

Impact on schools

Strengthened links with parents and grandparents

Parents and grandparents were involved in the project work in a number of ways in both complementary and mainstream school:

- helping children with homework which had been designed bilingually
- coming into class to be interviewed on a topic or demonstrate a particular skill
- supporting children's learning in class by supplying words and phrases in the home language

Mainstream teachers were struck by the greater involvement of parents in community classes. They began to take new steps to link with families. A teacher explained how she enriched curriculum topics with the help of parents:

You have to search for these ideas - now I go to the parents, ask the parents. They are over the moon to be consulted.

In both settings, family involvement brought children, parents and teachers closer and gave an additional dimension of cultural knowledge to the learning. As one community teacher put it:

When parents are able to do so, sharing homework for different ideas, sharing to learn better, it's a little guide from the home, I think it's wonderful.

Supported community cohesion through intercultural learning

Children benefited from sharing knowledge about different languages and different countries. For example, children from non-Bengali speaking backgrounds quickly learned to match up Bengali and English words on the interactive whiteboard in their primary class, and engaged with great enjoyment in dressing up in traditional Bangladeshi clothing. In a topic on food, children brought a fruit or vegetable from their family's country to class, tasted them all and taught each other the names in their languages.

As activities for parents developed at mainstream school, parents from different backgrounds began to meet. One commented:

Now parents really have respect for each other and we have a Parents' Group. We meet at school and also go to a cafe or visit a museum. Everyone needs each other - we talk about what we do with our children, and if my friend thinks it's good she takes my idea.

A creative and inclusive curriculum

The multilingual, multicultural approach provided inspiring ideas for new topic-based curricula such as the International Primary Curriculum. Community teachers' perspectives enriched the planning sessions with their mainstream colleagues.

For 'Grandparents', children wrote messages to grandparents around the world and mapped journeys to visit them. A Grandparents Afternoon brought grandparents into school to

create family trees in different languages and be interviewed in class. A grandparent expressed her wish to continue with this work:

I want to talk to them about things like coins, games we used to play, clothes we used to wear, oh so many things.

For 'The Rag Trade', a community teacher devised sessions for mainstream school and Bengali class, drawing on his own experience of working in a clothing factory in Tower Hamlets. He also discussed child labour conditions in Bangladesh. Pupils wrote questions to send to children in Bangladesh and a mainstream teacher visiting the country brought back answers. Children became strongly engaged with the topic:

I didn't know all this before and my Bengali teacher made a difference because he's from Bangladesh and he taught us a lot about it... It helped when our teacher took the questions to Bangladesh because it was very interesting to see what they actually said.



Project work for Rag Trade topic

A whole school approach

- Mainstream teachers draw up list of children attending community classes and encourage them to bring work to show in school
- Joint Languages Celebration events with complementary schools and families
- Panel discussion to support parents bringing up children bilingually, including complementary school representatives and other experts
- Involve children's languages in cross-curricular topic work
- Dual language book-making with parents and library loan system
- Family learning in different languages
- Invite community teachers to relevant INSET sessions
- Share resources, eg community classes use ICT suite

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Teacher partnerships for bilingual learning

A research study with mainstream and community teachers in Tower Hamlets

Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Tower Hamlets Directorate of Children, Schools and Families



Many bilingual children attend after-school or weekend classes in community languages. These 'complementary schools' play an important part in children's educational achievement. They support literacy learning, and often mathematics, history and geography as well. The concepts children learn in the community language transfer to their learning in English.

The research project formed partnerships between teachers from primary schools and their colleagues from complementary schools. Teachers visited each other's settings and exchanged ideas on teaching and learning strategies. They planned topic-based lessons together, adapted to each setting.

In complementary school, teachers delivered the lessons bilingually. Since English is often children's stronger language, bilingual teaching gives them two ways of understanding.

In mainstream school, teachers encouraged children to use their community languages as well as English for learning.

In both settings, parents and grandparents were involved in the topic-based activities.

Impact on children

- Mainstream teachers valued their complementary school learning
- Topic work made links between learning in mainstream and complementary school
- Built a curriculum that drew on children's cultural knowledge and language skills

Impact on teachers

- Mainstream teachers gained understanding of 'the whole child', their pupils' competences and life outside school
- Community and mainstream colleagues learnt new teaching approaches from each other
- Teacher partners built joint support for children who were learning in both settings

Impact on schools

- Strengthened links with parents and grandparents
- Supported community cohesion through intercultural learning
- Contributed to a creative and inclusive curriculum

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Teacher partnerships for bilingual learning

Aims

To create a model for partnership between complementary and mainstream schools through which teachers can jointly develop bilingual learning appropriate to each setting, through:

- Closer links between complementary and mainstream schools to find out how each supports learning
- Sharing ideas about teaching methods
- Drawing on children's bilingual skills to enhance educational achievement
- Increased involvement of parents and grandparents in children's learning
- Ongoing partnership between community and mainstream to share training and resources

Impact on children

Valuing complementary school learning

Children were surprised and excited to see their mainstream teachers visiting complementary school. The work children were doing after school, including language learning and performance, became visible to teachers and they were able to build on these skills.

We started talent shows at Bengali school then my teacher came and she said that it was very good and now she keeps on asking me to do drama....if she didn't come to Bengali school she wouldn't really know how good I am because at school I was always shy.

