

# Language Provision in the Context of the Multilingual School and Community in England

Mark Payne

What they are meant to be doing is research and not rushing it but actually doing research and getting out and talking to people and finding out who is there and what their needs are. We have got to keep working on it because it is the thing that schools find hardest, undoubtedly, and hardest to get their heads around.

(Key respondent, Specialist Schools Trust)

## Introduction

The quote above should be considered in relation to the community dimension of the specialist schools programme, with particular reference to language colleges. It encapsulates some of the problems and challenges faced by stakeholders in the initiative, from policy makers to practitioners. There is a sense that it is clear what schools are *meant* to be doing, a hint that policy may have been misinterpreted or rushed in the past, and the notion that it is a continuing problem. Drawing on empirical research, this paper explores the secondary school/community dimension in more detail and addresses some of the issues raised in this opening quote.

The overarching aim of the project, on which this paper is based, is to investigate the provision of MFL in the multilingual school and community context. Any study of MFL provision may be seen as an ‘extension’ of the work on language diversification that was undertaken in the mid-1980s and early 1990s (e.g. Filmer-Sankey 1989; McCrory 1990; Phillips 1987; Phillips and Filmer-Sankey 1989; Phillips and Filmer-Sankey 1993), culminating in the influential OXPROD study (Filmer-Sankey 1993). However, my work differs from the established field on diversification in one main area. As I understand it, language diversification is the (desired) move away from teaching one FL, usually French, to the teaching of more than one (usually European) FL. My study is an investigation of FL *provision*, that is, the languages offered by schools, whether diversified or not. Diversification as a process may be integral to providing languages that meet a community’s needs, but diversification *per se* is not under investigation.

A main impetus for the study is to investigate the notion that specialist language colleges will work towards meeting the needs and requirements of their pupils and communities<sup>1</sup>:

Language Colleges will work within a named ‘family of schools’ for the benefit of pupils beyond their own school boundaries and other groups of people in the wider community.

(Department for Education and Skills 2001, para. 2, p.3)

The aims of the Language Colleges initiative are to extend the range of opportunities available to students which best meet their needs and interests.

(ibid, para.4, p.3)

Underlying this particular set of aims for schools there are a number of questions which remain unanswered: How can a school meet the linguistic needs and requirements of a multilingual community? How does a school define the concept of community and identify a community’s needs? What programmes of language provision are in place or need to be in place to meet the various linguistic needs?

Although essentially a heuristic grounded project (see below), I worked from the premise that large secondary multilingual schools, and in particular specialist language colleges, would have, to some degree, conceptualised their communities, have audited those communities to establish linguistic needs and requirements, and then tailored programmes of language provision to accommodate such needs.

In this paper I present findings from the research and attempt to address some of the issues outlined above. The focus will be predominantly on two areas of the project: the ‘community’ and models of MFL provision.

This paper is set out as follows: Firstly, Section 1 explores the concept of community and the challenges faced in auditing the multilingual community. In Section 2, the research project is described in more detail to include both the method and the sample. In Section 3, based upon data from the project, the language programmes for each case study school are presented from three perspectives: the language programmes as they are currently structured; how they perhaps should be structured; and how they could be adapted to provide for the linguistic needs of the local community. In the concluding section, the three questions raised in this introduction are addressed again and an attempt is made to provide some answers.

---

<sup>1</sup> All specialist schools, regardless of specialism, will have a similar community dimension.

## **Section 1: The Concept ‘Community’**

It seems reasonable to assume that if a school wishes to cater for the needs of its local community through the planning of its curriculum, some explicit or implicit notion of what that community consists of must exist in the minds of policy makers in the school. However, the term ‘community’ is itself notoriously difficult to pin down. The Concise Oxford Dictionary, for example, lists eight definitions of the term ‘community’, including ‘all the people living in a specific locality’ and ‘a body of people having a religion, a profession etc. in common’ (Thompson 1995, p.268). In ‘Keywords’, Raymond Williams briefly traces the etymology of the term ‘community’ and maintains that it can be ‘the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships’ and points to the fact that ‘it never seems to be used unfavourably’ (Williams 1985 pp.77-76). The term ‘community’ is also a widely used, everyday word that would mean something to virtually everyone. Expressions such as ‘care in the community’, ‘community policing’, ‘community action’ and ‘community school’ are part of the accepted currency of contemporary discourse (Plant 1978). Most people, if asked to describe the type of community they lived in, would probably answer the question without hesitation whilst at the same time they would be hard pressed to offer an adequate generic definition of the word.

