

# लघुतौल्लुगुवत MANCHESTER

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**Multilingual Manchester:  
Language policy, language provision, teacher training and teacher  
methods**

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## **Introduction**

Multilingualism in the United Kingdom continues to develop rapidly, with Vertovec describing the U.K. as 'entering a period of 'superdiversity' (2006). It could be argued therefore that within the education system an effective framework of support for those who do not have English as a first language is required. In this study we question whether a school located in Gorton, South East Manchester follows such a framework for the overall goal of supporting children with English as an Additional Language (EAL). One member of our group is a regular volunteer at the School which shall be referred to as the Study School to protect identity. The group member runs a volunteering project assisting at after school booster sessions with a focus on SATs preparation for children in year six, thus building an ethnographic picture of the school infrastructure in accordance to EAL pupils. This existing link to the school meant that the group was able to guarantee the school's participation in the study. With access, we were able to gather first-hand experience of the school's policies in accordance to multilingualism.

With regard to what language policies are assigned to the school, the Manchester Educational Wide Area Network online stated that The Primary National Strategy EAL Programme has been conducted in Manchester in ten schools from 2004 to 2006. This Programme was a school strategy designed to raise the attainment of later stage learners within Primary schools. It has now been rolled out to more schools by EAL consultants working on promoting Diversity and inclusion. From our study we can see that these language policies enforced by The Primary National Strategy are incorporated in to school life. However, there is a possibility for further provisions for EAL learners as we discovered that not only students needed extra support but also their parents.

Walters (2007: 88) highlights 'significant educational underachievement amongst certain minority ethnic groups' citing the work of Phillips, 1979; Tomlinson, 1980; Rampton, 1981; Swann, 1985; Mabey, 1986, and describes how this underachievement was found to be related to a mixture of the 'different amounts of kinds of attention' paid to ethnic minority pupils by their teachers and the placing of ethnic minority pupils in lower sets, restricting their achievement, and highlights the fact that many ethnic minority pupils also have EAL needs.

## **Research Question and Methods**

The subject of EAL provision within schools was chosen as a research topic due to a common interest amongst the group in examining multiculturalism in Manchester within a school environment. The reasons for choosing the study school were due to its multiculturalism, and high level of pupils with EAL. Whilst further investigating the Study School, The Guardian's map of Indices of Deprivation shows that there are high levels of deprivation in the area of Gorton; therefore making the effectiveness of primary education in the area of vital importance. This further exacerbates the need for highly effective primary education provision. The existing link to the school through a group member was also a key factor in deciding the research topic as this meant a much greater chance of securing participation in the study.

The questions this study is aiming to address include (a) what language policies are assigned to the

school, (b) to what extent previous teacher training influences the classroom practice with EAL students and (c) the overall outcomes of these factors in the Study School, for example, educational attainment. To answer these questions, questionnaires were distributed to teachers at the Study School including questions designed to give the best representation of the EAL support within the school. We are also hoping to find out in what way multilingualism is incorporated in to school life. Our qualitative analysis of these questionnaires helped us achieve this. The questionnaires were distributed to members of staff only, as information from pupils does not contribute to the aims of the study. The school itself and staff members were kept anonymous; however some occupations of participants were revealed as to support several findings.

Fifteen copies of our questionnaire were distributed to members of staff at the Study School. Seven questionnaires were returned, thus giving a useful amount of data to represent the school there was no need therefore to change the chosen community. This was a sufficient amount for our study as we encountered another study on a Gorton School (Linguistic Diversity in a Gorton School: A Case Study 2010) that came to successful conclusions only using four questionnaires. With regards to the methodology, a few minor changes were made to the questionnaire to ensure the best results from this method of eliciting data. As a precaution, the length of the questionnaire was reduced to make it seem less daunting and more concise for the informants.

