Complementary and mainstream schooling: a case for reciprocity?

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Abstract

Supplementary or Complementary schooling, organised by minority ethnic and linguistic groups to support their own communities, has a long history in supporting learning beyond the mainstream sector. Indeed, successive governments have encouraged minority communities themselves to be responsible for maintaining their own community, cultural and linguistic heritages separate from the mainstream. The main purpose of this paper is to look at how complementary schooling, which is focused on the maintenance of community languages and cultures, can be included in the wider educational agenda. We will show how educational experiences around language learning, bilingualism and curriculum issues in complementary schools add value to the teaching and learning objectives of mainstream education. In doing so, we explore the potential links between voluntary and statutory education sectors, and the possibilities for synergy and distinction.

Introduction

Two complementary schools are at the centre of this study. They both serve the Gujarati community in Leicester which is the city's largest linguistic and ethnic minority. We have called these complementary schools Mount Hill (MH) and Temple Vale (TV).

We have chosen to use the term 'complementary' to describe these schools rather than the term more commonly used, 'supplementary'. The reason for this is that we wish to emphasise 'complementarity' in these schools, and move away from the notion that the main function of these schools is to 'supplement' something, as a type of 'add on', that already exists. Defining these particular schools as *complementary schools* stresses the positive complementary function for those who teach or learn in them. It recognizes their importance for participants and their local black and ethnic minority communities and their potential contribution to political, social and economic life in the wider community.

The purpose of this paper is to explore two issues which emerged in our study of the two Leicester complementary schools. These are bilingualarity and complementarity. Bilingualarity refers to the schools' ethos around language use and also to participants' attitudes, beliefs and actual language practices in two (plus) languages. The term is used to express the collective views of the school rather than the bilingualism of individual participants. It is our view that the bilingual interaction found in these schools, particularly the way that the participants spontaneously and purposely juxtapose Gujarati and English in order to create learning/teaching opportunities offers a useful example of 'bilingual complementarity' at work. We use the term complementarity to highlight the shared learning and teaching agendas in

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voluntary and compulsory schooling. It is our view that the two kinds of schooling share a concern with educational success. In the Leicester complementary schools we saw the development of successful and confident learner identities and the endorsement of good citizenship. These points are developed in greater detail below.

This paper has the following structure. We first set the scene by describing the policy context for complementary schooling before going on to review existing literature on complementary schools. The following section will briefly describe the Leicester research project and give some more background on the complementary schools themselves and how the research team collected data there. From there we move on to illustrate the issues of bilingualarity and complementarity. The aim in these section is to draw out issues of reciprocity between the two schooling contexts. A final section concludes with some consideration of what mainstream teachers can do to manage and build links across contexts.

Policy Context

As with many matters relating to community languages and to the learning of English as an additional language, the Swann Report set policy regarding the place of community languages in the mainstream. In one well known phrase, the report proposed that linguistic and cultural maintenance was beyond the remit of mainstream education and would be 'best achieved within the ethnic minority communities themselves' (DES,1985:406).

In many ways this view has contributed to the separation between the voluntary sector and statutory education sections and there is now a long history of the two sectors having little contact with one another in any institutional sense. However, a recent policy document does refer, for the first time to our knowledge, to the possible benefits to be gained from the teaching of community languages in terms of the value added complementary schooling brings to achievement across educational domains (DfES, 2003) Referring to mainstream schools, the government document states,

> 2.36: Successful schools reach out to their communities. They often make premises available for community use, which can build bridges and develop dialogue. Many pupils have also benefited greatly from out-of-school-hours learning in community-run initiatives such as supplementary schools. Some supplementary schools focus on the curriculum, others on cultural, mother tongue or religious faith instruction. Attendance can enhance pupils' respect, promote self-discipline and inspire pupils to have high aspirations to succeed. (DfES, 2003)

We see this as a forward looking statement because of the recognition it gives to the important role complementary schools play in children's lives and because it puts the onus on the mainstream school to extend its contacts with complementary and community organisations.