### **1.1: The Problem**

When engaging with the corpus of literature pertaining to ‘community’ it is evident that there are two, mainly divergent, disciplines contributing to the conceptual debate. On the one hand, philosophers have struggled with attempts at defining the concept ‘community’ whilst on the other, sociologists have had to move towards operationalising the term in order to study communities:

[o]f all the concepts in terms of which we characterize, organize, and constitute our social and political experience, the concept of community seems to be the one most neglected by social and political philosophers. (Plant 1978 p. 79)

This ‘neglect’ may be partly to do with the fact that ‘community’ may mean many different things to different people. As Frazer suggests, ‘usage is extremely ambiguous and vague’ (Frazer 1999 p.45). For MacIntyre, for example, ‘community’ may be subcategorised into the ‘family’, ‘neighbourhood’ or ‘city’ (MacIntyre 1985 p.221). Sandel sees ‘community’ as referring to an institution of which we might have

membership; for example, a ‘family or tribe or city or class or nation or people’ (Sandel 1998 p.172). Etzioni suggests that

all sorts of social groups should and can be communities – firms, schools, families, neighbourhoods, states. (Etzioni 1993 p. 32)

However, rather than identify what might constitute a community in terms of a definite geographical location or a particular social grouping, philosophers have been more concerned with the abstract values or relationships inherent within a community. Taylor, for example, views members of a community as sharing ‘meanings’, ‘[c]ommon meanings are the basis of community’ (cited in Frazer 1999). Common meanings in turn lead to a common language and a common understanding and shared practices. It is clear that consensus as to what ‘community’ actually is, or should be, is not likely to be reached. As Connolly points out, there is an ‘endlessness’ to such conceptual disputes. Just discussing one concept may entail the usage of other equally contested concepts (Connolly 1983). It is clear that rival theorists will have their own interpretations of what is already a messy construct.

For sociologists, the concept ‘community’ has been operationalised out of necessity in order to carry out research into society, such as into the problems of industrialisation and modernisation (for example Lynd 1929; Warner 1963; Whyte 1955). In order to study a ‘simple society’, for example, Barnes investigated a small parish in Norway (Barnes 1954). There is a sense here that sociologists are readily able to identify what constitutes a village, parish or society, and then study it. One would assume, then, that the term ‘community’ from a sociological point of view would be a straightforward definition. That said, Poplin argues that ‘community’ ‘is one of the most confusing terms that sociologists use’ (Poplin 1979 p.vii) and points out that

[w]e use terms such as *village*, *city* and *metropolitan area* with alacrity, but sometimes we fail to define them precisely. (ibid, original emphasis)

As an example of the dilemma, Hillery identified ninety-four different definitions of community, classified according to generic or rural community (Hillery 1955). Even then, though, he concluded that

[w]hen all the definitions are viewed, beyond the concept that people are involved in community, there is no complete agreement as to the nature of community. (ibid, p.119)

This underlines an inherent problem in any attempts to analyse and operationalise the concept. The result is either a narrow definition that proves too simplistic and restrictive in practice, or it is such a broad, all-encompassing definition that it proves to be unworkable.

As with the discipline of philosophy, sociology offers no clear definition of community that would be transferable to the context of this study.

It would appear that any school attempting to define its community then, is faced with a problematic task. The Headteacher of one school summed up his school's community thus:

Several really. There is the community within the school. The school's own, internal community. There is the community it directly serves in terms of its environment, the parents, carers and the children. The wider community which either includes in terms of businesses who might take children on in terms of employment. The community of the LEA you know other schools the primary school community, we have a family of schools it is quite wide and varied.

(Headteacher, Midlands School)

This quote appears to support my contention that the reification of a 'community' which encompasses parents, children, other schools and businesses is fraught with problems. That said, it is accurate to say that most schools will have a clearly defined notion of what, to some extent, their community is. A community college, for example, must be serving its community. The community of the school can be embodied in the 'catchment community'. The catchment community would encompass all those pupils on the school roll along with their families and, therefore, embody the environment and influences (socio-economic, linguistic or other) that impact upon them. The term 'catchment community' was used extensively throughout this study by respondents when discussing the communities that the respective schools served. But even if this is a neat solution to the problem, how does a school identify and audit the multilingual community within that catchment?

## **1.2: The Multilingual Community**

Once a community has been identified, the linguistic needs of that community can become an object of focus. A Language College is required to provide an audit as part of its development plan. The audit includes

[a] summary of the range of languages and cultures represented in the school's local community, the proportion of pupils at the school who are bilingual and in what languages.

(Department for Education and Employment 2000, para. 57b, p.18)

In order to make any judgements on the linguistic needs or requirements of a community it is fair to say, as the DfES suggests, that some data on the linguistic profile of that community must be collected. However, in a multilingual setting this is not a straightforward task. For example, the Linguistic Minorities Project provided stark evidence of the problems associated with identifying and targeting linguistic communities, of designing research instruments and of collecting data from respondents (Linguistic Minorities Project 1983).

In terms of the multilingual context, the Nuffield Inquiry informed us, for example, of the linguistic profile of schoolchildren in London:

307 different languages are spoken by London's schoolchildren, ranging from Abe (from the Ivory Coast) to Zulu.

(The Nuffield Languages Inquiry 2000)

However, whilst this, and other research (Baker and Eversley 2000; Reid et al. 1985) serves to highlight the wide range of linguistic diversity in the capital, questions still remain about other details such as the spread of languages both throughout the capital, and England, and the depth of individual linguistic competence (see Alladina and Edwards 1991). There is no accurate, up-to-date linguistic database and even the Census for England of 2001 contained no language information rubric (Office for National Statistics 2001). It is probably fair to say that we have no real idea of the numbers, range and depth of languages spoken in this country.

One could assume that targeting pupils within schools would be an appropriate way forward to obtain linguistic data. However, this may prove just as problematic, as supported by evidence from one of the case study schools sampled for the project. In the school, new pupils are asked to fill out a questionnaire containing a 'home language' element. However, as the rubrics are predetermined it is not uncommon for pupils to find their language not listed and so tick the 'other language' rubric. The result is a set of incomplete language statistics. Even when pupils provide details of languages spoken at home there is no indication as to the depth of competence.