Despite making changes to the questionnaire to ensure it was less time consuming, it appeared that although the staff were willing to complete the questionnaire, there was not enough time to allocate to the questionnaire within a school timetable; as we originally anticipated. There were factors which affected staff's availability to participate in the study, such as key stage 2 SATs approaching whilst the research was being conducted, as well as the school also being subject to OFSTED inspection at this time. Due to the delay in collecting completed questionnaires, we were forced to reduce the scale and depth of the study, deciding not to seek interviews with respondents. A more in depth study, outside of the format of a questionnaire, would have examined the methods of EAL assessment. As Walters highlights, the assessment and subsequent support given to EAL pupils can be affected by factors such as the way the pupil presents themselves, and their classroom behaviour.

## **Findings & Discussion**

*When looking through results and discussion, please refer to the question numbers on the sample questionnaire in the Appendix.*

Perhaps the most significant finding of the study was that most respondents claimed that a majority of children in their classes were EAL learners, one specifying approximately half, and two specifying that EAL children were a minority in their classes.

One informant specified that 14/24 children in their class were non-native English speakers. With just over half of students in the class as non-native English speakers, a significant majority of the class may potentially need some form of additional help or guidance. Figure 1.1 shows this large majority of non-native English speakers within the classroom. As we have found that 57% of

informants claim that the EAL students are in the majority of classes, we would hope to see a large amount of EAL support within the school.

## Children considered not to have English as a first Language (based on 7 staff members)

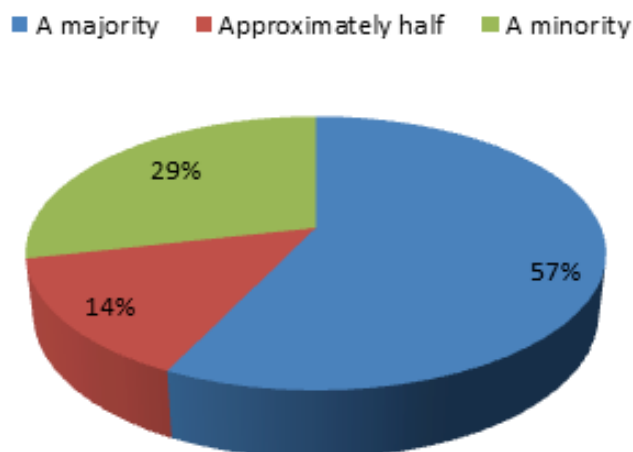


Figure 1.1

These findings confirm the most recent OFSTED report on the Study School, which stated that ‘a higher than average proportion of pupils comes from one of approximately 16 minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an Additional Language is twice the national average’ (2010: 3).

These findings are opposing to the Multilingual Manchester study of a Gorton School, which found that only 27% of students in classes were learning English as a second language, results which differ to those gained from the Study School involved in this project (2010:4). This may be due to their lack of questionnaire feedback and so their results were not representative of the school in its entirety.

Respondents were asked to specify how many languages other than English were spoken by pupils as their first language and given five possible answers, with responses falling into the categories 0-5, 5-10 and 10-15. Figure 1.2 demonstrates the responses we received.

From this we can see that in each class that the informants teach, there are a range of pupils with EAL, each with a specific and individual linguistic background and set of needs. While there is some variation in linguistic background, we see that the different languages spoken by children as their first language do not amount to between 15-20 for any of the respondents, showing that linguistic diversity is not as high as it might be. One respondent who specified 14/24 children with EAL also specified that 5-10 different languages are spoken by children within their class, and named nine of these languages. This suggests that, whilst not true of all EAL pupils, some pupils at the school do share a language with their peers, although they would appear to be in the minority.

