

Multilingual Learners, linguistic pluralism and implications for education and research

Abstract

In this chapter we address issues concerning multilingual pupils in linguistically diverse classrooms. Taking Britain as an example, we begin with a very brief history lesson which demonstrates that this country has long been, and continues to be, a multilingual society. We share concerns over the terminology used to denote multilingual pupils in the UK (and beyond) and then turn our attention to whether and to what extent a multilingual pedagogy does/could have benefits to pupils. In particular, we argue that while there has been some compelling descriptive and qualitative research that argues for an approach which directly capitalises on the home language knowledge of multilingual pupils, we need more controlled, experimental work to establish any causal links between drawing on the home language on the one hand, and enhanced second language (L2) and academic outcomes on the other. We discuss the theoretical background which justifies the need for this research, and we present relevant past research that has attempted to examine the impact of multilingual approaches. We conclude by arguing that while what has been done is of significant value in our efforts to understand and articulate best practice for multilingual pupils, we still need more, and more experimental, research to establish causal links between practice and outcomes in linguistically diverse classrooms.

1. Britain: a well-established multilingual society

The UK has a long history of educating multilingual learners. While acknowledging the presence of multilingual learners in the UK since time immemorial, Costley (2014) notes that the 1950s provided somewhat of a watershed moment. It was here, in response to the 1948 British Nationality Act (11 & 12 Geo. 6 c. 56), that the UK saw the beginning of significant and sustained inward migration. This started with the 'Windrush Generation' (British citizens from former British colonies, named for one of the ships that brought the first wave of migrants from the Caribbean in 1948) and has continued consistently ever since. This period saw the arrival of people from all over the British Commonwealth, and with them languages such as Bangla, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Patwa, Swahili and many more. Contrary to the common assumption at the time – that migrants were merely temporary sojourners, here for a short while until the time came for them to return 'home' (Stubbs, 1985; Levine, 1996) – large numbers of the Windrush generation, and every generation of migrants since, have settled, made the UK their home and become an important part of the fabric of British society. So too have their languages.

An Act of Parliament (Immigration Act 1971) marked the end of the Windrush period, stopping free movement to the UK of British overseas passport holders, and replacing it with the need for Commonwealth citizens to have both a work permit and a parent or grandparent born in the UK before being considered for settlement (BBC 2020). However, two years later, in 1973 the UK joined the European Economic Community and thus signed up to the principle of free movement of labour within that coalition of nations, a principle that was reaffirmed in 1992 with the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht and the creation of the European Union (EU) (European Union 1992). As one might expect, the free movement of people within the EU brought many more migrants to the UK and, as with the Windrush generation, many more languages. Figures from the Centre of Migration, Policy and Society (Vargas-Silva & Walsh 2020) show that the number of British residents born in the EU rose from an estimated 1.6 million in 2004 to approximately 3.7 million in 2019. Over the same period, numbers of UK residents born outside the UK but not in the EU rose from an estimated 3.8 million to nearly 6 million. This inward migration is associated with an increase in the numbers of multilingual

learners in UK schools, as the Department for Education notes that a significant proportion is accounted for by mothers born outside the UK giving birth to children in the UK (DfE 2019).

The UK's decision to leave the EU, taken in 2016 and finally consecrated on the first of January 2021, might be thought to apply limiting pressure on the rate of increase in migration. While the total number of EU-born residents living in the UK dipped only slightly following the 2016 referendum that precipitated the UK's decision to leave the EU, movement of people from the EU to the UK dropped off sharply. Between 2015 and 2019 new arrivals from the EU fell by 34%. However, over the same period, inward migration from non-EU countries started to rise (Vargas-Silva & Walsh 2020). Regardless of the UK's decision to leave the EU, it will continue to need migrant labour for its own economic prosperity (HM Government 2018) and will continue to be bound by international law to accept applications for asylum from people fleeing trauma. There is every reason to suspect, therefore, that inward migration will continue to bring multilingual families into the British school system and that the British-born children of settled migrants will continue to contribute positively to the linguistic profile of this nation, its society, and schools. Britain is, and will remain, a multilingual society.

2. How is linguistic diversity represented in UK schools?

Recent figures from the UK's Department for Education – which help to contextualise the relationship between immigration to the UK and the impact on the country's school population – puts the number of learners classified as hailing from multilingual home environments at around 19% of the pupil population (DfE 2019), a figure that has risen steadily from about 11% in 2006 when these data began to be regularly reported.

In England, among the 19% of the school population who can be thought of as multilingual, more than 300 different non-English languages are represented (Bailey & Marsden, 2017). In Scotland, the proportion of multilingual children in government-funded schools is about 10%. Among these, 153 different home languages in addition to English are represented, including Scots (Scottish Government, 2020). In Wales, the proportion is approximately 8% (StatsWales, 2020). However, while the Welsh figures incorporate pupils speaking one of the more than 155 languages represented among Welsh school pupils, the relevant statistical release collapses first language Welsh and first language English speakers into one figure, thus underestimating the number of multilingual pupils in the system as a whole. In Northern Ireland, the equivalent figure is approximately 5%, with about 90 different home languages represented (Meredith, 2018). As in Wales, this figure does not take into account pupils who speak Irish, which is collapsed into one figure with English.

Our national education system is thus unquestionably multilingual. The term provided by the British education system to describe this significant minority within the school population is pupils who have English as an Additional Language, or simply EAL. The implications of this term are discussed in the next section.