NALDIC (2003) too has welcomed recent government moves to promote children's and teachers' bilingualism within schools. NALDIC's response to question 4 in the *Aiming High Consultation* document (DfES, 2004) is a follows:

Q4. What more can be done to recruit, retain, support and promote more minority ethnic teachers and other skilled adults in schools?

A significant area of development which is inadequately explored in the consultation document is the impact that the development of bilingual education and an enhanced community language provision in schools would have in leading to a wider participation in schooling of adults with minority language skills. NALDIC has long argued that there needs to be a greater acknowledgement of the key role of first language/mother tongue in learning and attainment, including:

- A recognition of the importance of prior knowledge brought by bilingual pupils
- The role of L1 (first language) in the maintenance of individual and cultural identities
- The role of L1 in supporting learning in the development of English and the work of bilingual staff
- The importance of parents and communities in relation to L1 development and learning.

Similarly the Nuffield Inquiry on Languages (Nuffield, 2000) recommended that there should be a nationally co-ordinated programme of bilingual learning in the UK. In one statement the Nuffield Inquiry argues,

> There is a widespread public perception, backed by research, that learning another language needs to start earlier if the next generation is to achieve higher standards. An early start to language learning also enhances literacy, citizenship and intercultural tolerance. (Nuffield, 2000, http://www.wmin.ac.uk/sshl/nuffield/findings.htm, visited May 2004).

Nuffield also claim that in spite of parental demand, there is still no UK-wide agenda for children to start languages early. One of the arguments we will make in this paper is that voluntary complementary schools play an important role in enhancing literacy, citizenship and intercultural tolerance and understanding. Complementary schools are also one of the few educational institutions where children can learn and build upon the early process of language and cultural acquisition from the home.

Learning and teaching in complementary schools

The literature on complementary schools (supplementary schools/community schools/ heritage language schools/out of hours learning) is relatively scarce, especially compared to the available literature on mainstream education. Several studies in Britain, such as Baumann (1996) and Gregory (1996), and in North America (Zentella 1997; Heller 1999; Norton 2000), have demonstrated crucial connections between minority communities and their languages, cultures, religions, literacy practices and identities. Recent work by Kenner (2000; in press) and Sneddon (2000) has shown how children from minority ethnic communities benefit from their bilingualism. Kempadoo and Abdelrazak (1999) and Abdelrazak (2001) provide quantitative information and guidelines on improving 'supplementary schools'. However, there are only a very small number of studies that provide an inside view of complementary schools, and particularly on their educational agendas and on qualitative, ethnographic and discourse analytic aspects of these schools, and specifically the learning and

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teaching in them. In particular, complementary schools remain relatively unexamined for the interaction, learning and identity formation processes which are probably at the heart of sustaining community languages and developing identities through socialization practices.

Exceptions to this dearth of research are the studies by Li Wei (1991) on mother tongue maintenance in a Chinese community school in Newcastle upon Tyne; Khan and Kabir's (1999) study on mother tongue education among Bangladeshi children in Swansea; Arthur's (2003) case study of Somali literacy teaching in Liverpool; and Wu's (2001) doctoral research on learning Chinese as a community language in Chinese schools in the UK.

The major focus in Li Wei's (1993) study is the issue of Chinese language maintenance among young ethnic Chinese in Newcastle, and the way in which ability to use Chinese among this generation is closely linked to the language ability of parents, and the parents' and children's social networks. Li Wei makes reference to the goal of the community schools where Chinese is taught, that is, 'to maintain their mother tongue and to contain and even reverse the language shift taking place in the community' (1993: 211). He makes reference to the 'generation gap' (including 'language behaviour' and 'social attitude') which has caused 'serious anxiety amongst the Chinese'. It is the very insistence of some parents that their children use their mother tongue all the time that is causing children to turn their backs on the language. Emerging from Li Wei's study is the need to ensure that both the English language skills of the older generation, and Chinese language skills of the younger generation are taken into account, and the main conduit for the latter are the Chinese schools. He cites Fishman's (1991: 4) notion that in order to reverse language shift, it needs to be 'accomplished at the intimate family and local community level'.