## Number of Languages other than English spoken per class

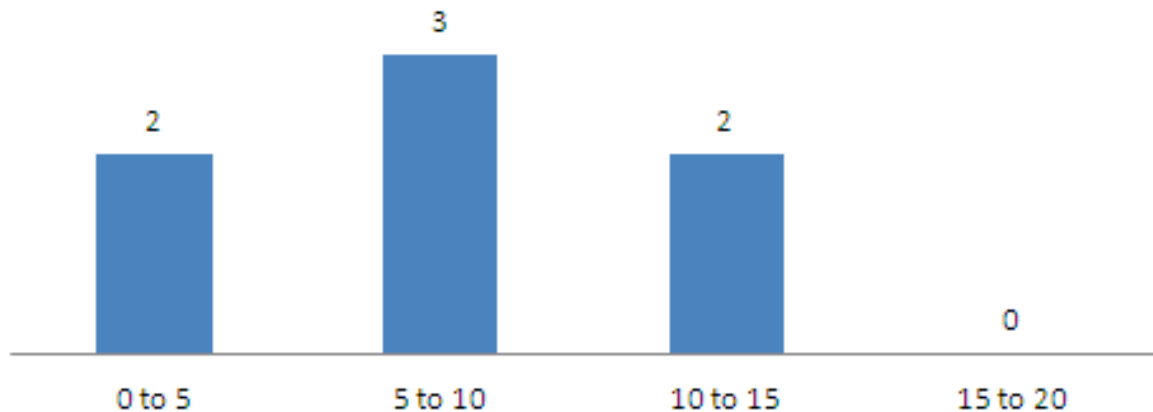


Figure 1.2

The list of languages supplied by the informants reflects the diversity as seen in Figure 1.2 from Question 2. This in turn also displays the Subject School's area trait of being multicultural. This is demonstrated in the online UK polling report, which states that Gorton has a total population of 88,143. Of this, 21% of the population were born outside of the UK. With 69.5% being of White ethnicity, 5.4% Black, 19.2% Asian, 3.6% Mixed race and 2.3% of other ethnicities. (UK Poling Report website, Anthony Wells 2001).

The languages spoken within the school as specified by respondents include:

1. African languages
2. Chinese
3. Czech
4. French
5. Indonesian
6. Kurdish
7. Languages from Zimbabwe
8. Latvian
9. Lithuanian
10. Pakistani
11. Polish
12. Portuguese
13. Romanian
14. Slovenian
15. Somalian

Despite not being able to accommodate for all these different languages, the school teaches French as part of the curriculum on a second language learning basis. One informant specified that they had

two pupils in their class who were both native speakers of French. This could be seen as a great benefit to the English speaking students as this could be an opportunity to interact with the French speakers therefore creating a very inclusive environment for both EAL students and native British students.

It was found that no languages other than English were spoken by staff in the classroom environment. Due to the plethora of languages spoken by students as demonstrated in the graph, this could put the students at a disadvantage and impede their educational development through a lack of understanding, inability to communicate, and increased frustration as a result. In response to Question 11 of the questionnaire, one respondent stated that bilingualism in teachers is not necessary in primary education. However, others stated that it could be of benefit as it could increase the child's confidence and happiness, enabling them to express themselves, thus possibly increasing educational development. While the volume of pupils with EAL would suggest that some support in the pupil's native language may be beneficial, the significant range of different first languages spoken by pupils would suggest that this may be expensive, time consuming, and simply unrealistic.

When looking at how the school promotes this linguistic diversity in Question 20, they gave examples of a few adjustments they had incorporated in to the school life. At the moment, the Study School includes a 'language of the month' activity which can promote non-native languages of EAL pupils and raise awareness for native pupils. Not only are languages promoted through visual displays, they are also discussed in assemblies and actively encouraged when answering the register in classes. If they wish to, children can answer their names in their native language. Further provision that the informants stated they would like to involve in their teaching were additional bilingual support, as well as identifying the difficulties with EAL students once they have settled in to their school. Initial first language assessments were suggested, in which the child, their family and a translator would discuss the child's interests and fears, enabling the teacher to work with the EAL pupil's strengths, thus increasing their educational development. In Terry Lamb's Language Policy in Multilingual U.K. (1997: 7) the Multilingual City Project in Sheffield, U.K. aimed for a community where languages other than English were spoken at home, in public and in education. From the responses in our research, we can see that linguistic diversity has been incorporated into classroom life.