To conclude this section, the notion of schools meeting their community needs may prove problematic for two reasons. Firstly, defining the concept of 'community'

may not be a straightforward task and, secondly, the linguistic audit of a multilingual community may prove impossible.

## **Section 2: The Project**

In this section the research project will be briefly explicated in terms of the method and sampling.

### **2.1: The Method**

In order to explore the phenomenon of the multilingual school and its community, an exploratory two-stage research model was designed based upon a strategy of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Qualitative data was collected and analysed with the assistance of the qualitative analysis software programme ATLAS, which enables interview transcripts (and images) to be coded for sorting and retrieval (Miles and Huberman 1994). On the basis of the emergence from the data of themes and salient areas of interest, follow-up data collection was carried out.

Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with key school respondents including representatives of the school management team, MFL staff, Minority Group Support staff, GCSE and A-level pupil focus groups, and key community respondents as sampled by the schools. Language lessons were observed conforming to a non-participatory strategy and documentary data was provided by the schools in the form of prospectuses and pupil statistics. A qualitative pupil-background language survey also comprised part of the data collection tools.

In addition to the interviews, language card exercises were conducted with all school respondents<sup>2</sup>. These served two purposes. Firstly, conducting the exercises would serve to help explore more of the implicit and explicit views of respondents vis-à-vis language provision in terms of hierarchy and status. Secondly, by means of taped ‘talkthrough’ whilst conducting the exercises, respondents were prompted by, and reflected on, the language structures as they were composed.

---

<sup>2</sup> The languages taught in the school, as identified by respondents, were written on cards and then these cards were sorted by the respondents into patterns to depict: 1) the languages structured as they are taught in the school (current language provision); 2) the languages as they should be structured (ideal language provision); and 3) with the addition of any salient community languages, again as identified by respondents, a language programme that would best serve the community (community provision). All results were photographed for qualitative data analysis.

## 2.2: The Sample

Two multilingual schools were sampled in England, one situated in the Midlands, the other in London. Both schools were large (1000 plus pupils) and multilingual in profile. The school in London has a very diverse linguistic profile with about 65 languages spoken by pupils, the one in the Midlands sees fewer languages spoken but proportionately more speakers of those languages. The research focus was on schools meeting their community needs rather than on specialist schools *per se*, therefore, in order to provide a contrast, the Midlands school is a comprehensive school, the London school a specialist language college.

Respondents were sampled ‘purposively’ (Cohen et al. 2000) to enable an in-depth study of language provision in both schools. The Heads of MFL in both schools became key respondents and, as such, were instrumental in sampling the other respondents (particularly the pupils) and organising interview appointments. For each school, the following respondents were selected: the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum), Head of MFL, the heads of each individual foreign language, a focus group of GCSE pupils and a focus group of A-Level pupils. The Head of the EAL department (or equivalent) for each school was also interviewed. In terms of community respondents, sampling proved more problematic. Key respondents and Headteachers were instrumental in gaining access to the communities. The following community respondents were sampled: the LEA MFL Advisers and General Advisers for each school; for the London school the Head of Saturday School and the Director of the Minority Assistance Project; and for the Midlands school the Director of Minority Group Support and a focus group of Minority Language Coordinators.

The sample is purposive (Cohen et al. 2000), that is, the schools were chosen for the study on the basis of their ‘typicality’. With this in mind, and the fact that the sample is small, the aim is not to generalise findings to the wider population *per se*. The study could be described as both ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ (Stake 1995). It is intrinsic in that I am interested in studying the particular case that is, broadly speaking, foreign language provision in the multilingual school and community context. It is instrumental because an understanding of the schools and communities in question may further our understanding, to some degree of the linguistic impact of the Language Colleges initiative.

### **Section 3: The Language Programmes**

The language provision of both schools was investigated by interview, language card exercise and lesson observations. In this section I will examine evidence elicited from the language card exercise supported by the relevant quotes from the interviews. As the total data corpus comprises over 60 images and 260,000 transcribed words, I have to be selective in an article of this length. Therefore, data is selected as ‘illustrative’, to underline a point or issue and no claims are made in terms of objectivity. To recap, respondents were required to portray three structures with language cards:

- 1) How the languages are structured in the school (current language provision).
- 2) How the languages should be structured (ideal language provision).
- 3) A programme that would best meet the needs of the catchment community (community provision).

I will now consider these three aspects of the exercise in more detail supported by the data from two respondents per school. For the Midlands school, the data from the Head of MFL and the Head of French is presented, and for the London school the data from the Head of Japanese and the GCSE focus group is discussed. As articulated above, the emphasis here is on illustration rather than a ‘like-for-like’ comparison or contrasting of the data.

