

Full analysis of what weight language skills have in the economic development and

the development of specific branches of business and industry in the UK has been provided by the Nuffield Inquiry, at the request of the representatives of the business and employment sector. Their findings highlight that developing countries are becoming increasingly important for economic growth. Even though planning and business that happen on higher levels are conducted in English, the success of specific projects depends on communication with and understanding of local communities. Securing a contract can depend on developing an understanding with the client, which is better achieved with even basic knowledge of the local language and culture. Evidence given to the Nuffield Inquiry revealed hidden resentment by international clients, because of an assumption by monolingual English speakers that others will always be prepared to speak English. The Inquiry exposes a complacency in the UK created by English being the first global language. Efforts put into learning other languages in the British context are judged as inadequate in comparison with the other European countries. In a world where bilingualism and plurilingualism are commonplace, monolingualism is criticised as implying inflexibility, insensitivity and arrogance. The Inquiry communicates concerns that while English monolinguals have English only, others have English, their national language and a head start in learning new languages (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 14, 15, 18).

In terms of specific industries analysed by the Nuffield Inquiry, tourism for example relies on nearly 20 million customers a year from non-English speaking countries having sufficient proficiency in English. This situation is termed 'scandalous' especially in comparison with other European and Asian countries whose tourist industries operate using the languages of their customers. The absence of language skills and awareness in some examples is so severe, it is argued, that the term

‘scandalous’ seems justified: key staff at a London airport not only unable to respond to a request for assistance in another language, but unable to distinguish whether the request is in French or Spanish (Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 23).

According to the national statistics, a 1 per cent increase in export is worth £2 billion to the UK economy, yet an estimated 20 per cent of potential orders are lost due to a lack of linguistic skills (The English Speaking Union and The Nuffield Foundation, 2002, p 9). Even though these types of statistics need questioning, it can still be said that lack of linguistic skills results in business loss.

2.3. Bilingualism/multilingualism as a global resource

A type of global resource I would like to focus on in this section has yet to be explored. Therefore this section is different from the previous two sections in this chapter. Instead of reviewing the existing literature, I will argue that in the era of contemporary globalisation resulting in ‘transnational identities’ (Block, 2006), based on the phenomenon that ‘people are no longer territorially defined’ (Jacquemet, 2005), languages need to be repositioned as global resources within frameworks of democracy and social justice.

I will explain my proposition through examples of a Chinese mother living in England

and a Welsh mother living in Wales:

At a recent Applied Linguistic Conference in Canada (Joint American and Canadian Applied Linguistics Associations, in Montreal, June 2006) one researcher from London presented interview data collected from adult English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Several of her interviewees talked about experiences not only of their own children rejecting communication with them as parents, but also indicating the feeling of mutual alienation. Children are growing up as English speakers, while parents are struggling to find opportunities for conversations in English and the development of their skills in English. A Chinese mother experiences rejection on different levels from her two children of very different ages. Her youngest child of four reportedly says to her: *'Don't speak to me in Chinese, because Chinese is stupid.'* (Melanie Cooke, King's College, Research in progress, Joint American and Canadian Applied Linguistics Association Conference presentation, Montreal, June 2006). This very young child has not only already internalised negative attitudes to her home language, but she has started making choices and depriving herself of exposure and language use during a crucial period of language development.

This vignette of a child at the beginning of her life, as a bilingual or monolingual individual, encapsulates a multiplicity of issues discussed in this study: the role of parents in the process of language maintenance; the lack of an early years advisory service; the absence of affirmative messages about bilingualism; the low value attached to home languages; the issue of language choice, especially for children; issues of self-esteem and achievement in later years.

The questions that it provokes are many. Where are these powerful negative messages coming from in the context of such a young child? How can they be reversed? How

can we start communicating equally powerful messages motivating children to look for opportunities to develop the languages available to them?

Furthermore, if we look at this parent's attempts and the complexity of obstacles in terms of parenting and language maintenance, we may reasonably ask: how can these parents be supported? How can their experiences be communicated to policy makers?

Case studies like this one highlight the need for research that will expose the contradiction of approach by which minority languages can still flourish within families and communities, while there is little recognition of them within wider society. Bilingual parents and families will struggle to fulfil even their natural function of '*simply speaking it at home*' (in the words of one of the interviewed MPs), if there are no affirmative messages relating to bilingualism reaching potentially bilingual children in their settings outside home boundaries.

On the positive side, evidence gathered by the researchers in Wales provides numerous examples of parents 'armed' with knowledge about the benefits of bilingualism successfully recruiting supporters among newcomers, friends and neighbours. The example of a mother, who 'reported using what she had learned from a health visitor about bilingualism to convince English speaking grandparents to approve of the bilingual education (English-Welsh) for the child' (Edwards and Pritchard Newcombe, 2005, p 145) demonstrates how research findings and recommendations that follow can become an important part of everyday reality for relevant communities.

The issue emerging from these examples of bilingual mothers living in Britain that disturbs me the most as a researcher and a professional in this field is the unavoidable

issue of social justice. One bilingual mother experiences helplessness to transmit the value of bilingualism and her first language even to her own children, while the other is equipped with knowledge that can influence decision making in her wider family and even the attitudes of the monolingual members of her family. Regardless of the fact that one of these examples relates to a world language with the greatest numbers of speakers in the world and the other to a small, but indigenous language, should it not be that both mothers are entitled to the same knowledge, advice and guidance? Would it not be considered unacceptable if the Chinese mother was not given advice on feeding and hygiene? Is society doing right by its citizens by creating conditions for failed parenthood in certain sections of society? Do these issues eventually lead to problems of underachievement in the education system and to wider issues of different types of social exclusion?

Hence, my proposition to reposition languages as a global resource, meaning that language policies and languages practices in individual countries should not be based on the principle of being responsible for and interested in national language/s only. This principle is argued by Malcolm Rifkind in his letter to me (see Appendix 3) and by the Conservative MP interviewed for this study. My suggestion is that language policies and practices of nation states should be based on the principle that every language is a resource to all of their citizens, in different and multiple ways, in an increasingly globalised world. This is more so in England than anywhere else, because that globalised world for England starts in its capital, defined as a global city 'par excellence' (Block, 2006).

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3. Research design

3.1. Three platforms of this research

This thesis is designed as an amalgamation, continuation, bringing together and completion of a cycle of research that started with a pilot study focused on bilingual parents. The rationale was to start with the family platform where speech starts developing. For bilingual children, the family is also the place where it will be determined what their first language will be, whether they will be supported in maintaining their minority language, how they will relate to it and if they will be supported in developing bilingually. The study focused specifically on parents, who are the ‘natural policy makers’ in this setting.

From home, children go into mainstream schooling. Under the new strategy of devolving finance to schools, headteachers have almost unlimited autonomy to decide how to utilise funds allocated to schools for raising the achievement of bilingual pupils. Also, headteachers play a key role in terms of initiating and implementing school policies. Therefore, my Institution Focus Study sought to gain an insight into the values that key professionals in mainstream education attach to bilingualism and the influence their attitudes have on practice, as evidenced in the data collected.

The natural progression of this research cycle is now to move onto the platform of national policy making and the research attitudes of key practitioners and politicians. This progression from family to mainstream schooling to national policy making is built into the study as hierarchical and cyclical. It is hierarchical in terms of power relations, with the national policy making apparatus being at the top of the policy making pyramid. The cyclical nature of this study lies in the fact that family and mainstream schooling are involved in the consultation processes, social changes and

many other aspects that form the context of influence in the policy cycle (Ball, 1993).

Ball identifies the following stages of the policy cycle or contexts: context of influence, text production, practice, political strategy and outcomes. The context of influence refers to all the factors that jointly create a 'need' and appropriate conditions for all other stages of the policy cycle. Some of these factors are: significant social changes at the national or international level; local, national and global economic demands; as well as changes in social awareness and attitudes.

3.2. Collecting data

The main body of data was collected in seven in-depth interviews. For this purpose I was using the interviewing technique that I also used for the Institution Focus Study. The key feature of this technique is that there are no initial questions as such, but, instead, participants are given statements on which to comment. This technique can be classified under the category of semi-structured interviews (Cohen and Manion, 1997), even though it is not specifically listed or outlined in any of the references on methodology that I have considered (Cohen and Manion, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Gradoll, Maybin and Stierer, 1994; Robson, 1996). It has developed from the following demands of my research:

Firstly this study aims to gain an insight into attitudes and values, which are complex, not easily defined or measured categories and which are rooted in complex cultural, personal, professional and political backgrounds. The issue I was facing was how to motivate interviewees to express their strong agreement, disagreement or another attitude. Considering the fact that the agreed interview time was only 30–45 minutes, using statements that capture extreme views was judged as a more effective way of accessing attitudes and values held by interviewees rather than using questions.

Secondly, as mentioned in the introduction, one of the aims of this study is to engage policy makers with the views relating to bilingualism of parents, students, headteachers, researchers and public figures. By using quotes from my previous research, interviewees engaged directly throughout the interview process with a selected sample of different views on the relevant issues. The following statements originate from these studies: *Researching Attitudes and Values Attached to First Language Maintenance* (Mehmedbegovic, 2003); *Equality in Action: The Pimlico Way* (Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004); and *Bilingualism in Mainstream*

Schools: What Do Headteachers Make of It? (Mehmedbegovic, 2004). The rationale for selecting each statement will be given in the continuation of this chapter.

Interviewees were sent in advance ten statements, which they were invited to comment upon: six were by pupils, parents and headteachers, and four were by researchers and public figures, as they play a role in shaping public opinions. Each statement was selected for a specific reason in correspondence to the research questions, as given on page 3:

Statement 1:

Parents feel that children are changed by the system if they lose the language (minority language). If there were Bengali lessons from Year 7, parents would feel happier about their children going to school and would not take them for such long holidays.

(Pimlico School student, Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

This statement addresses several key cause and effect issues: language loss that causes alienation within families; absence of first language provision in mainstream school linked to long holidays taken to spend time in the country of origin and maintain the language; and long-term absence that has been identified by OfSTED as one of the reasons for the underachievement of Bangladeshi pupils (OfSTED, 2001). In terms of the research questions, it addresses the lack of value attached to bilingualism in mainstream schools as perceived by bilingual students and their parents.

Statement 2:

Bengali has no value. It is only valued among people who speak it. Employers want French or other European languages. It is a waste of time.

(Pimlico School student, Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

This student captures the debate on the language hierarchy: European languages versus Asian languages. In terms of students' experiences of schooling and career guidance, issues relevant to the research question of promoting bilingualism are: do they receive any affirmation of their bilingualism as an asset? Are they given opportunities to use their first language as a part of learning or any activity with the status of school work?

Statement 3:

English is more important than our language. You are nobody if you can't speak English.

(Bosnian bilingual parent, Mehmedbegovic, 2003)

Having a voice and participating in society is a difficulty for many recent immigrants as reflected in this statement by a parent from a refugee community, in this case Bosnian. It raises questions of rights to interpretation, translation, use of minority languages in legal affairs, health and housing. Responses to this statement were expected to provide data on the value of English and its consequences on the value of minority languages.

Statement 4:

More or less I am proud of the fact that they (my children) speak two languages, regardless of the fact that some (parents) are not.

(Bosnian bilingual parent, Mehmedbegovic, 2003)

This parent recognises bilingualism as an achievement, something to be proud of. He also reveals that some parents around him do not see bilingualism as beneficial. How much effort, though, is put into making sure parents make informed choices when it comes to supporting or not supporting a child to develop bilingually? What structures

are there in the existing system to make parents aware of the advantages of bilingualism? How are they supported in the process of language maintenance? This statement was expected to provide data relevant to all three research questions, as given in Chapter 1.

Statement 5:

An inclusive curriculum means recognising languages, respecting difference... You do everything to get people to achieve. And if people have languages that other people don't have that's an advantage that should be built on.

(Headteacher of a beacon secondary school, Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

Again this is a statement that requires many key considerations: inclusion versus assimilation; the principle of pluralism; whose and what knowledge is validated by the curriculum; the role of first languages in the achievement of bilingual students. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of 'cultural capital' links underachievement with systems that do not provide opportunities for minority groups to experience their backgrounds as having cultural capital status. This was another statement with the potential to inform all three research questions.

Statement 6:

Is language primarily culture or communication? If you are saying language is a cultural feature then fine, you can have many different languages going on. If you are talking about language for communication then the fewer languages you have the better. Otherwise, you'll end up like the Welsh speaking the language that nobody else understands, just to keep it going.

(Headteacher of a primary school, Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

The trend of 'language death' is widely debated among linguists. According to

estimates there are around 6,500 existing languages, every month two languages die and 95 per cent of world languages are classified as endangered (May, 2001). The issue of language death poses certain questions: what, if anything, do we as humankind lose with a loss of a language? Is language death a natural or socially constructed process? Therefore, this statement is aimed at establishing the familiarity of interviewees with the agenda and research on the value of language diversity.

Statement 7:

There is one consistent message coming out of these data, based purely on the facts, which is: that these headteachers have been appointed to manage schools with large proportions of bilingual children without any requirement in terms of training and insight into the experience of bilingualism and its implications for one's education.

(Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

This statement summarises the key finding of my study with headteachers. It highlights the areas of improvement needed within a system committed to closing gaps in achievement between different groups (Education Development Plan, City of Westminster, 2001, based on the national priorities). The issue of headteachers' training is one that policy makers and lead professionals can influence directly and its significance in valuing and promoting bilingualism is explored in the earlier study with headteachers (Mehmedbegovic, 2004). This statement is also used in order to link the two studies: the present one and the one focusing on headteachers (Institution Focus Study).

Statement 8:

The research points to first language literacy and then biliteracy as a strong source of cognitive and curriculum advantage for bilinguals: more diversified cognitive

abilities; increased abilities to process and manipulate ideas and symbols; increased fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in thinking; increased analytical orientation to language; higher awareness of the needs of the listener.

(Swain and Lapkin, 1991)

Here are a number of cognitive advantages that bilingual children are in a position to develop. Familiarity with and acceptance of these ideas pave the way for the treatment of bilingualism as an intellectual resource. I used this statement in the study with headteachers as an indicator of the degree of their training and awareness of cognitive advantages of bilingualism. Statements 8 and 9 were used in both studies: the present one and the previous one with headteachers, with the aim of identifying common patterns within the community of practitioners and the community of policy makers. Statement 8 in both studies corresponds to the research question of attitudes being informed by the relevant research and theories. The following is the second of the two statements common to both studies.

Statement 9:

Immigrants should speak English at home. It would help them overcome the schizophrenia that bedevils generational relationships.

(British politician, 2002, Daily Press, September 2002)

This statement by David Blunkett was not fully referenced for the purposes of the interview in order to avoid political allegiances of the interviewees influencing their comments. However, if requested, the source was revealed. This statement targets the first and last bastion of first language maintenance – home. It uses strong language, mixed with psychiatric concepts. The headteachers interviewed previously expressed unanimous disagreement with this statement. They categorised it as an unacceptable

infringement of civil liberties. It will be interesting to see if, and how, the perceptions of politicians and lead professionals differ. I was personally drawn by it into a public discussion, since I felt that public statements such as this were not supportive of minority languages and first language maintenance (Appendix 1). Many researchers expressed their disagreement with this statement (Appendix 1). In general, it initiated a wider public debate, which is also a significant process feeding into the policy cycle, as previously discussed in this chapter.

Statement 10:

The City of London has for centuries been a major trading centre, first for Europe and later for the whole world. It has also been a place where political and economic refugees from many different nations and background settled. These people invariably brought their own languages to London and although they eventually learned English, their own languages and culture continued to be reflected in business and this greatly contributed to the developing prosperity of the City, and over time to Greater London... When the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was set up in the capital there was a requirement for speakers of 38 different languages. All were found from within London.

(The Lord Mayor, City of London, in Baker and Eversley, 2000)

The tenth and last statement captures the essence of an approach that transforms the linguistic potential of bilingual individuals, which often remains passive and unrecognised, into a resource and benefit for the whole of society. How long does it take to educate an employee to speak a foreign or minority language fluently? In London employers can, in principle, draw on native speakers of 360 world languages (Baker and Eversley, 2000). The future of the availability of these 360 languages in

London depends on supporting bilingual parents and communities in terms of language maintenance. Again this statement corresponds to a particular subcategory of valuing bilingualism - its economic value.

For the full interview protocol see Appendix 2.

For the purposes of this study, I interviewed two politicians, one civil servant and four key/lead/leading professionals. Six interviews were recorded on audiotapes and transcribed. One interviewee did not want to be recorded, but I was given permission to take notes.

In addition to the interview data, I will be engaging with the Hansard records of relevant Parliamentary debates and relevant policy documents, such as the National Literacy Strategy and the National Languages Strategy.

3.3. Interviewees

3.3.1. Accessibility of interviewees

Researching policy makers in education is not addressed in much of the methodological literature. Where it is, the issue of access is described and analysed at length (e.g. Walford, 1994). Academics like Fitz and Halpin blame ‘the paucity of empirical educational policy research’ on gate-keeping processes and the inaccessibility of politicians and senior civil servants (Fitz and Halpin, 1994, p 40). I approached in writing, just before the 2005 general election, 46 MPs, including Ruth Kelly, Stephen Twigg and Malcolm Rifkind. In most cases I had no success, apart from Malcom Rifkind and Karen Buck. Both campaigning in my own constituency, they promised me interviews after the election. After the election I was informed that they were both too busy. Malcolm Rifkind offered to contribute to my research in writing, which I accepted (Appendix 3). Unfortunately his response completely ignored my research protocol and was too insufficient to be used as a part of the data collected.

Finally, as a researcher fitting into a category described by Fitz and Halpin as those researchers ‘without a claim by birth, education (meaning Oxford or Cambridge) or other affiliation to the establishment’ (Fitz and Halpin, 1994, p 48), I had to rely on using my own professional, academic and personal contacts. This method proved successful and resulted in seven interviews. On reflection, I argue that it is undemocratic that policy makers are ultimately not accountable through the prism of research. The recently introduced Freedom of Information Act 2005 has given researchers, and citizens, greater rights in terms of accessing records and government files, but accessing key people is not something that has been addressed. Perhaps something like the ‘surgeries’ which are held by MPs could be developed as a regular

forum for policy makers and interested parties to meet.

Interestingly enough, another community of the ‘powerful’ in education has proved even more inaccessible in this case. Among the sample categorised as ‘leading professionals’ I was aiming to interview at least one leading academic acting as the policy adviser to the Government. I was expecting that I would be able to secure at least one interview from this section of the policy making community. Disappointingly, I can only report that neither have I interviewed any key academics, nor have I received any replies from when I approached a number of them for an interview. It is an interesting ‘no collected data’ situation because one would expect that academics contributing to policy making processes would be supportive of research efforts in this area.

3.3.2. Sampling

The sampling process for this study was based on the following criteria: interviewees had to be individuals who contributed to the policy making processes in either their political or professional capacity and they needed to be active in England and/or Wales. With politicians, the aim was to interview representatives of the governing and the opposition party. At the time of writing this was the Labour and the Conservative party respectively.

Cohen and Manion refer to this type of sampling as ‘purposive sampling’, which is based on the principle of ‘hand-picking the cases that are satisfactory to their (researchers’) needs’ (Cohen and Manion, 1997, p 89).

3.3.3. Interviewees’ profiles

As stated earlier, two interviewees were politicians, one a civil servant and four were

key professionals. By key, lead or leading professional is meant professionals who are heads of Government departments, relevant initiatives and programmes.

In terms of ethnicity their backgrounds were, as defined by themselves:

- English, with partly American-Jewish origin
- English, with partly Russian origin
- English
- English-Irish
- Welsh
- English and European (European by choice and beliefs rather than origin)
- English-Welsh.

With regard to their personal experience of bilingualism, they were five monolinguals and two bilinguals - bilingual in English and Welsh and in English and French. Two monolinguals living and working in Wales experience bilingualism on an everyday basis in their environment.

In terms of educational backgrounds two interviewees had attended public schools followed by a degree course at Oxford or Cambridge; and five had attended comprehensive schools and universities other than Oxford or Cambridge. All were educated to MA level. Two had PhDs. They had worked in a variety of professions: law, public relations and housing, and four interviewees worked in education at the time of interviewing. One interviewee had previously worked as a headteacher, which had relevance when commenting on the interview statements referring to headteachers. In terms of gender four were male and three female. The age range was from late twenties to early fifties.

3.4. Wider methodological issues: Identifying bias

Cohen and Manion (1997) identify three carriers of bias: researcher, respondent and questions.

3.4.1. Researcher

In this section I will explore my professional, academic and personal background and my theoretical position, with the emphasis on my theoretical position.

My claim to a prolonged involvement with the research focusing on attitudes and values towards bilingualism is based on the last 15 years in which I have been professionally involved with bilingual communities and individuals. The work I have been doing has provided me with numerous opportunities to observe and engage with families going through the process of coming from a monolingual culture, going through the resettlement process and becoming bilingual.

My academic background can be perceived as a continuum in terms of the research focus on attitudes and values attached to bilingualism conducted with different communities. From the methodological point of view, this way of researching the same phenomenon with the different communities in their different settings can be classified as ‘space triangulation’ (Smith, 1975). In the case of this study this process is supported by using some of the same interview statements as in the study with headteachers, in order to search for common patterns across different communities.

In terms of my personal background, the most relevant detail is becoming bilingual as an adult with a degree in Education. This meant that I have had the awareness, skills and interest to observe myself going through the monolingual to bilingual transition. Relying on the knowledge of, and about, my first language was supportive

in terms of language acquisition and my academic pursuits.

