

# Language policy in multilingual UK

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**"the number of languages spoken continues to increase...in London there are over 300 languages spoken by children of school age"**

As recent reports have confirmed, the UK is becoming more and more linguistically diverse, especially in urban areas. This article explores ways in which educational policy might respond to these changes. It begins by reporting on a small-scale research project designed to find out from a number of community language teachers in Nottingham what they consider to be the linguistic needs of their children and how these might be fulfilled in both mainstream and supplementary schools. Having identified these needs, the article then turns to a description of the Sheffield Multilingual City Project. An analysis of this project serves to identify some useful principles for the development of a coherent policy which would include the voices of the various community language speakers. The article concludes by arguing that there is a need for a national policy framework designed to promote appropriate language policies in all areas, and that this should ensure that the linguistic needs of all of our children are met, regardless of where they live.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the belief of many that use of minority languages would disappear as the various linguistic communities became more 'integrated' into British society and as immigration slowed down, the number of languages spoken continues to increase. A recent study showed that in London there are over 300 languages spoken by children of school age (Baker and Eversley 2000; Gundara 2000). This compares with the last Language Census conducted by the Inner London Education Authority in 1989 which revealed that there were speakers of 184 different languages in London's schools (ILEA 1989). At that time there were over 70,000 pupils in ILEA schools who used a language other than, or in addition to, English at home, making up a quarter of the school population. In Sheffield, England's fourth city, the linguistic makeup is less diverse, but nevertheless there were 48 different languages spoken there in 1994, the number of bilinguals having doubled to 8.1% of the primary school and 7.5% of the secondary school population over the previous eight years (SUMES 1994). By 1996, 57 languages were spoken in Sheffield, and the numbers of speakers of these languages continue to increase (SUMES, 1997).

Educational responses to such diversity in the

UK have mainly focused on the curriculum in general, both in terms of debates on the curricular implications of multicultural and anti-racist education, and in terms of broader school policy, including the hidden curriculum (see, for example, Gillborn 1995; Lamb 1999a, 1999b; Mullard 1982; Sarup 1991; Troyna 1993; Troyna and Carrington 1990). Nevertheless there has been a series of policy responses to linguistic diversity over the last 35 years, ranging from an assimilationist focus on the teaching of English as a second language to a broader more celebratory attempt to recognise and promote the many community languages. This article is not intended to plot the development of these policies, though it does begin by pointing out that such development has tended to proceed in an uncoordinated way and has been subject to the vagaries of financial cutbacks. This brief contextualisation will be enriched by a summary of the needs of community language groups as perceived by a group of community language teachers in Nottingham, a city in the East Midlands with a population of approximately 300,000 inhabitants. The article will then describe one city-wide intervention aimed at producing a coordinated response to linguistic diversity, namely the Sheffield Multilingual City project, and will conclude with a discussion of some of the emerging issues. It should be stated that the focus on the two cities of Nottingham and Sheffield is not intended to suggest that they are representative of their respective areas. Nor were they initially selected in order to demonstrate differences in policies. Their inclusion is, in fact, solely determined by the fact that I live in one and work in the other, and therefore had a personal interest in finding out what was happening in both localities.

Throughout the article the languages spoken by minority groups will be referred to as community languages, a term first used in the 1980s. I have chosen to use this term for several

reasons: firstly, it reinforces the fact that these languages are, on the whole, an integral part of local communities (though the sizes of the communities will of course vary); secondly, unlike the previously used term 'heritage languages', it does not imply that these languages belong in the past; and thirdly, I have avoided the term 'minority languages' since in some contexts they are, in fact, used by a majority of the population.