#### **3.1: The Midlands School**

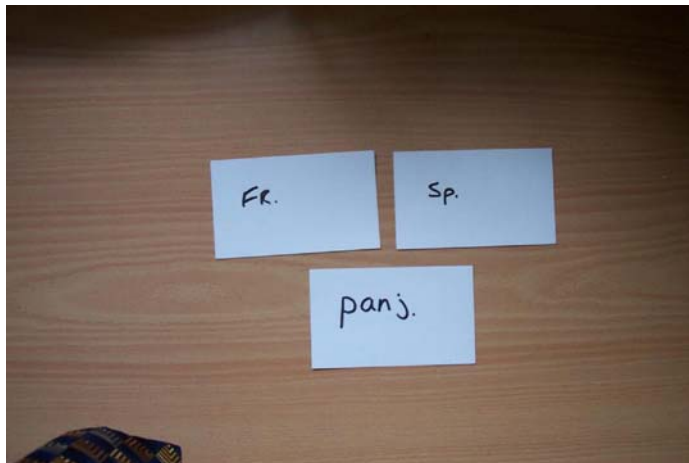
- 1) How the languages are structured in the school<sup>3</sup>.

The language programme in the school was based around French, Spanish and Panjabi<sup>4</sup> as three equal languages in Year 7. Panjabi is currently being phased out (an issue not pursued further here) and is currently available in Years 10 and 11. French and Spanish are currently offered in Year 7 with pupils opting for one of them and taking it through to Year 11. Respondents were asked to portray the current language provision using the language cards. The Head of Languages portrayed the programme as shown in Figure 1.

---

<sup>3</sup> Although both schools offer languages at Post-16, this paper will focus on Key Stages 3 and 4 only. The learning of languages beyond the period of compulsory schooling raises issues which cannot be addressed here.

**Figure 1: Head of MFL (current language provision)**



This representation portrays the structure of French and Spanish as equal first languages in the school with Panjabi clearly in an inferior position. In her ‘talkthrough’, the Head of MFL described the portrayal thus:

I think equal, the only reason I put French there before Spanish is because historically French always had more students. Now they are equal. (Head of MFL, Midlands School)

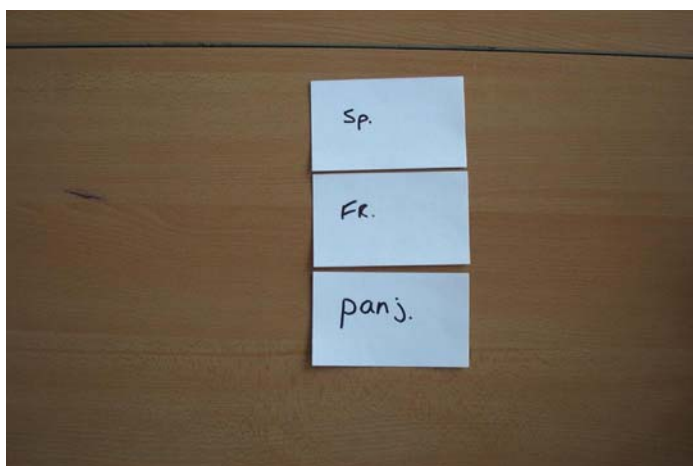
The term ‘equal’ in this quote refers to the status of the languages in the school. It is also interesting that Panjabi is not mentioned at this stage of the exercise.

The language structure portrayed by the Head of French for the same exercise is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Head of French (current language provision)**

---

<sup>4</sup> A key respondent advised on the spellings of community languages for this project.



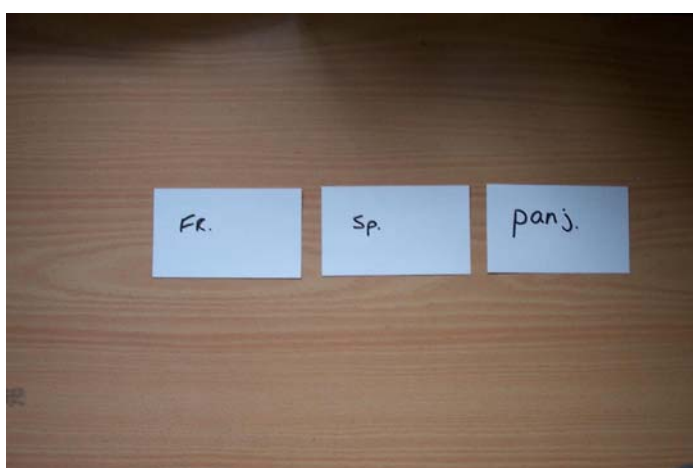
The structure in Figure 2 is based upon ‘language popularity’, and quite clearly puts Spanish in first place, followed by French with Panjabi last. The respondent described the structure as follows:

I am not sure but I reckon that more children do Spanish than French. It is either half and half or slightly more Spanish, then Panjabi. (Head of French, Midlands School)

2) How the languages should be structured.

Based upon the existing languages in the school, the Head of Languages thought that the language programme should be structured as presented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Head of MFL (ideal language provision)**

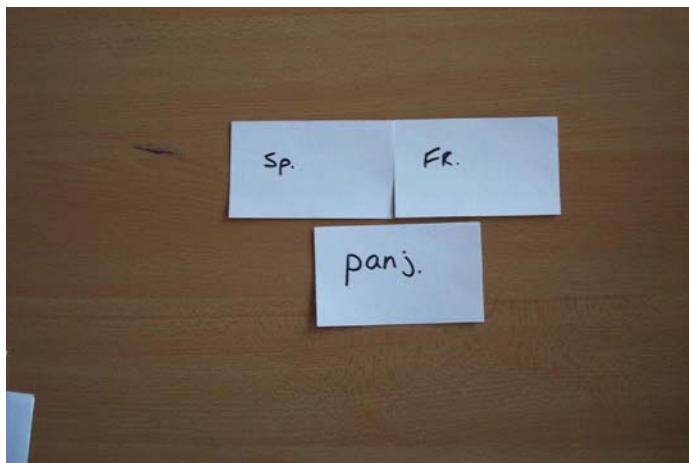


This is a programme based upon total equality of choice and opportunity for pupils and, as such, the order of the cards is not significant:

All equal, I think they should be all equal. (Head of MFL, Midlands School)

The Head of French also opted for a more horizontal programme, portrayed in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Head of French (ideal language provision)**



This was essentially based upon a perception that it is important to offer a European language and ‘nice’ to offer an Asian community language:

An even keel really. In terms of what you are offering and putting into the curriculum I think it is important that you are offering them European languages. It is nice that you can offer them an Asian one as well because some of these children come from Asian backgrounds but I think maybe it is more important to offer a European language. (Head of French, Midlands School)

This quote is interesting because it might introduce a ‘generational’ variable in that the Head of French is near to retirement and may have more entrenched views on language provision than, say, the younger Head of MFL. Also of interest is the

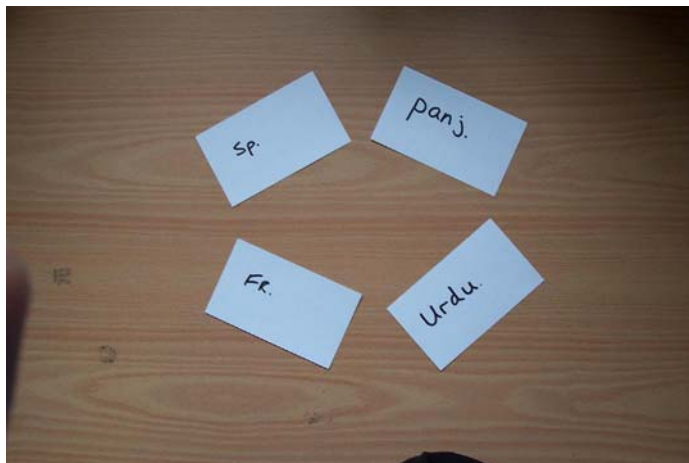
comment ‘some of these children come from Asian backgrounds’. In fact, around 40% of the children are of Asian background.

### 3) A catchment community language programme

Respondents were asked to add any salient languages spoken in the community and then to structure a programme that would best meet the needs and requirements of the catchment community.

The Head of Languages structured the programme represented in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Head of MFL (community provision)**

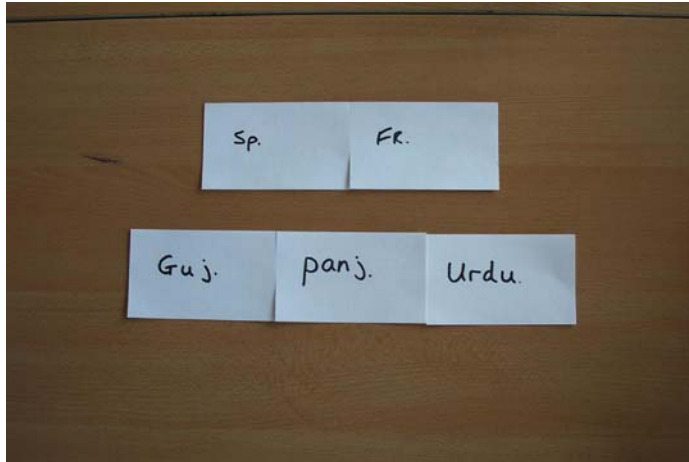


Urdu as a perceived salient community language has been added. The programme is based upon an equal choice of any two languages from four. The Head of MFL explained the programme thus:

I would like them to do two languages and it would be nice if they could do either French and Spanish, Spanish and Panjabi or French and Urdu. I would like them to be able to do two ideally. So they don't have to decide do I want to do a minority language, my language that my parents speak at home, or a European language. They could do a European language, which is important, but also a community language. (Head of MFL, Midlands School)

The Head of French depicted an appropriate community programme as presented in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Head of French (community provision)**



Here, Gujarati and Urdu have been added. According to this programme, pupils would take Spanish or French at Key Stage 3 (represented by the top line of cards) and then at Key Stage 4, pupils could opt for a community language or continue with the KS3 language (the bottom line of cards). The respondent explained the programme as follows:

It is difficult to know what they need, it depends what they want to do. I would offer the European languages, certainly at Key stage 3. And at Key Stage 4 you could get a bit more flexible and offer these [community] languages. (Head of French, Midlands School)

### **3.2: The London School**

1) How the languages are structured in the school.