I will now proceed by outlining my theoretical position. Viewing my research as a tool of transformative practice places me within the tradition of Critical Theory. Denzin and Lincoln state that: 'An inquiry that aspires to the name critical must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society.' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p 453). The issue of social injustice in this study is linked to Bourdieu's (1991) concepts of 'cultural capital' and 'misrecognition'. Cultural capital is a category that encompasses past and present experiences, histories of communities an individual is linked to, languages, customs, system of beliefs and lifestyles. The domination of cultural capital of certain groups is often perceived by the dominated groups, whose cultural capital is devalued in the context of education and society in general, as natural, without recognising it as a social and political construct. Bourdieu terms this process 'misrecognition'. The end result of this process is symbolic violence, which minority groups often comply with and in a way even support, due to the misrecognition that their cultural capital is of a lesser value and that it is natural to lose it and replace it with the one that has more value.

In this study there is an interesting polarisation of two sections of society, who relate differently to the experience of symbolic violence. One consists of speakers of non-indigenous minority languages such as Bengali or Bosnian, whose views interviewees comment on. Statements like '*you are nobody if you don't speak English*' or '*Bengali has no value*' are delivered without hesitation by members of minority groups seem to communicate currently experiencing what Bourdieu defines as symbolic violence.

The other group is the interviewees who are either bilingual English-Welsh speakers

or have Welsh as a part of their background. Their responses reflect the fact that Welsh speakers are surfacing out of the period of partly misrecognition, partly open oppression. Statements like *'in the past people didn't regard Welsh as being on a par with English'* or *'Welsh was not seen as a language that you would get on in life with'* in contrast to statements like *'there is actually economic benefit in speaking Welsh'* and *'Welsh is valued among employers'* – represent the shift in values that has happened during their life time, as a result of the Welsh Assembly led, strategic and well resourced Welsh revival programme. Another layer that adds to this polarisation of experiences among different groups is the fact that as lead professionals they are aware that symbolic violence continues for other groups in their own environment: *'Because Welsh is given such a high level of importance within the Government of Wales Act ... community languages are left to...they are almost third status, they are given a lower status than English and Welsh.'* (Interview data, Welsh civil servant). In the data interpretation chapter I will analyse in more detail this dichotomy of non-indigenous versus indigenous minority languages.

In addition to the suggested dichotomy, researching bilingualism in England and Wales at this point in history means also researching the position of minority languages versus English and high status European languages. The issues of social justice, education and civil rights, political and cultural domination implemented through the National Curriculum and government policies and the impact of economic factors on individual and social structures are essential to interpreting the data collected for this study.

Scott and Usher place the emphasis of research grounded in Critical Theory on: *'detecting and unmasking beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice and*

democracy...’ (Scott and Usher, 1999, p 30). Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemony employs Critical Theory beyond the Marxist analysis of domination based on economic forces. It introduces culture, education and media as different attempts to achieve popular consent and domination (Kincheloe and McLaren, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p 439). This study focuses primarily on beliefs and practices that shape and influence education.

In relation to the imperative of Critical Theory which argues that the ultimate aim of research is not only about making a contribution to knowledge and understanding of a certain phenomenon, but is actually about changing and improving practice, I would like to highlight the fact that my research design is developed with the aim of contributing, on a wider level, to the policy cycle and public debate in this field, and on the individual level to the awareness of interviewees. However, I am aware that this is a small scale-study, with limited exposure and, therefore, its impact on reality is proportionally limited.

My commitment to promoting the use of first languages in working with bilingual children rests on all of these four aspects of my background. Having a committed position can be perceived as a source of bias in one’s research, which I duly acknowledge.

3.4.2. Respondents

The issue of bias with regard to the respondents of this study is in a complex relationship with the focus of the study: respondents’ attitudes towards bilingualism. By definition, bias is an opinion that strongly favours one side in an argument (Oxford English Dictionary, 1995). One of the instruments used to measure attitudes

is the Likert scaling procedure which is based on measuring the degree to which a person is favourable or unfavourable towards the attitude object (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). This means there is a crossover between what is understood by bias and the object of this particular research. In a way, I am trying to uncover the bias that influences the practice of my respondents. Therefore, what is commonly referred to, in research, as respondents' bias does not apply to this study.

The issue of power balance between respondents and researcher is a specific methodological issue in the context of 'researching up'. My first interview, which was conducted with a newly appointed Conservative MP, echoed the experience of interviewing a minister described by Fitz and Halpin:

"There are two pages of single-spaced interview transcript before the first intervention into his monologue is recorded, and that came from the political adviser. The interview continued in similar fashion. We asked relatively few questions and exerted almost no control over the interview situation."

(Fitz and Halpin in Walford, 1994, p 50)

In my case it was even over two pages when I managed to interact and ask my first exploratory question. I was also humbled even before the interview started by the respondent's comments with regard to the outdated equipment that I was using, on loan from the Institute.

However, the advantage of engaging with respondents from a position of less power provided the advantage of a lower probability in terms of respondents saying what they assumed the researcher wanted to hear.

3.4.3. Questions

As explained earlier, the interviews were structured around the statements reflecting the views of respondents from my previous studies, followed by statements from other researchers and public figures. I reaffirm my overall goal of the interviewing technique: it is designed specifically to accommodate research on attitudes.

Statements which are 'charged' on different levels were specifically chosen to trigger in respondents strong agreement or disagreement.

However, after the initial comments provided by the respondents, I asked questions to explore points of interest. For example, when the Conservative MP stated that languages were easily maintained by 'parents simply speaking them at home', I asked him to consider if the young person whose quote: 'Bengali has no value' was used in this study, could become a parent with the high motivation for maintaining the language in the home environment. Since this part of the interview needed to follow from the opinions expressed by the respondents while commenting on the statements, it was envisaged as being unstructured. However, these additional questions were kept close to the agenda of the statements given in advance, as illustrated in the above example or they served to seek clarity and detail of the opinions expressed by the interviewees.

3.4.4. Data analysis and interpretation

The interview data analysis was conducted following relevant guidelines as given by Hycner (Hycner, in Cohen and Manion 1997, p 293-4). The interviews recorded on audiotapes were transcribed, by myself. Even though this was a time consuming task it was useful in achieving a high level of familiarity with the individual interviews.

The interview data were then revisited in the process of listening continuously to the

whole interview and reading the transcriptions several times in order to prepare for the later stage of identifying themes. This step advanced the analysis of individual interviews towards the analysis that encompassed all of the data with the aim of identifying common themes either to all, or most, interviews and the unique ones that occur only in one of them. The processed data were then ready for contextualisation of themes, within the context of practice, theory, research and literature.

In the process of the data contextualisation the starting point was Ruiz's (1984) classification of attitudes to bilingualism, which was used in my previous study, IFS. According to his framework there are three main types of attitudes to bilingualism, based on which bilingualism is either treated as Problem or Right or Resource. However, I have encountered difficulties in using this framework. I will elaborate on the way I dealt with this methodological issue in Chapter 5 under the Data Categorisation subheading.

The final result of my interview data analysis, presented in Chapter 5, I see as one possible interpretation of the collected data. The view that expresses best where I position myself epistemologically is the following:

“The interpretive practice of making sense of one's findings is both artful and political. There is no single interpretive truth. There are multiple interpretive communities, each having its own criteria for evaluating an interpretation.”

(Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p 30)

I reaffirm and acknowledge that this study is one possible interpretation of the data collected. It is an interpretation processed through a specific prism of theories and previous research findings, but also my specific and individual background as the researcher doing the analysis.

3.4.5. Ethical issues

Having familiarised myself with the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA), I identified a number of general and particular considerations that apply to this study. In respect of the general considerations, I was aware of my obligation to inform participants of the aim of my research and its use, and to obtain their consent to interview them and record interviews on audiotapes.

In terms of guaranteed anonymity, which is one of the most important general issues, I decided to offer the interviewees a choice of either anonymity or having the interview attributed. The reason for this was that it would add another layer of interest and engagement for the reader if he/she was familiar with the public figures contributing to this study. In the case of Malcolm Rifkind, who sent me a short letter as his contribution, I had his permission to use it and to attribute it to him. However, the participants, who gave me full interviews, expressed the wish not take the unnecessary risk of negative publicity. This was especially emphasised in one case where personal attitudes conflicted with the mission and ethos of the institution in which they worked. Therefore, I reverted to the usual clause of guaranteed anonymity.

Particular issues for this study arose from the fact that I had to use personal contacts to gain access to the interviewees. Obtaining interviews would not have been possible had it not been for a chain of people 'doing favours', which contributed to the likelihood of interviewees being easily identified. This had put even more pressure than usual on me as a researcher to safeguard their identity in the presentation of this study.

Apart from looking at BERA guidelines, I had also considered the relationship between the researcher and the researched in terms of the classification: 'research on,

research for and research with' as given by Cameron, 1994 (in Graddol, Maybin and Stierer, 1994). Rating my research against this classification, I could identify that I was looking to gain an insight from the 'researched', which qualifies this research as 'research on'. My research design was developed with the aim of engaging policy makers with the views of parents, children, practitioners, researchers and public figures relevant to a particular marginalised issue of bilingualism. Raising awareness, sharing findings and expert knowledge, via statements included in the interview schedule, was clearly a case of doing 'research with'. As for the third aspect doing 'research for', this piece of research does have an advocacy role, but not specifically in regard to the issues affecting the participants as politicians or key professionals. Its advocacy role potentially applies to all sections of society who would benefit from more informed attitudes to bilingualism.

Lastly, another consideration discussed by Cameron (in Gradol, Maybin and Stierer, 1994) is the fact that ethical research outside the positivist tradition needs to recognise that the researcher is by definition in a more powerful position than the researched since the researcher is the one making the decisions concerning the focus, methods and activities within the research process. The researched, in many cases, will have their own questions and agendas. In order to make research ethical from this aspect the research design needs to accommodate the possibility of contribution from the researched in terms of agendas.

The issue of the power relationship between the researcher and the researched, which I have already considered under the section Respondents in this chapter, is very different in 'researching up' from the much more frequent 'researching down' context. This point is best illustrated by the way my protocol was overridden by my

first respondent, Malcolm Rifkind, who replaced his agreement to give me an interview by offering to respond in writing and, then, completely dismissed my interview schedule and statement-comment method. Instead I received a short statement of his beliefs.

However, regardless of the particular issues of power in this study, the interviewing technique used and previously outlined was developed in such a way that it allowed each respondent to develop the discussion in the direction of their own agenda.

3.4.6. Professional relevance and wider value of the study

For me as an adviser on ethnic minority achievement who encounters on an everyday basis learning environments that neither acknowledge nor encourage bilingualism; practitioners who have not had any access to relevant training, research findings, theory or literature; children and families who have internalised the devalued status of their home languages – doing this type of research, publishing it and presenting it in different forums is my attempt to contribute to transformative practice in this field.

On a level wider than the context of mainstream education, at a time when political agendas and public debate are often dominated by competing issues of community cohesion and a pluralistic society, studies of this kind highlight the lack of, and the need for, researching and considering linguistic diversity as an integral, but often marginalised aspect of that debate.

**4. Political background and the document data relevant to this study,
the Nuffield Inquiry and related Hansard records:**

Why do the Germans have 16 different ways of saying 'the'?

My third research question seeks to establish what evidence there is that identified attitudes (both politicians' and policy makers') are informed by relevant research and pedagogical theories. In order to widen the process of looking for the evidence of engagement by politicians and policy makers with the research relevant to this study beyond my interview sample, I have used Hansard records of Parliamentary debates. These records have provided an additional set of data that complements my interview data. The Hansard data consist of transcripts of considered and prepared speeches as delivered in House of Lords and House of Commons on the relevant topic and it is also data directly linked to policy decisions and practice transformation.

In this process of searching for debates that have taken place in Parliament on the issues of languages and why they took place at a particular time, encountering the Nuffield Inquiry Report (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000) meant finding a prime example of research that directly influenced policy making mechanisms and transformed practice.

The Nuffield Inquiry initiated a debate within the highest political forum, Parliament, on the role and value of languages in the economy, public services, education and citizenship. It has so far been the key study in this area that has informed Parliamentary debate and put pressure on the Government to launch the National Languages Strategy and to appoint a 'language supremo' - the National Director for Languages. Therefore, analysing the findings and recommendations of the Nuffield Inquiry Report and relevant records of the Parliamentary debates has also proved a

useful way of illuminating the interview data. The analysis of these two key sources provides an insight into the background of the current policy and debates.

The existing language diversity in England and Wales is addressed in one section of the Nuffield Inquiry Report. It is bold in recognising the failure of policy when it comes to community languages, defined here as ‘the languages of one’s parents or grandparents’ in the case of immigrant communities. It points to ‘the failure of policy as social injustice responsible for the creation of an under-class category of languages in the UK’ (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 37).

However, despite recognising the significance and many outstanding qualities of the Nuffield Inquiry, it is also possible to criticise some aspects of it as falling into the same trap of contributing to the undervalued status of minority/community languages. This is evident in the membership of the Inquiry, which did not include members with a specialist knowledge of bilingual communities in England and Wales, with the exception of Welsh. All 13 members of this Inquiry had experience of addressing issues of languages other than English in established prestigious mainstream settings - Cambridge University, the British Academy, HM Diplomatic Service, the Treasury and Cabinet Office, the BBC, grammar schools and leading business companies such as Barclays Capital. In terms of personal backgrounds, which are not specifically mentioned, only one member was from an evident ethnic minority background, the newscaster Sir Trevor McDonald. In the list of the contributors and the acknowledgements not one community school is mentioned, and minority/community languages are not specifically referred to, in the chairmen’s foreword, in the aims of the Inquiry or in the executive summary of findings. There are some vague references such as ‘languages from outside the classroom’, which is

in itself a problematic term because of the sense of marginalisation that it communicates (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 7).

Additionally, these aspects and certain sections of the report contribute to widening the gap between the status of British indigenous and non-indigenous minority languages. The section ‘Our children’s linguistic heritage’ only refers to ‘children whose mother tongue is one of the indigenous languages’, i.e. Welsh and Gaelic. It highlights the advantages of bilingualism, but does not mention that these advantages are not exclusive to any particular combination of languages, be they indigenous or not. I do not challenge the fact that there is a difference in status between indigenous minority languages and other minority languages referred to as community languages, but I am questioning a failure to include non indigenous minority languages on an equal footing with either indigenous minority languages or modern foreign languages, where that may be appropriate (ibid, p 34).

The contribution of this report to a more valued place being given to modern foreign, world and indigenous languages within the education system and society is remarkable. Having to criticise it, made me look for reasons behind its shortcomings. Perhaps the absence of minority/community languages and community schools from some key points of the report can be justified by the fact that the Inquiry was requested by representatives of mainstream language teachers, businesses and employers. However, the fact is that ‘community languages’ are not mentioned in the executive summary. They are first referred to on page 37 of the report. A key question is: how many MPs who influenced implementing the recommendations of this report considered the sections in which ‘community languages’ are addressed?

This question is relevant to my research focus. Therefore, I analysed a sample of

points made by members of the House of Lords and MPs during identified relevant Parliamentary debates. The aim of this analysis is to look for evidence corresponding to all of my research questions, namely: what evidence is there of valuing bilingualism?; what evidence is there of promoting bilingualism?; what evidence is there that identified attitudes to bilingualism are informed by relevant research and pedagogical theories?

In terms of the policy making process this analysis has a contribution to make in providing an insight into a particular instance of the policy cycle, where a specific piece of research is taken as the basis for Parliamentary debates and governmental policy action. This chapter contributes to an understanding of this moment in the recent history of repositioning languages in British society following the publication of the Nuffield Report. Since there is a historical distance of six years, between these debates and the collection of interview data for this study, this chapter will also set the scene for the interview data analysis presented in the next chapter.

My search through the records of Parliamentary debates started with the aim, first of all, of establishing: how many relevant records exist. The database search of the Hansard records of Parliamentary was conducted using the following key words: bilingualism, multilingualism, plurilingualism and community/minority languages. It resulted in three references for the period between 1997 and 2006, which was the entire period under the Blair Government at the time. The same search carried out on the Downing Street Cabinet Office website identified only one reference. All the identified references were linked either to the Nuffield Inquiry itself or the National Languages Strategy, which was a recommendation of the Nuffield Inquiry. A few simple, but telling, observations can be made based purely on the number of relevant

records: bilingualism and community/minority languages are not high on the agenda of Parliament or the Downing Street Cabinet Office. The fact that they are considered at all in the highest political arena is solely to do with an independent inquiry.

However, in comparison with the fact that the same search for the period 1987-1997 identified zero references, even four references in the last nine years can be counted as indicating significant progress. The fact that an independent inquiry had such a remarkable presence in Parliament could probably be explained by the connection with Baroness Ashton, a member of the House of Lords and the chair of the Nuffield trustees, and therefore somebody in the position to put this report on the House of Lords' agenda. This link between the Nuffield Foundation and a member of the House of Lords may also be the reason why this report was mainly debated in the House of Lords, while in the House of Commons only a few contributions were made.

My second aim was to look into the content of these references. The analysis identified three main points from the Nuffield Inquiry as the focus of the debates when the Nuffield Report was discussed in Parliament: the 'English is not enough' argument explained as: "We are fortunate to speak a global language but ... exclusive reliance on English leaves the UK vulnerable and dependent on the linguistic competence and the good will of others." (Nuffield Inquiry, 2000, p 6). This is followed by a second main point, namely a recommendation that languages should be recognised as a key skill, alongside literacy, numeracy and ICT (ibid, p 8). Finally, there is an urgent request for the launch of a national strategy that would make languages compulsory throughout the education system, including the primary and secondary sector, vocational and academic routes (Hansard, 2002).

In addition to the views relating to the three main points from the Nuffield Inquiry, I

will present views separately that directly address issues of minority languages, bilingualism/multilingualism and bilingual/multilingual speakers. I am extracting these as a separate category because of their immediate relevance to my research focus. In the last section of this chapter I will analyse the only reference that my data search identified on the Downing Street Cabinet Office website.

The following is a sample of views expressed during the Parliamentary debates referring to each of the above points. MPs who have made considered contributions to this debate have a wealth of relevant experience in terms of their long term academic, professional, political and diplomatic engagement. For example, Lord Quirk, linguist and president of the British Academy; Lord Watson, Chairman of the English Speaking Union; Baroness Massey, former teacher and educator; Lord Wilson, last governor of Hong Kong; Baroness Hooper, council member of the Institute for the Study of the Americas, Baroness Howe, Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission (1975-79); Lord Hannay, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham. Some contributors and especially those who spoke in the House of Commons were themselves from bilingual and multilingual backgrounds, the experience of which they highlighted in their contributions. I will use my research questions, as outlined previously, in relation to the values attached to bilingualism and the promotion of other languages to reflect on the views of members of the House of Lords and MPs presented below, as recorded in Hansard.

4.1. English is not enough

The ‘English is not enough’ argument and the debate it generated corresponds to my research focus in terms of providing views and evidence relevant to my first two research questions: what evidence is there of valuing bilingualism?; and what evidence is there of promoting bilingualism? In many cases views expressed within this category focus on criticising monolingual English speakers and are not directly about valuing bilingualism, but they imply that monolingualism is neither desirable nor sufficient. Numerous contributions were made in support of the finding that ‘English is not enough’. They are divided into criticising monolingual English speakers and arguing for the benefits of studying other languages.

4.1.1. Criticising monolingual English speakers

‘The cultural problems that arise from the assumption that English, if shouted loudly enough, is understandable to everybody in whatever country they are, I should have thought alarmingly obvious.’

Lord Williams of Elvel, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘The English-speaking world has got itself into a dreadful bind. We think we understand what makes other people tick – but only if they tell us in English.’

Lord Watson of Richmond, Chairman of the English Speaking Union quoting Quentin Peel from the Financial Times, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘Why seek to learn a foreign language, since all the people that matter would before long be speaking English?’

Lord Quirk quoting a British Member of the European Parliament, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘Ambivalence towards Europe, let alone other parts of the world except perhaps the United States, may be giving our children messages that it is not important to learn languages other than English.’

Baroness Massey of Darwen, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘Because English is the major world language for the moment and the most common spoken within the European Union, there is not the political will to do anything serious about our poor record.’

Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘The European Language Year, such as it was, has passed us by. ...we give to the outside world every appearance of drifting in a sea of English linguistic arrogance.’

Lord Williams of Elvel, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘... native English speakers ... confidently expect that the rest of the world will eventually also speak English, and that it is merely a question of waiting long enough.’

Gisela Stuart, Birmingham, Labour MP, Commons Hansard, 2003

The quotes above are just a sample of main points raised supporting the view that ‘English is not enough’. Many speakers displayed a high level of familiarity with the demand for languages in different socio-economic areas and an insight into the advantages of multilingual societies and individuals.

‘Lack of political will’, identified by Lord Wilson in a quote presented above seems to be reflected in attitudes throughout public institutions and in the attitudes of individuals in these institutions: Lord Wilson, quoted above, gave the example of a British representative in the European Parliament who does not see the need to learn

another language. He also exposed the institutions that were meant to promote the European Language Year, but did not. In the continuation of his speech, which I could not quote in its entire length, he reflected on members of the public, native English speakers, and ultimately children, who absorb the message that other languages are not important. A widely spread attitude that, eventually, most of the world or at least *'all the people that matter'* will speak English is based on the historically unparalleled domination by English in comparison with any other language. English dominates science, the internet, air traffic, pop culture and the film industry. "No other language has been spoken by so many people in so many places... one in four of the human race is competent in English ..." (Crystal, 2002, p 10). Therefore, *'drifting in a sea of English linguistic arrogance'*, as described by Lord Williams, on an individual and institutional level is in many ways an unavoidable consequence of possessing an overwhelmingly powerful linguistic capital.

