

UKLA
UK LITERACY ASSOCIATION

Cross-Language
Dynamics **OWRI**
Arts & Humanities
Research Council

LIBRARIES
SHEFFIELD
DISCOVER MORE
Sheffield
City Council



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE: EXPLORING BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sabine Little, University of Sheffield

s.little@sheffield.ac.uk

@sabinelittle

@LostWor_I_ds

GUESS WHEN?

Immigrant children's attainment in tests and at school in general is related not only to language but to several other issues, particularly those of cultural identity and cultural knowledge. No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart.

GUESS WHEN?

Immigrant children's attainment in tests and at school in general is related not only to language but to several other issues, particularly those of cultural identity and cultural knowledge. No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart.

Bullock Report (A Language for Life), 1975

“what multilingualism means has become a pressing educational matter of concern in the first half of the twenty-first century” (Heugh, 2018, p. 341)



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA-NC

WHERE ARE WE AT NOW?

- ❖ Approximately 20% of students are first- or second-generation immigrants (UNESCO, 2018), with numbers on the increase. Over 1 in 5 pupils are registered as EAL (DfE, 2020)
- ❖ Language predominantly treated as deficit model in education across policy documentation (Little, 2019)
- ❖ Curriculum pressures often dictate focus on learning English, not 'full linguistic repertoire'
- ❖ Formal qualifications in heritage languages being cut
- ❖ Most heritage language education taking place in community schools
- ❖ Lots of amazing work at classroom, school, council, and organisation level (NALDIC, Bell Foundation, etc.), but not recognised in formal, national policy
- ❖ Multilingualism is becoming recognised (and fought for) as a social justice issue

“FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE” (GONZALEZ, MOLL & AMANTI, 2005)

Funds of cultural values, customs, beliefs, skills etc. children develop at home

May or may not correspond to formal education contexts, or their peers

‘Dark’ Funds of Knowledge (Zipin, 2009) need acknowledging

(Include parental political views)

Funds of Knowledge



Theorizing
Practices in
Households,
Communities,
and Classrooms

Edited by Norma González · Luis C. Moll · Cathy Amanti

WHY DOES IT MATTER HOW WE TREAT MULTILINGUAL CHILDREN'S HOME LANGUAGES?

No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he [sic] crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart (DES, Bullock Report, 1975, p. 286),

“I’m in Year 6. Nobody at school knows that I speak Hungarian.”

“I read all the Harry Potter books in Bengali. But why do you want to know about that? Nobody wants to know about that.”

“It would never occur to me to write what we read in Slovak into [my daughter’s] reading diary.”

REASONS FOR MAINTAINING THE HERITAGE LANGUAGE

Familial (connections to relatives)

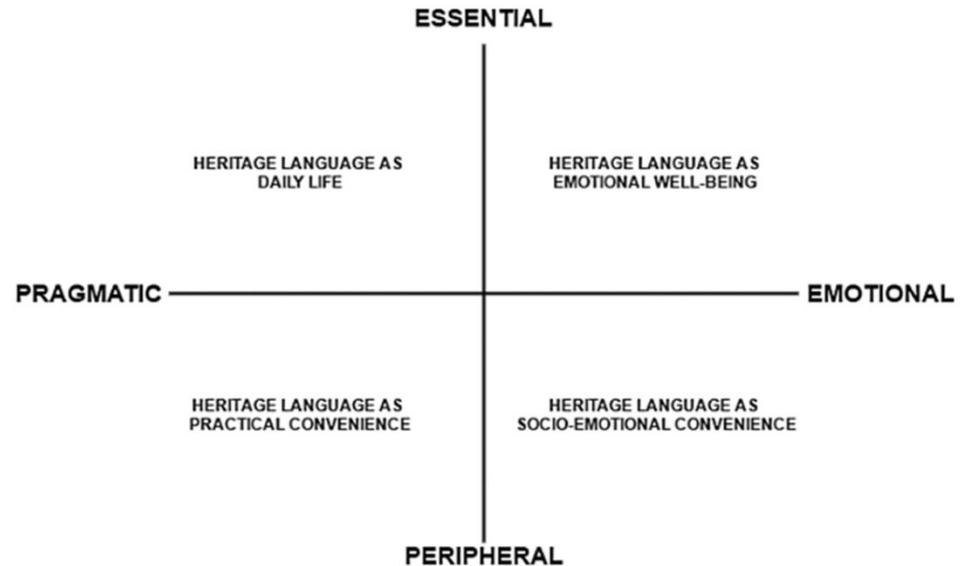
Cultural (desire for children to remain connected to heritage culture)

Aspirational / cultural (desire for child to move to home country)

Aspirational / employability (increased chances of employment)

Emotional / connective (cannot imagine children not speaking the heritage language)

Figure 1. A conceptual framework of heritage language identities.



Little, S. (2020) 'Whose heritage? What inheritance?: Conceptualising Family Language Identities'. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, DOI: 10.1080/13670050.2017.1348463

Multilingual children's language and literacy experiences are vastly complex, and discussion about them is almost impossible without considering their concept of identity, too.