2.2. English as an Additional Language: what's in a name?

A pupil is recorded to have English as an additional language if she/he is exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English. This measure is not a measure of English language proficiency or a good proxy for recent immigration. (DfE 2019:9).

Arguably, this somewhat paltry explanation of what it means to be an EAL learner invokes more questions about that classification than it clarifies. If 'exposure' to a language other than English is the defining characteristic, then what does it mean to be exposed to another language? Is it enough for

pupils to hear their grandmother or uncle using a non-English language when on a phone call to relatives in another country? Does the presence of foreign language newspapers in the family home count as exposure? If a child hears music in their heritage language, or is present when other members of the family are watching non-English movies or TV programmes, is that sufficient? The strict interpretation of the term would suggest that, yes, all of these and any other one might think of would place a pupil into the category of EAL.

Of course, 'exposure' could also mean that the pupil uses non-English languages with a proficiency equal to or superior to that of their English language. So, we find ourselves subsuming under the banner of EAL everything from ostensibly monolingual English pupils, whose ambient home environment features non-English languages which they may not use or understand, through pupils who use only a non-English language at home and who are in the process of learning or acquiring English at school, to pupils who are fully conversant with English and one or more non-English language. Note also that it is sufficient for any of these contexts to be 'believed' to characterise the linguistic environment of the pupil; though believed by whom is undeclared. This all-encompassing characterisation of EAL has led some to brand it "reckless" (TES 2018, no page). EAL as a defining characteristic tells us nothing of the nature or extent of the exposure to either English or the non-English language. Crucially, therefore, it tells us nothing of the type of education that would be best suited to any individual classified as EAL.

In Northern Ireland, official classification is more informative. A decision was taken by the Northern Irish Department of Education in 2010 to dispense with the term EAL "due to difficulties in the interpretation of the above definitions [of EAL] encountered by schools when completing their census returns" (Department of Education 2010:3). The term chosen to replace it was 'Newcomer', defined as "a child or young person who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum and does not have a language in common with the teacher" (Department of Education, 2010:3). This definition matches more closely definitions used in other parts of the world, notably the United States, where children who require additional support to access the curriculum because of their English language skills are referred to as Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Importantly, and unlike the EAL designation used in England, this categorisation makes explicit reference to the child's developing linguistic proficiency in the medium of instruction.

EAL may have its limitations as a diagnostic indicator for linguistic and other educationally relevant characteristics of multilingual pupils, but it does something that other terms do not. It explicitly places English as an *addition* to the existing linguistic repertoires of pupils. It does so without implying a hierarchy of languages, as for example the more globally familiar ESL (English as a Second Language) does. Neither does it draw attention to what nascent multilingual children cannot do, as Limited English Proficient does. Instead, it invites the view that multilingualism is an asset. Whether or not the orientation towards "additive bilingualism" (Lambert, 1981) is intentional, and more specifically *well intentioned* – Cunningham (2019), for example, argues that 'EAL' cannot escape negative ideological associations and language attitudes and is thus inevitably problematic – we believe that users of the term should seize the opportunity it presents to frame 'EAL' as descriptive of the kind of linguistic competence we aspire to for all of our children. That is, EAL can be seen as reflective of a society where languages are things to be added to our shared repertoire, where multilingualism is seen as an unremarkable aspect of everyday life, and linguistic pluralism is something to aspire to.

3. Does a multilingual society benefit from a multilingual pedagogy?

We have established that we live in a multilingual society. Children at various stages of multilingualism, from those just beginning to acquire an additional language to those with impressive command of a number of them, make up a fifth of the pupil population in the UK. Similar patterns of societal multilingualism exist the world over. A turning point in the way that applied linguists have begun to think about the implications of a society in which different languages coexist was codified in the publication of two books both using the term 'The Multilingual Turn' in their titles (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014). In both volumes, the authors explore what it means to live in a global society where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception, and explore the implications of this for personal identities, social cohesion, language learning, and language pedagogies and curricula.

Conteh and Meier (2014) consists of a number of different contributions which explore issues around language ideologies and identity in linguistically diverse societies, language education in schools and communities, and pedagogies and classroom practice. The volume challenges the notion of a monolingual mainstream and promotes the reality (and advantages) of multilingualism throughout all aspects of society, but education in particular. The majority of the contributions were based in complementary schools, those educational settings that fall outside of formal education and in which many multilingual families send their children to develop more advanced heritage language skills. Research on linguistically diverse classrooms is often carried out in such contexts, as teachers in 'mainstream' formal education do not tend (at present) to engage in multilingual pedagogical approaches.

May's (2014) volume is also a compilation of contributions from authors around the world, each of whom in their own way address important issues within the context of linguistically diverse classrooms and multilingual learners. Works such as these, which focus on the needs, issues, challenges, and education of multilingual learners, are increasingly pertinent as our society slowly recognises the reality of the multilingual world in which we live. For the purposes of this chapter, we will focus on the implications of the multilingual turn as it relates to pedagogical approaches for multilingual learners.