4.1.2. Benefits of studying other languages

The other arm of the argument 'English is not enough' shifted the focus from criticising monolingual English speakers to exploring the benefits of studying or having skills in other languages. Therefore this particular subcategory of views expressed has more direct links to my research questions of valuing and promoting bilingualism. The benefits that the speakers explore in this section are frequently found in the literature with regard to the benefits of bilingualism. The following speakers argued the benefits of developing skills in other languages.

'Whoever is not acquainted with foreign languages knows nothing of his own.'

Lord Williams of Elvel quoting Goethe, Lords Hansard, 2002

'Different languages express different ways of thinking.' Gisela Stuart, Birmingham,

Labour MP, Commons Hansard, 2003

‘This country will not get the business unless we can speak the language of other countries.’

Baroness Buscombe, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘Multilingual jobseekers are to an extent advantaged.’

Lord Puttnam, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘Speaking another language automatically increases your job prospects and earning power.’

Baroness Hooper, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘Increasing awareness, cultural, communicative and analytical skills gained from learning a foreign language are vital to facing the challenge of the global knowledge economy.’

Baroness Sharp of Guilford quoting Doctor von Ploetz, Ambassador to Germany,
Lords Hansard, 2002

‘... in the future monoglot native English speakers will lose out to qualified bilingual – or probably multilingual – young people in the global jobs market.’

Baroness Buscombe quoting the English Next report by the British Council, Lords
Hansard, 2002

‘There is a great need to understand and share the culture of other countries, and what better way can you do that than by learning a bit about one other’s languages?’

Baroness Howe of Idlicote, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘English is the language of science, with 70 percent of scientific theses now being published in English. It is the language of information technology, aviation and globalisation. Therefore why should we be concerned by the poverty of our own foreign language skills and those of the Anglo-Saxons more generally? One of the reasons is the depth of that poverty...Eurostats recent research shows that our foreign language skills are the lowest in the European Union...Perhaps we can take comfort in the fact that the situation in the United States is no better, but we certainly cannot share the attitude of the perhaps apocryphal account of the American Senator who, giving evidence on the Hill explaining why he did not think that foreign language learning was important to the United States, said that if English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it was quite good for the United States.’

Lord Watson of Richmond, Chairman of the English Speaking Union , Lords
Hansard, 2002

‘One of the most damaging consequences of the weakness of language teaching in this country and of the decline of A-level qualifiers in languages coming forward is the remorseless squeeze that this is putting on the language departments of our universities... The situation is indeed a dire one. The supply of qualified students coming forward to study languages declines and, as it does so, the losses of the universities’ departments mount and pressure comes on us to reduce the spread of languages we offer.’

Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, Lords
Hansard, 2002

The contributions in this section were well referenced, informed mainly by

quantitative research and statistics produced by public institutions in Britain and Europe and were illustrated by examples. This, in fact, contributes evidence to my third research question: are attitudes to bilingualism informed by relevant research and pedagogical theories? The attitudes expressed above demonstrate that scheduled debates in Parliament result in considered, prepared and research informed contributions made by Lords and MPs. However, it is also noticeable that it was not academic research and especially not any type of qualitative research that any of the quoted Lords and MPs relied on while making their points. This appears to expose a possible lack of communication between academia and policy makers or a lack of accessibility and public presence of academic research findings.

The above views present a range of reasons why, despite English language domination, other languages are needed and are important. Lord Watson used the term '*poverty*' with reference to the lack of foreign language skills among the British population. This concept of 'poverty' lends itself to putting into context other views expressed in this section. For example, 'poverty' on the individual level in the sense of: never experiencing the insight gained in one's first language by virtue of acquiring a foreign language; not having the opportunity to notice differences in ways of thinking embedded in language structures and expressions of other languages; lacking cultural awareness; not benefiting from the analytical skills multilingualism brings. On a wider level this concept of 'poverty' is identified by speakers as a possible loss of business and competitiveness on the global market, but also loss experienced by academia through the lack of students of languages and therefore a lack of future linguists. The 'poverty' discourse also features in another aspect in the collected interview data. It is discussed in the following chapter under the subheading *Feeling poorer*.

It is interesting to note that only one contribution in the category English is not enough and its subcategory ‘Benefits of studying other languages’ is made by an MP in the House of Commons. The majority of the debates on languages happened in the House of Lords. This can be explained by the fact that one of the House of Lords members was, as noted earlier, a patron to the Nuffield Inquiry, Baroness Ashton of Upholland, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Skills. Again, this shows the type of connections needed with the individual politicians in order for a piece of research to be given importance and attention of this kind.

Further analysis of the one contribution made in the House of Commons, which was made by Gisela Stuart, a Labour MP of German background, provided more details of interest. During her speech she was heckled and comments in German, such as ‘Das stimmt!’ (All right! – translation added), were recorded. She was also challenged by a Conservative MP to explain how different languages express different ways of thinking by ridiculing certain aspects of another language. In this case the language was acknowledged as the mother tongue of the challenged MP, making it even more intimidating:

‘I spent two years living in Germany, trying to understand and master German. Can she (the hon. lady Gisela Stuart) explain why the Germans have 16 different ways of saying ‘the’?’

Richard Bacon, South Norfolk Conservative MP, Commons Hansard, 2003

This section of the Hansard transcript reads surprisingly against ‘political correctness’. It seems like an incident that could lead to complaints of unprofessional conduct in any other public setting, for example a local authority meeting. However,

in this highest democratic forum it appears acceptable to intimidate an MP on the basis of their German background. It also seems to stall the discussion on languages in the House of Commons by a Conservative representative making it sound like the lonely quest of a bilingual Labour MP.

4.2. Views on languages as a key skill

It needs to be acknowledged that the following are key points often from long Parliamentary addresses, as recorded by Hansard. Even though selected parts were considered carefully in some cases they may not fully represent the point of view of each individual speaker. For example, Lord Puttnam (quoted below) on the whole supports advancing languages in the curriculum, but questions how realistic it is to have languages widely accepted as a core skill.

4.2.1. Views expressed in support of having languages as a key skill

‘...language learning is also an international obligation under Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention...’

Baroness Buscombe, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘...language, not the mythical fog, will isolate the Continent from us and us from the Continent. Seriously, I believe that our failure to play our full part in Europe during the past half century stems in substantial part from linguistic inadequacy.’

Lord Watson of Richmond, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘We found that there was demand from pupils and parents and from employers and business. It is hard to get the statistics together. It is a mark of lack of seriousness with which we regard this matter that good statistics are not available. But there is an enormous amount of evidence of language learning at considerable inconvenience and expense to families outside the educational structures.’

Baroness O’Neill of Bengarve, Lords Hansard, 2002

‘...employers sought languages and could not recruit in this country....airports being unable to recruit ground staff with elementary language skills and therefore

recruiting people in Spain.'

Baroness Buscombe, Lords Hansard, 2002

'Our young people are talented as any. But they are being denied the opportunity, the encouragement and the basic provision. A child can be keen as he or she may be, but if the basic provision is lacking, nothing substantial happens.'

Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve, Lords Hansard, 2002

'I argue that there are probably very few young people who really understand the different opportunities within the different professions and jobs, and their potential to enhance their careers as a consequence of language ability.'

Baroness Ashton of Upholland, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Skills, Lords Hansard, 2002

This selection of views represents interests of different sections of society: young people, parents, employers, businesses and the interest of the state and its place in Europe. The lack of language skills impacts on all of them, resulting in some type of loss. However, a point specific to young people is that their loss is based on a lack of opportunities and provision. It is the policy making mechanism and the system that are responsible for their disadvantage, rather than their own actions or lack of them.

In the case of bilingual young people, the lack of opportunities to use and further develop their knowledge and talents translates into an even more problematic loss of already existing linguistic capital. However, the fact that bilingual young people can take GCSEs in almost all languages represented in the UK is a big advantage in the existing system. This is further improved by the recent introduction of the Languages Ladder assessment. This assessment allows children and young people who are

speakers of a particular language, but have no literacy or a low level of literacy in that language, to have the skills they do possess recognised. This is achieved by separating assessments and grades for different skills: speaking, reading and writing (CILT website, www.cilt.org.uk).

4.2.2. Views opposing languages as a key skill

In the House of Lords Lord Puttnam, who does not doubt the value of learning other languages, was not convinced that giving languages the status of 'key skill' is realistic. He described trying to present foreign languages as a key skill to children in school as 'a lost battle'. Therefore, he argued that the only possibility is to explore motivating children to see languages as a beneficial addition to their key skills:

'Children are very smart. You cannot 'con' them into something which, on a day-to-day basis they know not to be true. A knowledge of foreign languages, for the most part English, is a core, or a basic, skill for ambitious French, German or other European students. They know it. But to pretend that there is a precise equivalence is wrong. As I say, I do not believe that we advance our case by taking that position. Frankly, our young people know better. Therefore, the real challenge is motivation for the enhancement of their personal, cultural and in many cases their professional lives by the addition of another language.'

Lord Puttnam, Lords Hansard, 2002

Firstly, this view questions the requirement for languages to be recognised as a core or basic skill and, secondly, giving them a due place in the education system is challenged on two points: on the basis of a crowded curriculum and languages not qualifying as a core skill.

‘Young people know that language is not a core skill... In a desperately crowded secondary curriculum, we must make the point that language skills are very desirable. However, they fall some way short of the claim that they are ‘basic’ skills. I believe that that will be the one of the factors that will influence not only the Minister’s response, but, indeed, government action in years to come.’

Lord Puttnam, Lords Hansard 2002

The issue of the ‘desperately crowded’ curriculum seems a weak argument when many other European countries, which achieve better standards in literacy and numeracy, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1997), have committed to the European language policy ‘mother tongue plus two other languages’.

The second point, regarding attitudes to languages as not qualifying as a core skill, is addressed by other speakers. A number of MPs raised the issue of the lack of messages to do with the value of other languages in terms of: employability, global markets, improved service and business volume; understanding other cultures; opportunities in terms of study and work exchange programmes. Additionally, important points were made that a subject that is not made compulsory cannot be viewed as a core skill.

One of the speakers used statistics revealing that *‘80 per cent of English people freely admit that they have no competency in any language other than English compared with 13 per cent in Holland and similar percentages in Sweden and Denmark’* (Lords Hansard, 2002).

Is it surprising, then, that children growing up in a society where an overwhelming

percentage of adults are monoglots 'know' that languages are not a core skill? One might reach here for Bourdieu's (1991) concept of misrecognition, even though its application is only ever encountered in relation to marginalised and dominated social groups. Here, one is looking into native English speakers living in Britain – a situation that cannot be more removed from the theory of symbolic violence.

However, I find that concept relevant to revealing the reality of these children who are actually internalising something devalued in the society in which they live. By internalising the devalued status of languages, they are potentially disadvantaging themselves and contributing to their own deprivation of opportunities to develop the kind of linguistic capital necessary for an increasingly globalised world.

4.3. Views commenting on the recommendation of developing a National Strategy

The push for a National Strategy for Languages comes across forcefully from the transcripts of these debates. The Government is challenged to act urgently and efficiently as concerns are many: a shortage of language teachers, a shortage of linguists in general, a narrow range of offered languages - mainly reduced to offering French, and Britain being identified as the country with the lowest level of foreign language skills in Europe.

‘It is important for us to de-couple in our minds the undoubted benefits that we derive from the spread of the English language and the need for a country like ours with global interests to sustain a substantial pool of people with linguistic knowledge that is not in any way diminished by the spread of English.’

Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Lords Hansard 2002

‘...there are between 24,000 and 25,000 schools in this country. I should be fascinated to know where language teachers for each of those schools will come from.’

Baroness Miller of Hendon, Lords Hansard 2002

‘We simply do not have the capacity at the moment to achieve the objective that all of us involved in the debate want to achieve.’

Stephen Twigg, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Skills, responding to questions in the House of Lords, Lords Hansard, 2003

‘...we had the Government’s commitment for the first time – and this hit me as something that I had not taken in at all – that by 2010 every primary school

pupil would have the chance to learn a foreign language. That was a lovely thought, but the idea that they were then likely to go on and not continue it because it was not part of the curriculum was a pretty worrying progress report for the future.'

Baroness Howe of Idlicote, Lords Hansard 2003

'What would the Liberal Democrats do? First we would introduce a modern foreign language at seven. We would like all primary schools to offer children the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language from seven onwards. We think that that is a good idea because of emerging evidence. Although all children may not be suited to such a study, we would like all children to be given the opportunity.'

Baroness Sharp of Guilford, Lords Hansard 2003

Several speakers, Baroness Hooper, Lord Quirk and Wayne David, challenged the Government on providing responses in terms of how they plan to engage with the linguistic wealth and resources in Britain. Baroness Sharp spoke on behalf of the Liberal Democrats and their vision for languages in the curriculum. It is significant that the Liberal Democrats presented the issue of languages as important enough to feature in an election campaign. They agreed with the view that modern foreign languages should be studied from the age of seven onwards, but delivered this view with the caution that *'although all children may not be suited to such study'*, they should be given the opportunity. This caution sounds like one of those myths that dominate attitudes to learning languages in Britain and underpin a deeply rooted monoglot ethos. As with any subject area, children and adults will differ in terms of abilities, talents, interests and motivation, but would such a caution be mentioned when Parliament debates studying and achieving in Maths and Science? Several

speakers addressed ‘this myth’ in their speeches. Baroness Massey, who advocated including foreign languages in SATs, said: *‘Young people and older people in this country can learn languages, and many do so. I cannot think that we are genetically resistant to foreign languages.’* (Hansard, 2002). Baroness Hooper approached it in her speech in a very direct way: *‘...British children are not more stupid than, for example, Dutch or Swedish children, who seem capable of holding intelligent conversations in three or four languages at an early age. Children from an early age do not seem to think about it, they just get on.’* (Hansard, 2002).

The Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands are often used as an example of an environment where children ‘naturally’ acquire several languages (in Scandinavia, most often Swedish and English in addition to their mother tongue) and as adults move with ease between these languages. One speaker even gave the account of being approached by a mugger in Holland, first of all in Dutch and then in grammatically correct English, to hand over his money and possessions. These points lead to conclusions that fluency in different languages does not have to be a privilege of either an intellectual or socio-economic elite in society. Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands have made space for several languages in everyday life, in the school curriculum, universities, the media, scientific work and in publishing – their children do not have to make choices at a very young age if languages are worth studying, *‘they just get on with it’*. Nettle and Romaine state that: “All children are capable of learning any language as long as they have adequate input from others in the community...” (Nettle and Romaine, 2000, p 55). In short, children can comfortably learn or familiarise themselves with as many languages as there are sufficient opportunities for.

Plurilingualism as the aim of the European language policy: ‘mother tongue plus two languages’, encompasses communication skills in the standard state language, home languages, European languages and other world languages. All these languages have a role to play in developing confident communicators who draw on a variety of their linguistic experiences in a creative and individual way (Council of Europe, 2001).

Most importantly promoting skills in all languages overcomes the issues of competing values of different languages, an institutionalised hierarchy of languages, or state languages being threatened by minority languages. The Scandinavian countries provide a good model of how that is achievable, even though they themselves have not yet fully resolved the complexities surrounding minority languages.

In terms of making practical proposals for dealing with the recruitment of language teachers, two options were considered in the debates: the recruitment of ‘foreign nationals’ living in Britain and the ‘offer’ of the German ambassador to help by providing teachers directly from Germany (Lords, Hansard, 2002). Not one recorded contribution mentioned the possibility of providing routes into mainstream schools for teachers working in community schools who already teach a whole variety of languages, even though this particular issue was criticised in the Nuffield Report. It stated that the marginalisation of community languages is ‘responsible for the creation of an under-class’ of teachers (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 37). Lord Quirk, who commented on the identified shortage of interpreters in courts, described it as: *‘The paradox of famine in the midst of plenty’*. His perspective perfectly captures the experience of unrecognised linguistic capital of many communities and individuals in Britain.

Analysing these debates makes one consider: what would the opposite situation look

like? What if Britain did recognise its linguistic capital? The estimates are that there are around 5,000 community schools in the UK (Lords, Hansard, 2003). Therefore there must be at least 10,000 language teachers who are native speakers of around 360 languages and who would welcome the opportunity to train to teach in mainstream schools as well. Many of them do not have qualifications recognised in Britain and some may not have the needed level of expertise, but using community schools as a recruitment pool for trainee mainstream language teachers would certainly ease the workforce issue in terms of the Languages Strategy. It would also probably earn Britain a proud top place within Europe in terms of the range of languages it offers. Instead of 'importing' German teachers, Britain could invest in developing skills and qualifications of its ethnic minorities and perhaps in the future even 'export' interpreters and linguists.

4.4. Views on minority languages and their speakers in Britain

In addition to analysing the debates under the headings generated by the Nuffield Inquiry and its recommendations, I also provide a sample of views that directly correspond to my first two research questions: is there evidence of valuing bilingualism?; and, is there evidence of promoting bilingualism? Identified relevant contributions by Lords and MPs are divided into points made about indigenous minority languages and non-indigenous minority languages. This divide in the different positioning of these two groups of minority languages in England and Wales is developed further in the analysis of the interview data.

4.4.1. Attitudes to indigenous minority languages

In this section MPs and Lords who themselves come from an indigenous minority languages background promote bilingual education in English and indigenous languages as an educational advantage and as good practice that can be used to improve languages learning and teaching across the country.

‘Does my honourable friend agree that there is much to be learned from the example in Wales, which shows that young people who are educated from an early age in the English and Welsh languages have a greater aptitude later for learning a third language - a foreign language?’

Wayne David, Caerphilly, Labour MP, Commons Hansard, 2003

‘...the Nuffield Language Inquiry devotes a whole chapter to the indigenous languages of the United Kingdom, which include Welsh, Gaelic, Irish and Cornish, and recommends that we learn from, and draw upon, the extensive and valuable experience of bilingual education from nursery and primary schools to university and beyond. The report goes on to point out that there is much that can be

extrapolated from their experiences and applied to the teaching and learning of other languages in all parts of the country.'

Baroness Michie of Gallanach, bilingual in English and Scottish Gaelic, who has used her right to address the Parliament in Westminster in Scottish Gaelic, Lords Hansard, 2002

Again these advantages are applicable to any combination of languages and are found in the literature on advantages of bilingualism in general. However, the current political climate in Britain is merely suitable for advancing the case of indigenous minority languages. As the interviewed Conservative MP, stated '*there is political clout*' linked to supporting indigenous minority languages. Not in any distant history, but only 60 years ago, the political climate was the opposite. Indigenous minority languages were banned in schools and were not seen as of value. They started gaining ground extremely fast and the value attached to them increased with the higher level of political autonomy acquired by Wales and Scotland in the 1990s. The establishment of political bodies such as the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament paved the way to a well-resourced strategy for promoting indigenous minority languages. The revival of indigenous languages, especially of Welsh in Wales, has played an important part of the nation-building process. Equally, the attitudes of English MPs, at least in the Hansard sample and the collected interview data, whether representative or not, are supportive of valuing and promoting indigenous minority languages. In the interview data it appears as if it has become a part of 'political correctness' to acknowledge and respect indigenous minority languages. On a wider level it can be seen as an important element of the UK Parliament working 'with' the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament, rather

than ‘against’ them in the aftermath of what in many ways was, but never labelled or acknowledged as such, the ‘English only strategy’.

4.4.2. Attitudes to non- indigenous minority languages and their speakers

Baroness Hooper finally addressed the issue that it needs to be acknowledged that all benefits ascribed to bilingualism in English and indigenous languages are applicable to all other languages spoken in Britain. Welcome enthusiasm for indigenous languages does not seem naturally to spread to other minority languages in Britain. The political imperative of respecting the increased autonomy, as explained with the example of Wales and Scotland, is absent in the case of immigrant languages.

‘She (previous speaker, Baroness Michie of Gallanach) pointed out convincingly that those who are brought up bilingual (in English and one of the heritage languages) have a head start in learning another language. Many children have that head start – not just those whose mother tongue is Gaelic or Welsh, but those who speak Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu and all other languages... We should not ignore that. Can the Government find a way to take the advantage of it? I look forward to hearing from the Minister.’

Baroness Hooper, Lords Hansard, 2002

Baroness Hooper also highlighted the need to provide space for community/minority languages as a part of the mainstream curriculum.

‘There needs to be greater recognition of community languages and opportunities for children to share their languages with others. That fits in well with our strategy for an enriched curriculum at primary level, not at the expense of, but as part of, our drive for higher standards.’

Baroness Hooper, Lords Hansard, 2002

This approach to minority languages is also promoted by one of the interviewed lead professionals: *'Children are resources and desperately needed ones.'* (English lead professional, Interview Data). There are schools in which this is already happening. Such schools demonstrate that this approach is realistic and often brings multiple benefits: better links with parents and communities, enhanced school diversity ethos and better results. CILT regularly provides case studies of this type of good practice, published and disseminated through their website and publications.

A baroness who comes from a multilingual background spoke against the core principle of plurilingualism or *'multiplicity of languages in schools'*.

'All four of my grandparents arrived in this country early in the 20th century speaking not one single word of English between them. Their children, all born in this country, were sent to school where they were taught – as all other children in those days – in English. There is no point ... when scarce resources are spent in teaching children, for whom English is not their first language, in a multiplicity of other languages in schools, because that is what they speak at home.