## LANGUAGES AND THE UK CONTEXT

### The national picture

The recent Nuffield Inquiry (2000) highlighted some worrying aspects of the state of language teaching and learning in the UK. These included falling numbers of A level candidates, fewer undergraduates, and a shortage of language teachers (see also Saunders, 1998). However, if the situation is bad with regard to the European languages traditionally taught in British schools, the situation for community languages is even worse. Despite the large number of languages spoken and the increasing global significance of many of them (Graddol, 1997, 1998), we have a list of only 19 official languages on the National Curriculum, of which eight are the official languages of the European Union. A non-European language can be offered by a school only if they are offering at least one of these European languages - a significant statement of status. In linguistically diverse cities such as Nottingham, it would appear that the number of community language teachers in the mainstream fell dramatically in the 1990s, and specialist advisors are now few and far between (and this is also increasingly the case for other subject-specific advisors). There is a very real threat to some community language examinations (for example, Arabic at GCSE and A level, and Hindi at GCSE level) simply because they are deemed to be financially unviable by examination boards. Furthermore, most of these languages are not offered in higher education, and there have been cases where some higher education institutions have failed to recognise an A level in a community language as part of their entry requirements, since a qualification in one's mother tongue is deemed to be an easy option (unless it happens to be English). In addition, there are very few courses leading to qualified teacher status in community languages, though some progress has been made recently in this area (see Pagliero and Keenan, 2000a, 2000b).

So what strategies are in place at a national level to improve this situation? Are we aiming to make positive use of the existing linguistic resources of the country at a time when there is increasing demand in the world of business not only for Western European languages but also for those from other parts of the world, in particular S.E. Asia and the Indian subcontinent (Land 2000)?

Is there a coherent plan to build on this and at the same time to develop more positive attitudes amongst our monolingual population? Or are we happy to write ourselves off as a nation which is linguistically hopeless, ignoring the linguistic proficiency already evident in a significant proportion of our population?

Unfortunately, the UK does not yet have a coherent national policy to promote language learning and teaching, though the recent Nuffield Inquiry (2000) offers some hope of this in the strength of its recommendations. It is not surprising then that the different types of language (modern foreign languages, community languages and English) are being pigeon-holed as different types of problem (and I use this word with full awareness of its implications). Thus, the 1995 version of the National Curriculum for English was more influenced by the call for a return to traditional standards, values and methods in the teaching of English than by broader language issues. The 1999 version of the MFL National Curriculum has no reference to the fact that there are many pupils with multilingual backgrounds. There are no observations on handling bilingualism in the new Primary Standards for Initial Teacher Training. Given that the recently introduced compulsory study of a language up to the age of sixteen seems to be coming into question already, there is little hope that the Common European Framework for language learning being issued by the Council of Europe and currently in its second draft form will have any meaning in the UK, since it states that all pupils must learn at least two foreign languages at school (see Council of Europe Modern Languages page: <http://culture.coe.fr/lang/index.html>). Indeed even within our National Curriculum there are inconsistencies. Bilingualism is largely ignored in most of the documentation, implying an assimilationist position, whereas in Wales the development of bilingualism is now part of the school curriculum.

### The needs of linguistic minority groups

Nottingham is a large city in the East Midlands of England. In 1998 there was a reorganisation of local government, and the city of Nottingham became a unitary authority separate from the county of Nottinghamshire, for which no demographic details are available as yet. However, some indication of linguistic needs can be seen in county figures from 1991, at which time survey results showed that of 5671 pupils from the New Commonwealth 3934 "had a degree of English language proficiency which was a barrier to full curriculum access" (Nottinghamshire Education Authority 1996).

Support for bilingual children was until recently provided through Section 11 funding (from the Home Office), and is now devolved to schools. This spending on the needs of bilingual pupils

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has, however, focused mainly on English language support, with only some residual support for first language development through limited funding for supplementary language schools functioning outside mainstream education (one of the Assistant Directors of Education has supplementary schooling as part of her brief).

### Carrying out the research

In an attempt to explore possible ways in which the University of Nottingham School of Education might support first language development, research was carried out with groups of community language teachers in 1997-98. These were largely teachers who work in supplementary education, i.e. Saturday or evening schools run on a voluntary basis for specific linguistic communities, with the aim of teaching those languages (and in some cases, e.g. the Urdu school, aspects of culture and religion). As the aim was to define real needs by creating an environment where the open exchange of opinions would be facilitated, it was decided to run separate group discussions, one for the supplementary school coordinators and two for the language teachers. In each of the language teacher groups there were fifteen teachers from a range of community schools. In the coordinators' meeting there were thirteen participants representing a range of languages (Gujerati, Hindi, Polish, Punjabi, Ukrainian and Urdu), and including a representative from the Muslim Education Trust.

