English language learning for adult migrants in Multilingual Britain: A perspective on policy and practice

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1. Introduction

There is currently a focus on the role of research evidence in informing educational policy. While this is important, language education research also needs to engage with the agenda of practitioners, creating and maintaining a research/practice nexus. At the same time, practitioners themselves are of course constantly having to respond to policy moves. In this paper I sketch out this three-way relationship between research/policy/practice as it relates to the teaching and learning of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for adult migrants to the UK. I conceptualise this relationship as an intersection, although too often the three spheres operate independently of each other.

I start by briefly discussing recent research, and the theories that underpin such research, into the superdiverse multilingual realities of contemporary language use in the UK. I then go on to discuss what Jan Blommaert described as 'modernist reactions to postmodern realities' (Blommaert 2008:2): that is, how dominant political and ideological forces that are heavily monolingualist – and monolingualising – respond to the multilingualism associated with globalisation and superdiversity. Thirdly, I consider where the tension between a monolingualist ideology and the reality 'on the ground' leaves practice, at a critical juncture in the history of Adult ESOL in England.

My desire to explore the relationship between sociolinguistic theory, political ideology and ESOL practice has a proximate cause. In 2009 the then New Labour Government, with its *New Approach to ESOL*, signalled the end of the position of ESOL as a central component of a national policy, *Skills for Life*, and required it to be coordinated locally, at the level of local authorities and councils. Under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, since 2010 the orientation of ESOL in policy has shifted from 'community cohesion' to 'austerity measures', including cuts to the funding of ESOL provision which would have been more devastating had they not been resisted by an active and vocal *Action for ESOL* campaign. The

relinquishing of government responsibility for adult ESOL potentially leaves spaces in what for a decade or so has been a fairly rigid structure, which I suggest in conclusion might be filled by a research (and theory)-informed critical ESOL pedagogy that is more in tune with the multilingual realities of contemporary language use.

The HENNA Project

I illustrate my discussion with data and findings from a study of ESOL need and provision in Harehills, Leeds (Simpson et al 2011), commissioned by Leeds City Council and funded by the Yorkshire and Humber Improvement and Efficiency Partnership: the *HENNA* (Harehills ESOL Needs Neighbourhood Audit) Project. The motivation behind the project, from the sponsors' point of view, was to examine the links between ESOL and unemployment (or 'worklessness'), though the project interpreted this desired orientation broadly.

Harehills is an inner city suburb in the east of Leeds, originally one of a scattering of villages in the area. By the late 19th century these villages had been incorporated into urban Leeds. In the 1950s and 1960s Harehills was an area of low-rent housing. This proved a magnet for successive waves of migration, originally from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean. The area retains its gravitational pull for new migrants.

2. Superdiversity and contemporary multilingualism

The sociolinguistics of movements and flows of people works with the concept of *superdiversity*, or the 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec 2007) in a globalized world. Britain can now be characterized by 'super-diversity', argues Vertovec, invoking a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Contemporary migration is certainly less predictable than the patterns of earlier movements of people: people move potentially from any place to any other, note Blommaert and Backus, 'carrying with them widely different backgrounds and moving with different motives and using different means of mobility' (2011: 4).

Harehills, the site of the *HENNA* project, as with similar areas across Britain, has a long history of inward migration. The Harehills neighbourhood has seen patterns of migration over the years:

- from Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century;
- Jewish settlement from Central Europe in the late nineteenth century;
- from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean in the mid twentieth century;

- in more recent years from places such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, Somalia, Congo, Iraq, and Afghanistan, where the political and economic situation has forced people to uproot and leave their homes;
- also recently from Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, a shift associated with tougher asylum laws and curbs on non-European immigration, along with the expansion of the European Union.

Many migrants who do not even live in Harehills come to buy food, eat out, socialise, use internet cafes, visit doctors, attend religious, educational and cultural centres, and so on. The streetscapes, shop fronts and signages of Harehills bear witness to the energetic cultural and linguistic hybridity which characterizes the area, though along with its cultural vibrancy and energy, Harehills is also criss-crossed with the fault lines of multiple social disadvantage. In many ways, Harehills is emblematic of the superdiversity that Vertovec talks about as being typical of many of Britain's (and the world's) urban centres today.

