



Using the home language to enrich EAL support

By Saiqa Riasat

BLTA(Founder and Project Manager)

Main focus



- My personal journey as an EAL learner and teacher
- Arguments for and against bilingualism
- Some practitioners and children's views on EAL
- The birth of the BLTA
- Bilingual strategies promoted by the BLTA
- Parent Forum and courses

I became a victim of assimilation



During my schooling days, I strongly believed that teachers knew everything and that their views and opinions were the “correct ones”. Consequently I viewed bilingualism as a disadvantage and felt ashamed of my culture and identity as I believed it was inferior to the supreme culture and language of schools.

Bradford Riots

I have never said or implied , that lack of fluency in English was in any way directly responsible for the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in the summer of 2001. However, speaking English enables parents to converse with their children in English, as well as in their historic mother tongue, at home and to participate in wider modern culture. It helps overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships. In as many as 30% of Asian British households, according to the recent citizenship survey, English is not spoken at home.

(Blunkett – December 2001)



We need to examine in detail why those ***young Asian men were so keen to join in the criminal activity***.....There is little point in blaming the situation simply on racism and islamophobia. We must instead consider in detail what causes the under-achievement that I have mentioned. The ***main cause is the lack of a good level of English***, which stems directly from the established tradition of bringing wives and husbands from the sub-continent who have often had no education and have no English.

(Anne Cryer, Labour MP for aKeighley constituency 2001)



Arguments against bilingualism

- Lower levels of intelligence

- The balance theory

- Maximum exposure or “time on task” hypothesis

- Verbal deprivation theory

Mirpuri Punjabi language richness



Dad's dad = Daada

Mum's dad = Naana

Older brother = Bi/Papa

Mum's brother = Mava

Dad's younger brother =
Chacha

Dad's older brother = Thaya

Dad's mum = Daadi

Mum's mum = Naani

Older sister = Baji

Mum's sister = Hala

Dad's sister = Puppoo

Arguments for bilingualism



- Greater Mental flexibility
- Metalinguistic awareness increased
- Superiority in creative thinking
- Threshold Theory (balanced bilingualism)
- Cognitive academic linguistic proficiency (CALP)
- Second language Acquisition
- Developing positive self-concept for bilingual children
- Benefits for Monolingual children

Modern Foreign languages introduced into primary schools 2014



- “opening to other cultures” (DFE)
- “the younger the better”
- Increasingly globalised world
- Cognitive advantages (enhanced problem solving, attentional control or ability to switch tasks)

Pupils with English as a second language outperform native speakers (The Telegraph 4.3.14)

“Pupils with EAL progress very well and have higher EBacc scores. Indeed sadly, it is many white working class British boys with English as a first language who do particularly badly”
(Lord Nash- House of Lords 2014)



He added “We recognise the importance of language skills, which is why we have introduced them as a compulsory measure into primary schools.”

Irony

“allowing languages already spoken in the home and community to be eroded, whilst starting from scratch to teach other languages....”

(Stubbs 1991, cited in Baker 2001)

Research

Transitional view of bilingualism



“...we talked our own language all the time cos we didn’t know English then”

“You know when I was small I used to speak Gujarati really well, and then when I started speaking English....em and then I couldn’t speak Gujarati after that properly”

“My dad....tells me to speak Punjabi at home cos when my grandparents come I can’t talk to them properly....I feel ***ashamed***”

“sometimes...like if we don’t like the teacher..we can say something in our own language.”

Classroom management



“It’s just that you don’t know if they’re talking about you, their work or just having a chat.”

“If you ever let em talk in their home language, you just know they’re gonna muck about and that’s when you lose your classroom control, so I stick to what works and that’s English.”

Equal opportunity



“The baseline that all the children have in common is English and that should be the language of learning as a matter of equality.”

“It is idealistic to assume that two languages can develop parallel to one another as English will inevitably supersede as it is the language of the media and economy...also English should supersede as it is the language of power and success.”