Encouraging and perfecting their fluency in English will do much more to improve their integration into British social and cultural spheres ... I believe that such a process would make it easier for them later on to learn other languages.'

Baroness Miller of Hendon, Lords Hansard, 2002

It is interesting to note that the only speaker who declares being from a multilingual immigrant family background speaks against other languages as having a role in the education of potentially bilingual children. There is a parallel here with one

of the interviewees in this study from a similar background who is the only participant in this study attaching no value to the revival of Welsh. In my experience I have encountered a small number of adults from bilingual background who dismiss the value of it. Such cases will be discussed on the example of the Welsh civil servant in the following chapter underpinned by Bourdieu's (1991) theory of misrecognition.

There is a parallel, also, between this contribution and the collected interview data in the suggestion that minority languages should not be used in schools, because they are spoken at home – the view advocated by the interviewed Conservative MP. However the most contradictory point of the argument above is that concentrating on English will help bilingual children learn other languages later (Baroness Miller). There are two probable interpretations of this view. This is either embedded in a monolingual outlook that has no capacity for recognising the advantages of bilingualism. Or it is based on the belief in the superiority of one language, in this case English.

Advocating that only learning English equips our intellect to understand and acquire other languages or that English is the best starting point might be interpreted as the 'superiority argument'. And what about the rationale of learning minority languages 'later'? Does this mean advocating learning a language when these children are adults who will have missed out on the advantages of language learning associated with early childhood, as discussed in Chapter 2?

The views outlined below are addressing key social and political issues: non-indigenous languages as an important national resource and their service in the British interest; and the role these languages should play in social inclusion and social participation.

'...there is a point to be made about the lesser used and lesser known languages.

Surely this was emphasised to us all in the aftermath of the events of 11th September. It is a remarkable fact that the Foreign Office was able to bring out of retirement and produce as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to Afghanistan someone who spoke Tajic, Uzbek, Farsi, Dari and, indeed, Russian – which is no mean feat. It is very much to the credit of the Foreign Office and some other departments that they continue with the teaching of these relatively unused languages. We never know when we are going to need them and we should continue to teach them. It may not be our main priority, but we need to do it.'

Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, Lords Hansard, 2003

'I am concerned that the Government is focusing on promoting the languages of the EU – which is fine – and are saying that it is not really necessary to promote the languages such as Mandarin. The Chancellor of the Exchequer recognises that what happens to our economy over the next 20 or 30 years will be dynamic in terms of what is developing in the Far East.'

Baroness Buscombe, Lords Hansard, 2003

'... it is significant to note that both in the United States and the United Kingdom, finding Arabic speakers who can assist in the business of building relations with the Muslim community has been extraordinarily difficult. There are so few Arabic speakers that one has to hunt around even to staff adequately the intelligence community, let alone moving beyond that to establish close relationships, as we desperately need to do, with Arabic speaking parts of the world.'

Baroness Williams of Crosby, Lords Hansard, 2003

'An immense wealth of languages is spoken in this country. More than 300

languages are spoken in London alone, making it one of the most – if not the most – linguistically diverse cities in the world. Understanding that cultural and linguistic richness plays a critical role in promoting social inclusion, responsible participation and an understanding of cultural traditions in the UK and wider international communities.'

Baroness Ashton of Upholland, Parliamentary Under-secretary of State, Department for Education and Skills, Lords Hansard, 2003

A feature that comes across as distinct to analysing the views of the politicians, who contributed to this debate and this study, with reference to minority languages and in comparison to my experience of analysing the data collected with students, parents and teachers, is the fact that politicians focus on macro issues such as the role of languages in the national and global economy, Britain's position within Europe and in the world, employability, diplomatic and intelligence services and the needs of British academia. Some of these issues were previously explored in Chapter 2, under the heading 'Bilingualism as a national resource' and they provide substantial evidence that bilingualism/multilingualism is, indeed, valued as a national resource. However, micro issues concerned with the needs or wishes of bilingual individuals and families are not acknowledged. This focus on the national good can be seen as having its advantages and its disadvantages. The advantages are to do with bringing into the public arena little known facts and issues about the role languages play in multiple aspects of the present functioning and future prosperity of this country.

The disadvantages can be illustrated in the example of '*lesser used and lesser known languages*' such as Farsi and Dari, which '*we never know when we might need them* (for diplomatic purposes) *and we should continue to teach them*' (Lords Hansard,

2002). Even though this speaker is in effect supporting the appreciation and teaching of minority languages, categorising languages that are widely used in another part of the world, and in fact by communities in Britain, as ‘lesser used and lesser known’ indicates a Eurocentric outlook. However, a more substantial criticism is that the speaker is arguing the case for keeping these languages alive in Britain due, in some way, to the terrorist attacks and the needs of the Foreign Office following these attacks. This line of argument communicates an absence of consideration that Farsi and Dari are languages used in everyday life and the practices of the relevant minority groups in Britain. These communities will probably not appreciate their languages being of interest to the state only in the context of terrorism.

Official discourse of this kind potentially leads to a situation highlighted by Baroness Williams of Crosby, who gave the example of difficulties that Britain has in recruiting Arabic speakers for the development of the intelligence service and building better relationships with the Arabic speaking world. The daily press on 19th February 2004 reported on the urgent need of the British Army for Arabic interpreters, who had to turn to universities and recruit 19 year old students of Arabic to do highly skilled interpreting in challenging circumstances. Considering that Arabic can hardly be classified by anybody as a ‘lesser used and lesser known language’ and is a widely spoken minority language in Britain, Britain should not be facing such shortages.

Perhaps some answers can be found in questioning the approach that minority languages are called upon only when there is a crisis and British interests are threatened. Communities and individuals should be consistently supported to maintain their languages and develop literacy in those languages within the wider sense of

individual and social wellbeing. On the contrary, if it is not recognised that they have an asset in their language other than in the situations connected with terrorism and political conflict, it is a realistic outcome that they may not have all the skills needed (such as interpreting skills) and may not be motivated to take up posts that rely on their first languages.

The approach to languages as the factor which plays ‘*a critical role in social inclusion, responsible participation and understanding of cultural traditions in the UK and wider international communities*’, advocated by the Parliamentary Under-secretary of State for Education and Skills, at the time, Baroness Ashton, promotes the treatment of languages that is integral to achieving one of the most important goals of a modern society – social inclusion. This approach is about putting languages on the map of the social continuum rather than ‘wheeling them out’ from the margins when a political incident so requires.

4.5. The Government's official response

The analysed debates resulted in the policy decision to introduce the National Languages Strategy, which in practice means that every child in primary school will have an opportunity to learn a language other than English. This could be any language a particular school chooses to offer. In many ways the pressure put on the Government in these debates yielded desired results. However, languages are not recognised as key skills and they are not compulsory beyond the age of 14. Therefore, the significant gains made in the primary sector are less of 'a victory for languages' when put into context with the policy for the secondary sector and indeed complete absence of policy on languages in further and higher education.

In the conclusion of this chapter, I will reflect on the Government's official press briefing on the National Languages Strategy delivered by Charles Clarke, the Education Secretary at the time. This is the only reference identified as the Government's official response in my previously outlined database search.

The Government at the time acknowledged agreement with the view that '*we aren't doing anything like well enough in teaching foreign languages*', '*it has to start from the youngest possible age...while not detracting from our central themes of numeracy and literacy and raising standards*' (Downing Street Cabinet Office website, 18th December 2003).

These comments indicate that a commitment to teaching other languages is in conflict with raising literacy and standards in general. Languages are excluded from 'the central themes' and they should 'not detract' from those. All the arguments skilfully presented by numerous MPs, reflecting the Vygotskian (1962) theories of deepening the understanding of one's first language by engaging with a foreign language, have

evidently not been considered by the Government. Its line remains that literacy objectives are only achieved through the study of English.

The same briefing goes on to address the issue of appropriate teaching qualifications by offering a short course: Teaching Foreign Languages to the English! Is this to say that foreign languages will not be offered to Scottish and Welsh pupils living in England nor indeed to any of the ethnic minority groups such as British Asian or Black British? Or will all these other groups have different teachers and different courses?

The course is very short, six to eight weeks, relying on the recruitment of people who are native speakers, foreign nationals or people from local communities: *‘so you are not talking about teaching the language in any way, you are teaching the application’* (Downing Street Cabinet Office website, 18th December 2003). The importance of this approach is that it looks hopeful for the speakers of minority languages being able to use their skills. However, as soon as the focus is on the languages being offered, the expectation is that they will predominantly be high status European languages: *‘I would expect it to be mainly European and the traditional languages, but I am keen not to be restricted to that. I think there are other languages which particular communities will want to study, and I think it’s worth acknowledging that in many of our cities we have essentially bilingual communities in primary schools where people have got English and another language, and we ought to recognise that linguistic capacity that is there. But we are talking principally about foreign languages here and so that is the approach to it. But I would be surprised if it wasn’t predominantly the European modern foreign languages, but I am very keen that it shouldn’t be restricted to that’* (Charles Clarke, Education Secretary,

Downing Street Cabinet Office website, 18th December 2003).

This quote communicates several attitude messages that contribute to ‘the under-class status’ of minority languages, as identified by the Nuffield Inquiry. There is a clear expectation that languages offered would be ‘mainly European and the traditional languages’, probably referring to languages traditionally taught in English schools. The emphasis on modern foreign languages is even stronger when the words ‘principally’ and ‘approach’ are used. There is an emphasis on ‘other languages’ that only ‘particular communities’ will want to study. The term ‘not to be restricted’ is used twice, which communicates a negative type of allowance. Minority languages will not be promoted, but, if certain communities succeed in opening this door that is being left ajar for them, they will not be restricted. How is it going to work in practice? Is it going to depend on the attitudes of headteachers in mainstream schools? Are they ultimately going to decide what languages to offer? Would the interest of monolingual English speaking parents in languages such as Chinese being made available to all school children make a difference? These questions are addressed throughout the interpretation of the interview data in the following chapter.

5. Interpretation of interview data

5.1. Theoretical framework

As stated earlier, this is a study in attitudes. The definition of attitudes and values for the purposes of this study is based on two key concepts arising from cultural theories analysing power relations: cultural capital and habitus, both as given by Bourdieu (1991). The definition of cultural capital, already given in Chapter 3, is as follows: Cultural capital is a category that encompasses past and present experiences, histories of communities an individual is linked to, languages, customs, system of beliefs and life-styles. Habitus is a concept closely linked to cultural capital and it relates to the process of socialisation and acquisition of a particular cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1990), this process defines our habitus or systems of dispositions; the way we see things, our attitudes and values.

Bourdieu (1997) places the concept of capital and its accumulation as central to his understanding of history and social reality. His critique of the Marxian economic theory as one which reduces social reality to accumulation and exchange of material forms of capital only paves the way for his recognition of two further forms of capital:

“...cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and ... social capital, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility.”

(Bourdieu, 1997, p 47)

In defence of Marxian economic theory, it has to be noted that these two further forms of immaterial capital have their value and function defined on the basis of

convertibility into economic capital.

The process of accumulation which is embedded in the concept of capital excludes the possibility of what Bourdieu terms ‘perfect equality of opportunity’. In a social context ‘everything is not equally possible or impossible’; ‘the objectivity of things’ is determined by the inertia of accumulated social history, our social capital (Bourdieu, 1997, p 46).

These concepts projected onto values and attitudes to languages illuminate the underpinnings of the language hierarchy that forcefully emerges from the collected data. In this study English is at the top of the hierarchical language pyramid, followed by French. The next layer consists of other modern foreign languages: Spanish, German and Italian. Currently in competition with modern foreign languages, especially in Wales, are minority languages indigenous to Britain (Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic) – with the greatest emphasis on the revival of Welsh in Wales. At the bottom of the pyramid are non-indigenous minority languages such as Bengali, Turkish or Kurdish, more than 300 of them represented in Britain.

English has its obvious position of unrivalled value, not only because it has had the history of being the majority and official language of England for sixteen centuries, but also because of its acquired European and global domination, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2. In the category of modern foreign languages, French is the most widely spread. It will almost certainly be offered as part of the curriculum of every mainstream secondary school and university in Britain. The extent of shared history between Britain and France, alongside the wider history of France, is the most likely factor determining the value associated with French. Evident among the collected

data, the perceived value of other modern foreign languages (Spanish, German and Italian) is increasing because of the business and economic opportunities within the European Union. In the words of an interviewee:

‘I think quite clearly people will focus on other European languages because of the market place that we operate in Europe.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

The existing dichotomy between the high value of languages classed as Modern Foreign Languages and the lower value of languages outside that category was, in fact, institutionalised in 1989 when the Order for Modern Languages was introduced by the Department of Education and Science (DES). This legislation, apart from introducing languages as a compulsory part of the curriculum, also introduced the division of languages into the categories A and B. All schools were obliged to offer languages from category A (i.e. Modern Foreign Languages), while languages from category B (community and world languages) were optional. I would like to suggest that categorising languages such as Turkish or Polish outside the Modern Foreign Languages grouping is unjustifiable. They are both ‘modern’ and ‘foreign’ to this country, so why are they classed as ‘community languages’ instead? Does this mean that they are only used within communities for day-to-day communication, rather than being fully fledged languages? Does this division have any links with the terminology used in the context of Parliamentary debates, where ‘community languages’ were referred to as ‘lesser known’ and ‘lesser used’ languages? Also looking at the issue of terminology in the opposite direction: is not French the community language of the French community living in Britain? Is not French also a minority language in Britain? But in no public domain or educational setting is French referred to as a community or minority language. Bourdieu’s notion of ‘not everything is equally

possible' because of its accumulated history, in this case centuries of economic and political power underpinning French, sheds light on why French, even though technically a 'community language' in the context of Britain, is perceived and consequently treated in society and education in a way that is unachievable in the foreseeable future for any modern language classed as 'a community language'. On an anecdotal level, it is interesting to notice the custom that the titles of French films shown in British cinemas are never translated, a current example being *La Vie en Rose*. Is this not very peculiar for the country in which, according to a recent Eurostats survey, over 80 per cent of the adult population claim not to be competent in any foreign language? It can be seen as communicating assumptions that everybody will have studied French at some point in their lives and that the French is prestigious and appealing.

Chinese is an interesting case where the phenomenon of the fast growing economy is activating the perceptions of convertibility of cultural capital into economic capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1997) and clearly identified by the participants in this study:

'I certainly think that if we have a kind of open debate about how we treat, as it were, the home languages, and also start to talk about the fact that countries like India and China are likely to be the world leaders in 10, 20, 30, 40 years time and therefore just to bring up the point that having in effect these cultures within our society potentially has huge economic benefits for Britain, then perhaps we can reach quite a useful compromise.'

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

On the other hand, a language that is linked to the context of struggle with poverty, rather than a booming economy, has no perceived economic convertibility potential

and therefore its cultural value to the wider society is judged as non-existent:

‘
*... it does not particularly matter to this country, to put it completely bluntly,
whether people speak Bengali or not, in terms of our culture.*’

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

More detailed analysis of how the expressed attitudes of the interviewees in this study provide evidence for the outlined hierarchy of languages will be given in the following sections of this chapter.

5.2. Data categorisation

As outlined in the Research design chapter, the collected interview data have been initially categorised using Hycner's guidelines, as listed in Cohen and Manion (1997), and Ruiz's (1984) framework: Language as Problem, Language as Resource, Language as Right. Having produced the first list of categories, while working with this set of guidance and this framework, it became clear that there was an emergence of a new key category. This category did not appear in the previous study with headteachers conducted in the context of practice. However, in the context of policy making, this new category, which I have termed 'Language as Responsibility', is a key issue. Language as Responsibility is linked to Language as Right, but it has a more active component. Rights can be dormant and not necessarily exercised by groups or individuals, while responsibility places a greater emphasis on the system: i.e. policy makers and providers. An example would be the European legislation Education of Migrant Workers Directive (1976), which placed the obligation for mother tongue provision to children of migrant workers on the education authorities of the host European countries. However, this legislation was only recognised by Britain as a recommendation. The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in the 1980s supported around 100 mother tongues schools in London, but since its abolition mother tongue provision has mainly existed within the voluntary and community sector, more as an opportunity for many bilingual children rather than as a right or responsibility of any particular sector.

Another distinct feature of the collected data became prominent after the initial data categorisation. This feature was the range and intensity of the responses that were addressing the emotional evaluation of the issues commented on. An unexpected finding was the fact that 'fear' emerged as the main emotion in relation to some

languages.

The richness of the data under the categories of emotion and responsibility led to exploring further ways of categorising data that would allow for these two new categories to take a central place within the data categorisation. The solution was found in superimposing another theoretical framework. Having made this decision I looked for confirmation of the value of such a process within the research methodology literature. The guidance by Miles and Huberman on working with predefined data categories provided appropriate justification:

“... the trick is to work with loosely held chunks of meaning and be ready to unfreeze and reconfigure them as the data shape up otherwise.”

(Miles and Huberman, 1994, p 70)

This guidance captures exactly what I was experiencing in the data categorisation process. Having ‘unfrozen’ my data, for the new framework, I had to reach into the tradition of social psychology, which has a long history of attitude analysis (which can be traced back to ancient Greece) based on the following three categories: affect, cognition and behaviour (Katz and Stotland, 1959; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960; McGuire, 1969, 1985; Triandis, 1971; Oppenheim, 1978; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). These three categories are seen as the three components of ‘evaluative responses’ that are attitudes. The affective component encompasses feelings, emotions and moods, cognition – thoughts, ideas and beliefs, while the behaviour component covers actions and intentions (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p 10, 11, 12).

The fact that this study has set out to interpret the researched phenomenon of attitudes to bilingualism by employing Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and habitus is

not in conflict with reaching into the tradition of social psychology during the process of data categorisation. While the socio-psychological categorisation emerged in its full force from the collected data on personal attitudes and serves the purpose of categorising the expressed attitudes, Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus provide the basis for the analysis of what underpins attitudes: power relations and ideology. They provide the 'tools' that enable one to look at attitudes expressed by individuals within the wider structures of society and power.

Therefore, the structure of this chapter is provided by the framework: emotions, beliefs, actions, which is based on the understanding of human psychology within the social context, while Bourdieu's concepts are used for the interpretation of the ideological aspects of the collected data.

5.3 Emotional aspects of expressed attitudes in the collected data

In the process of looking for commonalities in the collected data, one of the most noticeable qualities was the emotional charge evident in the attitudes expressed. The interviewees identified fear, feeling poorer, sadness and feeling annoyed as negative emotions associated with bilingualism in a variety of ways, while expressed positive emotions, which could be categorised under the umbrella of enthusiastic feelings, were mostly related to multiculturalism. One unique answer provided an insight in multiple benefits of embedding another language in all aspects of school life in a school in England.

The identified emotions will be used as subheadings for this section. Seven interviewees will be referred to throughout this chapter as: Conservative MP (based in England), Labour MP (based in England), Welsh civil servant (based in Wales), English lead professional (based in England), English-Welsh lead professional (based in England), bilingual Welsh professional (based in Wales) and monolingual English professional (based in Wales).

5.3.1. Fear

Fear is the emotion identified in the process of data categorisation as the one that features most frequently and with the greatest intensity.

In the collected data, fear is referred to in the following contexts: *great fear of immigration, fear of difference, fear for the National Curriculum, fear for the British identity being subsumed in the European Union, fear of children who can speak a language a teacher cannot, fear of people who have a foot in two different cultures.*

(Interview data, presented throughout the document in bold italics)

Leaving aside for the present primarily political issues such as immigration and Britishness, I would like to concentrate on the pillar of most centralised systems of education in nation states: the National Curriculum.

What does the National Curriculum need protecting from? One interviewee referred to *‘not having problems with segments of the school day being used to promote or teach community languages, but within the context of protecting the National Curriculum’*. (Labour MP, Interview data)

This statement opens many questions. Are minority languages seen as something that can be merely tolerated as long as the National Curriculum is not endangered in any way? Why is the set of knowledge and skills validated as the National Curriculum of higher importance than one’s first language? Who makes these decisions on behalf of minority groups?

These decisions are often dressed up in the rhetoric of good intentions: achieving on National Curriculum levels opens up prospects of social mobility, economic well-being and access to power. But is ‘protecting the National Curriculum’ discourse about giving individuals the skills and knowledge to change power relations fundamentally on a wider scale or about protecting the system that serves to reproduce existing power relations?

The theory of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1998) dismisses education as the neutral ‘transmitter’ of knowledge and skills. Instead, education is the instrumental force in class and inequality reproduction. When it comes to the acceptance of first languages not being a part of official learning, school environment and curriculum, Bourdieu’s (1998) conclusions that the groups lower down the hierarchy of power

accept a social construct like marginalisation of first languages as a necessity of the same order as the law of gravity, which seem to correspond to reality very well.

It is interesting to look at the case of Welsh. According to the interviewees, it is within the memory of their living family members that there was the acceptance that: *'it (Welsh) wasn't a language that you would get on in life with'* and *'was not on a par with English'* (Interview data, Bilingual Welsh professional). In many ways this minority, but indigenous, language was exposed to much harsher means of oppression than any minority language of present day immigrant communities. With the Act of Union in 1563 Welsh lost the use and status of the official language and domination of English remained unchallenged until 1942. However, it was not until 1960s that the first Language Act restoring the status of Welsh was adopted. It took another 30 years for a significant process of language revival to develop (Ager, 2003, p 69). One interviewed Welsh speaker reflected on this history in the following way: *'it is surprising that we (Welsh speakers) have survived at all'* (Interview data, Bilingual Welsh professional). The same interviewee identified that Welsh people were glad to be *'regarded as European rather than just British'*, because it gave them *'more status as a nation and as a language'* (Bilingual Welsh professional, Interview data). It was interesting to notice that the context of a United Europe was seen by this interviewee as supportive and affirmative to her language and national identity, while one of the interviewed English politicians expressed the view that: *'...the British are worried about their identity being subsumed within the European Union. ... and I also don't think British people have had their say or that there has been a proper debate about the implications of mass immigration for our culture. And until we are able to have that debate in a sensible and mature fashion there will be a sort of culture of fear and concern to which politicians will respond in a*

fashion which is to say, while there is immigration they are in favour of integration. If we can, as it were, have immigration under control and people feel a bit more relaxed about it, then we can also have a much more relaxed and mature discussion about the benefits of multiculturalism, which I think includes benefits of bilingualism. ’ (Conservative MP, Interview data).