In each of the groups, the following stimulus questions were used:

- 1 Would you like to see community languages more in mainstream schools or should they mainly be taught in supplementary schools?
- 2 Would you like children to be taught some other subjects through the community language?
- 3 Would you like more monolingual English-speaking children to learn community languages?

These questions provoked a great deal of discussion. In fact, the need on the part of the participants to discuss their needs with each other as well as with outsiders came across very strongly throughout the meetings.

### Responses

In the course of the discussions the following themes emerged:

1. *Erosion of local and national support for community languages*

Coordinators in particular were keen to defend previous local education policies which had been very supportive of community languages. Strategies mentioned were:

- financial support for supplementary schools
- bilingual instructors offering mother-tongue support in the transition stage

- the existence of an advisor with responsibility for community languages, as well as a support group

The situation, however, had changed over the last ten years due to a range of national and local policy changes. In 1997 alone, financial support had been cut by 40%, threatening the survival of the community schools. The number of GCSE examinations available in community languages had been reduced (Ukrainian had been withdrawn in 1996, Arabic was under threat, Hindi had never existed). The cost for entering pupils for GCSE examinations in these languages was no longer covered if they were taught outside the mainstream school (as had become the norm apart from a few exceptions).

### 2. *Status of community languages*

It was felt very strongly that the status of community languages was very low, leading to a fear that children would not wish to maintain these languages and, indeed, that they may associate the low status with their own cultural heritage. In order to enhance the status it was felt that they should feature much more in mainstream education, and that opportunities needed to be found to discuss why community languages are important. Though coordinators believed that mainstreaming was not possible for all languages, nevertheless they wanted the most widely spoken languages (Urdu and Punjabi) to be taught in the mainstream, with others being supported in supplementary schools. (Teachers felt that all languages should be offered in mainstream schools, and suggested that schools should work together in clusters to facilitate this provision. They felt that supplementary schools should exist only for younger children.) Where taught in the mainstream, it was also felt that they should be on a par with European languages, and offered to all pupils, including the monolingual English speakers. They should not, however, be offered as an alternative to European languages, since all pupils must be able to learn these languages if they are to have access to the benefits of the Single Market and mobility. It was felt rather that they should be offered in addition to European languages. Peripatetic teaching should be avoided where possible, and community language teachers in the mainstream needed to be paid on the same scale as other teachers. Qualifications obtained in these languages should be accepted as valid statements of achievement rather than being perceived by employers and educational institutions as easy options and therefore not of equivalence to other qualifications.

### 3. *Need for coordination*

Although some mainstream secondary headteachers in Nottingham had been trying to reintroduce community languages into their schools, it was felt that there was a need to

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coordinate the demand for this support. The communities themselves have a responsibility for making this known, but it was felt that this was hindered by the difficulties of getting together since no forum existed. Participants suggested that there is a definite need for an individual to lobby on their behalf, and to enable them to act as a coherent pressure group.

#### 4. *Supplementary schools*

There is still a need for supplementary schools for all community languages, even those languages which should by their numbers be represented in mainstream education, since in some cases such schools fulfil a special role in the transmission of religious and cultural values (in much the same way as do the traditional Sunday schools). In fact, the coordinators suggested that their role should be enhanced, that they should be helping bilingual pupils to prepare for GCSEs in other subjects by giving them a grasp of these subjects through their own language.

It was felt, however, that the status of these schools needed to be enhanced through consideration of the professional nature of the teachers. According to the coordinators, many of these teachers are voluntary and unqualified, using poor teaching methods. This could be improved through programmes of professional development, offering routes to qualified teacher status (which would, in any case, be essential if they were eventually to teach in mainstream schools), and courses in classroom management, record keeping etc. Also, support groups would be able to work together on teaching content and materials, which teachers felt to be inadequate both in range and quality. There was indeed great willingness from all the groups to align their teaching to the National Curriculum requirements and to learn new methods from modern language teachers. To this end, it was also suggested that close links with mainstream schools would be beneficial to both themselves and their learners.

#### **Sheffield: The Multilingual City Project**

This section examines language policy in Sheffield, a city forty miles north of Nottingham, where a prioritisation of linguistic issues has been maintained in recent years. The emerging themes are then analysed both in the light of literature and research on the issues and in the light of the above perceived needs in Nottingham, where no such prioritisation exists.