Transnational communication

Contemporary communication in areas such as Harehills displays characteristics familiar to superdiverse neighbourhoods everywhere: its transnationalism and multilingualism are the very drivers of superdiversity. Saskia Sassen says:

> Migrations are acts of settlement and of habitation in a world where the divide between origin and destination is no longer a divide of Otherness, a world in which borders no longer separate human realities.

> (Sassen 1999: 6)

This is no truer than when considering transnational communication using new technology. Along with global movements of people, the reshaping of diasporic space through the use of new media is also moving us towards superdiversity. Globalization has been understood as the compression of time-space, and as involving the reconfiguration of spatial and temporal relations (Harvey 1989; Collins et al 2009). This is manifest in online communication, which readily places us into the virtual if not physical co-presence of our globally-spread interlocutors. Hence we see the emergence of online trans-local, or 'glocal' interaction, which dominates the out of class literacy practices of many ESOL students.

Multilingual communication

Which language(s) do you speak? Responses differ to this question, depending on people's background and language learning history, and tend to sit somewhere on a scale between monolingualism and polylingualism. Typically people might say:

> *I only speak English* – invoking the monolingual norm in many parts of the UK, though unusual in most parts of the world.

> *I speak English outside and with my brothers, but Panjabi at home because my mum and dad aren't that good at English* (cited in Baynham et al 2007) – invoking an integrated bilingualism: people with competence in two languages will adjust to the needs and possibilities of the conversation, including the linguistic skills of their interlocutor. The distinction made between 'outside' and 'home' indicates something of a functional distinction.

> *I speak Kurdish at home and English and other languages outside* – polylingualism, with hints that 'outside' language use is complex.

Superdiversity is implicated in a growing amount of research on sociolinguistic phenomena that occur in migration contexts. Researchers such as Garcia, Blackledge & Creese, and Conteh have adopted the term *translanguaging* as an alternative to codeswitching, to describe the usual and normal practice in multilingual environments (including some classrooms) of 'bilingualism without diglossic functional separation' (Garcia 2007: xii) or 'flexible bilingualism' (Conteh forthcoming). This points to an understanding of languages not as hermetically sealed and bounded entities. Rather, in this use-informed view, the focus is on an individual's communicative repertoire made up of a set of linguistic and semiotic resources (see also Blommaert and Backus 2011). To understand this fully, one first has to accept that languages are inventions, social constructions that are 'artefacts analogous to other constructions such as time' (Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 1).

Blommaert and Backus (2011) remind us that the notion of a communicative repertoire is core in sociolinguistics, defined by Gumperz in 1972 as 'the totality of linguistic resources (i.e. including both invariant forms and variables) available to members of particular communities.' The idea of a repertoire as the 'totality of linguistic resources' available to people has remained reasonably stable since Gumperz pinned it down. But the understanding of 'particular communities'

certainly has moved on. To tie language use to particular speech communities – especially geographically-bounded ones – in the 21st century and in the fluid spaces of the world's global cities and online would be absurd.