Considering the fact that English is one of the twenty official languages of the European Union and the most dominant one (Phillipson, 2003), while Welsh is not one of the official languages, this difference in attitudes does not seem to correspond to the relevant facts. Possible explanations could be explored along the lines of possibly xenophobic feelings among native English speakers, identified by another interviewee: *‘Xenophobia is implicit in the indigenous population of Britain. It is based on the fact that different is dangerous. They’ve had a ‘diet of difference’, not a diet of what is similar, what is similar about people, and then what is unique about them. British National Party type of people talk about difference.*’ (English lead professional, Interview data). Or perhaps another explanation could be in the changes of power balance through the protected status of minority languages within the larger entity of the United Europe. European language policies emphasise preserving and promoting language diversity in Europe as essential to the success of European integration (Vienna Manifesto on European Language Policies, Principle a), 2001).

As argued by Baetens Beardsmore there is a ‘deep-seated and widespread fear of bilingualism’, mainly among monolinguals. His suggestions, that these fears are only overtly about language, culture, education, but in fact they are of politico-ideological nature, are visible in the sample of views presented above (Baetens

Beardsmore, 2003, p 10, 20). Baetens Beardsmore's adopted approach that 'unease about language is almost always symptomatic of a larger unease' (McArthur, quoted in *ibid.* p 20) seems relevant too for the analysis of the views presented above.

The fact that immigration, xenophobia, 'Europhobia', the need to protect the National Curriculum and British identity were addressed by interviewees demonstrated identification of this 'larger unease' as directly linked to bilingualism/multilingualism.

5.3.2. Feeling poorer

The collected data show that there is a split in valuing indigenous and non-indigenous minority languages:

'I think it's a very good thing that the Welsh have held on to their culture and to a certain extent I think in a civilised society we can accommodate elements that at first appear frivolous like Welsh language signs or Welsh language TV station.'

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

The same MP was also impressed with a fellow MP speaking Welsh in Parliament and he concluded that *'you would feel poorer if Welsh disappeared'* (Conservative MP, Interview data). *'Feeling poorer'* in relation to the disappearance of languages or language death, however, seems not to exist when it comes to non-British languages.

About Bengali, which for example is the home language of over 11 percent of children living in Westminster (City of Westminster, 2006), this interviewee said:

'It does not matter to this country if people speak Bengali or not, in terms of our culture. Bengali could matter if the Indian economy grows and it can be used for business purposes. Welsh and Gaelic are home languages. There is more political imperative and more political clout behind preserving those languages as a part of our own cultural identity.'

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

This view of '*our culture*' exposes the complexity of issues around the definition of Britishness and contemporary British multicultural society. According to this MP 'our culture' has a very exclusive definition: only languages indigenous to the British isles matter to the British culture. What about the languages of ex-British colonies, such as Bengali? Are they in some way a part of British history and culture? For how many generations does a community have to exist in Britain in order for politicians to recognise it as integrated – by which is not meant assimilated, but as a contributor to the fabric of British society? An attempt to respond officially to some of these questions came in a collection of essays *Reclaiming Britishness: Living together after 11 September and the rise of the Right*, written mainly by politicians (Foreign Policy Centre, 2002).

Right-wing politicians are criticised in one of these essays for failing to see that multiculturalism is not a threat to nationhood, but leads to its enhancement. The celebration of the Golden Jubilee in 2002 is used to support that argument:

“The parade on the Mall was a sparkling celebration of British pluralism, a pageant paid tribute to the profound role that immigration from the Commonwealth has played in the evolution of patriotism in this country over the past half century. The gospel choir, Bollywood performers and Notting Hill Carnival dancers were all vibrant proof that those who would pit traditional Britishness against its modern variant, hoping to detect irreconcilable tensions, miss the point completely. The Jubilee revealed a sense of nationhood which is not embattled and defensive, but porous, adaptable and confident.”

(The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002, p 9, 10)

In the collected data, ‘our culture’ discourse differs greatly from ‘our economy’ discourse. The interviewed Conservative MP had no doubt that: *‘If the Indian economy grows...’* Bengali will become of value and interest to Britain. This highlights the aspect of convertibility of cultural capital into economic capital as discussed in the theoretical framework. The potential economic value that minority languages have was emphasised by all other interviewees as well, with a common agreement that this area had not been explored very well, especially by the Government:

‘I don’t think we have focused perhaps enough on how language impacts on ... community languages impact on our economy. Maybe more work is needed by the Government seeing how that particular sector of, of language skills impacts on our economy. I am not aware of any work that’s been done on that, maybe something we ought to look at.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

However, in terms of supporting the process of the maintenance of minority languages, the Conservative MP was of the opinion that schools cannot be responsible for that process, but that *‘parents should simply speak it at home’*. When challenged by me to consider parents who did not receive any support from the mainstream society to maintain their language, and could easily internalise the attitude that their language had no value and therefore concentrate only on developing their children’s English, this MP resorted to an evolutionist analogy by stating: *‘Languages evolve like any organism and some languages die away’*. Again, there is an echo of Bourdieu’s warning in this statement that people see social constructs as natural and inevitable as the law of gravity (Bourdieu, 1991).

Are languages subject to evolution like living organisms are? May (2001) argues that biological metaphors relating to language death ‘obscure the wider social and political factors at work in language loss’. Groups that suffer from political marginalisation, social deprivation and economic instability are the ones that lose their languages (May, 2001, p 4).

5.3.3. Sadness

Four interviewees, professionals working in education, identified sadness as the emotion that coloured their attitude to language loss in general and scenarios leading to it, such as children not seeing the value of their minority language. On the other hand, one of the interviewed MPs commented on the interview statement:

Bengali has no value. It is only valued by people who speak it. Employers want French or other European languages. It is a waste of time. (Pimlico student) - by saying: *‘This student is right – Bengali has no value.’* (Conservative MP, Interview data). A statement like this at some point plays a role in the process that results in what Hall (1991) terms ‘constructed narratives’. According to Hall, the positioning of individuals and groups in the present society is determined by their relationship with their histories which are partly based on facts and memories, but also the narratives that they encounter.

Another interviewee, an English lead professional, spoke about the alienation and ghettoisation that stem from the marginalisation of linguistic resources that children bring to school. His approach is that every child speaking another language is a resource in schools, which can be used as a part of learning strategies to acquire other languages and to learn about citizenship. When this happens the bilingual child feels: *‘...valued and respected, she is more likely to integrate in mainstream society if*

she is positive about her place in it. If she is made to feel alien and different, she is not going to integrate. And what we are doing rapidly is alienating these groups, so they are ghettoising themselves to protect themselves.'

(English lead professional, Interview data)

Failing to recognise bilingual children as resources in schools was also criticised by The Nuffield Inquiry. According to the section of the report entitled 'Building on diversity: neglecting the nation's wealth', bilingual children are still seen in schools 'rather as a problem than a resource', while on the whole 'multilingual talents of UK citizens are under-recognised, under-used and all too often viewed with suspicion'. The main point of criticism is highlighted as lack of correlation between demand and supply. Bilingual children in the UK speak languages that are of great importance in the international and economic affairs of the country, yet the existing skills in these languages go unrecognised, are under-deployed or dismissed as a problem (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 36).

One response provided a description of an inner conflict between the feelings of sadness about the language loss, her instinct that language variety is beneficial, and failing to see pragmatic reasons for language maintenance:

'I'm torn. I'm torn. I feel sad when he or she says: the fewer languages, the better...but then, in some ways, I don't see the point of continuing the language that is dying out. Instinctively I think the more languages the better, because that's amazing and you get all of these different ways of communicating. And we all make ourselves understood, just about, and in some way I don't see the point of maintaining the language just for the sake of it.'

(Welsh civil servant, Interview data)

This interviewee demonstrates the complexity of shaping an attitude. She battles with sadness related to the loss of something that she considers amazing and she even draws on her instincts which support the emotional aspect, but rationally she ‘does not see the point’. In fact her emotions and instincts are disarmed by a lack of knowledge that no language maintenance is ‘just for the sake of it’. Every language has something to contribute to the human totality of knowledge in the field of linguistics, communication, culture, literature, art and knowledge about local environments. I wish to argue that this interviewee is identifying a vacuum in her experience that has not given her the reasoning and facts which would support the emotional and instinctive elements of her attitude. The ethos of plurilingualism as promoted by the European Council aims to replace this kind of vacuum with language awareness.

5.3.4. Enthusiasm

Throughout the process of data collection it was evident that there was a consistent and passionate enthusiasm expressed towards multiculturalism, even though none of the interview statements focused on multiculturalism:

‘Britain has benefited hugely from multiculturalism.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

‘London thrives on different cultures. We can pick home grown talent because we have communities that are comfortable with England and London, but have also kept their roots.’

(Conservative MP, Interview Data)

These statements are a testimony that this society is already very advanced when it comes to accommodating multiculturalism as one of the integral and defining elements of citizenship, education and everyday life. When it comes to multilingualism, educators refer to ‘multilingual schools’ and ‘multilingual learners’.

In reality this means that schools are multilingual by their intake and records of languages spoken by their pupils. However, most of these multilingual learners use their languages only in the playgrounds and school corridors, but predominantly outside school.

My previous study conducted with headteachers of four London schools (Mehmedbegovic, 2004) provided evidence that culture and language awareness do not develop jointly. The diversity of cultures was celebrated and promoted in a consistent way in all four schools in this study, while languages received a different treatment from school to school. The view expressed by the Centre for Language and Language Teaching (CILT, currently named as National Centre for Languages, but using the same acronym) in the document *Bilingualism and British Education: The Dimensions of Diversity*, published in 1976 seems to be as applicable today:

“Multiculturalism has been accepted, indeed to some extent exploited, as a new dimension in education, but its associated multilingualism often seems to be too complex to permit much specific education provision to be made for it.”

(CILT, 1976, p 8)

Current official discourse on issues of diversity is presented in a recent White Paper on Citizenship, subtitled *Diversity in Modern Britain* (2002). In this paper cultural diversity in Britain is praised for several reasons: the strong international links that Britain has, the strong economy and cultural vitality. It even includes an explicit statement about the Government ‘welcoming the richness of the diversity which immigrants have brought into the UK’, recognising that ‘our society is shaped by its diverse peoples’ (White Paper, 2002, p 10, 18). The messages and the timing of this White Paper have, in fact, more to do with the threat posed by terrorism in the last

few years, than mere enthusiasm for multiculturalism. The September 11 2001 events in the USA have triggered public debates and literature in Britain that address a rethinking and redefining of Britishness. The Citizenship White Paper and the introduction of citizenship into the National Curriculum are significant attempts by the Government to build community cohesion on the values of diversity as the pillars of modern Britain. However, yet again, there is a complete absence of addressing language diversity within the cultural diversity debate and the place of languages in everything that cultural diversity is praised for, as listed above.

One of the interviewed lead professionals in England offered an explanation for the absence of multilingualism in classrooms:

‘The problem of our system is that teachers like to be in control. Teachers have to take risks and allow children to take risks. I think if you have 90 percent Gujarati speakers in your class, you do poetry in Gujarati. If we just treat language as a communicative tool, then all these problems what language it is – disappear. In all sorts of learning teachers don’t see themselves as facilitators. They see themselves as instructors.’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

The feeling of ‘not being in control if a language is used that they (teachers) do not understand’ was also identified in the same context by a bilingual headteacher in my previous study (Mehmedbegovic, 2004).

The same interviewee provided an account of ‘taking a risk’ himself in his previous career as a headteacher. He reported experimenting with introducing another language as the medium of instruction for certain parts of the day. He decided to introduce French, because he had a native French speaker as his deputy, to all pupils and staff

in a primary school 16 years ago. The reason he introduced this initiative was to fill in certain literacy gaps for Black African Caribbean monolingual pupils who were below the average reading age and were not seen as being able to access the curriculum:

‘Well, there were six boys who could not read, really could not read. I was talking with my staff and we decided to try it again from the basics through a different language, because they would not feel isolated, they would not be taken out of classes, they would not feel picked on. We made the whole school bilingual over a half-term and it worked! The way we taught French was alongside English and children started making connections ... At the moment all the spaces to put the language in are there, but teachers need the training to know how.’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

This account refers to very emotional states that are connected with being a pupil new to English and going through the process of acquiring English, feelings of isolation, separation from one’s class in order to receive support in English and the experience of being picked on because of language errors or foreign accents, resulting frequently in children seeing no value in their first language or seeing it as a reason for their lack of achievement (Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004). The question that needs asking is: if the introduction of a foreign language deals so effectively with many negative aspects of the lack of literacy in English, what could then be achieved by bringing first languages into teaching and learning?

Supporting bilingual children in experiencing their linguistic and cultural knowledge as an asset has been identified by several researchers, whether they were conducting studies with teachers or students, as an important factor in the academic achievement of bilingual students (Igoa, 1995; Thomas and Collier, 1997; Nieto, 1999). Cummins

(2001) argues that effective teaching on its own cannot reverse the patterns of underachievement in education. He considers an affirmation of students' backgrounds as an equally important side of the pedagogical coin (Cummins, 2001, p 263). This affirmation of backgrounds needs to be equally inclusive of cultural and linguistic aspects.

Currently, with the latest push for language teaching in primary schools CILT have been regularly reporting in its newsletter on 'pioneering and bold' steps to use minority languages in schools. In primary schools in Coventry and Southampton there is a lot of enthusiasm for the Language Investigation model. This model is implemented through 'encounters with languages of local and international communities'. The advantage of this model, which has as its aim developing languages awareness across many different languages rather than proficiency in one specific language, is that it can be delivered by the class teacher regardless of their proficiency in languages other than English. In fact, the teacher becomes a facilitator in the full sense of that word, while bilingual children in the class have their opportunity to take their place as experts and contribute their knowledge (CILT, 2006, p 5, 6).

5.3.5. Feeling annoyed

One single answer of feeling annoyed came from the interviewed bilingual Welsh professional:

'Not true at all!! Totally not fair! We've been born into it! I was not taught English until the age of five! I am very annoyed to see this! In Wales people wouldn't say such things!'

(Bilingual Welsh professional, Interview data)

This response was triggered by the following interview statement:

Is language primarily culture or communication? If you are saying language is a cultural feature then fine, you can have many different languages going on. If you are talking about language for communication then the fewer languages you have the better. Otherwise you'll end up like the Welsh speaking the language that nobody else understands, just to keep it going.

(London headteacher, in Mehmedbegovic, 2004)

For somebody who describes herself as follows:

'I classify myself as a true bilingual with Welsh as my dominant language. My reading and writing are balanced in both languages, oral language not as much. In Aberystwyth 80 to 90 percent of communication happens in Welsh. It is a cultural shock to be in Cardiff! I have to translate!'

(Bilingual Welsh professional, Interview data)

... engaging with a statement dismissive of the value of Welsh caused disbelief and a strong personal reaction. This memorable episode during the data collection process exposed the differences between two high status professionals working in the same education system, the monolingual English headteacher whose quote was used as the interview statement and the bilingual Welsh professional in this study. Their different views might be said to be representative of differences between monolingual outlook and bilingual experience.

In an analysis of fears and negative attitudes to bilingualism by Baetens Beardsmore (2003) entitled *Who is Afraid of Bilingualism?* it is highlighted that negativity to bilingualism mainly comes from monolinguals. Bilinguals relate to bilingualism as the natural consequence of their environment or their life histories; while

monolinguals perceive monolingualism as the norm and bilingualism as a type of deviation from the norm and consider it as problematic (Baetens Beardsmore, 2003, p 10, 11).

5.4. Cognitive aspects of attitudes expressed in the data collected

The second section of the data discussion focuses on the cognitive aspect of expressed attitudes, which encompasses thoughts, beliefs and ideas with regard to the interview statements. It will be presented under the subheadings: Home versus school, Valuing English and Valuing bilingualism.

5.4.1. Home versus school:

'I believe in diversity. Speaking another language at home is fine.'

(Labour MP, Interview data)

The chosen subheading captures well the way attitudes to languages, not only in this study but also in my previous studies, are determined by the location of their use, such as home or school. The area with the highest level of agreement among the interviewees lies in their attitudes to minority languages being used within families and homes. The opinions are mainly based on valuing personal liberties and choice. Home and family are the principal domains in which these basic civil rights are exercised. Therefore, Blunkett's statement: Immigrants should speak English at home..., is rejected as it is viewed as unacceptable ***'to be telling people what they should speak at home'*** (English lead professional, Interview data). Blunkett's statement is judged as: ***'racist, disgusting, horrific, horrible, disgraceful, dreadful, going too far and the most ridiculous thing'*** (All interviewees, Interview data).

This choice of words points to a strong consensus over any suggestion that compromises well established values of democratic societies such as respect of privacy and individual choice. Identical findings came out of the data collected in a previous study in attitudes of headteachers (Mehmedbegovic, 2004). Interviewed headteachers in fact chose the same or similar words when expressing their opinions.

This is one section of the data analysis where there is a clear, shared attitude and it can be traced in this previous study. Having such unanimous agreement among all interviewees across two different studies suggests that if a value is integral to a particular society there are effective mechanisms for transmitting that value. The pride in the democratic tradition of this country which is present in the practices of public institutions, public debates and political campaigns corresponds to the clear statements of embarrassment and rejection, expressed by interviewees for the possibility of democratic rights being denied to a section of society and unanimously judged as unacceptable.

However, once the debate moved away from guaranteed civil liberties within the context of home, the agreement among interviewees was lost. In terms of the mainstream schooling context, views varied – again in agreement with the findings of the study with headteachers (Mehmedbegovic, 2004). As much as the statement: ***‘I believe in diversity. Speaking another language at home is fine.’*** (Labour MP, Interview data), about protecting freedom of choice, there is also an element of it saying that another language at home is fine – as long as it ‘does not come out’ or as long as it does not endanger the National Curriculum or as long as there is an understanding which language really matters to ‘our culture’ and success in ‘our society’.

The range of views, reflecting on responsibility, preference, prejudice and tolerance to do with other languages in the context of schooling, is presented below. They vary from:

1. ***‘School should not be responsible for Bengali lessons.’*** (Conservative MP)

2. *'I would prefer to see immigrants speaking English in school.'* (Conservative MP)

3. *'What makes people unrelaxed is when immigrants are taught in their first language at school and are not given the opportunity to develop the language of their new home.'* (Conservative MP)

to:

4. *'Schools need to tailor their language curriculum around the communities that they serve.'* (Labour MP)

5. *'I have no problems with us teaching Bengali in schools.'* (Labour MP)

6. *'Lambeth have a significant number of Portuguese students, why aren't they taught some of the time in Portuguese?'* (English lead professional)

From the above sample it appears as if there is a clear right and left divide between the Conservative and Labour MPs, but I would like to argue that this is not entirely the case. Even though the Labour MP has 'model' starting points such as: *'I believe in diversity...; schools need to tailor their provision to reflect the communities they serve; segments of the school day can be used to promote a community language...'* he eventually drifts into the agendas of *'protecting the National Curriculum and understanding that English is the core language'* (Labour MP, Interview data).

It is revealing to look at how 'responsibility' is approached in these views and which sections of society are the starting points for consideration. Views 4 and 6 approach responsibility with reference to the community of learners they serve. They suggest that school provision needs to take into consideration the profiles of its pupils. View 1, on the contrary, takes 'school' as the starting point. School which is located in England, therefore its provision should be in English only, regardless of who the pupils are. This approach was also strongly advocated by one of the headteachers,

interviewed previously. He referred to his 'brief' to teach English and the fact that even if there was funding available from community groups he would not consider any teaching in minority languages in his school (Mehmedbegovic, 2004). I am in agreement with the view that schools in England have a primary responsibility and a 'brief' to teach English, the importance of which I do not question, but I do question the interpretation of the part of this brief for schools that says: 'every child needs to be supported to realise his/her full potential' (National Priorities, Westminster's Education Development Plan, 2001). How can a school support bilingual children to realise their full potential without acknowledging the fact that languages other than English have their place in that potential?

Views 2 and 5 take as the starting point 'I' and present the personal preferences of two English monolinguals, in this case two English monolingual politicians. Even though this is a study in personal attitudes, it was interesting to notice that two participants, whose role in the system was to delegate for citizens of their constituencies, chose to engage with the issues of educational provision for their bilingual communities from the platform of their own preference. Would it not be reasonable to expect that parents and communities should be consulted?

In view 3 there is a division between 'people' and 'immigrants'. 'People' in this case refers to the 83 per cent of monolingual adults in the UK (Eurostats figure previously quoted in Hansard records), many of whom are probably not aware of why and how first languages might play a part in the acquisition of English.

The responsibility of the system to bilingual students who cannot access the curriculum in the dominant language was challenged in a historic court case of

this kind in the USA in 1970, known as the Lau versus Nichols case. This court case was based on the argument that it was a breach of equal opportunity rights if students, in this case Chinese in origin, were taught in a language they could not understand.