In another study of learning in Chinese community schools, Wu (2001) claims that such schools focus on more than simply learning the heritage language and culture, in order to maintain the language and cultural knowledge of second generation Chinese in Britain. Her study explores what she refers to as the 'distinctive cultures of teaching and learning' in such schools (Wu, 2001: i). The study, which provides a holistic view of the cultures of teaching and learning, includes a discussion of the learning strategies employed by the students in the schools. The elements which are influential in developing the particular classroom cultures include 'classroom activities, the highly varied, mixed-age/ability nature of classroom members, the students' language learning strategies, the texts and textbooks used in the classrooms, [and] the teacher-student relationship and the school settings' (Wu, 2001: 311). In the conclusion to her study, Wu notes how 'British and Chinese cultures contribute to the construction of the [community school] classroom culture', for example, in the more active participation than in traditional Chinese classrooms, and attributes this to the students' British educational environment. A major factor in the study is the 'powerful influence of the written language' (cf. the discussion in Li Wei, 1993).

Arthur's (2003) ethnographic study on the Somali community focuses on language and literacy among Somali speakers, a minority group in Liverpool. The study was based around a ten-week *Baro Afkaaga Hooyo* ('learn your language/mother tongue') course in a disused primary school. Arthur explores the bilingual language practices

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in the group, which consisted of ten 11-12 year old girls, demonstrating what these practices reveal about bilingualism among the group. The paper discusses the role of Somali literacy and its potential significance for developing cultural and linguistic identity.

Khan and Kabir (1999) report on a study based on their personal experience of teaching Bengali to Bangladeshi children in Swansea in what they refer to as 'extra-curricular' classes. Like some of the other studies referred to above, it provides an inside account of the classroom and, at the same time, provides insights into the 'perspectives and attitudes of the students, teachers and parents towards mother-tongue education' (1999: 20). As well as pointing to such problems as funding, Khan and Kabir highlight issues to do with the syllabus, textbooks, as well as the 'values and perceptions' of the students, parents and teachers (1999: 25). Khan and Kabir found that the reasons for parents wanting their children to learn Bengali was linked to their desire to return to their motherland.

While not focusing solely on complementary schools, the work of Kenner is significant to this study in that it considers children's bilingual script learning. In a case study of a four-year old child learning both Gujarati and English, Kenner demonstrates the active combination of the two languages by the child in order to enhance her literacy learning (Kenner, 2000). Kenner goes on to discuss how this child's biliteracy development is constrained by the fact that the monolingual school system gives little, if any, status to literacies other than English. In a separate study of six-year-olds in London who were learning to write Chinese, Arabic or Spanish (in complementary schools referred to in the study as Saturday schools), Kenner (2004) refers to the way children experience their worlds not as separate linguistic and cultural entities but as simultaneous. She goes on to show how the children integrate and synthesise their linguistic resources. Kenner notes how the English education system and, indeed, wider society, tends to keep children's worlds separate, with different codes for each separate context. Similarly, Robertson (2002) shows how children learn from their *simultaneous bilingual literacy* experiences. Robertson's study focuses on children from second/third generation Pakistani background. The children's home language is Pahari, which no longer has a written form. They attended English 'literacy hour' lessons in a mainstream school and Urdu literacy lessons in a community school hosted by the same mainstream school. They also attend madrassahs or Qur'anic classes, in the local Mosque, in which they learn to read in classical Arabic, a language they do not speak or understand. Robertson shows how all these literacies and lessons play an essential role in the children's lives. Specifically, Robertson's work reveals how schooling in Urdu results in multilingual flexibility allowing children to switch between literacy systems and use this as a tool for literacy learning. As we discuss in the final section of this paper, complementary schools are an important site where the 'different worlds' of the children can be brought together, and different languages can be juxtaposed, not only to create learning opportunities, but to signal and construct identities.