So how does one describe and highlight the linguistic diversity of an area? One way is to count the languages claimed to be spoken, as is done as part of the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). This PLASC data, reproduced in the *HENNA* report, lists English as the most common 'first language' of children in Harehills' schools. English is claimed as a first language by around 40% of children, with Bengali and Urdu appearing at just over 11% and 10% respectively.
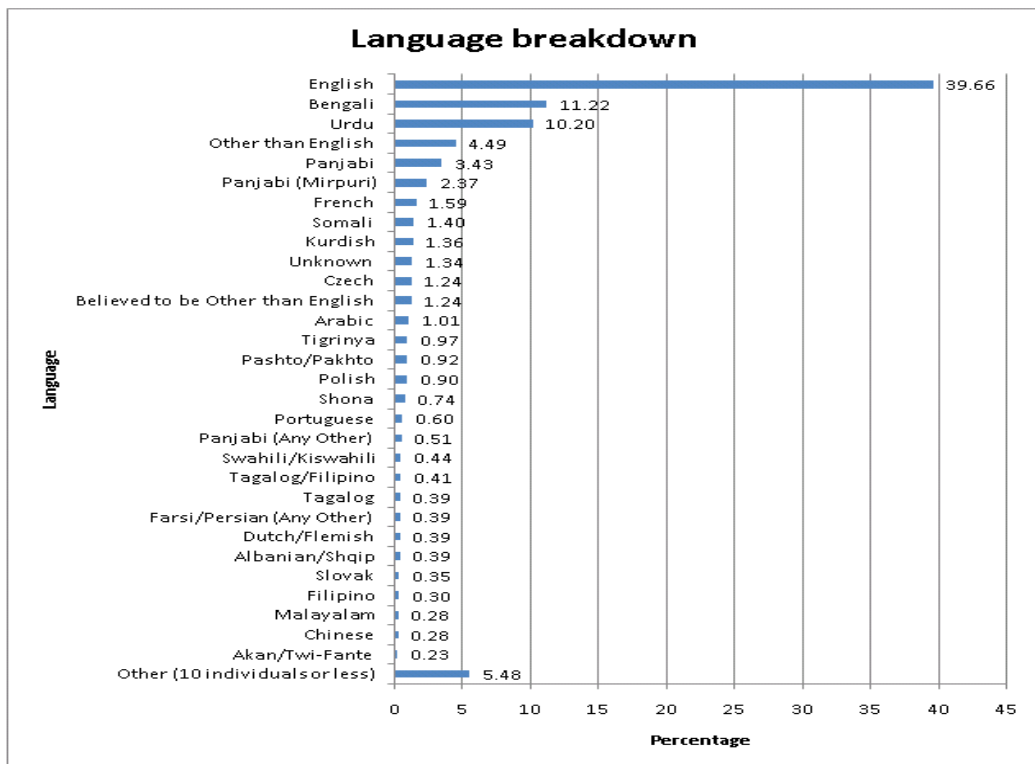

Figure 1 First languages claimed by children in Harehills schools (PLASC 2010 in Simpson et al 2011:18)

The relationship between the representation of language use in this chart to how language is actually used is tenuous however: Makoni and Pennycook's trenchant critique of a 'census ideology' includes a quote from Susanne Romaine, who maintains that the:

> very concept of discrete languages is probably a European cultural artefact fostered by
> procedures such as literacy and standardization. Any attempt to count languages will be

an artefact of classificatory procedures rather than a reflection of communicative
practices.

<div align="right">(Romaine 1994: 12, in Makoni and Pennycook 2007: 11-12)</div>

The alternative presents a key challenge for researchers, and one which they are beginning to meet: to provide robust sociolinguistic descriptions of today's face-to-face and mediated language use. Examples are Ben Rampton's work on language crossing (Rampton 2005) and David Block's preliminary study of niche *lingua francas* (Block 2007). John Callaghan's recent study of two forced migrants living in Leeds points to the richness and diversity of their linguistic and other semiotic practices (Callaghan 2011). In classroom settings research consistently demonstrates the importance of encompassing a concern with multilingualism and non-standard varieties of English in pedagogy, to avoid, in Jim Cummins' words, 'squandering our bilingual resources' (Cummins 2005; see also Creese and Blackledge 2010). Such work includes Angela Creese and colleagues' studies of complementary schools in the UK (e.g. Creese and Blackledge 2010); and Jean Conteh's work in multilingual primary classrooms in Bradford (e.g. 2011). But multilingualism in adult ESOL classes remains under-explored, as does migrants' out-of-class language use. And as we see in the next section, multilingualism in general is under-recognised and undervalued, in policy as well as in pedagogy.

3. Monolingualist ideology and policy in England

The dominant discourses about linguistic diversity – and the ideologies that sit behind them – are at odds with the multilingual realities of everyday life. In recent years, policy at a national level concerning superdiversity and the learning of English for adult migrants has been both contradictory and problematic. As Melanie Cooke and I put it in 2008:

> The relationship between national security, immigration, integration, social cohesion and language is becoming progressively tighter. In most government reports and in very much political and media discourse, a great deal of attention is paid to English as the greatest shared resource and the need for everyone to speak it to integrate fully in their communities.