After four years of legal battle, the students won. Programmes that included some use of minority language in schools followed the significant success of this case (Baker, 1997, p 356). Perhaps it is not a coincidence that only a year later the European Council issued the Directive for the education of children of migrant workers (1975) making it a responsibility of member states to offer some educational provision in mother tongues. Britain opposed it, firstly on the grounds of its decentralised system of education, secondly due to having settlers rather than migrant workers and, finally, the existence of too big a range of languages (Brumfit, Ellis and Levine, 1985, p 19). This Directive, which is the closest step Europe has made to make mother tongues a part of the mainstream system, was soon changed into a recommendation to member states. The emphasis was no longer on obligation, but rather on the promotion of mother tongue maintenance, deleting the actual right to it.

It was recognised by the interviewees that there were *'huge variations'* in terms of current practice in mainstream schooling and the position of first languages. Ofsted (2001) describes current practice as: 'there are pockets of good practice'. The findings of the study with headteachers (Mehmedbegovic, 2004) provide an insight into these variations and their relationship with the attitudes of headteachers. If headteachers do not consider first languages as a part of their vision for the school, or as one of the interviewees in this study has expressed it, *'it is not on their radar'* (English lead professional, ex-headteacher, Interview data) then first languages will not have much presence or use in school life.

The situation in Wales is significantly different, when it comes to the position of

Welsh, but not different in the case of other minority languages. According to the interview data: *‘bilingual Welsh-English schools are very successful, there is an increase in interest, even English monolingual parents send their children to bilingual schools, most parents want their children to be bilingual, not just middle class parents’* (Welsh lead professionals, Interview data). The fact that bilingual Welsh-English education has overcome its earlier middle class only image is discussed later on in this chapter.

The findings of the Nuffield Inquiry support the views expressed above. A total of 36 per cent of Welsh speaking children come from families where neither parent is a Welsh speaker. On the whole, demand for learning indigenous languages is judged to be ‘booming’. The success of the language revival strategy in Wales is attributed to the ‘political will’ which has changed ‘negative attitudes.... a general lack of appreciation of its (Welsh) value and lack of enthusiasm for learning it’. This ‘political will’ has created ‘ambitious and energetic policies’ and ‘translated innovative ideas into strategies and projects’. The result is portrayed as a ‘remarkable success story’, not only of language revival, but of increased achievement of pupils benefiting from the cognitive advantages of bilingualism (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000, p 34).

Contrary to the expectations that positive attitudes to English-Welsh bilingualism might open doors to bilingualism or multilingualism which include other languages, the collected data show that this is not the case.

Starting with the terminology used:

‘Bilingual in Wales always means English-Welsh, never English and a community

language, English and a European language – it goes back to the point that community languages are second best.'

(Welsh lead professional, Interview data)

As to the perceptions of the status of non-indigenous minority languages:

'There is a lot of emphasis on Welsh. Community languages are given lower status than English and Welsh. They are third status.'

(Welsh civil servant, Interview data)

These statements not only resemble what was seen in the analysis of Hansard records as a split in giving more acknowledgement to indigenous than to non-indigenous languages, but they portray the actual experience of that division as directly marginalising and degrading non-indigenous languages.

Also, the position of recent immigrants in Wales has added complexity in comparison with England, because immigrants need to acquire both English and Welsh. The English monolinguals in Wales, who participated in this study, reported that they do not personally feel under pressure to acquire Welsh, while they have observed immigrants putting efforts into acquiring Welsh in order to secure better integration.

One Welsh born English monolingual living in Wales, whose paternal grandparents were immigrants and never acquired English, expressed a unique lack of valuing Welsh and its revival, within the context of this study:

'I laughed at this comment: You'll end up like the Welsh speaking the language nobody understands. That's exactly how I feel about it. We are maintaining it just for the sake of maintaining it. I can't help laughing a little bit, when people speak Welsh in the office. I think it's probably the English person in me coming out.'

Learning Welsh is inward looking. Why would I want to learn Welsh? It is not very useful, because it is only spoken in two places: Wales and Patagonia.'

(Welsh civil servant, Interview data)

What is the concept of 'the English person' that this interviewee refers to? It might be the glorified native speaker of English. Her linguistic capital is the unachievable goal of many immigrants and students of English. She can communicate with 700 million people around the world. In 60 out of 150 countries in total she can deal with any legal or official matter without needing a translator or interpreter. The power of her linguistic capital is without challenge (figures as given in May, 2001).

Why would she spend hours learning Welsh? Why would any English speaker spend time learning any other language? These are real questions that can be identified in the Hansard records of the relevant Parliamentary debates. The difficulties of 'selling languages as a key skill to young people' in Britain result from the domination of English. In fact it needs to be acknowledged that the real challenge for the British is not to be blinded by the current power of English.

5.4.2. Valuing English

Recognition of the dominant status of English is expressed by interviewees linked with the following issues: *'being able to assert your rights and get your entitlements, functioning as a citizen, accessing society and jobs.'* Also English is referred to as: *'the universal language of business; more valuable in terms of employment; language of computers, which have a bigger impact on the global society than anything else.'* (All Interviewees, Interview data). There was only one interviewee who presented a different attitude to English. It is relevant to note that he is an English monolingual, but identifies himself as British European:

'I think that it is probably a fairly strongly held view in Britain: English is the most important language. And you are nobody if you don't speak English, I think the English speaking population is facing the situation: you are nobody if you can't speak another language. In the ever changing business world, if you haven't got the ability to learn another language or the understanding of how other languages work, you are lost. We (government institutions) certainly have hard evidence showing that jobs are going to people with languages. Our population is going to be disadvantaged. The trouble is, we think because we speak English, we can be complacent.' (Interview data, English lead professional)

As discussed in the previous chapter, several speakers in Parliament criticised the dominant monolingual ethos and lack of political will to address it. They were urging the Government to 'de-couple' the benefits gained by the spread of English and the need for Britain to secure skill in other languages (Lords Hansard records, 2002). In terms of the views of linguists there are many who focus on analysing the disadvantaged position of speakers of minority languages (Phillipson 2003, Tollefson 2002, May 2001, Crystal 2002, Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), but finding studies exposing possible future disadvantages of English speakers is rare. Grin (1999) argues that the value of English decreases in the process of becoming a skill so necessary, that soon it is going to become as banal as basic literacy. If that happens, monolingual English speakers will be a minority possessing necessary, but not adequate, skills in the predominantly bilingual/multilingual societies.

This view brings on board the other side of the coin. The process of globalisation and the necessity of a lingua franca do not mean only devaluing and endangering minority languages, but they also mean devaluing the language which is the lingua

franca, simply because it becomes common currency. I would like to argue that it is essential for linguists not to lose sight of this balance, otherwise studies that have great value in exposing social injustice, in the context of language policies and practices, are vulnerable to the criticism of demonising English. Concepts like ‘killer language’, coined by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and applied to English, are not helpful in the process of recognising the value that each and every language has.

5.4.3. Valuing bilingualism

All those interviewed perceived certain benefits in individual or societal bilingualism/multilingualism. Also, the teaching and learning of other languages was frequently referred to as beneficial in a whole range of areas. The list of benefits suggested by the interviewees is an exhaustive list of different aspects of bilingualism and language learning and the multiplicity of ways in which they advance learning, thinking, use of language and human resources. Identified benefits can be classified into five groups: linguistic, cognitive, cultural, economic and educational benefits. The rest of this section will be presented under the corresponding five subheadings.

5.4.3.1. Linguistic benefits

Views expressed in this category relate specifically to the benefits of learning other languages with reference to the development of metalinguistic skills. The interviewee who says:

‘When you learn French you don’t just learn French, it opens up opportunities to learn how language is structured. You learn about the style and structure of language and how it operates.’ (Labour MP, Interview data), exposes a paradox of several generations educated in the UK system during the period of a communicative approach in teaching English, when the explicit teaching of grammar was completely

abandoned. At the time of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (2001-2002), which reintroduced contextualised explicit grammar teaching, during which time I encountered many English teachers attending training, who repeatedly emphasised that the knowledge of grammatical structures they had acquired was gained mainly in their Modern Foreign Languages lessons, which predominantly were French lessons. This is an unusual situation within the European context, where this complete abandonment of explicit grammar teaching as an integral part of first language instruction does not occur in other countries. However, it proves that the teaching of a foreign language can fill some gaps in language knowledge and awareness that, for various reasons, may occur in the instruction of the mother tongue or dominant language. The same point was argued by several speakers in the analysed Parliamentary debates. Their contributions can be summed up in the quote by Goethe used by Lord Williams: *‘Whoever is not acquainted with a foreign language knows nothing of his own.’* (Hansard records, 2002).

‘More languages in schools, the better it is. Transfer of skills is an amazing process!’

(Bilingual Welsh professional, Interview data)

The interviewee who spoke with the greatest enthusiasm about the transfer of skills declared Welsh as her first and dominant language, English her second language and she also had a degree in Classical Languages. She was exposed to teaching and learning in two languages from an early age and, in her teenage years, she had embraced classical languages and pursued them to degree level. She is an example of a bilingual learner who had developed in conditions favourable to reaching the bilingual/multilingual Threshold of Linguistic Competence, as defined by Cummins (1976, 1979, 1981). Her learning environment was supportive of the transfer of

skills between the languages she was learning and using. In her reflection on her schooling she did not spare words in order to describe what a positive and beneficial experience it was. The impact of it on her situation was not only that she had become a leading professional in bilingual education in Wales, but also that she had transferred her enthusiasm for languages onto her children, who had also studied another two languages in addition to Welsh and English, as revealed in the interview data. The experience that this interviewee had is precisely the kind of experiences described by Lords and MPs in the Hansard data. They spoke of the rest of the country learning lessons from bilinguals education in Wales, as discussed in the previous chapter (Lords and Commons Hansard, 2002).

A monolingual interviewee expressed remarkably positive views with reference to acquiring high status foreign languages abroad:

‘Every child who speaks two languages has a gift in life that should be treasured and saved. After all, friends of mine who have gone abroad with young children are delighted that their children are coming back speaking a foreign language fluently.’

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

Even though the starting point here was *every child*, meaning every bilingual child, there was evidence throughout the interview that this interviewee had attached more value to indigenous and foreign languages than minority non-indigenous languages. This statement identified bilingualism as ‘a gift that should be treasured and saved’. The view of this interviewee was that this gift, in the case of children who speak non-indigenous minority languages, would be preserved simply by speaking it with parents at home. In fact, children can lose their ability to communicate in their mother tongue within two or three years of starting school in their second language. If all

their learning and development happens in other language communities, they will probably retain comprehension skills in their mother tongue, but will communicate in the majority language (Cummins, 2003, p 64).

One interviewed lead professional reflected on the benefits of the new approaches to foreign language learning in schools:

‘And now the National Strategy (for Languages in primary schools) has a huge potential, I am not talking about being fluent in a particular language by the age of 11, but understanding how languages operate.’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

Promoting the approach to foreign language teaching, the aim of which is not necessarily to reach fluency in the target language, but to develop metalinguistic skills and insight into fundamental issues of language structures and functions, marks the shift from traditional foreign language teaching towards the agenda of plurilingualism. These skills that are relevant, regardless of the specific languages used or learnt by an individual throughout his/her life, contribute better to the ideal of a ‘pluralistic communicator’ who draws on his/hers varied repertoire of linguistic and cultural knowledge in a flexible, creative and individual way (Council of Europe, 2001, p 4, 5, 169).

‘If a language, any language, is taught properly, which is about the acquisition of language, it is useful.’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

This interviewee is in agreement with my main starting point, as given in the introduction: every language and any language is a resource. The linguistic

development that one can achieve by stepping out of his/her monolingual experience is equally achievable through French or Urdu.

Another interviewee expands on this type of benefit:

‘And we certainly have evidence that children in schools where English is their second or third language and they are introduced to a European language, Spanish or French – they learn it very quickly, because they have the skills.’

(English-Welsh lead professional, Interview data)

This is an important argument in terms of challenging schools which choose to timetable extra English lessons for their students new to English during the slots for foreign languages. Even though learning English is the highest priority for new arrivals, depriving them of access to foreign languages tuition means depriving them from taking part in a subject area where they can be at the same starting point as all other pupils and have the opportunity to utilise the linguistic skills they have been developing in the process of becoming bilingual. As an area in which bilingual pupils have the potential to achieve better, or as well as other pupils, its impact on self-esteem, motivation and achievement in other subjects also needs to be taken into account when decisions are made relating to providing extra English or Modern Foreign Languages.

5.4.3.2. Cognitive benefits

One of the case studies of good practice on the CILT website (www.cilt.org.uk) presents Till Hill Wood Secondary School in Coventry. This school teaches Geography through the medium of other languages, mainly French. When this initiative was introduced teachers were hoping for improved results in French and hoping to, at best, maintain results in Geography. Contrary to their expectations, not

only did French results improve, but Geography results too. The following statement from an interviewee provides a possible explanation for such occurrences.

‘The more skills you have, the more language base you have, the more effective you can be. Manipulating language helps you manipulate thought processes much better. It is not only about being able to speak the language itself, but also about being able to pick up other things, being able to think more strategically, being able to map the things out in your brain more easily. It is important to be expansive in your thought process about language.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

Another interviewee briefly refers to a similar experience:

‘I think it’s true of any learning of languages, once you’ve learnt a language you can relate different aspects of language back and how you picked up that particular element.’

(Welsh civil servant, Interview data)

This last statement is of a more general nature, but importantly it emphasises that these wider benefits of bilingualism are applicable to any combination of languages:

‘I think there is value in having two languages whatever the languages are.’

(Monolingual English lead professional in Wales, Interview data)

These three interviewees referred to the wider cognitive benefits of bilingualism that have been already explored in Chapter 2. Increased analytical skills linked to using more than one language were also highlighted in the Parliamentary debates by Baroness Sharp, as quoted in the previous chapter. Evidence on the cognitive advantages of bilingualism is crucial in making schools and practitioners aware of the connection between efforts invested in promoting and supporting first or foreign

languages and an increase in terms of exam results in all subjects. This is the key quality of bilingualism that has the potential of providing the proof that the use of two languages in learning for bilingual learners is not additional, desirable and optional, but integral, essential and compulsory in the process of realising their full potential.

5.4.3.3. Cultural benefits

‘Community languages are about communities being able to continue with their traditions.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

‘There will be certain families that will integrate and leave behind their home language and there will be others that will take it seriously and continue to speak it at home. I think we should allow the individuals the freedom to decide which culture they are going to inherit and take on board.’

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

These two responses raise the questions: which communities are the ones that take their languages ‘seriously’? which communities keep their traditions and languages flourishing? Does integration mean ‘leaving behind’ a language? How real is one’s freedom in deciding which culture ‘to inherit or take on board’? Is it freedom or misrecognition, as defined by Bourdieu (1991)?

An example of a community that stands out in London when it comes to taking their language ‘seriously’ is the French community. A recent visitor from the French Government, a minister at the time and the Gaullist candidate in the elections Nicolas Sarkozy, referred to London as ‘the third biggest French city’! (Financial Times, January 2007). The physical evidence of the French presence in London is a cluster of

impressive buildings in one of the most prestigious London areas, South Kensington. Nestled at the back of the French Consulate is the French Lycee, an independent secondary school that follows the French curriculum. Adjoined to it is the French Institute, the cultural hub which promotes French film, literature and art. In the surrounding roads are several independent French primary schools. Even the French patisseries in the area make their contribution to maintaining the traditions, by providing the smell, feel and taste of France. Passing through South Kensington around nine o'clock in the morning and struggling to make one's way through streets blocked by four wheel drive cars belonging to French parents dropping off their children at French schools, leaves one in no doubt that not only do these affluent parents take their language seriously, but that they also belong to a nation that takes its language seriously. Having at one's disposal a strong network of schools and other institutions supported by the government of one's home country certainly makes the 'freedom' of leaving or not leaving one's language behind somewhat more real. May (2001) argues that language loss, which the Conservative MP portrays as 'freedom of choice', is closely linked to social deprivation and economic instability. I would add that this apparent 'freedom of choice' is strongly influenced by the dominant and legitimate types of cultural capital in the wider society. By the term 'legitimate' in relation to languages I mean giving minority languages status of official use, even if that right is only occasionally exercised: for example, use of Welsh in Parliament or Gaelic in TV programmes.

5.4.3.4. Economic benefits

'Learning a language opens up your opportunities.'

(Labour MP, Interview data)

'It is becoming more prospective and desirable in terms of employment

opportunities. People who speak ‘hard languages’ (Chinese, Japanese) can get very, very good jobs.’

(Welsh civil servant, Interview data)

These views, supported by the findings of the Nuffield Inquiry (2000), appear not to be filtering through to young people at the crucial stages of their schooling. From my work with bilingual students and students’ consultations I have conducted in my professional role, I have not found any evidence that bilingual children take into consideration their first languages when making further education or career choices. In fact, the title of my thesis: *Miss, who needs languages of immigrants?* – comes from a student wishing to pursue a career in tourism, but who does not see her fluency in Arabic and Kurdish as an asset in her future career.

Recently, I arranged for a group of bilingual sixth formers in a Westminster school to attend a core module in Public Services Interpreting delivered by Middlesex University. During the induction session I asked them about their motivation to do that course. All seven students who attended said that they wanted to help other people who come to school and who do not speak English or wanted to be helpful to their families. It is impressive that these young people are so focused on the contribution they make in their community using their language skills, but it is also a concern that not one of them suggested that doing this course had a value for their own development and possible future careers. I would like to argue that these young people did not receive those types of messages either through school or the media. They were not aware of the opportunities the interviewees referred to. There was no awareness of what Bourdieu (1997) describes as the convertible economic value of their cultural capital. As a consequence there is a ‘famine in the midst of plenty’

syndrome when it comes to, for example, interpreters for the courts – as reported in the House of Lords and previously referenced.

‘It (language diversity) gives us strength in terms of the market place in the wider economy.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

‘They (minority languages) clearly have a value in the economy depending on where and what businesses are doing and where they are trading, what their customer base is.’

(Labour MP, Interview data)

On a wider level, all of Europe, and Britain especially, are going through a very complex period. At the European level the process of forging the community of European states and nations is ongoing, while the process of globalisation at the wider level is influencing the British economy with great force. In terms of the role languages play, there is a dilemma: to develop further the promotion of European languages or to refocus on those languages which are becoming increasingly important on the global scene?

‘Places like India can become world leaders in 30,40, 50 years and the languages of the subcontinent would be an enormous boost in the future as the Indian economy develops and grows. Chinese Mandarin can be the common language in the next 50 years.’

(Conservative MP, Interview data)

The BBC eight o’clock news on the 4th of February 2007 included an item on the way prognoses like the one above influence MFL curriculum changes. The item was

entitled: ‘French Out, Mandarin In’. It featured several schools in England, which had decided to stop offering French and, instead, offer Chinese to their students. This example highlights the following issues: firstly, schools have the autonomy and flexibility to shape their curriculum; secondly, economic imperatives and prosperity are good incentives and provide a safe rationale for making radical curriculum decisions.

‘We (government institutions) *have hard evidence showing that jobs are going to people with languages.*’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

This comment refers to an occurrence that does not appear evident in the context of England, even for somebody who is searching for such evidence. Individual and societal economic losses due to lack of foreign language skills do not feature in the media. Facts such as the estimated 40 billion pounds loss due to lost orders because of lack of language skills have never made headline news or been the subjects of TV programmes (The English Speaking Union and The Nuffield Foundation, 2002, p 9).

‘A *part of the bid* (for the Olympics) *was to say – we have all these languages.*’

(English-Welsh lead professional, Interview data)

In his keynote speech at a conference in London, Jim Cummins made a comparison between Toronto and London, both of which ‘wheeled out’ all their languages as a part of the Olympic bid, but otherwise they are ‘languages’ graveyards’ (University of Westminster, London, 4th March 2007). Currently there is a Government designated team placed within the DfES with the brief of ensuring that the multilingual potential of London is put into use in the lead up to and during the

Olympic Games. Mid-term and long-term impacts of these initiatives will be of interest to future research.

5.4.3.5. Educational benefits

‘Where languages are being introduced (in primary schools) teachers are realising bilingual children are very able to take up another language and they help other children who aren’t. They (bilingual children) help pupils who are monolingual to access the language, they teach them the skills to access it. The case is that where you have classes with big groups of bilingual children, monolingual children develop very quickly.’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

Evidence so far collected in Britain on peer and sibling learning supports this view that early age bilingual children will, with a little encouragement in the school context and even no encouragement in the home context, be inclined to share their insight into different languages and teach what they know to other children around them (Kenner, 2000, 2004, Gregory, 1997).

‘It (using a foreign language across the curriculum) made an impact on a lot of learning.’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

This interviewee refers here to his experience as a headteacher when he decided to introduce French across his school in order to tackle a lack of literacy in English among a group of Black African Caribbean pupils who were struggling. All teachers in the school were expected to use French in some of their teaching. This required detailed planning which made a noticeable difference to the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum. The other benefits of this approach were: not singling

out the group of targeted boys; instead of going over curriculum tasks in English that made them feel inadequate these boys felt they were learning something new, like everybody else - a whole new language; children quickly became ‘better’ at French than their teachers, which had a positive impact on their motivation and self-esteem; the initiative led to developing links with the French Embassy, who provided support, interesting guests and real life opportunities to use their new skills, and a trip to France, where children and teachers were able to use their French with their host, the mayor of a French city. This inspiring account demonstrates how introducing a language and properly embedding it into the curriculum enriches teaching and learning, experiences of children and teachers alike and the school life in general.