Focusing on the educational attainment of EAL pupils, we asked what effect, if any, the staff felt that achievement at primary level had on later education. The responses showed that the majority of staff agreed that education at this level had a significant effect on later education. One informant stated that primary school education provides the foundation for progress in high school. The importance of EAL pupils achieving highly in primary school would suggest that support for EAL pupils at the primary level is of crucial importance, as respondents felt.

The majority of respondents indicated that the earlier on in primary level education that a pupil starts at an English speaking school, the more chance there is they will go on to progress at the same rate as children who are native speakers of English. This opinion has been shared by other studies including the Multilingual Manchester study on another Gorton school, who stated that 'older

students from non-English speaking backgrounds have more difficulty learning English, compared to younger students from non-English speaking backgrounds' (2010: 01).

One participant also mentioned that once their acquisition of the English language is secure, they tend to progress faster in their education attainment. The word 'secure' came up in two instances of the responses from seven participants, stated in 2.1 and 2.2.

2.1 'EAL progress faster once they are secure in English.'

2.2 'EAL children progress at a quicker rate once they have secure language acquisition'

These examples indicate that not only do the pupils benefit from being in English speaking schools from a younger age, but also that a pupil's confidence in the language is a significant factor in all areas of attainment.

When looking at the aspects of teacher training, from the majority of the informant's responses it was evident that the teacher training that they had individually received in accommodating pupils with EAL was minimal. However, one informant specified that they received a lot of training. This informant had been trained on Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) courses whilst studying in Glasgow, which could be very specific to this informant's past education. When asking if the informants thought the training they did receive was useful, the informants suggest that their EAL training prior to working in the multicultural environment of the study school was of great use despite how little they received. One informant stated that 'it made you aware of the initial feeling and issues a child may have when entering an alien environment'.

When asked if they encountered any additional problems due to pupils having EAL, three respondents cited difficulties with homework due to parents being unable to understand and therefore help with homework. Three respondents also cited difficulties in communicating with parents, specifically at parents meetings. One respondent indicated that EAL pupils were at risk of becoming bored during lessons, perhaps due to an inability to understand lesson content. Two respondents indicated that they found a lack of English spoken at home to be an additional problem when teaching pupils with EAL. However, as found by Walters, there may be a need for greater vigilance and more thorough checking of understanding of certain words and concepts, rather than an assumption a pupil is bored.

Two respondents indicated that they found a lack of English spoken at home to be an additional problem when teaching pupils with EAL, which was seen to be negatively affecting a pupil's ability to succeed in EAL. A risk of the native language of children being spoken amongst peers was also cited as a hindrance for EAL pupils. Many respondents cited factors which made a positive difference to a child's ability to succeed in EAL, including finding positive English speaking role models, and a sense of confidence, security, and belonging within the classroom. This suggests much optimism and enthusiasm as well as sensitivity amongst staff when dealing with EAL pupils.

## **Conclusion**

Our study confirmed that high levels of linguistic diversity in Manchester's primary schools are an



increasing reality, and that there is a call for EAL support within Manchester's primary schools in multicultural areas such as Gorton, both due to the sheer volume of EAL pupils in schools, and the significance that the achievements of EAL pupils at the primary level is felt to have in guaranteeing success in later education, and with it, later life. Geay, McNally & Telhaj state that 'Since 2003, the number of school students who do not speak English as a first language has increased by one-third' which is reflected in our study school. It is also conclusive that whilst support does exist for EAL pupils and this support could be built upon, with more training provided for teachers as well as additional EAL staff being put into place.

The Primary National Strategy suggests that 'Language competence and intercultural understanding are... an integral part of the language learning experience in the classroom', and within our Study School we can see this linguistic diversity incorporated in to classroom life in a multitude of ways, which is in accordance to these policies.