Parents often caught between school expectations and heritage language hopes

Links between well-being, language use and identity.

REASONS TO SUPPORT HOME/HERITAGE LANGUAGES IN THE CLASSROOM

- Illustrate all aspects of the child are welcome.
- School as multicultural *beyond* multilingual welcome signs.
- Give children tools to learn with *all* their skills, rather than forcing them to do so with one hand tied behind their back.
- “British Values”

USING LANGUAGES TO PUZZLE OUT CONTENT

“Working out” box or sheet for scribbles and notes across all languages

Encourage communication about all languages, to facilitate understanding (over rote learning) of differences in grammar, structure, etc.

Ultimately, facilitate work in multiple languages

今天天气很好。

(“Today weather very good.”)

- No verb
- No spacing between words
- No definite or indefinite articles
- Time tends to come first

LOST WOR(L)DS



Activities linked to the NC, as well as nature, conservation, and sustainability

Lesson plans and resources freely available

Techniques universally adaptable across the curriculum

Social justice approach (partnerships with Schools of Sanctuary) – provide materials *and* educate/challenge ideologies

www.multilingualism-in-schools.net



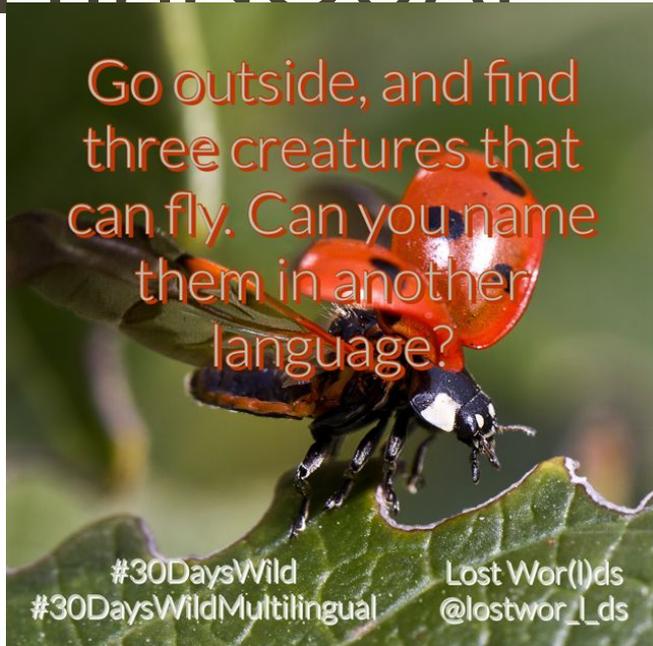
Encourage children to bring all their languages to their work (repertoire approach)

Depending on the child, the home language *or* English might be stronger, but either can be used to showcase knowledge and understanding

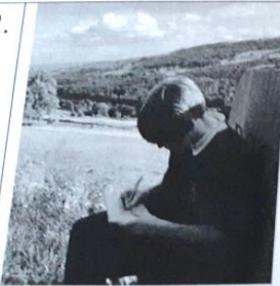
Dictionary skills (and/or parental/peer support) can be used to “puzzle out” missing words, and develop literacy skills across all languages

SHARING LANGUAGES IN FORMAL EDUCATION CONTEXTS

QUICK, BUT FREQUENT ENGAGEMENT: 30 DAYS WILD MULTILINGUAL



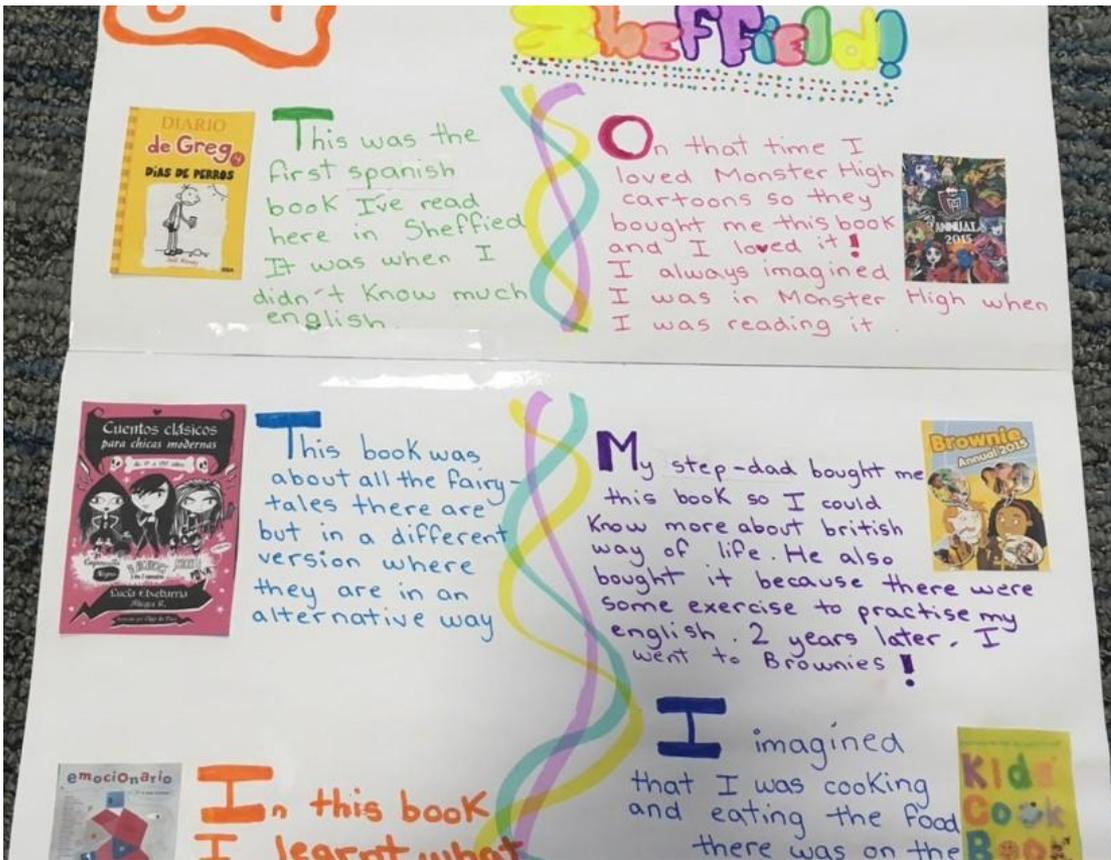
22.