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Mount Hill And Temple Vale Complementary Schools, Leicester

The schools are in diverse areas of Leicester, itself a linguistically diverse city (Leicestershire County Council, 1991; Leicester City Council, 2000).

Mount Hill School convenes on one weekday evening a week, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the large, old Mount Hill Primary School and Community Centre building. The number of registered students at the complementary school is 90. The school employs 7 teachers. Class sizes are on average around 15 but they can be as large as 20. A considerable number of students who attend the weekly evening lessons are also students in the mainstream school in the same building. This is also the case for several of the teachers who work in both MH complementary school and the same primary school. The space provided for these evening classes consists of a large hall (where the assembly is held), and several classrooms, which radiate off from the hall. The principal administrator/head teacher is provided with a table at one end of the hall, and some lockable cupboards in which to store school materials. She is also provided with a walkie-talkie to help her and her assistant to keep in touch with the school porters.

Temple Vale School convenes on Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. to midday. It is held in a large Victorian further education and community college. The number of registered students at this complementary school is 110 with 10 teachers. Similarly class sizes are around 15 students but again some classes are smaller or larger, exam classes tending to be smaller. The space provided for these Saturday classes consists of classrooms and a library dotted around the building. Assemblies are held in a space in which the partition between two classrooms is taken down to allow for one large space. The teachers bring in their books and equipment on a weekly basis, although a small cupboard is provided for books and equipment. Temple Vale borrows the community college once a week for its classes; however the complementary school is attached administratively to a local Hindu Temple which supports it financially.

It is important, then, to emphasise that these two complementary schools do not have premises of their own. Rather, they rely on space provided by a mainstream school and college for two hours every week. The notion of 'borrowed space' is one that emerges in discussions with key players in the school, and is discussed in greater detail in a separate paper (Martin et al, in prep). One feature of the mainstream school which loans accommodation to MH complementary school is the multilingual nature of the signage on the premises. As one enters the playground there are hopscotch markings laid out in Urdu, Panjabi and Gujarati, and in roman numerals. Many of the notices on the doors are also in these languages and there are posters such as 'We all smile in the same language' around the school premises. Around the hall there are posters and displays promoting multiculturalism. This expression of multilingualism and multiculturalism, however, was not as apparent in the displays inside the classrooms of the (mainstream) school, which on the whole, project literacy only in English - a practice which is in line with the concept of 'borrowing' teaching/learning space. As one of the teachers in the study noted, 'we can't display our resources anywhere ... we can do it [but then] we take it off again'. The lack of bilingualism in the learning environment is even more noticeable at the further education college used by TV. There are few multilingual notices or displays of any kind in the entrance or

on the corridor walls of this college. From the students' point of view, the message conveyed about their other languages in the premises used for their classes must serve to confirm their understanding of the status given to their languages in the wider education system.

Visits were made to the school over a period of five months in early 2003. Members of the research team engaged in varying degrees of semi-participant observation of assemblies and classrooms, as well as a staff meeting, a Prize Giving Evening, and other school events (such as a sponsored walk and a literary event in the city). Fieldnotes were made following the visits, and documents pertaining to school life were collected (lesson plan 'Notes and Thoughts', exam papers, letters about extramural visits, minutes of AGM and PTA). As part of these observations some lessons were audio-recorded, with the full permission of the head teachers and all participants. Additionally, a short questionnaire in Gujarati and English was given to parents of students in the school, and interviews were held with the school administrator, parents, teachers and students.