Parents' responsibility



“Our job is to make them proficient in the language of assessment, their parents’ job is to look after their mother tongue development.”

Nearly four decades on and the 1980’s Swann Committees attitude still exists which stated that minority languages should be “taken care of the by the community themselves.”

Verbal deprivation



“...their language is quite limited and can only really be applied for social conversations and not higher academic processes.”

Findings



- Negative attitudes towards EAL children's mother tongues
- Bilingual teachers used the children's mother tongue as a reprimand tool.
- Denial of children's mother tongue in the classroom was just as powerful in maintaining the status quo that English is the only language of learning.
- Same abandoning and embarrassment of children's mother tongue as I myself experienced.

BLTA – New beginnings



- Working from the outside in Bradford (Manningham Area)
- Supplementary Saturday classes for primary aged children in which we promote home languages alongside English. NOT teaching a language.
- Raise minority languages profile and status
- Empowering parents through the home language
- “Literacy in All our languages” parent course
- Inset training and workshops for teachers and support staff

Parents reasons to enrol children



- Children have lost their fluency in the home language and the other parent blames me.
- Can't communicate with grandparents and extended family
- Planning to visit our homeland Pakistan or Bangladesh and would like them to improve their home language
- Have become an interpreter for my children with their parents and even their dad.

Saturday Classes



- Family tree activity
- Oral story telling with pictures
- Dual language books
- Playground rhymes and songs
- Grandparents stories
- Numeracy – no square to 100
- Snakes and Ladders
- Days of the week, colours, weather and ME
- Cooking



Dual language books

Where groups of pupils share the same home language, the use of dual language texts can promote discussion about reading and writing, help to build their confidence in tackling tasks in English and emphasise the importance of speaking and listening in the general development of literacy.

(The National Literacy Strategy – Framework for teaching EAL pupils).

BLTA Parent Forum



The BLTA Parent Forum was launched in September 2011 to give EAL parents a voice as well as providing help, advice and events for parents to promote and develop the use of EAL children's home languages. We are now becoming a recognised and respected force for change in the community and we feel as parents all of us are best placed to do this.

The aims of the BLTA parent forum



- To provide a platform for the voice of parents whose children's home language is not English.
- To make the wider community, families and schools aware of the growing trend of children leaving our schools and losing their home language and the negative impact this has on the child, the family and the wider community.
- To provide opportunities for parents to meet as a group and discuss the above and think of solutions to reverse the trend of loss of home languages.



- To make resources which promote children's home language.
- To organise events in their children's schools and the community to promote the use and development of home languages alongside English.
- To make partnership with other organisations which will help them to achieve their aims.
- To raise the profile of all the languages in our community

BLTA – Shaping change



- Bradford Multilingualism Policy (2003)
- Delivering parent courses and workshops for Education Bradfords Family learning team
- Invited to work on the EAL pilot (2005/2006)
- Delivering workshops for NALDIC
- Showcasing our work through seminars.

Families & Schools in Partnership; Multilingual Approaches to Learning Seminar

On Friday 7th November 2014

10 am - 4 pm
(registration starts at 9.30am)

Manningham Mills Community Centre, The Silk
Warehouse, Lilycroft Road, Bradford,
BD9 5BD

BLTA presents ...

- Keynote lecture from international Guest - Line Moller Daugaard.
- Workshops with local projects in Bradford
- Panel discussion about the future of Multilingual learning
- An opportunity to browse multilingual resources and books from the 'Multicultural bookshop' stall





The use of first language does much to maintain confidence and self-esteem because it is a signal that the classroom includes the child. It says “we accept your language and – by implication – your family, your ethnicity and your culture.”

(Pauline Gibbons: Learning to learn in a Second Language)

Schools change attitude



“Of all the institutions that may be linked with attitude change, school is often regarded as the most influential.”

(Baker 1995)

For Further Information

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