‘In the Canaries in schools, they are employing English people and everybody in school must communicate with them in English. We don’t need to buy our resources, children are the resource – they are there!’

(English lead professional, Interview data)

Currently, along with the implementation of the National Languages Strategy, there are initiatives being developed throughout the country which recruit bilingual children to contribute to teaching as ‘language ambassadors’. CILT reports on students who teach tester lessons to younger students, visit other schools and deliver language and culture awareness sessions and who make significant contributions to language exploration lessons (CILT, 2006).

‘Teachers in Welsh medium or bilingual schools are bilingual themselves and probably have more understanding of language and how it is used and how it is developed and how to maintain it than teachers in monolingual schools.’

Teachers in North Wales cope with non-Welsh speakers, teachers operate bilingually completely naturally, the children are assimilated, they quickly pick up the language. There has got to be a lesson that we can learn from that about bilingualism and extending it more widely.'

(Monolingual English lead professional in Wales, Interview data)

This interviewee made an important point about the wider use of all the strategies and resources that have been developed to support English-Welsh bilingualism. Throughout this research I have not seen any evidence to suggest that there are links being made between encouraging and promoting English-Welsh bilingualism and other types of bilingualism that children may experience. On the contrary, the interviewees have highlighted that even the term 'bilingual' in Wales is exclusively reserved for English-Welsh bilinguals. Consequently, practitioners and policy makers in England are not considering developments in Wales as relevant to bilingual children in England, because of its exclusive nature. For that reason, excellent initiatives such as documents and resources such as Common Links in Teaching English, Welsh and Foreign Languages (EALAW, 2004) go completely unnoticed in England.

5.5. Action aspects of the attitudes expressed in the collected data

The action aspects of individual attitudes in the case of politicians and lead professionals step out of the boundaries of relating to the actions or intentions of them as individual actors. They transfer onto the institutions and agencies, that these individuals are part of or can influence. Interviewing politicians and lead professionals provided data rich with opinions and suggestions on what actions needed to be taken by the Government, different agencies and institutions. This particular section of the data provides insight into key policy making issues: whose responsibility is it to support minority languages?; and who makes the decisions? The emphasis of this section is on the institutions and agencies in the policy making and policy implementation processes such as the Government, politicians, leading institutions, schools, headteachers and teachers. These categories will be used to proceed with the analysis of the data collected. In the conclusion of this chapter I will consider implications of existing policies and practice on bilingual parents, children and young people, as perceived by the interviewees.

5.5.1. Actions by the Government, leading institutions, politicians and lead professionals

In this section an almost completely contrasting picture emerges of high levels of engagement with one specific type of bilingualism, English-Welsh bilingualism, and a low level of engagement with bilingualism of any other type.

The data collected indicate a set of legislation, policies, incentives, guidance, materials, practices and projects that have resulted in the revival of English-Welsh bilingualism in Wales. In fact, one of the interviewed professionals in Wales identified '*state intervention*' as the key factor in the revival process. The question of

Welsh has historically been a political issue. It has gone through a full cycle of state interventions: from being banned, to being devalued, to being generously supported from early childhood to employment. It is an exemplary case study in what can be done, and undone, in terms of language use if the political will is there.

A difference in the level of engagement with the issues of bilingualism between the Welsh Assembly and the UK Government is clearly visible in the collected data. The interviewees in Wales commented on: *'commitment of the Welsh Assembly to maintain the language and spread the language* (Welsh)' and the importance of: *'Welsh Language Act, bilingual signs, laws about companies having two languages; a lot of support from the Welsh Assembly and resources pumped into bilingual education.'* The Conservative MP interviewed in England, on the other hand, referred to: *'Debates on bilingualism that need to happen amongst the political classes.'* I do take on board that the political significance of Welsh in Wales and that of minority languages in England are very different, but is it not surprising that the Government of a country with the capital that prides itself to be: 'a mini-version of the world, the most ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan city in the world, where you have the globe on your doorstep - Planet London' (Time Out, May, 2006), is still at the stage: 'we should have a debate about multilingualism'? Every two weeks a language dies in some remote place, but are there statistics on how many children and adults 'lose' their languages in our own neighbourhoods?

A recently conducted survey of Language Trends in England, Wales and Scotland (CILT, 2005) highlighted the conflicting issues of declining numbers of children studying languages at GCSE level and public debates raising concerns about the implications of it in terms of academic knowledge and businesses, but nevertheless a

complete failure in terms of language policies and planning to engage with the linguistic assets of bilingual communities and children from such backgrounds. The Scottish CILT, which surveyed 76 percent of local authorities in 2005, made the statement:

“The linguistic skills of this group of children are often ignored in the discussions of the UK’s competence in languages other than English. There is a need to recognise the particular benefits which competence in community languages represents for the children themselves, for their communities and for wider British society, and to identify ways in which their potential as linguists can be best realised.”

(CILT, 2005, p 1)

In support of my hypothesis, which identifies attitudes as the key factor in the treatment of the researched phenomenon, the authors of the CILT research report identified as one of the main challenges for utilising the potential of community languages at individual and societal levels, ‘the ambivalence in mainstream attitudes towards community languages’. The data collected in the CILT survey indicated the following attitudes in regards to first language maintenance, tuition and examination: ‘not valuable; not a high priority; no justification for provision; waste of resource and time, since students are already ‘naturally’ good at it; less important than EAL provision’ (CILT, 2005, p 3,4).

Currently, there is great potential within mainstream education to redress this imbalance and to provide space for minority languages within the curriculum. One of the interviewed lead professionals talked about the National Languages Strategy as currently being introduced to primary schools. He reflected on the DfES making a crucial decision:

‘We took the decision very early on, that if primary schools wanted to teach any language they could. So you can teach Serbo-Croat or Japanese or Urdu ... anything. Most of them don’t, but it’s important to say that they could.’

(English-Welsh lead professional, Interview data)

This interviewee focused on an important issue that the Department of Education dealt with very differently in the 1980s, when languages were introduced to secondary schools as a compulsory subject (DES, 1989). Schools were obliged to offer one of the European languages from the approved list of Modern Foreign Languages, while other languages were optional. Therefore, seeing languages being introduced into primary education, underpinned by the DfES message that teaching any language will achieve the objectives outlined in the National Languages Strategy is significant progress indeed. Additionally, there is funding being made available: ***‘We (National Languages Strategy) are funding some projects where we are encouraging community languages and supporting community languages.’*** (English-Welsh lead professional, Interview data) However, the same interviewee acknowledged that these projects ***‘have not gone as far as they might’***.

The current position of minority languages in secondary schools was explored in a report that was published in 2006 by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). This report was based on a survey of pockets of good practice in mainstream schools, language colleges, community schools and local authorities. One of the starting points of this report was that schools which wanted to benefit from enhancing their performance in the league tables by being able to add usually excellent results achieved by bilingual students in their home languages needed to address first of all negative attitudes of children and parents to their home

languages, who may feel that there was a hierarchy of languages and that their languages were not valued as much as European languages (QCA, 2006, p 2). Interestingly, this is another leading institution that identified attitudes as the key factor influencing efforts to turn around the under-use of linguistic resources in minority languages. However, this dichotomy of low values attached to minority languages and high values attached to European languages goes further. Some minority languages are also European languages, like Serbo-Croat mentioned above, but they do not necessarily have a high status. These issues are closely related to my previous discussion on the institutionalised hierarchy of languages embedded in the division on MFL and ‘community languages’.

Additionally high status European languages have suffered a loss in terms of their position in the curriculum. Currently, they are no longer a compulsory subject beyond Key Stage 3 in the secondary sector, which means that beyond the age of 14 students in England do not have to study any language other than English. According to the Languages Review (DfES, 2006c), which evaluated the position of MFL in the educational context, reported that the number of students taking GCSE in languages had fallen from 80 per cent, while it was still mandatory, to 51 per cent. In some schools where language teaching had fallen to a very low level, a realistic expectation was that it would take up to three years to improve practice and increase the number of students obtaining GCSEs in MFL. Aside from numbers, studying MFL has become another aspect of the social divide. Pupils with free school meals entitlement are significantly less likely to gain a language GCSE, than everybody else (DfES, 2006, p 3, p 4, p 23).

Also with the recent change of the Prime Minister (June 2007) there have been

announcements that schools will be given more flexibility to shape their curriculum and will be encouraged to offer languages perceived to be of economic importance to Britain, such as Mandarin (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

However, not committing to foreign languages in the later stages of secondary education seems at odds with the language policy launched by the European Community, which advocates that mother tongue plus two other languages should be acquired fluently by every pupil in Europe (Council of Europe, 2003). In England, even English plus one is not guaranteed throughout compulsory schooling.

Beyond references to the National Languages Strategy, the data collected did not contain many other references to actions of leading institutions in England in the area of bilingualism. It inevitably led to questioning whether the absence of such data was yet more evidence confirming the lack of support from the leading institutions for bilingualism.

The interviewed professionals working in Wales referred to the work of the Welsh QCA (ACAC) on guidance aimed at promoting the curriculum in which *'languages are valued within schools and used as a resource'*; teaching materials produced to help teachers link and cross reference *'common language learning across English, Welsh and Modern Foreign Languages'* and more general references to *'a lot of work going on in terms of increasing bilingualism'* and early years work on *'introducing the language (Welsh) with babies'*, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background (Welsh professionals, Interview data).

These points gave an overview of a strategic approach of a government focused on increasing bilingualism, but not bilingualism in general. This approach was

focused on increasing English-Welsh bilingualism and more specifically on the increase of competencies in and use of Welsh. Again, there are many political and national interests and justified reasons linked to this language policy and planning in Wales. However, are some of the steps taken in respect of English-Welsh bilingualism at the same time missed opportunities to acknowledge other languages spoken in Wales, too, and a failure to provide guidance for families and practitioners? Would the teaching materials referring to commonalities in language teaching and learning across English, Welsh and Modern Foreign Languages lose any of their impact in terms of the increase of Welsh, if they made references to minority languages as well? Could health visitors advising parents on introducing Welsh to newborn children also advise parents on the importance of their minority language and how to balance it with exposure to English and Welsh at the same time? It is arguable that, Wales has structures and mechanisms in place that can easily be utilised for all its languages to flourish, but, like many other European countries, which have recently gained a higher level of political autonomy, Wales is focused on reshaping and reviving its national identity. Language policies during such periods are mostly highly politicised, nation-centred and potentially highly exclusive.

The most active organisation in Wales promoting the value and role of languages other than English and Welsh in Wales is English as an Additional Language Association of Wales, EALAW. In its report on the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Children based on a one-year research project, it confirmed findings from England (Gillborn and Mirza, 2001) that the underachievement of minority groups was linked to the curriculum that does not reflect positively their cultures and backgrounds; and that teachers' lack of awareness in terms of cultural diversity and low expectations result in disaffection. EALAW made recommendations to the Welsh

Assembly in terms of encouraging multilingualism in Wales, using other languages in schools and promoting ‘Welsh’ as the multiethnic identity (EALAW, 2003, p viii, xi, xii). This research and its recommendations were presented to the Welsh Assembly two years prior to the data collection for this study. Still, the interviewees identified the same obstacles relating to the achievement of ethnic minority children: a lack of teachers’ awareness, curriculum issues and perceptions to do with the hierarchy of languages. The interviewed Welsh civil servant even addressed attitudes linked to the use of the term ‘bilingual’: *‘It (i.e. fact that the term bilingual is used only for English-Welsh speakers) is something we (Welsh Assembly) need to tackle. There is a sort of understanding, a perception, a barrier that we have to cross almost, in order to use that .’* The barrier this interviewee referred to is about the exclusivity of the use of the term ‘bilingual’ in Wales. She hinted at the lack of understanding or awareness that emerges as an invisible barrier when it comes to the discourse of bilingualism, which in Wales includes only English and Welsh.

5.5.2. Actions by teachers and headteachers

Teachers are discussed after the Government and leading institutions, because their practice is influenced to a large extent by the Government’s policies and initiatives.

A lack of awareness among practitioners in schools resulting from insufficient training on relevant issues was unanimously identified by the interviewees in this study, in both England and Wales, as an area that needed urgent action. The interviewee whose background was that of a headteacher talked about the complete absence of training in regards to bilingualism for headteachers:

‘Headteachers don’t get any training on bilingualism whatsoever, I certainly

didn't. And if they were trained then the attitudes of most of our headteachers would be different. Because they would get to see the children as a resource not a problem. At the moment they are seen as the problem. They are paying it lip service.'

(English lead professional, Interview data)

The data collected for my IFS study provided evidence in support of the views that there was a lack of training for headteachers (Mehmedbegovic, 2004).

This aspect of mainstream practice: the need for specific teacher training on bilingualism, was the only one where there was this undivided agreement amongst politicians and lead professionals, in the collected data. It was also confirmed in a survey of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) conducted in 2003 by the then Teaching Training Agency, now called the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). NQTs were demanding more course contents on issues of cultural and linguistic diversity, because they did not feel they were well prepared in that area. The TDA has responded to these concerns by supporting the development of the Multiverse website for NQTs which provides examples of good practice and relevant research findings. Individual Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) providers in London, such as the Institute of Education (IOE) currently offer two whole days of EAL training for MFL PGCE students and are looking to develop a full EAL module.

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

Nonetheless, there is an increased recognition that teachers in London, which has the greatest percentage of multilingual learners in its schools in the context of England and Wales, need a distinct set of skills and professional knowledge in order to address ‘complex issues of diversity and pupil learning found in London schools’ (DfES, 2004). As a part of the London Challenge, the Chartered London Teacher status (CLT) scheme, launched by the DfES in September 2004, places an emphasis on the knowledge about communities, cultures and subcultures in London and developing inclusive practices (DfES, 2004). However, this focus entirely on culture carries the danger of adding to the previously discussed culture-language dichotomy. Many London practitioners are already advanced in terms of accommodating multiculturalism as one of the defining elements of citizenship and education, while multilingualism mainly manifests itself as part of a school’s data. Often the fact that a school lists 40 languages spoken by its pupils will not be visible in the classrooms, notebooks or schemes of work. It is a missed opportunity, therefore, that the Chartered London Teacher scheme does not specifically mention linguistic diversity. The importance of multiculturalism to excellent teaching practice in London is recognised, but the recognition of multilingualism is left more open. Also, it is not ideal that EAL learners are mentioned under the point referring to ‘reducing individual barriers to learning’ and in the same sentence as pupils with Special Educational Needs. Referring to bilingualism as ‘a barrier to learning’ perpetuates the view of bilingualism as a problem rather than as a natural process of new language acquisition (DfES, 2004).

For headteachers, the situation is somewhat similar. There is no compulsory module in the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) training focusing on

multilingualism. Even though there is a compulsory module on racial and cultural diversity, again it cannot be taken for granted that multilingualism will be sufficiently covered under these two headings. Securing sufficient content on multilingualism for future headteachers currently going through training and for existing heads throughout their professional development is of vital importance in a system where headteachers have almost unlimited autonomy to decide how to utilise funds allocated to schools for bilingual children.

In terms of the development of EAL practitioners, it has taken several decades to achieve an appropriate offer of nationally recognised accredited courses. Ofsted, 2001 recognised that the lack of standardised qualifications in addition to short-term contracts, unclear career paths and high job uncertainty due to frequent restructuring resulted in difficulties in recruiting specialists in this field. Therefore, many schools employ non-specialist staff or divide the time allocation among mainstream staff. In addition, according to NALDIC (2007), there is a growing concern that the EAL community of teachers is increasingly becoming an ageing professional community, because younger colleagues are not choosing to specialise in this field.

Since the publication of the Ofsted report in 2001 the DfES has promoted a nationally recognised course in EAL. The Institute of Education and the University of Birmingham have both been supported by the DfES to run such courses. The course at the IOE has attracted a lot of interest amongst London EAL practitioners who welcome the opportunity to have a longer-term professional development leading to recognised qualification. However, many interested teachers do not have the opportunity to enrol on the course, mainly for two reasons: the cost of the course and the time off work they need to attend lectures.

In terms of a whole institutional attitude to bilingualism, interviewees criticised schools for *‘the lack of emphasis on language teaching throughout the education of children and adults and the lack of recognition of skills transfer process’* (Interview data). The transfer of skills was previously discussed in this chapter, under the Cognitive benefits subheading, therefore, I will concentrate on the first point: a lack of emphasis on language teaching.

The National Strategy (2001) aimed at promoting language teaching across the curriculum came in with a strong drive to equip all teachers in tackling the specific language requirements and vocabulary of their own subject area. It also meant changing the dominant attitudes to language teaching as something that was the responsibility of English and EAL teachers only.

Recommended whole school training entitled Literacy Across the Curriculum was offered to all schools. The Literacy Across the Curriculum document addressed the needs of bilingual learners in a separate unit called: All Inclusive. The strategies suggested for including bilingual or EAL learners were underpinned by the principles of inclusion of all students; gathering knowledge about their ‘literacy identities and previous educational experience’; and hearing their viewpoints about what makes a difference to their learning (DfES, 2001, p 99). The same unit made a point of promoting the use of first languages as an integral part of classroom work. As the reasons for using first languages this document listed the following: ‘drawing on existing skills and strengths; working quickly and fluently where the learning can be completed equally well in mother tongue and knowing that other languages are valued and good for learning, too’ (DfES, 2001, p 100).

The unit All Inclusive was accompanied by classroom footage of two examples of good practice where bilingual students were seen in lessons discussing work in their first languages, producing written work in both English and their first language and presenting to the whole class in both languages too. Teachers encouraged their students and communicated consistent affirmative messages about bilingual skills and, consequently, monolingual and bilingual students demonstrated appreciation of bilingual skills in their class. The most encouraging aspect of these examples in terms of their wider use was that most teachers did not speak languages used and that giving space to first languages in the curriculum in the ways demonstrated did not require any extra work by the teachers, other than identifying appropriate opportunities and encouraging students to use them. These examples certainly provide some answers to the question that is frequently encountered in practice: how do I as a teacher include all the different languages I do not speak?

Five years after the distribution of these documents and materials to schools and organised INSET, interviewees in this study still experienced a vacuum in terms of guidance and training. From my own experience of supporting schools to implement the National Strategy I would say that support for bilingual students was proportionally small in comparison with all other areas it had been trying to cover, but my main criticism would be that, although the material produced was of a high quality based on appropriate principles, it did not take into account that practitioners in schools would be starting from different points in terms of their knowledge and attitudes to bilingualism.

A headteacher interviewed for a national newspaper highlighted more fundamental issues to do with implementation of initiatives such as the National Strategy. He

reflected on what was needed to transform practice: “Rapid and radical change can only occur when everybody is on board and believes the gains will outweigh losses. This has not been achieved in schools. You cannot issue edicts and expect other people to pick them up and run with the ideas.” (Education Guardian, 2006, p 1,2).

The issues highlighted by this headteacher are the weakest aspects of the top-down policy approach where school practitioners, on whose commitment the implementation success rate depends, feel no ownership of the new policies resulting from lack of consultation and involvement at the policy production stage (Ball, 1993).

One of the aims of this research is the attempt to contribute to the policy cycle, by creating a ‘surrogate discussion forum’. By this I mean using the technique of interview statements as a vehicle for giving: headteachers, parents, children and researchers a voice and constructing a situation in which policy makers and lead professionals engage with the views of relevant groups.

The data collected suggested that the principle of participation and involvement did not feature in perceptions as given by the interviewees on what needed to be done and how bilingualism in schools and society could be addressed. The interviewed Conservative MP suggested: *‘political classes having debates about bilingualism; politicians and leaders of the teaching establishments discussing the role of multiculturalism in our schools; Gordon Brown and David Blunkett leading on what we do about multiculturalism’*. There was no suggestion that parents, children, communities and schools should in any way participate in these discussions; or any indication that politicians discussing bilingualism should be aware of the views of their bilingual population.

This was particularly interesting because partnerships were promoted as ‘a central principle of New Labour’s political rhetoric and practice’, with ‘the idea of inclusion and participation embedded in New Labour partnerships’ (Cardini, 2006, p 393).

Cardini argued that the Government’s apparent commitment to partnerships, functions in practice as ‘the instrument to implement top-down central policies’. Partnership creation and development was closely controlled by Central Government through the establishment of frameworks and funding opportunities (ibid, p 398,408).

5.5.3. Implications of existing policy and practice

The concluding section of the data interpretation chapter will consider perceptions of the interviewees in terms of the implications of existing policy and practice. This section provides an evaluative basis for recommended future actions, strategies and initiatives. It will be presented under two subheadings: Implications for children and young people and Implications for parents.

5.5.3.1. Implications for children and young people

One of the main criticisms of the current system was expressed by a lead professional with the experience of being a headteacher and with a current high profile role of leading nationally on Teacher Training. His criticism exposes the approach to bilingual children as a problem:

‘At the moment they (bilingual children) are treated as a problem. Schools have religious services and a week with displays, which is not good at all. I am talking about a sustained approach.’

(English lead professional, Interview Data)

This interviewee saw as a solution a shift to an approach that not only recognised children as a resource, but had children as a resource as its starting point and central

feature.:

'In schools where you have 36 languages, my view is you have 36 resources. We are talking about strategies to learn languages, strategies to learn about citizenship. They (teachers) have fluent speakers of 36 languages! Use Jenny in Year 6 to go and work with a Year 2. Don't be frightened because she is a child! She is a resource and desperately needed. And what does Jenny feel about this? She feels valued and respected, her society and her culture is actually valued and she is more likely to integrate in the mainstream society, if she is positive about her place in it. If she is made to feel alien and different, she is not going to integrate.'