We were a four member research team who differed in our professional, linguistic, ethnic, gender and social profiles. Two members of the team speak Gujarati, are black and are culturally immersed in the aspects of the diverse Gujarati community in Leicester (AB and NB). Two other researchers (AC and PM) do not speak Gujarati, are white and are not culturally immersed in Leicester's Gujarati communities. One researcher (AB) is also a teacher at Temple Vale school. He has had many years teaching practice in complementary schools and has been involved in initiatives to sustain the maintenance of community languages through complementary schooling over time within Leicester. Each week two, or sometimes three, or all four of the researchers would visit each of the two schools in the study. We were paired researchers in the sense that we would go into the same two classes per visit individually. We were paired so that a Gujarati-speaking researcher and non-Gujarati-speaking researcher worked together; so for example, AC would go into one class for one hour and AB to another. At the break time we would change to our paired researcher's class. This meant that we saw the same teachers working with the same students for each visit. Our fieldnotes therefore shared an account of the same class observation each week.

A classroom study

In this section we illustrate how a particular teacher helps his students make connections across their educational contexts. The teacher who we refer to in the data below is Mr K Patel (pseudonym). However, in keeping with the way he is referred to by students, staff and parents, we adopt the use of first name, Kanak, plus the honorific term, Bhai (KB). KB runs the GCSE class in Mount Hill schools. He is an experienced teacher who has taught Gujarati for over 20 years. He has taught in at least 5 complementary schools and is also head teacher/administrator of another school, which at one time, had up to 800 students and 50 members of staff. He has also run Gujarati classes in many state secondary schools and organised the GCSE classes and examinations there. KB is a 'typical' example of a complementary school teacher profile in the sense that he teaches across both voluntary and complementary

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school settings and has worked in a variety of complementary schools often over a number of years.

The case study we will look at below centres around one GCSE lesson and the data we draw on are from observational fieldnotes, class transcripts from audio recordings and a semi structured interview which followed the lesson. In the lesson, the teacher and students are going through a letter, written in Gujarati. There are comprehension exercises following the letter and a discussion which leads on to Gujarati weddings and is further extended to wedding ceremonies in different religions. From our fieldnotes, we record the following entry.

Fieldnotes (AC: 6.5.03)

One is in safe hands in KB's class. The children are engaged, happy, concentrating. The rhythm and pace of the class is melodic. He has already done his board work before the students arrive. First the date is written in English. Under this, is some Gujarati text and then the word, 'VOWELS'. 'He has written 10 vowel sounds on the board. The Gujarati character is given first and then the phonemic approximation in English and then the word 'sound' written after each character .

The lesson consists of 3 texts. Two of these are in Gujarati only and one is bilingual. The students read through the first text. Students are selected to read passages. They get all the way through the text before KB checks for comprehension. The bulk of this is in Gujarati. They switch to the English when they get excited about the topic in hand – Gujarati weddings. They cannot express themselves in Gujarati but some students attempt to do so before switching to English. There is lots of good natured laughter. KB sets the homework which is to write about weddings in different religions. He says, 'We respect all cultures. We are good citizens, that is what we should be.' The students write their homework in the books. They are encouraged to ask parents and teachers the Gujarati names for wedding features.

The vignette is used to make several points. The classroom is bilingual with the base languages being Gujarati for the teacher and English for the students. Throughout the class, children are encouraged to develop their bilingual and biliterate skills in Gujarati and English. For example, children are required to extend their knowledge of graphemes and understand the relationship between graphemes and phonemes. They are also given experience in exploring notions of vernacular and literary texts as they move between informal personal letters and information on cultural events.

From the above example, we wish to propose that complementary schools promote bilingualism as usual and unproblematic (Martin, et al in prep). Languages are juxtaposed naturally, and students at Mount Hall complementary school are offered a positive model of codeswitching which they are unlikely to come across in their other school contexts (Martin et al forthcoming). Similarly, they are invited to learn Gujarati partly through their knowledge of English: bilingual instruction is seen as an appropriate methodology for teaching Gujarati as an additional language. In this lesson, as in the others, the classroom participants negotiate their interaction

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bilingually, through a 'bilingual label quest' type of discourse, where the teacher requests students to provide a label in English . This feature of classroom language use has been noted in a range of other bilingual contexts (see, for example, Martin 2003; Arthur and Martin, forthcoming). We would suggest that these bilingual and biliterate skills are important skills to be used across the students' educational contexts.