Children gained in confidence when teachers asked for their support to introduce different languages into lessons at school. For example, a Somali child was initially embarrassed about his language being used in class, but became a leader as he helped his primary teacher present Somali vocabulary to his classmates.

Linking learning across settings

Teacher partnerships devised lessons for each setting that provided interesting and challenging work for children, on topics such as food, animals, climate, schooling and jobs in different countries. Songs, poems and stories were studied in different languages, with transliteration (eg Bengali written in English script) and translation into English. Examples include:

Jobs in different countries

At mainstream school and Bengali school, children examined photos of people working in different settings in Bangladesh to establish which jobs were similar or different to those carried out in England. They generated vocabulary in Bengali and English for job titles and shared typical experiences from their own visits to Bangladesh of which the photos reminded them, such as riding in rickshaws instead of cars or buses.



Bengali poem 'Kajla Didi'

The Gingerbread Man

Children first heard the story in English, followed by seeing a Russian version on the interactive whiteboard or laptop. They learned the rhyme that was central to the story, in Russian as well as English. The primary school class performed the rhyme in Russian outside in the playground, whilst in Russian class children picked out words they recognised and used phonics to sound these out and write them on the board. The Russian teacher commented:

The children were completely immersed in their work on the story for a week at both schools in both languages...they finally saw a connection between their day-to-day activities and Russian school.

Children understood and appreciated the links between their sites of learning:

I haven't done work like this in school before, it was kind of a Bangla lesson with my teacher, she doesn't know Bangla, she was using a book that had Bangla in it and we were doing it at Bengali school with my teacher and that helped.

Drawing on cultural knowledge and language skills

Teachers found lessons particularly successful when they connected with children's home and community experiences. These lessons also fitted well with schemes of work and met important learning objectives. Examples include:

Bilingual poetry

Children studied the traditional Bengali poem 'Kajla Didi' (in three versions – Bengali script, Bengali transliterated into English script, and English translation) about a girl whose sister has gone missing, and wrote questions to take home to parents and grandparents. They brought back answers and additional poems in other languages. After comparing 'Kajla Didi' to the English poem 'What Happened to Lulu?' by Charles Causley, which also involves a missing sister, the children wrote poems of their own on the theme of loss.

Memories of school

Children studied excerpts from 'When I Lived in Somalia', a book in which Tower Hamlets primary school pupils interviewed their parents. They devised their own questions about memories of school, which they practised in class with an interview panel of parents and bilingual assistants, before translating their questions into mother tongue to ask parents and grandparents at home. In primary school, where the work was part of a topic on transition from primary to secondary school, Year 6 children devised powerpoint presentations for a whole school assembly on their findings.

Using more than one language in mainstream school enhanced children's learning:

It was the first time I used a little bit of Somali in class because we had the Pied Piper story in Somali and English. I was able to use more Somali when I had that book and learnt more new words.

Knowing Bangla helped because in Bangla you can find more interesting questions to ask.

My sweet grandma I miss you could you come with me bye bye. Rahima



Child's message to Grandma in Somalia

Impact on teachers

Understanding 'the whole child'

None of the mainstream teachers had visited a complementary class prior to the project. They were aware of the potential for linking with children's community experiences. One teacher said:

What happens to the children outside mainstream school is very separate and we don't really get to see that other part of the child... there's always that little bit that's missing.

Through the project, all the teachers commented that they had gained a deeper understanding of the children they taught, recognising the importance of learning mother tongue, children's cultural knowledge and links with family heritage, and children's bilingual identities. One teacher summed this up:

It's about the whole child really for me...just by having contact with their community schools I feel I can understand a bit more about their learning in a broader context – they've got skills we don't always use in class and doing the poetry work has given us the chance to use

some of those skills...it was lovely to see the confidence of the children who were able to take on the task and engage with it, using their mother tongue, it just felt very positive to see them.

Learning new teaching approaches

Mainstream teachers developed strategies for introducing children's languages into learning, after observing their community partners working bilingually in complementary school. Strategies included children comparing vocabulary in different languages, writing questions to interview parents in mother tongue, producing bilingual posters and powerpoint presentations, writing stories and poetry bilingually and performing bilingual roleplays.

Community teachers benefited from seeing approaches used in mainstream school, such as groupwork, drama, shared writing, storyreading, games or project work. One commented:

The project gave me a unique opportunity to spend a whole day in primary school observing teachers and children...I learnt lots of methods and techniques which I adopted and now use in my work.

For example, a nursery teacher suggested activities suitable for the younger children in her partner teacher's Somali class, and lent resources for the lesson. Teachers from Russian school were introduced by their mainstream partner to learning stories through drama. They worked successfully on the 'Gingerbread Man' story and went on to use a similar approach with 'Red Riding Hood'.

Teacher partners ran training sessions for mainstream and community teachers in Tower Hamlets to disseminate new ideas.

Joint support for children in both settings

When teacher partners had pupils in common, they could collaborate to provide a firm foundation for learning across both settings. For example, a Russian-speaking child was initially inattentive in primary school and shy in complementary school. He then saw his primary and community teachers visiting each other and helped his primary school classmates perform roleplays in Russian. He became confident and focused in both settings. His community teacher commented:

He has changed now that I've seen him in his English school... Now he helps me in Russian school and tells me stories of what he did in the week...He really enjoys learning Russian and thinks it is something "cool".



Child's work in Russian