Sheffield's Multilingual City Project was launched in January 1994 at a major conference attended by representatives of many significant bodies, such as the City Council, the Training and Enterprise Agency, further and higher education institutions and local schools. Coordinated by SUMES (Sheffield Unified Multicultural Education

Service), which is part of the Education Department of the City Council, its roots could be traced back to a commitment to the promotion of linguistic diversity, which six years previously had been expressed in its Curriculum Policy in the following way:

Bilingual children are specially fortunate in the breadth and richness of their linguistic heritage, and their presence in Sheffield schools is a benefit to all pupils. The languages of all our children should therefore be affirmed, maintained and developed (Sheffield LEA, 1988).

The aim of the initiative was to promote languages and bilingualism at every level of education across the city, and its focus can be seen in its definition of a multilingual city, which appears frequently in the documentation:

A multilingual city is one where different languages become part of the organic development of the community as a whole. It is where these languages are spoken at home, in public and in education. Crucially, it is where they are on offer to be learnt and used by anyone interested or fired by them - as well as by those who are historically and culturally bound by them. The range of languages and cultures serve to widen our daily experiences and thinking. They also lead to new ways of living so that we feel more stimulated and fulfilled. By knowing another language we acquire a key with which to open our parochial cages. Here are the beginnings of a new and more profound culture and look of the city (SUMES, 1994: 7).

The Project thus launched a comprehensive attack on traditional anti-foreign language attitudes, emphasising that "fluency in another language brings increased knowledge, cultural engagement, and extension of thinking" (SUMES, 1994: 8). One intended outcome was that every young person living in Sheffield would be bilingual in ten years' time, proficient in both English and any European, Creole, Asian or African language (a rather ambitious aim but one which was laudable and supported by all parties at the time as part of their 'vision' of the future). In order to achieve this, the city established a city-wide partnership of teachers, researchers, volunteers, local government workers and business people (SUMES, 1995). By encouraging cooperation between the different sectors, coordinating information and promoting developments, it was hoped that the initiative would exert a powerful influence on attitudes towards bilingualism. Thus, for example, in the economic field, language projects have been set up with local business and industry, and bilingual speakers are encouraged to find ways of using their linguistic

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skills to earn money. In the world of education, information on bilingualism and language provision is being coordinated, international links are being encouraged and schools are being identified as centres of multilingual excellence. In recognition of the complex nature of bilingualism (which in policy statements was used in an uncritical manner), a research group was established bringing together academics from both of the universities in Sheffield.

Complementary to this strategy is the focus on improving opportunities to learn minority community languages (i.e. those languages other than English, which are used by inhabitants of Sheffield in their everyday lives). The importance of "coordinating and mobilising resources of the voluntary and formal sectors (including language schools, state schools, the College, the universities, the commercial sector, embassy classes) in promoting second language learning" (SUMES, 1994: 9) is central to the Project. Although it is stressed that ideally community languages should be taught in state schools alongside those languages which are more traditionally taught (French, German and Spanish), in order to avoid them being marginalised, it is recognised that the voluntary sector is also providing vital language services and that such provision may in fact be highly desired by the local communities. Therefore the Project offers support to these supplementary schools via stable funding, teacher training and coordination of resources and equipment. In addition, the recognition of achievements in supplementary schools by state schools through their Records of Achievement and accreditation of bilingual skills achieved outside the state sector is also seen as essential to the promotion of community languages.

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## DISCUSSION

### Multilingualism and the individual

The Multilingual City Project clearly recognises the need for all individuals to maintain their first language in any way which seems to be appropriate, for linguistic, educational, psychological and social reasons, as well as to have access to English in order to be able to play a full and active part in society, and it thus aspires to the promotion of equal opportunities as described by Spolsky (1986: 189). It reflects the conclusions of research in a variety of contexts which suggest that development of the first language is an important factor for successful learning (e.g. Garcia, 1988; Mace-Matluck, 1990; Tikunoff and Vasquez-Faria, 1982). This is not to imply that there is a consensus on this issue. There are examples of researchers carrying out meta-analyses of the research in order to establish patterns of research (Lamb, 1997). Skutnabb-Kangas (1986), for example, has argued that many of the opponents of minority language

development come from the majority group whilst for the advocates the opposite is true, and Baker and de Kanter (1981) explored links between the research findings and the research methodologies used.