If we return to the extract above, we can see that there is also complementarity around curricula aims between the two school settings. The teacher uses the theme of weddings to encourage a discussion of multi-faith England while also endorsing respect and good citizenship towards others. Parents and students' other mainstream teachers are also included in the homework task. The teacher's discourse is inclusive and stresses differences and commonalities across religions in the GCSE instituted theme of weddings. We propose that the bilingual and cultural skills and knowledges highlighted in this complementary school classroom are very much in keeping with mainstream education agendas. We see this point further illustrated in the class transcript below.

(Note: bold font shows use of Gujarati while italics shows English.)

K: **You must be aware of all the cultures**...*we must, it's very important, that we learn to be good citizen, that's how it should be.* **So the** *homework* **for next week is** *wedding ceremonies* **in** *different religions...* **You can go to the temple,** *temple,* **to a** *church,* **mosque,** *mosque,* **you may have** *friends,* **if you have a Muslim friend ask them...you...ask them**...*try to get information on the different religions...how the wedding ceremony...OK?* **So, this was our...you have all understood the** *paragraph*?

The teacher further develops this multi-cultural, multi-faith theme in the interview which directly followed this class. AC is interviewing KB below.

KB: There are a lot of children who really want to learn, they are quite keen on it. Because they want to keep their identity, that's the first thing and, of course when they grow they become multi-cultural in the society, Isn't it? - if they know more languages it's better for them.

AC: Do they understand that?

KB: Yes, they do and try to help those who do not speak English and if they're in a certain environment they can translate into Gujarati . . .

AC: So how does learning Gujarati help the students with their mainstream work? Does it?

KB: Well it does I think, the mannerism - that's the first thing

AC: What do you mean, mannerism?

KB: Respect. And try to be honest, this we teach them in Gujarati.

AC: Right.

KB: And I think that helps in school, it could be vice versa as well. We try to teach them how to be a good citizen

AC: Absolutely

KB: I mean that is what I believe in

AC: Absolutely

KB: Just be a human

AC: Yes

KB: Respect others, if there's any difficulty try to help people out. I think that helps people.

In this interview transcript, the teacher speaks of his students' multicultural lives and their ability to use their languages to be good citizens and help others. He discursively constructs connections between the complementary and mainstream schools of his students in terms of the respect to others they are expected to learn about and show in both settings. He refers to complementary schools and mainstream schools 'backing one another up' in the message they give to students. One way this is consolidated is in the importance which the two Leicester complementary schools and their teachers gave to examinations. We explore the importance of examinations over the next two data extracts.

KB: One student said he didn't want to give the exam, he wanted to go away. I said 'why, being Gujarati you must learn your language'

AC: Yes

KB: I mean it should come from within

AC: Yes

KB: Being forced, I mean you can do it, but not as if it comes from within.

AC: Yes, sure

KB: So this, we try to convince the parents at the same time.

The importance of examinations in both complementary schools was clear. At the heart of the two schools was a concern with linguistic and cultural maintenances not available within the mainstream. However, in the case of the two schools in this study, there was also a recognition that this interest had to be worked into mainstream educational agendas of examination success. We have discussed elsewhere how the complementary schools created successful learner identities for their students (Creese et al in prep.). Working towards examinations in Gujarati allowed participants in complementary schooling to keep in step with the mainstream education while also offering opportunities to extend heritage and community cultural interests and knowledge. In many instances complementary schools offered an early opportunity for student success as students could be entered for GCSE exams earlier than their peers taking a modern foreign language in the mainstream.

In presenting this particular case study, we are of course aware that we present a GCSE class which is therefore already clearly preparing its students to pass an examination around an already set curriculum. However, the use of tests and examinations were apparent at every proficiency and age level within the two complementary schools. In the extract below, we depart for a moment from KB's class to illustrate a young beginner's class at Temple Vale school. There are 21 children in this class aged between 5 – 8.