At its heart, work advocating the multilingual turn argues for acceptance of, and support for, multilingualism. Within educational settings, this means that instead of viewing linguistically diverse classrooms as problems to be overcome, they should rather be viewed as resources from which one can support language development (in the round) in all students, regardless of their linguistic profile. A much-discussed notion relating to this, particularly from a pedagogical perspective, is 'Translanguaging'. Li Wei (2018), for example, has noted that the term Translanguaging can be conceived as a practical theory of language, where the notion of using more than one code within and across utterances is a language practice engaged in by multilinguals around the world. It can be directly relevant to classrooms as well, as highlighted by García (2009) and Creese and Blackledge (2015) among others (see also Conteh, 2018). From a pedagogical point of view, the notion is that multilingual children should be able to draw on all of their languages (i.e. their full linguistic repertoire) to enhance their learning across the curriculum.

An example of how using the home language can support learning in classrooms can be found in Early and Cummins (2011) and Cummins, Hu, Markus and Montero (2015). Cummins et al. (2015) discuss the notion of identity negotiation and how students' identities within specific social groups influences academic achievement. Multilingual learners often under-achieve academically (though note that they often excel too) (Murphy, in press). Academic achievement is influenced by numerous variables, including linguistic proficiency, literacy skill, and home language environment. Social status and the *perceived* social status of students and their respective languages is also argued to be a significant

factor in achievement. Indeed, Cummins (2000) powerfully articulates the social justice issues associated with educating multilingual learners, arguing that many of the problems they tend to experience from an educational perspective can be attributed to the implicit and explicit prejudices levied against ethnic minority pupils and their families.

Cummins et al. (2015) discuss the notion of 'identity texts', which is where teachers encourage multilingual pupils to use their multilingualism as a cognitive tool to broaden the range of modalities they can use to create literature and art. In turn, this can serve to enhance their literacy skills and help them develop a stronger, and more positive, self-identity. In their work, Cummins et al. (2015) present a model where such a process (in which multilingual pupils use their full linguistic repertoire) can support literacy engagement, and ultimately literacy attainment. Importantly (and taking a translanguaging perspective), this approach allows students to create dual language texts, even in educational settings where the teacher does not know the home language of the pupils. Cummins et al. (2015) report the pride felt by the pupils in terms of the work they created, and argue that literacy-based practices that affirm multilingual pupils' identity and use of their home languages can have direct, positive impacts, particularly with respect to their academic achievement. Indeed, they go so far as to suggest a causal relationship between an approach like that used in identity texts on the one hand and enhanced literacy skill on the other. This is because, they argue, approaches such as these increase pupils' engagement with literacy, and engagement has been demonstrated to be associated with higher literacy achievement.

All of these ideas are intuitively appealing to those of us who are predisposed to view multilingualism, wherever it is found, as more interesting and positive than the monolingual norm. There are powerful reasons to assume that adopting pedagogical approaches which allow multilingual pupils to draw from their home language knowledge and experience will lead to enhanced proficiency in the majority language (their L2) and improved academic outcomes. We submit, however, that at this point in the development of work in this area, we still lack the critical mass of research – and of a particular kind of research – that will unambiguously demonstrate the power of the multilingual turn in educational settings. In short, we would argue that while there is a sound body of work arguing for the benefits of translanguaging approaches in mainstream classrooms, until and unless we have rigorous experimental methods applied to this question, we will not be able to demonstrate unequivocally the benefits for majority language development or academic achievement. Importantly we need Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs), in which a multilingual pedagogy is directly compared with the monolingual norm, and where clear outcomes (language and/or academic) are compared across both types of learning conditions. Very little work of this type has yet been conducted, and without it what we have are compelling descriptions of what individual teachers, classrooms and/or schools have done that *might* be effective. What we don't have is convincing causal evidence, evidence that could be incorporated into teacher education programmes to support future teachers, and which can also be brought to government departments to argue for promoting multilingualism throughout the curriculum. We are hopeful that such research, once conducted, will bear fruit and demonstrate advantages in defined outcomes. The reason for our optimism stems from a body of theorising and research to which we now turn.

4. Leveraging language to leverage learning

To start to explore the possibilities, it is worth revisiting our theoretical understanding of the way that multiple languages coexist in the minds of language learners and the potential that this cohabitation in cognitive space might have on overall linguistic development. In 1979, Cummins published his Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, followed shortly thereafter (in 1980) by his theory of a Common Underlying Proficiency (Cummins 1979a, 1980). These continue to be extremely influential

in shaping the way we think about the cognitive development of multilingual learners and its implications for their linguistic and academic development (Cummins, 2008; Thomas & Mady, 2014; Forbes, 2019). Both theories will be familiar to many readers, but to recap: they do not see languages as separate entities that exist in splendid isolation from one another in the mind of a multilingual individual (and therefore entities that compete in a zero-sum game for cognitive resources, as earlier conceptualisations of bilingualism would have it: e.g. Darcy 1953). Instead, the theory sees the cognitive skills that inform linguistic proficiency in either language as being housed in the same central engine. As such, cognitive linguistic skills developed initially through one language inform the use of both (or all) languages. Cummins characterised this interrelatedness most famously with a diagram of a dual-peaked iceberg. The peaks of the iceberg emerging from the waterline represent the surface features of each of two languages: pronunciation, lexis, and grammar. These are the features of language that we see and hear when an individual uses one or other of their languages. Beneath the waterline, abstract and invisible, is where the cognitive resources that inform the use of the surface features are represented. According to Cummins, this collection of skills is unitary, informing both languages. Working from this assumption, Cummins posits that teaching to develop the cognitive linguistic skills that reside in the submerged central engine – using either of the languages known to the learner – will inform development in both. A child who has learned to tell the time in one language, for example, does not need to re-learn the semantics of words like ‘past’, ‘to’, and ‘o’clock’, they just need learn the labels for these concepts in the other language (Cummins 2001). The languages are interdependent; thus the skills informing meaning-making in one of them can be brought to bear on meaning-making in the other.