The Sheffield project also rejects any idea that maintaining the first language will interfere with the acquisition of English. It also rejects the perception that bilingualism itself is a problem (such perceptions have tended to refer to the languages of ex-colonies of Britain rather than to the more prestigious languages of some of Britain's European neighbours (Lamb, 1984: 43), with the result that a child who grows up bilingually with English and German is considered to be fortunate whereas a child who speaks Urdu as well as English is often perceived as having a problem).

### Multilingualism and society

As already stated, the debate surrounding the promotion (or not) of languages in society is closely related to sociological theories which attempt to offer a framework for the discussion of power relationships between different ethnic or cultural groups, referring to such phenomena as assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and cultural pluralism. It can thus be claimed that the majority group's attitudes towards bilingualism or cultural pluralism are reflected in and perpetuated by the role the minority community languages are allowed to play in the education system. Many studies have attempted to devise typologies aimed at facilitating an analysis of the relationship between bilingualism, education and society. Mackey (1972), for example, covered in a very comprehensive way all aspects from the monolingual education of bilingual children in monolingual societies to the bilingual education of monolingual children in bilingual societies. Tosi (1984: 137-147) recognised that there are two major orientations in the various categories, each with particular implications for the individual and for society as a whole (namely a compensatory/transitional orientation, resulting in a limited transitional bilingualism for the child and assimilation for the minority group; and language maintenance producing "balanced bilingual-coordinate competence" in the individual and cultural pluralism in society as a whole). What is clear then is that bilingual education is a complex phenomenon, and that it can represent a range of experiences either aimed solely at bilingual children or including the majority monolingual group.

Returning to the Sheffield Multilingual City Project, it can be seen from the statements quoted above that this initiative is not only aiming to build on the bilingualism which is already evident in a significant proportion of the population, but is also intended to promote community languages "outside their historical, regional and ethnic boundaries, and make them available to all

Sheffielders" (SUMES, 1994: 8). Despite somewhat idealistic claims that such a policy "is bound to reduce racism" (SUMES, 1994: 7), the Project is clearly not falling into the trap of seeing the issues as ones which solely concern the minority groups, who are sometimes viewed as if they have a pathological problem which needs solving. The Project rejects such deficit theories and addresses the issues with policies targeted at society as a whole. It thus corresponds to the notion of education for a pluralist society, which requires change from all members of society and not just from minority groups. According to this theory, its commitment to raising the status of local minority languages could result not only in raised self-concepts amongst speakers of these languages but also encourage majority group pupils and parents to choose to learn one of them in addition to or instead of one of the more usual European languages. This accords with the view taken by the NCLE Working Party on Minority Community Languages that

(...) the extension of opportunities for minority language learning beyond the communities themselves would increase links between them and the wider society, fostering societal multiculturalism as well as providing English L1 speakers with opportunities to broaden their personal linguistic and cultural horizons in directions relevant to contemporary Britain (NCLE, 1984).

### Partnership

The idea of partnership between the various agents of the majority and minority groups is one which is frequently mooted in the documentation. A paper delivered at the 1997 conference organised by the Project, for example, refers to partnership between the Association of Sheffield Community Language Schools and the Multilingual City Project in the development of the proposed Multimedia Community Language Centre, and goes on to say that it "will continue with its natural allies in the black community, SUMES, the educational institutions of Sheffield (i.e. The Sheffield College, the two local Universities, the state and voluntary schools, community centres and groups...), business education partners, and funders (i.e. TEC, ESF, SRB, The National Lottery, Charitable Trusts...)" (ASCLS, 1997).