Our study indicated that more hours could be allocated to EAL support workers, and more comprehensive tools and resources provided for teachers. Additionally, the importance of English amongst the parents and carers of EAL pupils was highlighted, which could be seen to support the case for ESOL (English for speakers of other Languages) provision to continue to be funded by the government for those adults who wish to improve their English. Alternatively, additional provision for EAL pupils could consist of homework clubs or additional booster sessions, where they can receive assistance in completing work that they may not receive at home. Where these resources already exist, more could be done to raise the awareness of these resources to the parents or guardians of EAL pupils in order for them and their children to be able to benefit in their overall educational development.

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## Questionnaire

Please use the space provided below each question to add any additional notes or comments.

1. How many students in your class would you categorise as not having English as a first language? Please circle the appropriate answer. If you can, please specify an (approximate) amount below.

All                                      A majority                                      A minority                                      None

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2. How many different languages beside English are spoken by students in your class as their first language? Please tick the appropriate box. If you can, please list as many of these languages as possible.

Between 15-20                     

Between 10-15                     

Between 5-10                     

Between 0-5                     

None                     

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3. Which additional languages are taught in the school and how do these relate to pupils with EAL (English as an additional language)?

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4. In your opinion, how does the educational attainment of students with EAL compare with those with English as a first language? For example, how many pupils with EAL are eligible to take SAT examinations, etc?

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5. What effect, if any, do you feel a pupil's attainment in EAL whilst in primary school has on their later educational attainment? Please circle the appropriate answer. If you can, please add any additional information.

A significant effect                      A lot                      A little                      None

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6. How effective do you feel the school's support for EAL students is? Please circle the appropriate answer. If you can, please add any additional information.

Very                      Somewhat                      Not very                      Not at all

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7. What additional support does the school provide for pupils with EAL, such as additional EAL staff, translators, etc. If you can, please add any additional information.

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8. Are there any additional language resources used by pupils and/or their parents that you are aware of (after school clubs, etc)? If yes, please state below.

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9. How do these resources/provision interact with your own teaching? If you can, please add any additional information.

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10. Are languages other than English spoken by staff in the classroom? Please tick the appropriate box. If yes, please specify which below.

Yes

No

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11. Is multilingualism/bilingualism seen as a benefit amongst staff? Please tick the appropriate box. If yes, please use the space provided to elaborate.

Yes

No

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12. Which resources (websites etc.) do you use, if any, in teaching pupils with EAL? If you can, please add any additional information (how you benefit from them, their overall usefulness, etc.)

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13. Where do you go for guidance or with any issues/concerns in teaching pupils with EAL? If you can, please add any additional information (how exactly you benefit from them, their overall usefulness, etc.)

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14. To what extent do you feel your training as a teacher prepared you to accommodate pupils with EAL?

Very

Somewhat

Not very

Not at all

15. What amount of training have you received in EAL provision (additional courses, etc.) ? If you can, please add any additional information (for example, whether the training compulsorily or voluntary, who the training was provided by, etc.)

A lot

Some

Little

None

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16. If so, did you find this training useful? Please tick the appropriate box. If you can, please add any additional information.

Yes

No

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17. Do you encounter any additional difficulties with pupils as a result of them having EAL, for example any behavioural difficulties, or any issues with regard to the parents' ability to help the pupils with schoolwork, etc.?

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18. Are there any factors, in your opinion, which affect a pupil's ability to succeed with EAL? Please state below.

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19. Is there any further provision you would like to see introduced in the teaching of pupils with EAL?

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20. How are pupil's first languages incorporated into the classroom and school life, if at all?

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Please leave any further information you may wish to add overleaf.

If you agree to a short, informal interview in order to discuss the issue of multilingualism in schools further, please leave your contact details below or alternatively contact Rachel Williams on [Rachel.williams-4@strudent.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Rachel.williams-4@strudent.manchester.ac.uk) or 07825800223 to arrange a time that is suitable for you.

Thank you very much for your participation.