The extract shows how the teacher works within an examination structure. Like KB, she is also a teacher in a mainstream primary school and understands very well the pressure the children are under. She attempts to mediate this pressure while still maintaining the importance of examinations.

In the next transcript, we again return to KB's class, where we examine, this time, the foregrounding of a heritage and community curriculum. Although we have tried to show throughout this paper possible synergies between the two settings, in this last extract we look at what complementary schools provide to their students which they would not find so easily in the mainstream classrooms.

Classroom transcript (6.5.03)

Students are working on Gujarati text which is written in the form of a letter from a boy in Gujarat India to a friend in England. The boy is describing a festival.

(Note: bold in Gujarati and italics in English.)

K: *OK,* ...**our...now listen, because you will get right answers to the questions from your understanding...our youth club of Wadala (town in Gujarat)...youth means** *youth club*...**organised to serve the people, what does serve the people mean? [indistinct]**...*yes* **to collect money...organised a programme of dandia ras (folk dance with sticks)...you must know dandia ras, right? Don't we do dandia ras when navratri (festival of dancing for nine nights) comes?...dandia ras, how many of you can do dandia ras?...during navratri?...almost everyone does...so it is not navratri but they organised a programme,** *programme,* **to collect money. Now, where was**

it organised? Wadala's secondary school's – means *secondary education, school,* in its *playing field* two tents were erected, tent means?

C: ...*tents...*

K: *Tents, yes.* You will see that in summer we – when the summer begins, many holy men from India come, right, they come and then they on the *ground, specially the grounds of Rushey Mead School* (school in Leicester), there many *programmes,* erect many tents and, in a similar way these people also, this *youth club,* they erected two big tents.

C: [reads with K's help]

K: ...Now, a good number of young men and women took part in the tents

C: [reads slowly]

K: Now, the best dancer – you – *you, yourself* – in your community...(there is) a *programme in community* of navratri then one night there is a competition of *fancy dress,* right? So, the best *fancy dress,* the best clothes worn will get a prize. So here as well, people who took part, they (wore) *fancy dresses,* different costumes, so the best, what is best? The one wearing the best costume will get a prize, what's a prize?

In this classroom transcript we see the teacher making reference to a Gujarati Hindu festival and a traditional dance that takes place during the festive period. The class are working around a text which describes the *dandia ras* (folk dance with sticks) during navratri (festival of dancing for nine nights) in a town, Wadala, in Gujarat, India. The teacher helps the students link the narrative of the text to the students' own lives in Leicester. He wants to know how many can do the dance and speaks specifically of tents being set up in a Leicester secondary school. He connects the Gujarati term **nice clothes** from the text to the phrase 'fancy dress'. This term is not a direct translation but an interpretation which allows the teachers to bring the event being described in the narrative more closely to the students' Leicester lives. The teacher is presenting a heritage culture while making connections to modern day lives. His interest in the Navrati festival in Gujarat and its traditions are part of his own history which he hopes to share with his students. He attempts to do this by making it current for them.

Complementary schools provide for distinct experiences not available to their students in the mainstream settings while also looking to make connections for students between their learning contexts. The teachers in complementary schools constantly looked for overlap across their students' different life experiences. We finish with a quotation from the headteacher at Mount Hill who talks of the importance of making connections for students across complementary and mainstream schooling.

interview transcript

You have to forge links, you have to because you have to learn from the mainstream schools. It will make it easier for the teachers to deliver it [the curriculum], for kids to learn it and it won't be like alien being in school- oh, that's one school and that's another school- hopefully it will blend in – the style of teaching, the style of, sort of ethos of the two- mainstream and the supplementary schools so similar that they feel as part of school extension instead of that school and this school. (Deepa, MH)

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Conclusion

The classrooms in the two Leicester complementary schools reported on in this paper are important sites for the acquisition of linguistic, cultural and literacy knowledge. The skills learnt in these contexts are transferable to other learning contexts. The multilingual experiences students have in the schools, then, provide important learning experiences and an improvement in cognitive and academic achievement.