The discourse of partnership is one which has been increasingly applied in the policy arena over the last twenty years. One example is the restructuring of urban policy in order to introduce an enterprise culture into an area which had most recently been in the hands of the local authorities with their perceived bureaucratic, non-entrepreneurial style. Although the rhetoric

appeals to a public demand to be consulted, the term 'partnership' is ambiguous and underconceptualised. In her article examining the process of partnership in urban regeneration policy, Hastings (1996) argues that, despite a political consensus in the UK that a multi-sectoral partnership approach is essential, it is vital to establish whether the manifestations of this concept are dominated by an agenda of privatisation and centralisation, or whether they really represent a commitment to greater democracy. For Hastings, partnership offers the potential to forge innovative policies if it encourages the possibility of combining different perspectives rather than just resources, and to increase democracy if all parties are in a position to affect decision-making, rather than just those who provide the main funding. Her research reveals, however, that differences in attitudes and power can mean that the different parties can have very different understandings of and aspirations for partnership, and that the way to find out is through qualitative research carried out with all stakeholders. Clearly such research needs to be carried out with the various partners in the Sheffield Project if the commitment is to real representation of the minority groups.

### Supplementary schools and empowerment

Cummins (1986) has developed a theoretical framework which connects bilingual programmes to the notions of empowerment and disablement, suggesting that society represents a conflict of interests between those in power and those who are disempowered. This is done by examining four major characteristics of schools: the extent to which minority language pupils' home language and culture are incorporated into the school curriculum; the extent to which minority communities are encouraged to participate in their children's education; the extent to which active learning is encouraged; and the extent to which the assessment of minority language pupils avoids locating problems in the pupil and addresses the social and educational system itself. He thus sees possible outcomes ranging from additive bilingualism to subtractive, from collaboration and community participation to social exclusion, from an interactive curriculum to a transmission-orientated curriculum, and from assessment and diagnosis which advocate changes to the system as a whole to those which legitimise the status quo.

If, on a societal level, it is similarly recognised that social change occurs within a conflict paradigm (since those in power have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, whereas the "oppressed", to use a Freirian term, require change), rather than in a harmonious, consensual way (for a fuller discussion of this, see Lamb, 2000),

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then it becomes clear that interventionist measures are needed for the minority groups to be empowered and to facilitate educational, social, economic and political change. Empowerment, i.e. “the process of acquiring power, or the process of transition from lack of control to the acquisition of control over one’s own life and immediate environment” (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba, 1992: 138), can be seen as essential if the situation of the linguistic minorities is to be transformed. That this needs to happen at a local level is reinforced by Saunders’ (1981) theory of the State, which sees a distinct difference in function between the State and the local State. For Saunders, the former is responsible for major economic policies which are protected from the influences of local political forces. The local State, on the other hand, is where the competitive, more democratic sector of politics operates and, as such, is more able to respond to local needs through social policy (though this underestimates the increasingly interventionist role played by the Government in some social policy areas). Similarly, Castells, in a development of his Marxist structuralist theories, has also spoken about the potential for urban social groups to empower themselves at a local level, albeit within the constraints of an overall capitalist society (Castells, 1977, 1978, 1983).

The notion that empowerment is something in which the disempowered can be actively involved rather than something which they passively receive from those in power is related to resistance theories which address the issue of agency. Gramsci, in his idea of the ‘war of position’, offers some insights into the ways in which the subordinate classes may overcome the hegemony of the dominant classes:

A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise leadership (i.e. be hegemonic) before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power) (Gramsci, 1971: 207).

Gramsci’s strategy therefore involved the establishment of working-class organisations as the foundations of a new culture, which would then be in a position to confront bourgeois hegemony in a war of position. The key is the establishment of a counter-hegemony outside the state school system, since teachers (“intellectuals” in Gramscian terms) from the subordinate classes who are invited into the state education system are in fact only there to legitimate the dominant ideology, and as such cease to be organically linked to their class of origin (Gramsci, 1971: 12).

Such arguments, it could be maintained, have resonance with the debate over the place of community languages. A Gramscian view would regard the positioning of community languages in the mainstream education system very warily. It

would argue that these languages can only maintain their place in society from a position of strength built up outside the state system, since otherwise they will be at the whim of the majority power. This would seem to support the role of the supplementary schools, organised by the minority groups themselves.

As we have seen, the Sheffield Multilingual City Project is promoting the teaching of community languages in state schools in order to avoid marginalisation, a position which is supported by theories of education for cultural pluralism. The Gramscian arguments are useful, however, as a reminder that this may in itself prove inadequate or undesirable to some community groups, and that the possibility of supplementary provision organised by the communities themselves must be maintained as an option. The Sheffield Project does in fact cover this in its support of the voluntary sector. What must remain under critical scrutiny, however, is the way in which such support is given, and whether it is offered conditionally or not. The experience of empowerment or control must be constantly monitored from the viewpoint of the minority groups.