4.1 Evidence for Cummins’ central engine

Cummins based his theories in large part on findings from the then relatively nascent field of bilingual education research in the 1970s (e.g. Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Cohen, 1974; Swain, 1975) and from studies assessing the correlation between academic language proficiency in learners’ first language (L1) and in their L2 (e.g. Cummins, 1977; Lapkin & Swain, 1977; Genesee, 1979). We will explore some of this work below.

4.1.1 Research on bilingual education programmes

At the time that Cummins and others were first exploring the notion of linguistic interdependence, research was more concerned with assessing whether bilingual education was *detrimental* to cognitive development, rather than exploring the possibility that it might be advantageous. The findings of studies like Lambert and Tucker (1972) and Cohen (1974) tended to demonstrate that the fears which some held about bilingualism were unfounded. Bilingual education did not damage the development of the L1, nor did it appear to have any detrimental effect on cognitive development, and it resulted in superior learning of the target language (French in the case of Lambert and Tucker, Spanish in the case of Cohen). Another influential study informing the Common Underlying Proficiency theory was Swain (1975), which looked in some detail at the development of specific writing characteristics in the L1 of her participants (English), who were Grade 3 learners in a bilingual French immersion programme in Canada. Outcomes measures were text length, proportion of complex and simple sentences, lexical variety, lexical misuse, morphological errors, spelling, and creativity. Swain found that, compared to English children studying French as a stand-alone subject in an English-medium programme, the writing of English L1 children in the bilingual programme was longer, more complex, equally lexically diverse, contained fewer lexical and morphological errors and was “at least as creative” (Swain 1975:20). It did contain slightly more punctuation and spelling errors, but Swain points out that the French immersion pupils’ writing was longer and more complex, so the opportunity to make these kinds of error was greater.

The success of bilingual programmes in Canada helped to usher in what might arguably be called the heyday of bilingual education in the USA, following the 1974 amendment to the Bilingual Education Act, when States were encouraged to provide bilingual programmes as a matter of routine. The prevailing conditions provided an opportunity to assess the effects of these programmes, and a number of studies were conducted in the 70s and 80s that did so. Several systematic reviews and meta-analyses of research conducted during this period demonstrate that these bilingual programmes were associated with improved educational outcomes for minority language students (Willig, 1985; Greene, 1998; McField, 2002; Slavin & Cheung, 2005; Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005). Across this body of research, children from minority language backgrounds who attended bilingual programmes either matched or outperformed their peers (who attended monolingual English schools) on measures such as reading, writing, vocabulary, oral language, mathematics, problem solving, science, social studies, and measures of general intelligence.

More recently, and adding important international evidence to a body of literature that had principally been focused on North-America, research on the effects of bilingual programmes in Europe was synthesised in a systematic review by Reljić, Ferring and Martin (2015). In their review, they performed an exceptionally thorough search for studies that evaluated European bilingual programmes in comparison to programmes conducted only in the target language (normally the language of the European state in which the schools were located). They found seven reports that add support to the general findings of the North American research. The studies assessed bilingual programmes that used six different L1s (Urdu, Asturian, Basque, Catalan, Gaelic, and Turkish) and four target languages (English, Spanish, Norwegian, and Dutch). The studies reported on outcomes such as literacy, mathematics, civics, linguistic creativity, and written expression, both in the L1 and in the target languages. As with previous studies, Reljić, Ferring and Martin's synthesis found a small but statistically significant positive effect on academic and linguistic attainment for students in bilingual schools compared to students in target-language-only schools. They conclude that their review "supports bilingual education in Europe, which specifically includes the home language of language minority children" (Reljić, Ferring & Martin, 2015:29).

In the bilingualism literature we have evidence, therefore, that when multilingual children are educated in both of their languages, there are detectable and meaningful advantages, especially for children who belong to language minority communities, as is often the case for EAL learners in the UK. While in this literature there are clear implications for multilingual approaches to teaching multilingual learners, it is not clear how important context is to these overall findings. For example, it is important to remember that mainstream schools in the UK are quite a different to bilingual programmes in Los Angeles or Montréal, in more ways than just the languages that are used for instruction.

4.1.2 Correlational studies

The correlational studies that informed Cummins' (1979a, 1980) reasoning about the interdependence of languages in the minds of bilingual (or aspiring bilingual) learners focused on assessing the relationships between academic attainment and proficiency in what he called Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency or CALP (Cummins, 1979b). Earlier explorations of the relationships between language proficiency and academic attainment, notably by Oller, focussed on the influence of what he called a "language factor" (Oller 1978: 412). This was a global measure of linguistic proficiency that was examined as a correlate of academic attainment. The language factor, according to Oller, explains about 79 percent of the variance in academic attainment across a variety of measures.