<div align="right">(Cooke and Simpson 2008: 10)</div>

It is relevant then to examine the linguistic ideologies behind policies that impinge on ESOL students. Kroskrity describes language ideologies as 'beliefs, feelings and conceptions about

language structure and use which often index the political interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states' (2001:1). Language ideologies can be heavily entrenched: for example the notion of a standard language is a language ideology that is often voiced uncritically in public discourse. The association of a language with a group or a nation ('one nation one language') is particularly deep-rooted. Spotti articulates a view of such *monolingualist* ideology thus: 'I am a speaker of language X and am therefore a member of group Y' (Spotti 2011).

In this section I examine briefly examples of monolingualist ideology evident in political rhetoric about English and migration, immigration policy itself, and media discourse concerning the learning of English by adult migrants, before considering public discourses about ESOL.

Political rhetoric

Sustained rhetoric insisting that migrants have an obligation (rather than a right) to learn English, which grew in pitch under the New Labour Government in the UK, has continued under the Coalition. Under New Labour, such discourse was primarily associated with an agenda of social cohesion. Research evidence confirming the notion that speaking languages other than English leads to a breakdown of social cohesion is hard to come by. Despite this, the links between the two have been made frequently in political discourse since 2001. Anne Cryer, the MP for Keighley in Yorkshire spoke in 2001 of the need for minority families to use English in the home 'in addition to Panjabi and Bangla' (Cryer 2001; see Blackledge 2005: 97) in order to prevent educational disadvantage. This was closely followed by the now notorious comments of then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, who wrote of the 'schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships' in bilingual families (2002: 77).

In order to legitimise their discourses and to distance themselves from extreme right-wing ideologies, politicians who link English competence with citizenship and social cohesion usually couch their talk in 'liberal' terms, that is, English is necessary for everyone to access their rights, to be able to fully participate in British society and to avoid being economically and socially marginalised. In Britain, though, as the first decade of the 21st century progressed, the discourse of politicians became less liberal and less apologetic about their views regarding English, linguistic minorities, social cohesion and immigration. Quotes from senior politicians demonstrate how their stance towards English learned by migrants has hardened. Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, in a speech given shortly after the 7th July 2005, announcing a package of

measures to combat Islamic extremism, stated: 'There are people who are isolated in their own communities who have been here for 20 years and still do not speak English. That worries me because there is a separateness that may be unhealthy.' Yet by 2010, rather than community cohesion, the spotlight was firmly on immigration: Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrat Party now in government, tied English to immigration in the leaders' debate in the run-up to last year's general election (22 April 2010): 'If they want to play by the rules, pay their taxes, speak English, that is a smart, fair effective way of dealing with immigration.' It is unusual to meet a new arrival to the UK who does not appreciate the importance of competence in English. However, contrary to political rhetoric, English is not 'the only game in town', but has value as part of a multilingual repertoire.

ESOL and migration policy

In policy itself, I'll discuss just one example, the *Life in the UK* Citizenship test. When it was first introduced, this test was taken by those applying for citizenship or naturalization. Today an individual from outside the EU has to pass it if he or she wants to gain leave to remain in the country; in other words, it has become an obligatory test for anyone who wants to stay in the UK. It remains possible, if you are not a competent user of English, to follow an ESOL & Citizenship course in lieu of the test, and progress one 'level'. Such courses are not without their problems, explicitly marrying as they do English language education and immigration policy.

Much of the *Life in the UK* test is about British political, legal and cultural customs. The test has been widely pilloried for its culturally-obscure questions and monocultural assumptions. It is indeed easy to lampoon, considering that it contains items like the following (from an online practice test):

Christmas

Is the following statement True or False?

Couples traditionally kiss under a wreath of holly at Christmas time in the UK

True

False

More to the point, this multiple choice test can only be taken in English (or Welsh or Scottish Gaelic), and is taken on a computer. Its gatekeeping role is quite transparent – this is not for people who wish to remain in the UK, but for a Government which would quite like to keep

them out. So rather than a test of life in the UK, the test is one of English literacy (questions are drawn from one source only, the *Life in the UK* book, which is only available in English) and computer skills.