The language programme at the language college was more diversified. In Year 7, pupils opt for French or Japanese. In Year 8 they opt for a second language from French or German. They can take their two languages through to GCSE or, in Year 10 take further options from Spanish or Gujarati. The Head of Japanese portrayed current language provision as outlined in Figure 7:

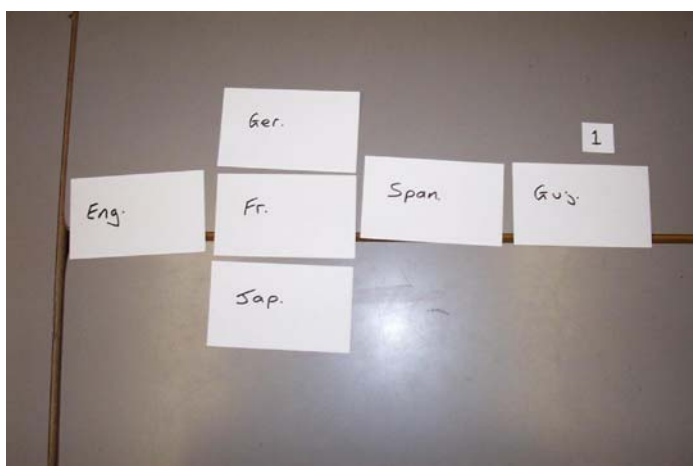
**Figure 7: Head of Japanese (current language provision)**



The top line represents KS3. French and Japanese are equal first languages in Year 7 (with number restrictions in Japanese) and pupils opt for one of these. In Year 8, German is added and pupils take two languages: pupils studying French may opt for German, pupils studying Japanese may opt for French or German (i.e. Japanese may only be taken from Year 7). At KS4 (the bottom line), pupils can carry on with their two foreign languages or they may drop one or both of them and opt for Gujarati and/or Spanish.

The GCSE pupils saw the programme as presented in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: GCSE Pupils (current language provision)**

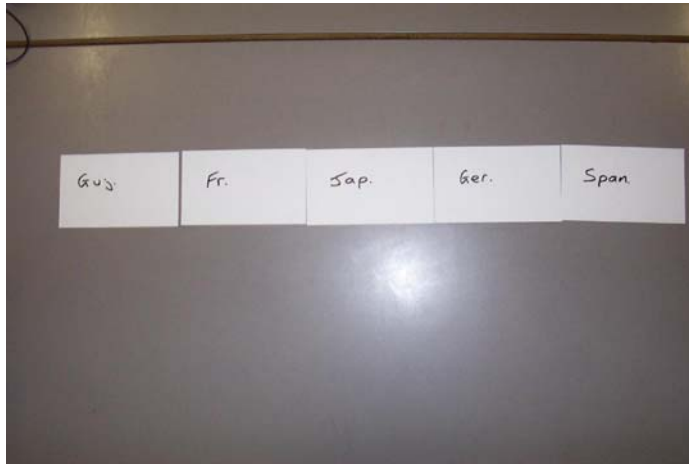


Interestingly, they put English at the front (read left to right) then positioned German, French and Japanese as the three KS3 languages. Spanish and Gujarati were added in KS4, with Spanish the more salient of the two.

2) How the languages should be structured.

The Head of Japanese was unequivocal in her proposed structure of 'all equal' as portrayed in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Head of Japanese (ideal language provision)**

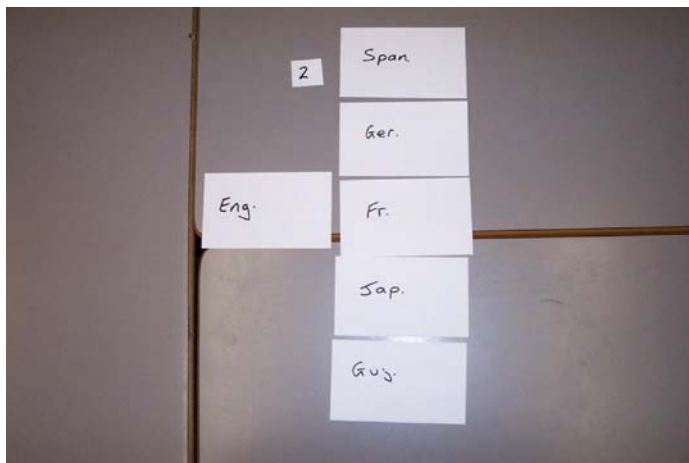


In this programme, all of the languages would be offered equally to all pupils. There is no significance to the order of the cards:

Oh, I would put them all the same, absolutely. They should all be offered these choices. They should all be there equally, and any other language that we could possibly offer. (Head of Japanese, London School)

The GCSE pupils mirrored this approach in their structure represented in Figure 10.

**Figure 10: GCSE Pupils (ideal language provision)**



Here, the pupils would do English as a main language and then opt equally for their other languages. Again, there is no significance to the positions of the language cards in the column:

Boy: Yeah, they should all be equal

Girl: I think in an ideal world everyone should have the opportunity to learn a language they want.

Boy: I think we should be able to choose out of all the languages to take them up to a GCSE.

Girl: If you have a choice to take them all at the same time you are going to always be equal instead of like benefiting in one subject then another because where they have got it spread out you pick up one subject in Year 8 and then another in Year 9 and Year 10, it is confusing.