Cummins, however, took issue with the language factor as a measure of the type of linguistic proficiency that would lead to success in school. The basis of his criticism was that, rather than there being a single language factor, there are instead two dimensions to language proficiency. The first dimension he called Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills or BICS (Cummins, 1980), with the second being CALP. The distinction is important. Proficiency in BICS – social, concretely contextualised, everyday, and chiefly oral language – is, with very rare exceptions, acquired by everyone in their L1, regardless of IQ or academic aptitude. It is also relatively rapidly acquired in an L2, assuming adequate exposure and opportunities to use it. As such, BICS introduces a ceiling effect into the measurement of language proficiency. If everyone by the time they reach school age, or soon after, has attained high levels of BICS, it ceases to be a useful correlate, as everyone is at (or close to) ceiling. Much better for assessing the relationship between language proficiency and academic success, says Cummins (1980), is CALP. CALP is the dimension of language that is harder to acquire without explicit teaching. It requires conscious knowledge of language, such that it can be manipulated, synthesised and used in decontextualised cognitive/academic operations.

By disaggregating CALP from BICS and assessing the relationship between the former and learners' academic attainment, a better understanding of how language development contributes to overall academic development can be determined. More importantly, for the purposes of this discussion, assessing the extent of CALP knowledge in either or both of the languages known to an individual, and comparing the extent to which these correlate with academic attainment, can provide insight into whether cultivating CALP in one language has implications for development of the same set of skills in the other. Cummins asserted that CALP can be distinguished empirically from BICS by the type of assessment used. For example, oral fluency tests say very little about CALP when compared with oral cloze tests - the latter requiring manipulation of linguistic knowledge to be successfully completed (Cummins 1979b).

To illustrate the importance of the CALP/BICS distinction, Cummins drew on a number of studies that assessed the relationships between CALP skills in L1, CALP skills in L2, aptitude, IQ and scores on achievement tests (Carey & Cummins, 1979; Cummins, 1977; Lapkin & Swain, 1977; Taft & Bodi, 1980; Genesee, 1979; Genesee & Hamayan, 1980; Swain, Lapkin & Barik, 1976). This body of literature demonstrated moderate to strong positive correlations between all of these measures. That is, L1 CALP was positively correlated with L2 CALP; and both were positively correlated with IQ, aptitude and achievement. Cummins took this as evidence for the veracity of his Common Underlying Proficiency theory. That is: "both L1 and L2 CALP are manifestations of the one underlying dimension" (Cummins 1979b:199). Moreover, Cummins' analysis of these data also revealed an association with the age at which the L2 was introduced. Specifically, the older that learners were when they first started learning the L2, the more likely they were to demonstrate an advantage in their mastery of L2 syntax and morphology as well as the cognitive/academic skills manifested through the L2. The implication from this latter finding is that CALP skills already manifested in the L1 are quickly absorbed into the L2, assuming adequate exposure and some direct teaching. Using the L1 to support EAL learners might, therefore, have a facilitative effect, if it works from the basis established in the stronger language to build competence in the weaker one.

More recent correlational studies, conducted since the body of work that first influenced Cummins, have largely confirmed his initial position. Preevo, Malda, Mesman, and van IJzendoorn (2016), for example, conducted a meta-analysis of studies exploring relationships between oral language proficiency in L1 and L2 and academic proficiency among bilingual children with an immigration background. Results from 86 studies published between 1976 and 2013, covering bilingual learners from pre-school to age 18 with a variety of L1 backgrounds, were synthesised. The synthesis revealed that oral language proficiency in the L1 was moderately positively correlated with early L2 literacy

(phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and initial awareness of literacy concepts) ($r=.22$) and more weakly correlated with L2 reading proficiency ($r=.12$). Both correlations were statistically significant. Adding support for the position that instruction in the L1 may facilitate development in the L2, the correlations found in the constituent studies in this meta-analysis tended to vary in strength according to school type: the strongest correlations were associated with bilingual programmes, and weaker correlations were found among children who attended schools in which the language of instruction was exclusively the L2.

Another meta-analysis (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2011) explored the relationships between L1 and L2 oral language proficiency, L1 and L2 phonology (operationalised by the authors as decoding and phonological awareness), and L1 and L2 reading comprehension. They searched for reports published between 1976 and 2009 that assessed the relationships between at least two of these variables in school-age learners. They located 47 eligible studies, across a variety of contexts, including a variety of L1s and L2s. The findings of these studies were statistically synthesised in five meta-analyses. These revealed a small positive meta-correlation ($r=.16$) for L1 and L2 oral language proficiency; a large positive meta-correlation ($r=.54$) between L1 and L2 decoding; a large meta-correlation ($r=.60$) between L1 and L2 phonological awareness; and a moderate meta-correlation ($r=.24$) between L1 decoding and L2 reading comprehension. The only meta-correlation calculated in this study that did not show clear evidence of an association was that of L1 oral language proficiency and L2 reading comprehension, perhaps reflecting the BICS/CALP distinction in the cognitive linguistic skills required for each task.