The idea that English binds society together runs very deep. The *Life in the UK* book (2007) states that 'the English language itself' is the key to participation of diverse communities in a common culture sharing common values, values which include a respect for difference and diversity but not – it would seem from the test – linguistic difference and diversity. In an ideology where multilingualism is seen as a problem, only English can serve as an efficient means of communication, migrants have no existing language tools that might be of use to them in the UK, and only if they learn English will they increase their opportunities for work, education and social mobility. This monolingualist – and monolingualising – notion does not take account the linguistic and cultural resources held by migrants, resources which as suggested earlier may well help, not hinder, their integration into many multicultural neighbourhoods. But it does seem sometimes that English is the only option, so deeply ingrained is this notion in normative discourse.

Media discourse and English language learning

The negative representation of immigrants in the press is probably familiar to you. Gabrielatos and Baker, in their paper 'fleeing, sneaking, flooding' (2008), use CDA and corpus linguistics to track the discursive processes of othering that occur in reporting of immigrants and asylum seekers. When stories in the press present a *prima facie* positive picture of integration, the issues can be more subtle.

This extract is from an article which appeared in London's *Evening Standard* newspaper earlier this year, headlined 'I was losing my children, I knew I had to get out and learn English'.

> Moshoda Khatun was just 13 when her family married her off and she moved in with her husband and his parents at their Tower Hamlets flat. From that day, her English deteriorated dramatically as her attendance at school took a back seat to housekeeping duties. […] Over the years, Moshoda's contact with English speakers receded as her entire world became the local Bangladeshi community. "We spoke only Bangladeshi at home, I'd shop only at Bengali shops, speak only to Bengali mothers at the school gate, and I never went to cinemas or restaurants," she said. "We lived off benefits. I never

thought I'd need English." The shock that Moshoda was living in a fool's paradise came from her own children. They were London-born and they'd grown up reading, writing and speaking English as their first language. One day her teenage daughter told her she could "no longer relate" to her because she could hardly speak English. Moshoda's belief that she could get by without English was shattered. […] The link between illiteracy and poverty is especially evident in places like Tower Hamlets where the child poverty rate of 57 per cent is one of the highest in the country. "A key driver of whether children do well at school is if their parents speak English at home," said [the manager of the centre where she learns English]. […] Moshoda is amazed at how differently people treat her since she learned English. "My child's teachers regard me with respect, my own children want to hang out with me, even their friends say I'm a 'cool mum'."

Evening Standard, 23 September 2011

Moshoda is positioned as a success story whose struggle for literacy leads to her self-actualisation. It's not Moshoda's immigrant status which is viewed as the most problematic issue, but her multilingualism. From the outset the migrant lifestyle is connected to her lack of competence in English (*From that day, her English deteriorated dramatically*), and with the non-use of English in her home (*"We lived off benefits. I never thought I'd need English."*). Her children are said to have rejected her because of her lack of English. Moreover the use (or not) of spoken English at home is connected to children's success at school (*"A key driver of whether children do well at school is if their parents speak English at home"*), an assertion that has little substance. Overall, English in this article is held up as the be-all-and-end-all of effective communication: Moshoda was somehow not a complete person until she had learned English, and become literate in English (*Moshoda is amazed at how differently people treat her since she learned English*).

ESOL practitioners and researchers have to take care not to align themselves too closely with the view that once people become competent users of English, all their other difficulties somehow melt away. As the draft manifesto of the *Action for ESOL* campaign says:

> speaking the dominant language should not be a precondition for moral recognition or the rights of citizenship, nor should the issue of language detract from other factors that cause division within our communities, including poverty, inequality and discrimination'

(*Action for ESOL* 2011)

Public discourse and the 'need for English'

ESOL students are living in a country where English is dominant. I would not deny the usefulness of competence in English when dealing with 'the system', and this sense emerges clearly in public discourse about ESOL. Researchers on the *HENNA* project interviewed a range of 'stakeholders', including local councillors in Harehills, employers, Jobcentre Plus officials, housing agency and health centre managers. From these interviews, a somewhat more sophisticated perception of the challenges faced by ESOL students emerged than that projected in the media, where competence in English was perceived to be necessary at three interconnected levels (Simpson et al 2011: 30-32):

- A 'basic English' needed to carry out everyday tasks.
- English for specific activities, e.g. health professional/patient encounters, bidding for and taking up residence in council properties; going for job interviews, working in a particular factory, and so on.
- (On a more abstract level) socio-cultural knowledge, e.g. about how local systems and procedures work.