We have tried to show in this paper how complementary schools add value and enhance learning across other educational settings. The research showed how complementary schools reinforced or complemented other educational practices, for example, how complementary schools manage discipline, assessment and examinations, all of which are important issues in other learning contexts. Practices in the two schools showed how matters related to discipline, respect and citizenship are embedded in the school and classroom discourses through, for example, students being taught appropriate and polite address terms, and respect for teachers and their classrooms. The culture of the schools, not only in the assemblies but also in the classrooms, is suffused with the notion of *varg etlay swarg*, a rhyming idiom which suggests literally that the classroom is heaven.

We also saw some examples in this paper of how the two complementary schools attempted to complement the mainstream curriculum by promoting multiculturalism and understandings of different religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In another example, not included above, Mount Hill organised a weekend trip for its school student to Leicester's National Space Centre. The school planned to use the trip to explore Gujarati vocabulary around the theme of Space and also to take a historic look at Gujarati scholars involved in Space research. This theme fitted directly with the children's mainstream curriculum and combined mainstream learning with Gujarati culture and language. Moreover, it was a carefully chosen theme by the Mount Hill administrator because again it brought together the students local lives as residents of Leicester where the National Space Centre has its home.

In this paper, we have not been able to do justice to reporting the full range of bilingual and complementary activities which we observed in the two schools. Some of these included:

- o Bilingualarity:
  - translation skills and moving between languages,
  - knowledge of linguistics,
  - practice in grapheme and phoneme recognition;
  - biliteracy

- o Complementarity:
  - practice in classroom routines (taking the register, good attendance, homework organisers)
  - exposure to relevant and complementary curriculum (science, cultural, language)

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- practice in respect for teachers, parents and others; good citizenship and learning about other ways of life; enhancing intercultural understanding.
- practice in assessment, passing exams and being a successful learner.
- practice in academic literacy
- inclusion and valuing of home culture into schooling; blurring of home/school spaces as places of learning

The full Leicester complementary school research project[1] report can be found at http://www.le.ac.uk/education/research/complementary_schools/index.html and in Martin et al, 2004.

We end this paper with a discussion of possible connections that mainstream schools can make with their local complementary schools. Many teachers will have already thought of and implemented these. We offer them not as a definitive list but as emerging suggestions from our own research. Neither do we concern ourselves with the feasibility of some of the proposals below. We realise that instituting change is a complex process. We would very much welcome hearing from teachers in order to extend this list.

- Find out what complementary schools are in your local area and make contact with them. Your LEA may keep a list; the library may advertise; bilingual/EAL teachers, parents and children will know of some.

- Invite complementary school teachers and administrators to any open days at the school.

- Offer to attend complementary schools' prize giving events where the schools share students. Show commitment to their bilingual and multicultural projects.

- Use mainstream school buildings to house complementary school classes.

- If a complementary school uses the mainstream school site, provide permanent space for materials storage, equipment, section of the library, a notice board.

- Use the mainstream classroom to reflects the home and community languages of the children studying there. Make the mainstream classroom a multilingual space.

- Put up a community/language/culture/ notice board giving information about bilingual, community and multicultural events.

- Find out if your teachers work in other complementary school settings – ask them to do INSET/ professional development workshop for other teachers in school

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- Engage bilingual parents in multilingual homework activities – not just for early bilingual learners until they learn English

- Find out phrases in different languages which highlight respect and good citizenship and positive attitudes to learning: display these on notice boards around the school.

- Ask a head teacher of complementary school to give an assembly.

- Encourage other bilingual teachers, parents and assistants to actively promote bilingual interactions in classrooms for learning beyond a transition to English.

- Encourage small-scale research and/or practical projects which would harness the potential links between complementary and mainstream schooling

- Incorporate teaching and learning experiences of complementary schooling into individual pupil profiles

- Work with complementary schools to facilitate registration for examinations in community languages

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