In addition, some work has added to our understanding about whether the linguistic interdependence associated with CALP is confined to structurally similar languages or whether the relationship holds for structurally dissimilar languages. Chuang, Joshi and Dixon (2011) explored relationships between competence in Mandarin Chinese literacy and English literacy among secondary school learners in Taiwan. The orthographic systems of these languages are very dissimilar. Mandarin Chinese uses a logographic script, in which symbols represent entire words or morphemes. English uses an alphabetic script, in which letters represent the individual phonemes that make up words and morphemes. The dissimilarity of these orthographic systems led Chuang, Joshi and Dixon (2005) to question whether we would see transfer of literacy competence in Mandarin Chinese to literacy competence in English, or whether the influence of proficiency in Mandarin literacy would be an impediment to developing similar skills in English. Mandarin and English test results from a random sample of 30,000 Taiwanese 9th grade students, over a six-year period were compared. Using linear regression modelling, they determined that 62% of the variation in English literacy proficiency could be accounted for by the participants' level of Mandarin literacy. The inclusion of other predictors in the model (gender; rural or urban school districts; length of time learning English) had negligible effects on the bottom-line finding. This study, and other similar ones (Bialystok, Luk & Kwan, 2005; Bialystok, McBride-Chang & Luk, 2005; Keung & Ho, 2009; Wang, Perfetti & Liu, 2005; Wang, Cheung & Chen, 2006), lend important support to the notion that, even when languages are structurally quite different, "students' L1 reading ability plays a significant role during the process of L2 reading comprehension acquisition." (Chuang, Joshi & Dixon 2005: 112).

Findings like these tantalize educators who wish to capitalize on the linguistic diversity represented by multilingual learners in their classrooms. Operationalising this understanding in terms of pedagogy is eagerly hypothesised about by researchers and practitioners alike (NALDIC 2019). Chuang, Joshi and Dixon (2005), for example, urge the Taiwanese Ministry of Education to adapt their national curriculum to "tailor L2 [English] reading instruction to capitalize on reading knowledge and strategies already familiar to students through the L1 learning process"(2005:114).

4.2 What are the implications of this body of work for multilingual pedagogies?

We have devoted quite some space to characterising and updating research that was first conducted more than four decades ago, to explain the basis for the claim that a multilingual approach to the education of EAL learners might be a fruitful avenue to pursue. The consistency in findings across this forty-year period is remarkable. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that more recent research in this area does not appear to have moved us much further forward in our understanding of the pedagogical implications of this theory than we were in the 1980s. In the four decades since Cummins first told us to adopt multilingual pedagogical approaches, conceptual replications of the work that informed this instruction have very little to add to, or clarify, Cummins' essential argument. One might well ask how many correlational studies of linguistic interdependence we need, before we are satisfied that Cummins' theory is sound. How many evaluations of bilingual programmes need to be conducted in order to conclude that children who want to participate in them should be able to? Or, perhaps, what could researchers be doing with their time and energy instead of re-litigating old arguments?

One area that we believe should be receiving much more attention from researchers who are interested in the potential of multilingual pedagogies is the exploration of the substantive effects of adopting these approaches on meaningful educational outcomes for multilingual learners.

5. A new research focus

The challenge for teachers of EAL learners relates to the operationalisation of the lessons learned from the research summarized above in the linguistically diverse contexts that characterise their classrooms.

A body of literature aimed squarely at teachers has grown out of the multilingual turn, and especially under the banner of translanguaging (García & Li Wei 2014). These have produced volumes of advice on how to incorporate other languages into the educational diet of multilingual learners. We have already mentioned the work of Cummins et al. (2015). As a further example, Gibbons (2009: 92) suggests that teachers should "use the students' first language to explain the key points of the text [...] prior to having them read it in English". The Department for Education for England suggests to teachers that students' "[h]ome language can be used to develop higher-order literacy and cognitive skills" (Bourne 2002:76) by, for example, discussing the rhetorical devices used in literary texts or exploring cause and effect in science lessons. Celic and Seltzer (2012) and Chumak-Horbatsch (2012) have produced compendia of multilingual approaches to teaching, including activities such as: dual language note taking; reading in one language, discussing the text in the other; using translation software such as Google Translate; and so on.

However, the efficacy of these interventions outside the context of bilingual education lacks a secure evidential basis. Most of the research on multilingual approaches to teaching EAL learners has been observational in nature and has a tendency to use proxy measures for actual linguistic and academic outcomes. There is, however, a small body of literature that evaluates the substantive educational effects of multilingual approaches to teaching, using methodological approaches that can help reduce uncertainty about these effects. We will describe both these bodies of literature next.

5.1 Observational research on the effects of multilingual pedagogies

We are informed about the potential pedagogic role of multilingual approaches to teaching by research that examines the purposes to which it is put by multilingual learners when they engage in educational activities. When given the opportunity to use their L1, multilingual learners use it in ways that seem likely to support their learning. For example, research using think-aloud protocols that observes and classifies the purposes of L1 use by students working together or responding to L2 tasks

finds that L1 is used for planning and reviewing work, meta-linguistic exploration, and for staying on task (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Scott & de la Fuente, 2008; Duarte, 2016).

In addition, research has examined the relationship between L1 use and student wellbeing (in the UK and elsewhere). This has shown that students feel valued when their linguistic background, and by extension their cultural heritage, is acknowledged and actively promoted by their teachers (Parke et al., 2002; Kenner et al., 2008). Similarly, aspects of social justice are the main drivers in the translanguaging movement. Some proponents of translanguaging make the strong argument that by failing to promote explicitly the dynamic use of the full linguistic repertoires of multilingual learners, the education system is marginalising and oppressing these students (Flores & García, 2017; Kleyne & García, 2019; García, 2019). It is legitimate to look at how multilingual learners and their advocates view linguistic plurality, and the multilingual turn in language teaching and learning reinforces this burgeoning rejection of what some call the monolingual (and especially monolingual *English*) hegemony (Major 2018).