### **Sheffield Multilingual City Project: Conclusion**

The sociolinguist Halliday (1978: 163) describes the multilingual city in the following way:

A city is not a speech community in the classical sense. Its inhabitants obviously do not all talk to each other. They do not speak alike; and furthermore they do not all mean alike. But a city is an environment in which meanings are exchanged. In this process conflicts arise, symbolic conflicts which are no less real than conflicts over economic interest; and these conflicts contain the mechanism of change(...)

The city dweller’s picture of the universe is not, in the typical instance, one of order and constancy. But at least it has - or could have, if allowed to - a compensating quality that is of some significance; the fact that many very different groups of people have contributed to the making of it.

The relationships which are central to the Sheffield Multilingual City Project can be viewed as a response to such ideas, encouraging a forum where, in Freire’s words, “Subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world” (1996: 148). The initiative is an interventionist measure designed to empower the linguistic minorities and encourage change in society as a whole.

As has already been mentioned above, however, the need for a continuous critical examination of the underlying assumptions is

paramount. The voice of the minority needs to be listened to, and allowed to speak for itself. Only such an approach can offer a principled way of reflecting on the progress of the Sheffield Multilingual City Project, and ensuring that the policies continue to correspond to the needs and desires of the communities themselves.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Returning to the Nottingham research, the above principles of voice and empowerment informed the initial meetings with the coordinators and teachers. The motivation was to enable the university to explore ways of offering the type of support which the communities themselves wanted, rather than something which seemed theoretically 'correct'. In fact, the communities expressed their views with conviction and consensus, and had clearly been in need of the opportunity to come together to do so. It is interesting to reflect on the close correspondence of these views with the principles which underpin the Sheffield Multilingual City Project, which would suggest that similar interventions would be appropriate in Nottingham.

In conclusion, therefore, the Nottingham research has highlighted the need for a national policy relating to languages in the UK, encompassing different languages (modern foreign languages and community languages), different phases of language learning, and teacher education and supply. This national policy needs, however, to be an enabling and flexible policy which nevertheless *requires* the development of local responses appropriate to local needs. In a 1984 study of policy relating to linguistic diversity, I described the innovative language policy which could be found in many areas, but focused particularly on the Inner London Education Authority (Lamb, 1984). However, the study also revealed that next to these areas there were many children in authorities with no policy. The current study suggests that such inconsistencies of provision still exist, even between cities which are linguistically comparable and even at a time when there is far greater governmental intervention in education than that which existed prior to the Education Reform Act of 1988 and subsequent policies. It is to be hoped that there will be a positive response to the demands of the Nuffield Inquiry in order to ensure that the needs of all children will be taken into account and that appropriate provision will no longer depend on where a child happens to live.

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## 日本語教授 (Associate Professor) 募集

ニュージーランド有数の国立大学・カンタベリー大学であなたのキャリアを生かしてみませんか。

### (応募要項)

- 当大学のアジア研究室で日本語の総合的な研究をつづけながら、大学生・大学院生に高いレベルの指導ができること。
- 英語に匹敵する日本語能力をもっていること。
- 強いリーダーシップとやる気があること。

### (問い合わせ先)

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当大学の総合案内は、  
<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz> へどうぞ。

### (締切)

2001年7月31日。



## ITALIAN WEEKEND

Wadham College, University of Oxford



### Friday 13 July

**Session 1** Anna Proudfoot,  
Using the Internet

**Session 2** Ernesto Macaro & Marina Esposito Aiardo  
Workshop: Come spiegare la grammatica

### Saturday 14 July

#### Session 3

3.1 A.Maria Sheikh & Adalgisa Serio  
L'italiano attraverso il cinema

or

3.2 Martin L. McLaughlin  
Teaching Calvin

#### Session 4

Derek Aust

4.1 The new specifications of the Edexcel AS/A level examinations

or

Carole Shepherd

4.2 The new specifications of the AQA GCSE Italian

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or email us at [langlearn@ALL-languages.org.uk](mailto:langlearn@ALL-languages.org.uk)