(English lead professional, Interview data)

I would like to argue that this can be interpreted in the following way: before professionals, adults and politicians decide how to shape the experience of being educated for this child, let us look at that child. What does she bring to school? What has she already learnt? What skills has she developed? At the age of starting primary education a child has a proficiency in a language that as an adult one can hardly ever reach by the method of expensive, time consuming evening language courses. A bilingual child brings to school a resource for herself/himself, an additional dimension to linguistic and cognitive functioning that the use of two languages creates and s/he also brings a resource for everybody else in the classroom. In the current context of practice these resources that bilingual children bring to schools may be seen as 'the emperor's new clothes' narrative. Teachers 'do not see' them (minority languages) as something that can be used for any proper, curriculum related learning; headteachers and local authorities 'do not see' them because they are not going to help reach their targets; the Government 'do not see them' because they are not on the agenda, parents

‘do not see them’ because of the pressure to acquire good English and lastly children ‘do not see them’ because they are not important in school. The only difference between the invisible resources of bilingual children and the emperor’s invisible new clothes is that the emperor had nothing on while everybody pretended that he was draped in the finest robes. In this case, educators and policy makers have children coming to schools with treasure boxes full of linguistic resources and yet they are made to feel their treasure is valueless, in fact a burden. Eventually many children abandon their linguistic treasure boxes not even noticing that they have been ‘robbed’.

A piece of research conducted in a London primary school explored the cultural and linguistic resources of four bilingual children specifically within the context of the National Literacy Strategy. Its findings confirmed that the Literacy Hour did not provide conditions or support bilingual children to draw on and utilise in the classroom their ‘wealth of understandings and experiences of literacy’ (Wallace, 2005).

Blommaert, Creve and Willaert (2005) term this phenomenon of failing to recognise language skills that children have in other languages, or non-standard varieties of the language used as the medium in schools, as ‘language ideological disqualifications based on monoglot ideologies’. Their research was conducted in Belgian classrooms. The research team recorded consistent teaching strategies, which dismissed the linguistic and literacy skills of newly arrived immigrant children as not being relevant to the acquisition of standard Dutch used in these schools. Children observed by the researchers, even though they were able to demonstrate their understanding of the spoken and written language relationship, and varied degrees of literacy in different alphabets, were not given recognition of this prior knowledge. These children were

treated as illiterate in the process of ‘language-ideological disqualification’ (Blommaert, Creve and Willaert , 2005, p 46).

These pedagogical practices, disqualifying relevant prior knowledge and skills in the learning of a new language, can be placed within the wider context of socio-political processes of the integration of immigrants or even perhaps their assimilation.

(Integration versus assimilation is discussed in the Feeling poorer section of this chapter.) In the context of classroom learning ‘minority pupils’ speech and writing are taken out to signify socio-political processes’; to mark points on a trajectory from ‘foreignness’ to ‘integrated’ (Blommaert, Creve and Willaert , 2005, p 36).

The issue of ‘taking out’ or not promoting the use of minority languages in the classroom situation is often defended with the line: ‘But children don’t want it...’.

In my experience I have often encountered this argument presented by teachers.

Currently, we are entering a new era of consultation and participation of children and all service users as an expectation of good practice and a legal requirement (Ofsted, 2005). The issue of children’s participation and involvement in making decisions that make impact on their education and life choices is complex and full of questions, in terms of children being able to make an informed choice and comprehend the long-term consequences of their choices. The principle of consulting children and young people and involving them in decision making processes is slowly making its way into education.

This new framework was introduced to schools in September 2005 and it is based on the process of accurate self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process encourages schools to demonstrate that they are collecting pupils’ views and acting upon them.

This does not automatically mean that pupils will have an opportunity to express their

views on bilingualism, but it does mean that there is a potential that these views will have a place some time in the future. In the meantime, bilingual children do make choices regarding their language use mainly by reacting to the messages communicated to them in their environments. Many parents face difficulties in maintaining the language within the family context, because children reject it for a variety of reasons, most often for wanting to fit in and not be different when in school and with their peers. One of the interviewees reflected on experiencing such attitudes in his practice:

‘When I was a teacher that was a very common attitude among school children. Which, I guess, is something you have come across a lot, which is almost the rejection of home culture by the teenager who wants to become a part of the school, by denying they speak another language. I used to speak Greek to a girl in my class and she would say: I don’t speak that language. But I think she did speak that language, her parents did speak that language. I saw that change to some extent.’

(English-Welsh lead professional, Interview data)

In one Westminster school which organised a GCSE course in a minority language students had stopped attending because they did not think the teaching was of a good standard. In these two examples bilingual children make choices or more accurately, they react to given situations. Will these choices stand the test of time and appear as the best choices ten or twenty years on?

One interviewee in Wales talked about *‘a generation in Wales who did not learn Welsh and now regrets it’* (Bilingual Welsh professional, Interview data). Another interviewee in England reflected on his own experience of coming from a bilingual background, but not being encouraged to acquire the minority language in his family.

As an adult he *‘was trying to learn Welsh and was finding it very hard’*; actually mastering a foreign language at university, but never acquiring *‘more than individual words in Welsh’*, which is his mother’s first language (English-Welsh lead professional, Interview data).

Considering the evidence that children, especially young children, are only in a position to react to what is made available for them, parents and educators have a significant responsibility to create supportive conditions for children who have opportunities in their environment to be exposed to, and acquire, two languages. By supportive conditions is meant actively minimising factors that lead children to reject or abandon first languages.

5.5.3.2. Implications for parents

Parents are natural ‘policy makers’ within the family context. In the process of first language maintenance parents are the key link. If they have the awareness and determination to keep first languages in use at home, their children will receive that crucial influence which will almost certainly decide whether they grow up as monolinguals or bilinguals. However, even in the privacy of their own homes and throughout the intimacy of family interactions, parents will be encountering either support or negativity to bilingualism filtering in through interactions of children with their peers, teachers and the media. This support or negativity can significantly alter the course of parental language maintenance actions.

One interviewee reflected on her experience as a parent making a considered decision as to whether to send her son to a monolingual or bilingual school in Wales. Now regretting that decision she said:

‘If I had my time again I would send him (my son) to a Welsh medium school. I

wasn't a Welsh speaker, my husband wasn't and I envisaged difficulties supporting my son if he was in Welsh medium education. Now I think the benefit of having bilingual education would outweigh that.'

(Monolingual English lead professional in Wales, Interview data)

What changed for her as a mother, as revealed in the continuation of the interview, was access to research findings and knowledge in terms of the benefits of bilingualism. This issue that 'policy makers of early years' are actually largely and seriously uninformed on the matters of bilingualism was commented on by the other interviewees in this study:

'They (parents) don't quite understand why it is an advantage.'

(Interview data, English lead professional)

Lack of understanding of the benefits of bilingualism was also one of the main findings in my study with bilingual parents (Mehmedbegovic, 2003). Research done by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority as recently as 2005 acknowledged that bilingual 'parents have little or no awareness' what benefits come with first language maintenance (QCA, 2005, p 2).

Why are parents without access to crucial information needed for making sure their children enjoy a healthy linguistic diet and a supportive environment? I had the opportunity of meeting a mother who attended one of my research seminars. She declared in the seminar that she was there not because she had anything to do with research in this field, but because she had many questions about bringing up her child bilingually. The initiative and commitment of this mother are to be applauded, but how many other bilingual parents are there with nobody to consult? Or who are not aware what kind of information they need to look for and where to find it?

One interviewee in Wales talked about the initiative of the Welsh Assembly that resulted in health visitors responsible for visiting mothers and newborn babies providing basic information on benefits of bilingualism, free packs with further information and free relevant toys for children (Bilingual Welsh lead professional, Interview data). This initiative termed Twf (Growth) and launched in 2002 made the bilingual campaign promoted by the Welsh Language Board focus on social inclusion and the principle of reaching out to everybody rather than just specific profiles of families. Mixed Welsh-English speaking families were targeted during a pilot, but the guidance and resources soon became available to all families. In the words of one of the interviewees:

‘A lot of parents opt for bilingual education (in Wales). It seems very positive. Not only middle class parents, but most parents want their children to be bilingual.’

(Bilingual Welsh lead professional, Interview data)

The Twf initiative has been evaluated as:

“... rapidly growing in a relatively short period and ... very successful in transforming the abstract notion of family bilingualism into a concrete message with which the target audience can identify.”

(Edwards and Pritchard Newcombe, 2005, p 146)

As the key elements that had made this initiative so successful, Edwards and Pritchard Newcombe (2005) identify: working jointly with the health department and providing training for midwives and health workers. These are staff in the system who already have access to every new parent, which provides a very efficient outreach mechanism. The added bonus is that midwives and health visitors have a well established and respected role within the context of new families and newborn

children. Specialist advice on the developmental, social and economic benefits of bilingualism has become a compulsory and integral part of the training for midwives and health workers in Wales.

Information on bringing up children bilingually is not available in any of the health, social or educational institutions that parents with young children are likely to visit in England. Once children start schooling, parents will be making contact with teachers, but teachers themselves are not given any guidance on what to say to parents about this issue. Often nothing is said. The only support specific to bilingual parents that I am aware of in England is the Bilingual Families Newsletter, published by Multilingual Matters. In fact the founders of Multilingual Matters are a couple who are bilingual parents themselves. They initiated this newsletter at the time of bringing up their children bilingually. The vacuum they experienced in terms of parental guidance, advice and exchange of experiences with other bilingual families resulted in this newsletter, which has been published for a few decades now (facts based on a conversation with a member of the family). The only problem is that not many bilingual parents know about this newsletter and not all of them would find written information in English and in this format easily accessible.

In a recent publication Mark Grover, the founder of Multilingual Matters, reflected on his experience of being a bilingual parent: “A quarter of a century ago when our first child was expected I knew instinctively that it was important for him to be bilingual. Our problem was that, for the lay parent, if anything at all was written about bilingualism it was about its problems....full of prophecies of doom.” (Grover, 2003, p vii). In his case being a ‘stubborn’ lay parent resulted in becoming one of the pioneering publishers on bilingualism.

The interviewed English Conservative MP was of the opinion that the entire first language maintenance efforts should consist of *‘parents should simply speak it at home’*. My study with Bosnian parents showed that children in that community were consistently spoken to in their first language mainly for the reasons of parents wanting to make sure children would be able to communicate with grandparents and other non-English speaking members of the family and reasons of maintaining identity (Mehmedbegovic, 2003). These reasons will largely disappear for the second and third generation of Bosnians in England. Also, ‘simply speaking it at home’ will do nothing for bilingual children in becoming biliterate. Baker (1996) argues that oracy without literacy in the first language is actually disempowering and decreases the potential of language survival on both, individual and community levels. It also limits the access to the media, literature and culture in one’s first language (Baker, 1997, p 323). In addition, it curtails academic and professional options linked to pursuing studies or a career linked to literacy in a particular language. Most importantly, according to research evidence (Swain and Lapkin, 1991), biliteracy is the key element of bilingualism that proves to be the strongest source of cognitive and curriculum advantage. Also, the ‘effective development of primary language literacy skills can provide a conceptual foundation for long-term growth in English literacy skills’, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Cummins, 2001, p 192).

Currently, many bilingual children in schools in England and Wales have not developed, and are not developing, literacy in home languages. For one of the ethnic groups battling the most with underachievement, Bangladeshi pupils, there is a valid reason for low levels of literacy in their first language: most of them speak a variety that is not a written language, Sylheti (DfES, 2006a). However, considering a possible link between literacy levels in first languages and academic achievement, is

it just a coincidence that nationally, for example, Chinese pupils, whose community and families have a strong commitment to developing literacy in their first language, achieve even better than White English pupils (DfES, 2006a)?

Presently, the development of literacy skills in first languages is mainly dependent on complementary, mother tongue schools or community schools. There are many issues with children attending these schools, because they occur after school hours or at weekends, they require a time commitment from parents and children. Their timing inevitably clashes with more attractive activities like football clubs. In addition, children on the whole receive little recognition for the extra time and effort involved, mainstream teachers are often not aware of this additional schooling. Sometimes teaching standards or styles are not satisfactory or appealing to children, which is often linked to lack of teaching materials and financial support (QCA, 2005, p 12). However, these schools remain the most valuable partners to bilingual parents in the process of first language maintenance.

This section of implications concludes my data interpretation and discussion.

Conclusions and recommendations for practice are outlined in the final chapter.

6. Concluding comments and recommendations

In search of answers to my research questions encapsulated in the title quote of this study: *'Miss, who needs the languages of immigrants?'* - I have reviewed the literature, which provides evidence based on several decades of research, to support the claim that every language is a resource that can be deployed at the individual, national and global level. The analysis of the collected data complements that literature review by providing insights into why the linguistic resources of non-indigenous minority speakers are still mostly unrecognised in wider society and in schools are experienced by bilingual pupils as unwanted.

Seven interviewees, who participated in this research, reflected not only on their personal views, but also on those of political parties and government institutions that they worked for. Revisiting the letter written by Malcolm Rifkind (Appendix 3) as a response to the initial research statements for this study, the Conservative Party line visible in his response was clearly reflected in the interview of the Conservative MP interviewed for this study. There were three main points to their approach: 'immigrants should have English as their first language and this should be made the priority of Government policy'; 'where bilingualism is concerned attention should be given to indigenous languages: Gaelic and Welsh' and 'so far as bilingualism involving languages that are spoken in other parts of the world ... there is no need for Government policy to protect these languages ...it becomes a cultural and personal matter of the families concerned' (Malcolm Rifkind, Appendix 3). In the responses of other interviewees, reference to, and identification with, the institutions they worked for is visible in the use of 'We' rather than 'I'. Even though the intention is not to make generalisations beyond the collected

data, there are indications that the data contain not only personal voices, but also the voices of the political parties and government agencies the interviewees worked for.

In addition, at the political level, competing discourses of ‘our culture’ and ‘our economy’ emerge from the data as representing the biggest obstacle and the most important rationale for legitimising languages as resources. While the ‘our culture’ discourse, still rigidly embedded in a narrowly defined national identity, is at odds with hybrid identities of globalisation, the ‘our economy’ discourse is liberated from operating within the national framework and oriented towards global markets. If different languages can support the process of international business growth, they will be recognised as valuable. Bengali does not matter to ‘our culture’, but it could matter to ‘our economy’.

At the level of educational practice, the competing discourses were outlined by the interviewed Labour MP. His opening statement in the interview focused on ‘schools shaping educational practices suitable to the communities they serve’, which was distinctly different from the Conservative line and reflected pedagogical principles of good educational practice. However, this community focused Labour approach almost immediately slipped into a conflicting agenda encapsulated in the principle of ‘as long as we protect the National Curriculum’. This narrow interpretation of the National Curriculum threatened by the languages of the communities it serves leads to the question as to whether the initially communicated inclusive and politically correct Labour rhetoric is only superficial. Could this imply that deeper layers of the Labour approach are much closer to the Conservative line than is desirable? Or perhaps these are

simply personal attitudes of the interviewed Labour MP?

The fact that personal attitudes can and do impact on educational practice is best illustrated in the example of an interviewed lead professional. He gave the account of turning a mainstream English school into a bilingual school overnight. In his role as headteacher, at the time, he had the power, professional autonomy and authority to do so. His aim was to address underachievement in English, while his initiative was based on his intuition and personal attitudes to languages as resources.

Throughout the interview this interviewee passionately advocated practice in schools that takes as the starting point bilingual children as resources. Such an approach has power implications at a micro and macro level. In the classroom, teachers need to exchange the expert-learner role with their pupils and they may feel out of control, if they are unfamiliar with the languages children use. At the macro level, this approach would challenge the existing hierarchy of languages, ultimately challenging the dominance of cultural capital constructed on that hierarchy. Recognition of all languages spoken by pupils in our schools as an essential element of every individual fulfilling their potential and, therefore, an element that needs to have its place in the curriculum time and school life, would be an attempt at eliminating the deficit model of these pupils. By 'recognition' of all languages in schools it is not meant tuition, but what Cummins (2003) terms 'holding an affirmative mirror' to pupils' backgrounds inclusive of the languages they use. Regular communication of affirmative messages relevant to bilingualism within the school context would be a shift from a culture of defining the educational experiences of bilingual pupils by the language skills they lack in English. My argument is that seeing

a child through a 'he has no English' lens only leads to low expectations and ultimately to committing educational and social injustices.

The final section of this study will engage with the question of how to achieve this shift in practice. It will outline a set of recommendations based on the findings, which will be presented under the subheadings: School practice, Teacher training and Policy development.

6.1. School Practice

The language diversity in England and Wales, further complicated by the uneven and fluctuating numbers of speakers of particular languages, represents real obstacles to developing provision for minority languages in terms of tuition. However, I argue that an awareness of the issues linked to the benefits of bilingualism and the importance of language diversity and language maintenance should be built into the mainstream curriculum. The type of awareness and respect towards other religions currently communicated within mainstream education can be used as a starting point in developing language awareness. Alternatively, if schools engage with the ecological approach to language diversity, these issues can be taught alongside environmental awareness.

The systematic lack of engagement, throughout key institutions, with the bilingualism of children going through the system leads to drawing parallels with the criticism of policies and practice that have failed to engage with the racial and ethnic differences labelled as ‘colour blind’ or what Blommaert terms ‘normative monoglot ideologies’ (Blommaert, Creve and Willaert, 2005). This blindness to diverse linguistic profiles imposes a fallacy that not only is monolingualism the norm, but that everything else is undesirable or even embarrassing. The argument that ‘children just want to fit in and be like the others’ is at odds with the growing number of schools where the ‘others’ are predominantly also bilingual or multilingual. Bilingual children, who choose to self-identify as monolinguals, are more likely trying to fit in with the only affirmed profile in their learning environment: the monolingual one.

The crucial question is: how do schools that have speakers of 40 or more languages

represented provide ‘an affirmative mirror’ (term after Cummins, 2003), to all of them? How do they communicate to bilingual children that their bilingualism is a resource, as advocated by the interviewed lead professional? First of all, bilingual children and their parents need to be given a clear, affirmative, consistent message by the school and their teachers in terms of a healthy bilingual linguistic diet. It should be a part of the Healthy Schools Initiative, currently implemented in schools focusing on healthy eating and lifestyle. As well as using every opportunity to say: ‘It is good for you to eat fruit and vegetables every day’; it should also be said: ‘It is good for you to speak, read and write in other languages’. This basic principle became clear while doing a focus discussion group with a group of Bangladeshi boys in Pimlico School. One boy identified bilingualism as the reason for their underachievement, while another stated: *‘I don’t think having two languages is a problem. I read in a scientific journal that it develops your brain.’* (Hanoman and Mehmedbegovic, 2004, p 14). Schools should not leave 14 year old students to take their own initiative to look for answers whether bilingualism is good for them or not. Pupils (and parents) should be explicitly told. Relevant printed information should also be available for families in health centres, nurseries and schools.

6.2. Teacher training

Currently, there is significant provision for new headteachers and teachers, especially London teachers, on race, ethnicity, culture and religion, although language is not identified as a category in its own right. One can argue that it can be assumed with certainty that language will feature and be covered under culture and possibly ethnicity. Based on the research findings of this study, which are also confirming the findings of my study with headteachers, I would like to challenge this assumption and suggest that culture and language awareness and appreciation do not develop jointly. Fostering positive and informed attitudes to bilingualism and linguistic diversity, in general, needs to be addressed as an area in its own right with sufficient time allocation. Continuing with the focus on cultural awareness only may result in an even bigger culture-language dichotomy than we currently have. Therefore an explicit focus on language within the training for headteachers and the initiative for Chartered London Teacher status would be an opportunity to move into a more balanced approach to multilingualism/plurilingualism alongside multiculturalism.

In addition to making explicit language awareness a part of the compulsory modules for headteachers' training, I would like to suggest that requirements in terms of understanding bilingualism and its implications in education should be built into the recruitment process and person specification for headteachers applying for headships of schools with one third or more bilingual children on roll. It should be a reasonable expectation that candidates can demonstrate knowledge and commitment to the specific needs of such a significant proportion on their school roll.

6.3. Policy development

May (2001) argues that there ‘appears to be a high correlation between greater minority participation in the governance of education and higher levels of academic success by minority students within that system’. Minority participation in decision-making processes, rather than being just a debate among political classes as suggested by the interviewed Conservative MP, leads to a closer match between minority aspirations and subsequent educational provision (May, 2001, p 181).

Fishman (1989) advocates the concept and practice of ethnolinguistic democracy where minority languages are recognised and present in schools and education alongside each other and without representing a challenge to a common, core curriculum and official language. This concept can be recognised in the approach of the European Council to language policy and planning, emphasising inclusion and encompassing the standard state language, home languages, European languages and world languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p 5, 169).

One of the key public debates centred around the European language framework and policy, but in fact questioning much wider issues of the European Union, was: can Europe speak in one voice in so many different languages? The answers to this question are not only found in manifesto statements that preserving and promoting language diversity are essential to European integration (Vienna Manifesto, 2001), but also in a very complex concept of plurilingualism. In my opinion, plurilingualism is the final qualitative step that for individuals removes the fallacy of different languages they use as separate competencies and entities, while for societies it

opens new perspectives on all different languages as contributors to the overall communication, learning and development in those societies. This type of approach is liberated from either majority or minority languages being threatened. It recognises that every language has its own distinctive contribution to make and, therefore, it communicates messages of value attached to all of them. For a society committed to racial equalities and recognition of contributions of different racial groups, recognising languages as a significant part of that equality is essential.

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