I would suggest that knowledge of communicative norms in these domains is necessary for everyone, and that everyone struggles with some aspects, regardless of whether they are local-born or a new arrival.

To exemplify this, the literacy challenges involved in negotiating bureaucracy were noted by Dennis, the manager of 'Bilingual Advocates', a third sector refugee advocacy organisation. He talks about the tangible problems that people have when faced with a complex bureaucracy:

> *It starts off with basic reading issues. People arrive with a bag full of letters, none of which they can understand. It's come to a crunch point where someone is trying to collect a debt. It's gone to extremes. It could be a bailiff. They recognise that there's something urgent, but because they haven't been able to read the letters they haven't been able to sort the issue out.*

With reference to the three-level summary above, Dennis's clients clearly struggle with 'basic English', the ability to decode text. But the texts he discusses are from specific domains: paying bills and rent, for instance, and generally those areas of life where an individual's property and

belongings are under threat if procedures are not negotiated effectively. Difficult bureaucracy will be familiar to many, but presents greater challenges to those whose linguistic repertoire is limited in certain areas, wherever they are actually from.

Of great importance, quite obviously, is the need to understand local systems. Robert, an adviser for a refugee training and education organisation, and himself an expert learner of ESOL, identifies an inability to understand the UK '*system*', which he suggests is one of the most consequential effects of limited English.

> *It was challenging because we knew nothing about the UK system. We didn't know where to go even for the transport. We couldn't manage with the transport. Because of our lack of English at the time.*

There is no doubt that knowledge of the dominant language can provide something of a "way in" to how local systems work. One thing that greatly concerned Robert was his initial helplessness regarding his children's schooling. Here the dominance of English, and the lack of a place for any other language, were really brought home to him:

> *Our children when they started school, coming back home, we couldn't support them because we had to support them in the UK the English curriculum, the UK system. It was very challenging. If I don't speak any English and my son comes back with homework, with reading, how can I support him? … It's very clear that for integration, for supporting kids with homework, and for just getting by English is essential.*

Robert's difficulties were in part due to his inability to negotiate the curriculum, a facet of the 'UK system', but his fundamental concern is the 'basic' or 'getting by' level of English.

4. ESOL in multilingual Britain: Addressing multilingual reality in practice

The *HENNA* project also surveyed and interviewed ESOL teachers about the challenges their students face in their daily lives (Simpson et al 2011: 36ff). We found that their perceptions of their students' English needs were quite detailed, when it came to listing settings and domains where English is used, and the types of communication engaged with.

- Oral communication needs: speaking in everyday contexts, particularly in shops, and in interactions involving locally-based officials, in, for instance, the Jobcentre, the housing office, the children's schools, the GP's surgery.

- Listening needs: Communication on the telephone, listening to interaction between local-born speakers, and listening to instructions, for instance at work.

- Writing needs: writing to fill in forms, writing to apply for a job (CVs etc), writing for communication with children's schools.

- Reading: letters from officials and bills, home/school communication, and local texts, for example adverts in shops, signs, communications from community groups.

Daily life, rather than communication at (or for) work, emerges as a key, even overarching, theme.

There is surely no doubt that migrants need to develop as part of a multilingual repertoire the linguistic resources which will allow and enable them to gain access to – for example – an understanding of the letters that Dennis talked about, or to help with children's' schoolwork, as Robert mentions. But despite ESOL teachers' extensive knowledge of students' needs in English on a fairly general level, we are only beginning to understand the actual realities of students' communicative experiences in English, in day-to-day life.