There is an expectation that teachers' practice should be based on the best available evidence about what is likely to work most effectively in their contexts. To that end, we take the position that it is important to determine whether multilingual approaches can help multilingual learners (such as EAL students in the UK) to understand better what they are being taught and to express better what they have learned, in the majority language (e.g. English in the UK). This should not diminish the argument that multilingual learners are entitled to be valued for who they are.

Observational research like that described in this chapter helps us to speculate about the potential advantage to EAL learners that multilingual approaches may have, and it makes a strong social justice case. However, these alone do not inform us about the substantive academic and linguistic outcomes of these approaches. In order to demonstrate that the educational outcomes for multilingual learners will be improved by multilingual pedagogies, experiments that compare these pedagogical approaches to alternatives must be conducted. It is a basic principle of educational research, aiming to tease out causal relationships between teaching and learning, that a promising teaching approach should be carefully compared with a realistic alternative in a fair test (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Too much of the existing literature on multilingual pedagogies does not do that. Far more often, we see causal claims made on the basis of research designs that cannot be said reliably to support them. Often the designs adopted do not provide valid comparisons and do little to address the potential biases which may have influenced findings. As such, our capacity to judge the merits of a given multilingual approach relative to an alternative is compromised. When researchers make the effort to reduce the potential that biases have to influence our understanding – by, for example, using random allocation to create comparison groups – we are in a far stronger position to assess reliably the relative effects of these approaches. Studies in which that effort has been made in the area of multilingual pedagogy are notable by their scarcity.

5.2 Experimental research on the effects of multilingual pedagogies

Empirical support for the above arguments is derived from a recent systematic review of research addressing this question (Chalmers, 2019). The review sought to locate studies using experimental and quasi-experimental designs that evaluated teaching strategies making use of participants' home languages, and where linguistic and/or academic outcomes in the target language were measured. A comprehensive search for research that met these criteria revealed only eleven eligible studies.

The eleven studies addressed a variety of learning strategies and outcomes. Three studies explored the effects of using learners' L1 on outcomes related to reading (Walters & Gunderson, 1985;

Sanchez, 2004; Huennekens, 2013). These used read-alouds in the L1, translations of school texts into L1, and dialogic reading in the L1 as vehicles for incorporating L1 into L2 classrooms. They assessed the effects of these strategies on L2 reading comprehension and L2 phonic knowledge. Taken together, their findings are equivocal. Huennekens (2013) found in favour of using the L1, Sanchez (2004) found in favour of not using the L1, and Walters and Gunderson (1985) found that it appeared to make little difference, as participants in all groups did equally well.

In another study included in Chalmers' (2019) review, Yiakoumetti (2006) compared two groups of Cypriot Greek speakers, whose language of instruction at school was Standard Modern Greek (SMG). One group was taught using a technique in which features of SMG were explicitly and systematically compared and contrasted with similar features in Cypriot Greek. The other group continued with their usual SMG literacy curriculum. The group who had used the language comparison technique made significantly fewer errors in their production of SMG (both written and oral) compared to the other group.

One study in the review (Chalmers, 2014) assessed the effects of asking the parents of EAL learners to discuss the events of a short story using either English or their L1. The completeness and quality of subsequent written recounts of those stories were then compared. Both the English-only and the L1 group did equally well on these outcomes. Notable for educational contexts such as the UK (see section 2), this was the only study located for the review which was conducted in a linguistically diverse setting; that is, a setting in which more than one L1 was represented among participants.

A more promising avenue for exploration emerges from six studies included in the review that addressed the use of the L1 to support vocabulary teaching in the L2. All but one of these used some variation on identifying keywords in a shared text and discussing these words using the L1s of the participants. Lugo-Neris et al. (2010) used a randomised crossover design with kindergarten-aged Spanish-L1 children in Florida to assess whether stopping to talk in Spanish about keywords in an English language story improved the subsequent understanding of those keywords relative to talking about them in English only. They found that participants were better able to define the keywords in both English and Spanish following the L1-mediated intervention. A similar approach was taken by Lee and Macaro (2013). The authors took advantage of pre-existing Korean primary school classes in which English was taught either by monolingual English teachers or by bilingual Korean/English teachers. Comparison classes were selected on the basis of the teachers' professional experience, class sizes, pupils' ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and English proficiency of the students (that is, participants were not randomly allocated to class type, but instead existing classes were 'matched' on these characteristics). In their reading lessons, when they encountered preselected target words, the bilingual teachers translated them and discussed their meaning in Korean. The monolingual teachers used English to explain the words' meanings. In tests of recall and recognition of the target words, the authors found that those who had been given Korean language input on meanings performed statistically significantly better than those who had been given English language explanations.

Two other studies follow a very similar structure (Sieh, 2008; Codina Camó & Pladevall Ballester, 2015). Sieh's study contained two experiments, which took place in Taiwan with 4th Grade Mandarin learners of English. In both experiments, the teacher read a story to the children in English. When she reached preselected target words, she either showed the children a flashcard with an illustration of the word and its written English form, or she showed the flashcard and orally translated the word into Mandarin Chinese. In one of the two experiments there was a statistically significant difference in the receptive knowledge of the target words, with those in the L1 condition faring better. In the other experiment, no difference in outcomes was detected.