Write an acrostic poem, where each line starts with a letter of the word "WILD" – use any language you know. If you want a bigger challenge, use "I AM WILD" or even "THIRTY DAYS WILD MULTILINGUAL"! Use a different sheet if you need to.

W alay unlangay Don't stop _____
 I pakita and kulay Showing the colour _____
 L aban para sa buhay Fight for life _____
 D ili magpahuwag Don't rest _____

Tagalog acrostic poem by student



Rivers of Reading (Cliff Hodges, 2010) can help understand children's literacy development (including asynchronous biliteracy) across time

Understand family literacy input, as well as links to identity

LONGER/MORE INVOLVED ACTIVITIES

SHORT-TERM GOALS FOR SCHOOLS

Facilitate

- Facilitate inclusion of books in home languages into 'read at home' diaries

Ask

- Ask children to share their language knowledge as part of formal education

Embed

- Embed multilingualism into teaching, storytelling, and shared reading ("how would you say X in your language/s")

Encourage

- Encourage children to use their full linguistic repertoire to work things out

Integrate

- Integrate multilingualism into praise

MEDIUM-TERM GOALS FOR SCHOOLS

Start

- Start a multilingual section in the library (with reading rewards/multilingual storytelling if ambitious) (sneaky link: <https://www.multilingualism-in-schools.net/the-multilingual-childrens-library/>)

Create

- Create a display board about non-English books

Integrate

- Integrate multilingualism into award systems

Communicate

- Communicate commitment to multilingualism to parents

Enable

- Enable staff training / parent information sessions

FEEDBACK

'The children became the experts. They really enjoyed teaching me how to pronounce words in their language. We laughed a lot!' Mrs Temple (Yr 5TK)

'Even the quietest children were enthused to participate and spoke about their home language animatedly.' Mrs Novak (Yr 2N)

*"We are from Brazil! My t-shirt has the flag of Brazil." 'My t-shirt says Brazil.'
Isabella and Emilia (Nursery)*

"I can sing 'Incy Wincy Spider' in Tamil." Abeena (Reception, Spotty Class)

"I liked drawing mini beasts and writing their names in lots of other languages. I feel proud that I learnt to write butterfly in Japanese. It was my first time and I liked it." Drashti (Yr 1L)

"I am proud of the language portrait because it's all about me." Rithika (Yr 3Wb)

"I love these kind of days because I can share the language that I speak at home and learn about other people's language" Manahil (Yr 3W)

"I learnt that in some languages the word sounds the same." Elizabeth (Yr 4M)

"It is important to learn about people, cultures and languages because it helps us to view and understand the world" Leo (Yr 4M)

"I think it is important to share our different languages because they share our ideas and show that we're all unique." Adrijana (Yr 6E)

REMEMBER THE BULLOCK REPORT AND SELF-EDITING IDENTITIES?

“It was a real eye opener to hear from children who had never before spoken about their home lives, but by delving into their reading lives, we were able to bring together languages spoken at home and school.”

Gladstone Primary School



Department of
Education and Science

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

(DES, Bullock Report, 1975, p. 286),

Report of the
Committee of Inquiry
appointed by the
Secretary of State
for Education and Science
under the Chairmanship of
Sir Alan Bullock FBA

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, WE CAN'T FORGET:

These children are genuine bilinguals, but this fact is often ignored or unrecognised by the schools. Their bilingualism is of great importance to the children and their families, and also to society as a whole. In a linguistically conscious nation in the modern world we should see it as an asset, as something to be nurtured, and one of the agencies which should nurture it is the school. (Bullock Report, 1975)

...otherwise, children will continue to self-edit their identity in formal education contexts, assuming that there is a part of them “nobody wants to know about”.

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?



s.little@sheffield.ac.uk

@sabinelittle

@LostWor_1_ds