John Callaghan begins his ethnographic study of two forced migrants living in Leeds with an anecdote, about an ex-student of his who is woefully unequipped for the difficult business of buying white goods to furnish his new apartment, and whose visit to an electrical superstore ends unhappily. As Callaghan says, he himself witnessed this particular event:

> a year or so after I had taught my last ESOL class, too late for me to make use of the knowledge that whilst my students appeared to be doing well as judged by the standards of … the cosy world of the classroom, judged by the standards of the much harsher world 'outside' they were doing far from well – and therefore so was I.
>
> (Callaghan 2011: 3)

He goes on to note that when teachers do attempt to relate classroom content to what goes on in students' lives beyond the classroom walls, they 'understandably lack adequately detailed knowledge of the lives of their learners' (Callaghan 2011: 3).

Which brings me finally to the provision of ESOL, and appropriate models of ESOL pedagogy. The knowledge we have about the social and cognitive benefits of multilingualism, and the 'post-

modern realities' (Blommaert 2008: 2) of daily life can be contrasted with the dominant and strengthening monolingual ideology behind much political and public discourse and central government policy. Where does this contradiction leave ESOL teachers?

Challenging policy in practice

In the decade from 2001, the task of coordinating and funding Adult ESOL in England was fulfilled by central government, as part of the *Skills for Life* policy, the national strategy for adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Under *Skills for Life* the space between ESOL policy and classroom practice was mediated 'top-down' via a national curriculum, the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum* (AECC). The little work hitherto carried out on contemporary multilingualism has had no real impact on mainstream ESOL practice: the AECC unquestioningly promotes standard English and privileges only certain genres. In addition, monolingualist notions such as the prohibition of translation and the use of other expert languages in classrooms have persisted in ESOL pedagogy: there are deep-seated ideas that heteroglossia in the classroom is to be avoided (cf Zentella 1981; Martin 2005 on moral disapproval about 'mixing' languages in classrooms and the guilt felt by students and teachers who do so).

But I am writing at a time when the Coalition Government has relinquished responsibility for funding ESOL under *Skills for Life*. I suggest that this helps to create spaces in what was previously a fairly solid structure, spaces within which new types of socially- and sociolinguistically-aware curricula, pedagogies and resources might be developed.

The nascent but growing knowledge about language use in Britain's multilingual neighbourhoods has implications for practice: practitioners need to cater for the increased linguistic unpredictability of contemporary urban life and hence need to understand it. They also need to incorporate into their practice a resistance to the banalities of the dominant monolingualising discourse emanating from central government. Finally, it's becoming clear that ESOL practitioners generally know very little about the realities of the linguistic and social challenges that face students as they adapt to life in a new country. I have four suggestions for addressing this situation:

1. a re-orientation in theory and practice (including assessment) away from concepts of (second/other) language *acquisition*, and towards notions of language *development*;
2. an incorporation into ESOL practice of translation and a pedagogy of *translanguaging*;

3. a *critical* pedagogy, addressing communication in an unequal society;

4. addressing the realities of students' lives by *bringing the outside in*, by incorporating centrally into pedagogy the real-life concerns of ESOL students.

ESOL pedagogy can reorient towards multilingual development

Epistemologically, the acceptance of multilingualism into ESOL classrooms is concomitant with a re-orientation towards *multilingual development* and away from *second/L2/other language acquisition/learning.* There are now well-established critiques of the notion of 'acquisition' as an appropriate metaphor for language development (e.g. Block 2003), and its conflation with 'learning'. There are many reasons why an epistemological shift away from 'acquisition' and towards 'development' is desirable: Diane Larsen-Freeman (2011) suggested a dozen. Here I will only note that:

- 'Acquisition' implies that language is a 'something', a commodity that an individual can have more or less of, and that can be obtained ('*my students have got the present perfect*'), whereas cognitive perspectives on learning (e.g. the ZPD in sociocultural theory; emergentism) tell us that learning is non-linear. When precisely can you say that a language item has been 'acquired'?

- 'Acquisition' points to a long-standing objectification of language: as something that exists outside, beyond and separate from contexts of use.

- 'Acquisition' suggest that completion is possible.

- 'Acquisition' is about language. Development can be too, but it can also be about learners, and their use of language as social practice.