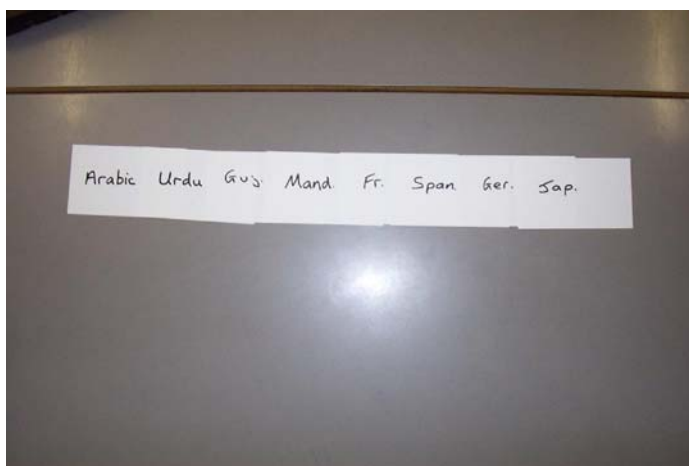
Girl: I think we should have the choice from the very beginning what we want to do.  
(GCSE Focus group, London School)

The notion of equality is striking in this exercise conducted by the GCSE Focus Group. It is also interesting how English has been included into the programme of FL provision, perhaps underlining the multiple viewpoints of a multilingual group.

### 3) A catchment community language programme

The Head of Japanese would expand the choice of languages in the school and proposed the programme in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Head of Japanese (community language provision)**

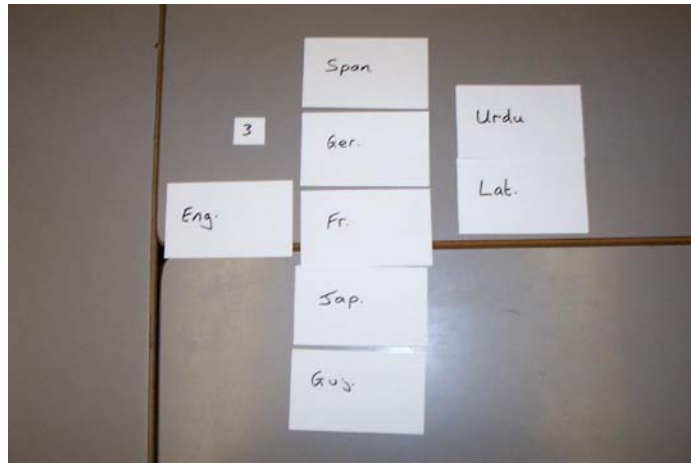


For this respondent, Arabic, Urdu and Mandarin would be incorporated into a programme based upon equal choice:

I would have them all on the same level, a choice. (Head of Japanese, London School)

The GCSE pupils proposed the programme of provision outlined in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: GCSE Pupils (community language provision)**



This is similar to how they would like to see the current language provision structured in the school, with the addition of Urdu and Latin. Urdu is perceived as a salient community language, Latin is in demand for other reasons:

Girl: Yes. Latin. Just because I think, because it is a quite useful language and I know there are a few other schools that do it and it may be beneficial and useful.

Girl: It seems interesting.

Boy: I think Urdu because there are a lot of speakers.

Girl: Maybe Latin but that is just any because I know that the other schools may have done it and they found it useful.

Girl: Latin

Boy: The same. Urdu and Latin.

(GCSE Focus Group, London School)

This group of pupils has again introduced an interesting point into the discussion. They seem unaware that Latin is not classified as a modern foreign language and would see it introduced as an equal option in their hypothetical community programme.

### **3.3: Conclusions**

What can be concluded from the data presented in this section? Firstly, it must be stressed that this is a small sample of a much larger data corpus. Therefore, any conclusions made here are, at best, tentative. That said, I would like to suggest the following observations based upon the data above.

#### 1) How the languages are structured in the school:

Both schools provide an essentially traditional language model. French is at or near the top of a relatively vertical language hierarchy. Choice is limited in Year 7 to one from two languages. The Midlands school offers French or Spanish (with Panjabi a third option until three years ago). The London school, as a specialist language college, offers pupils the choice between French or Japanese in Year 7, something that could be perceived as different and exotic. There is then additional language choice at the end of Year 9 with the inclusion of Spanish and Gujarati.

#### 2) How the languages should be structured:

The respondents in both schools tended towards more horizontally structured programmes with the emphasis on equality and choice. There is a notion that no single language should dominate in terms of status, although European languages are considered a priority by one respondent in particular, and English would be recognised as important for all pupils.

#### 3) A Community Language Programme

If one assumes that schools, such as those at the centre of this investigation, are already catering for the salient linguistic needs of their communities, then the results of activity three of the language card exercise should not differ significantly from the first part of the exercise. However, this was not the case.

There was evidence that further languages would be included in programmes designed to meet the needs and requirements of the respective catchment

communities. These languages would be added in to meet various demands. Urdu and Arabic, for example, are languages with a specific cultural and religious resonance. Latin could be perceived as a language for which there is increased demand – a demand seldom met by maintained secondary schools. Mandarin could increase in importance as China emerges as a major economic market. Above all, one could conclude that these widened programmes of language provision would send out a positive linguistic message to the respective communities.

There are two further language issues that arise from the data. Firstly, the inclusion of English into a programme of MFL raises questions about the dichotomous nature of English and MFL in schools. Secondly, the adjective ‘foreign’ in MFL may be a misnomer for some pupils where languages such as Panjabi, Gujarati and Urdu are concerned.

#### **Section 4: General Conclusion**

One fundamental aim of the specialist schools initiative is for schools to meet the needs and requirements of their communities (Department for Education and Skills 2001). What I have attempted to argue in this paper is that, in order for any individual school to achieve such an aim, the community in question must first be identified. Whether the task is approached from a philosophical, sociological or, indeed, a pragmatic viewpoint, it is a highly problematic undertaking. If the community can be adequately identified, then the linguistic auditing of that community from the perspective of the language college may prove equally contentious.