Codina Camó and Pladevall Ballester (2015) followed a very similar procedure. They used an animated adaptation of *The Tales of Peter Rabbit* as a stimulus with 5th Grade Catalan learners of English. When preselected words appeared in the video, the teacher paused it and either showed the participants a flashcard containing the English word and an illustration of it, or showed the flash card and orally translated its meaning into Catalan. The group who were taught using Catalan performed statistically significantly better on tests of receptive knowledge of the target words, both one week and one month after the intervention, compared to the group using only English.

The final study addressing vocabulary knowledge included in Chalmers' (2019) synthesis, Tonzar, Lotto & Job (2009), was somewhat different, and arguably less representative of typical classroom practice. Using a projector, 123 Italian L1 4th Grade students were shown a series of 40 English or German words (there were two target languages in this study). After each word, either a picture to illustrate its meaning or an Italian translation of the word was shown. On tests of recall of the target words, those words that had been followed by an illustration were statistically significantly better recalled than those for which an Italian translation had been provided.

In assessing the methodological rigour of all the studies that met the review's eligibility criteria, Chalmers (2019) found that very few had adopted the most trustworthy designs for causal inference (randomised trials, for example), and that there were significant shortcomings in terms of scale in most of them. With regards to the debate we are entertaining in this chapter, we might tentatively say that there appears to be promise in the use of multilingual approaches when teaching L2 vocabulary to multilingual learners (e.g. English vocabulary to EAL pupils). However, we are hard pressed to say much more than that. The literature exposes an embarrassing lack of quality evidence that would inform us either way about a pedagogical approach that has become something of a *cause célèbre* in the field.

6. Keeping 'the multilingual turn' turning

The enthusiasm that has been steadily building for multilingual approaches to educating not just our multilingual learners but also their monolingual peers demonstrates a seriousness about valuing the linguistically plural societies that characterise our world. In the UK, the EAL community is generally excited by the pedagogical possibilities implied by 'the multilingual turn'. As Macaro (2018:204) notes, "For the past 20 years or so, the presence of the L1 in the classroom has ceased to become a controversial issue in the SLA [Second Language Acquisition] community". Nonetheless, echoes of earlier academic concerns around the appropriateness of anything other than 'all L2, all the time' that characterised academic discourse can still be heard among decision makers not immediately invested in the field of EAL. Macaro continues: "the argument is no longer among researchers and commentators but among the teachers they are researching." Teachers are torn between a growing call to adopt multilingual pedagogies on the one hand and years of policy, practice, beliefs and experience that implicitly or explicitly reject this on the other.

The switch to a different way of teaching does not come without a cost. This may be in terms of money: buying multilingual textbooks or employing multilingual teachers and assistants, for example. It may be in terms of effort and time: training teachers and adapting curricula, for example. Or it may be simply in terms of opportunity: resources are finite and educational decisions in this respect are zero sum. Resources invested in one area cannot also be invested in another. Teachers should be confident that any investment in switching to multilingual pedagogies is worthwhile. As we have noted, on the grounds of its substantive educational effects, far too little existing research can give them this confidence. In the light of the paucity of trustworthy evidence from experiments on

multilingual approaches to teaching EAL learners, is it reasonable to expect practitioners to make that investment? We would not blame them if they demurred.

We recognise the vital contribution that work in the translanguaging sphere, and on multilingualism more generally, is making towards social justice. We have articulated the importance of correlational and observational studies in helping us to understand the theoretical foundations upon which multilingual pedagogies are constructed. If we are to keep ‘the multilingual turn’ turning, however, it is incumbent on us as researchers to invest more effort in robustly assessing the effects of multilingual pedagogies on outcomes that are important to teachers and EAL learners. We should ensure that this is done in ways that allow us to make confident interpretations about the substantive effects of these approaches as they compare to realistic alternatives. This means more experiments, conducted in contexts that more accurately reflect reality for teachers and EAL learners in mainstream education.

While we, as authors, celebrate multilingualism in our society, we nonetheless take the position that proficiency in the majority language of education is a *sine qua non* in terms of educational success for multilingual learners in any given context (e.g. proficiency in English for EAL pupils in the UK). It is this language through which multilingual learners are expected to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the things that they are taught in school. For better or for worse, English proficiency will continue to play an important part in the lives of EAL learners when they leave school. We believe a good starting point to address the uncertainty, if not outright scepticism, about multilingual pedagogies held by some decision-makers, therefore, is to build on the few experimental studies we have reported above and put well defined multilingual strategies to the test. There is no shortage of well-reasoned and creative approaches to incorporating multilingual learners’ linguistic repertoires into their mainstream education with which this could be done (Celic & Seltzer, 2012; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Hesson, Seltzer & Woodley, 2014; Espinosa, Ascenzi-Moreno & Vogel, 2016). All of these publications come with the promise of improved educational outcomes for EAL learners, but few have been robustly empirically evaluated. If it can be established that adopting multilingual pedagogies improves proficiency in the majority linguistic currency of our educational system, this would add important leverage in the hands of those advocating for this substantial minority group of learners.

In conclusion, the multilingual turn – and the enthusiasm with which it has been seized by advocates for multilingual learners – offers a practical and socially just framework for thinking about education in linguistically diverse contexts. If we are to build on the promise that was ignited in the 1970s, but which in important respects has failed to move much further forward in the years since, we must take seriously the need to complete the thought experiments, of which we have plenty, with real experiments, of which we have few.

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