ESOL pedagogy can embrace the multilingual reality of contemporary life

Regarding the implications for pedagogy of a multilingual reality, Hornberger suggests that:

> bi/multilinguals' learning is maximised when they are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills (in two + languages), rather than being constrained and inhibited from doing so by monolingual instructional assumptions and practices.
>
> (Hornberger 2005: 607)

This is all very well, but of course incredibly difficult to implement in practice, not lease because of the hegemonic nature of English in society. But the call comes from potential students as well.

Dennis, the manager of bilingual advocates, reports in the *HENNA* project (Simpson et al. 2011: 34) that:

> *Many of our clients have said that they are put off by the fact that ESOL classes are in English [only], they would rather have someone who speaks their first language so that they can ask questions and fully understand.*

Embracing multilingualism in ESOL classrooms can be done, I suggest, by adopting some of the principles of a 'pedagogy of translanguaging' that has been proposed in the context of complementary schools in the UK (Creese and Blackledge 2010: 112-113), and embracing some of the benefits of translation in language teaching outlined by Guy Cook (2010), in his recent reassessment of that issue.

- use of translation across languages;
- use of student translanguaging to establish identity positions both oppositional and encompassing of institutional values;
- recognition that languages do not fit into clear bounded entities and that all languages are 'needed' for meanings to be conveyed and negotiated;
- recognition that teachers and students skilfully use their languages for different functional goals such as narration and explanation;
- use of translanguaging for annotating texts, providing greater access to the curriculum, and lesson accomplishment.

ESOL pedagogy can take a critical turn

Critical pedagogy rests on arguments that advocate working towards a better world. In ESOL contexts, many students experience inequality as a matter of course, and are often among the most marginalised in society as a whole. Those involved in their education are in a position to work to counter the power imbalances inherent in their daily lives. There are tried-and-tested language teaching initiatives developed by practitioners working together with academics, which employ the tools of critical theories to develop understanding of communication in an unequal society. Examples are:

- Auerbach and Wallerstein's *Problem-posing at work: English for Action* (2004), a textbook drawing on the work of Paulo Freire that takes seriously the complex demands of adult ESOL students in workplace contexts.

- Action Aid's *Reflect for ESOL* (online), also run on Freirean principles, an approach which involves teachers working together with students on strategies to counter the excesses of inequality that they meet daily.

ESOL pedagogy can engage with new technology to 'bring the outside in'.
Connecting classroom practices with students' lives 'outside' has been described as 'Bringing the outside in' (Baynham et al 2007; papers in Lytra and Møller 2011). The promise of digital technology is that it offers bridges that afford such linkages. In particular new technologies can enable students to challenge established, institutionally-ratified identity positions. Simpson and Gresswell (forthcoming 2012) for example show how students use blogs, digital media and music to challenge the identity positions offered to them institutionally and in policy (as migrant, and as potential employee in low-paid work. This is no magic bullet, however. Contesting identity positions will not on its own equip ESOL students with the ability to gain access to the 'powerful literacies' that they need if they are to succeed, for example, in Higher Education or high-status work.

Concluding comment
We need to recall, however, that promising though these ideas might seem, we are involved with adult ESOL, a currently dysfunctional sector of education associated with fragmentation and the heavy hand of the employability agenda. As the *HENNA* report said:

> Patterns of ESOL provision, funding and attendance are complex, and pertain beyond the neighbourhood boundaries to the city as a whole. The general picture emerging from this study is one of fragmented ESOL provision locally and city-wide which is in urgent need of coordination.
>
> (Simpson et al 2011: 27)

In the small geographical area of Harehills alone, we found 24 physical sites where ESOL can be studied. Our findings noted that 'The pattern of multiple funders and combinations of providers

and centres, as well as growing reliance on volunteers, is likely to become more typical.' That is, ESOL is becoming less, not more, joined-up. Moreover:

> The complexity of provision and funding raises questions of continuity, coherence and quality of tuition for the benefit of students. Impending changes to ESOL funding means that it cannot be assumed that current funding streams are stable.
>
> (Simpson et al 2011: 27)

For example, it is difficult to ascertain and map out the progression routes that are an important aspect of appropriate provision, in a context where provision is incoherent.

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