Focusing on language in particular, I would like to return to the three key questions posed in the introduction and attempt to provide some answers:

*How could a school possibly meet the linguistic needs and requirements of a multilingual community?*

Discussion and evidence in this paper would suggest that any school addressing this question would need to compile accurate data on the linguistic profile of the catchment community. However, there may be no correlation between the languages spoken in a community and the community’s preference for languages taught in its schools. Furthermore, if 65 languages are spoken in a community it is also unrealistic to expect a school to provide for them all. That said, there may be

some languages that are salient in terms of numbers of speakers, and not provided for elsewhere. It is fair to assume that the provision of a diversified language programme based upon relevance to salient community need may go some way towards answering the question.

*How does a school define the concept of community and identify a community's needs?*

The key must be in defining the concept of community. Discussion in this paper would suggest that this is a problematic area which needs to be unpicked at different levels and from different theoretical standpoints before a community can be identified. What is clear is that no two communities are identical; therefore, one school's community plan may not be interchangeable with another school's context. This implies that a school needs to focus on its own plan in its local context. Once an agreed definition of the 'community' is reached by the school, the community can then be audited to begin to research needs and requirements. One appropriate way forward may be to work from the pupils outwards; that is, to thoroughly audit pupils and, through the pupils their families.

*What programmes of language provision would be in place or need to be in place to meet various linguistic needs?*

The language programmes operated in the two case study schools were quite traditional in offering French plus other languages in a fairly vertical structure. Language choice was available in Year 7 in both schools, with extra choice at the end of Year 9 in the language college. Respondents would have preferred to see the two language programmes structured 'horizontally'; that is, a wide range of languages with more choice lower down the school. In conceptualising programmes that would best meet community needs, the horizontal structure was also a key feature with extra languages, usually salient community languages, added to the programmes.

I would conclude from this that language programmes that are vertically structured may not be appropriate in all contexts. Horizontally structured language programmes may be more appropriate in some contexts. One can also make a strong case for the inclusion of salient community languages in language programmes for schools operating in the multilingual context.

Evidence from the study, then, suggests that horizontally structured language programmes based upon choice, particularly lower down the school, and equality, with a relevance to the community may be an appropriate way forward for the schools at the centre of this investigation. If I cannot generalise these findings to the wider population due to the nature of the investigation and the size of the sample then I can still suggest that they will be of interest to policy-makers and practitioners working within similar contexts.

### **Bibliography**

- Alladina, S., & Edwards, V. (1991). *Multilingualism in the British Isles*. London: Longman. [2 Volumes].
- Baker, P., & Eversley, J. (2000). *Multilingual Capital: The languages of London's schoolchildren and their relevance to economic, social and educational policies*. London: Battlebridge Publications.
- Barnes, J., A (1954). Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish. *Human Relations*, VII:1.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Connolly, W., E (1983). *The Terms of Political Discourse*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Department for Education and Employment (2000). *Language Colleges: A Guide for Schools*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Skills (2001). *Specialist Schools Programme: Language Colleges Applications A guide for Schools*.
- Etzioni, A. (1993). *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda*. New York: Crown Publishers Inc.
- Filmer-Sankey, C. (1989). The Basis of Choice. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Which Language? Diversification and the National Curriculum*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- (1993). OXPROD: A Summative Account. *Language Learning Journal*, 7.
- Frazer, E. (1999). *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine.
- Hillery, G., A. Jr. (1955). Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement. *Rural Sociology*, 20:1-4.
- Linguistic Minorities Project (1983). *Linguistic Minorities in England. A Report for the Department of Education and Science*. London: University of London, Institute of Education.
- Lynd, R. S. (1929). *Middletown. A Study in Contemporary American Culture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- MacIntyre, A. (1985). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London: Duckworth.
- McCrorry, D. (1990). Diversification: What Does It Mean? *Language Learning Journal*, 2.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Office for National Statistics (2001). *England Household Form*: Accessed from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/pdfs/H1.pdf>.
- Phillips, D. (1987). OXPROD-An Oxford Research Project on Diversification of First Foreign Language Teaching. *British Journal of Language Teaching*, 25:1.
- Phillips, D., & Filmer-Sankey, C. (1989). Vive la Difference?: Some Problems in Investigating Diversification of First Foreign Language Provision in Schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 15:3.
- (1993). *Diversification in Modern Language Teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Plant, R. (1978). Community: Concept, Conception, and Ideology. *Politics and Society*, 8:1.
- Poplin, D. E. (1979). *Communities: A Survey of Theories and Methods of Research*. New York: Macmillan.
- Reid, E., Smith, G., & Morawska, A. (1985). *Languages in London*. London: University of London, Institute of Education.
- Sandel, M., J (1998). *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. London: Sage.
- The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000). *Languages: The Next Generation. The final report and recommendations of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry*. London: The Nuffield Foundation.

- Thompson, D., (Ed.), (1995). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*.-9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Warner, W. L. (1963). *Yankee City*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Whyte, W. F. (1955). *Street Corner Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Williams, R. (1985). *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. London: Flamingo.