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Creating a multilingual classroom environment for monolingual and multilingual children in Scotland

► **About the authors** ► **Key words**

Extensive evidence suggests that many benefits arise from being bi- or multi-lingual. It is further suggested that monolingual children in the classroom may also benefit from this, as they can experience insight into other cultures. However, even though these are justified claims, there is little research in this area to prove the points made. The current ethnographic study aims to find out what impact a multilingual environment has on both mono- and multilingual children and how teachers are able to create such an environment with simple resources. Within the context of a Storyline and a short topic, a Scottish P5 class explored different cultures and languages, in many cases guided by their bilingual peers. The researcher worked with the children on this project and at the same time observed them throughout the day. The findings of the observations seem to support the claim that both mono- and multilingual children benefit from an environment that embraces different languages and enables the children to explore these. Overall, the children showed increasing interest in other languages and a more positive attitude towards other cultures. In addition to this, in some cases the bilingual children became more integrated in the class.

**Að skapa fjöltyngt umhverfi í kennslustofunni
fyrir eintyngd og fjöltyngd börn í Skotlandi**

► **Um höfunda** ► **Efnisorð**

Ítarlegar rannsóknarniðurstöður sýna að margskonar ávinningur hlýst af því að vera tví- eða margtyngdur. Einnig bendir margt til þess að eintyngd börn njóti ávinnings af fjöltyngi í skólastofunni þar sem þau fá þá innsýn í aðra menningu. En þó að slíkar staðhæfingar geti átt við rök að styðjast er lítið um rannsóknar-niðurstöður sem staðfesta það. Nýlegar etnografískar rannsóknir leitast við að

skoða hvaða áhrif fjöltyngt umhverfi hefur á bæði eintyngd og fjöltyngd börn og hvernig kennurum tekst að skapa slíkt umhverfi með einföldum úrræðum. Skoskur P5-bekkur kannaði ólíka menningu og tungumál með aðferðum sögu-aðferðarinnar, en hún byggir á samvinnu nemenda og því fór námið í mörgum tilvikum fram undir handleiðslu tvítyngdra jafnaldra. Rannsakandi vann að verkefninu með börnunum um leið og hann rannsakaði hvernig til tókst. Niður-stöður rannsóknarinnar virðast styðja þá staðhæfingu að bæði ein- og fjöltyngd börn njóti góðs af því að vera í umhverfi þar sem ólíkum tungumálum er vel tekið og rými skapað til að börnin geti kynnt sér þau. Almennt séð, sýndu börn-in aukinn áhuga á öðrum tungumálum og jákvæðara viðhorf gagnvart annarri menningu. Í sumum tilvikunum aðlöguðust tvítyngd börn bekknum betur eftir verkefnið.

Aims

This project was conducted by a bilingual, fourth-year undergraduate student during her final placement in a Scottish primary 3 classroom. The aim was to research whether a multilingual classroom environment has an effect on children, and if so, in what way. To do so, I first review bi- and multilingualism theory to determine whether it can be applied to multilingual environments.

In the Scottish educational context, *bi-* and *multilingualism* means that a person uses two or more languages in their everyday life (Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), 2005); this article uses the same definition. Therefore, *monolingual* describes a person who only uses one language in their daily life, which in this case is English. There are many bene-fits of being bilingual (Baker, 2011), as will be discussed in the literature review. I will explore whether some of these benefits could also be triggered by a multilingual environ-ment, as opposed to being able to speak a different language – a multilingual environ-ment meaning being surrounded by many different languages and exploring them. I will therefore try to create a multilingual environment in a mainstream classroom where the medium of instruction is English.

I explored how bilingualism could be used as a resource, examining how bilingual children and their monolingual peers reacted when invited to share their home language as part of daily classroom life. There is extensive research on the benefits of such language sharing for bilingual children (Baker, 2011) but little regarding the effects on monolingual children. Therefore, I considered it interesting to discover more about such language sharing.

Next, I focussed on how a teacher could create a multilingual environment. Many studies examining multilingual environments include teachers who speak the same language as their students (e.g. Dalton-Puffera & Nikulab, 2014; Merisuo-Storm, 2007) or create big projects necessitating funding or the involvement of other agencies (e.g. Ulich & Ober-huemer, 1997; Young & Hélot, 2008). However, for the results of this study to be more useful for practitioners, I tried to create a multilingual environment with relatively few resources, to find a way that is accessible to most teachers.

Justification

In the media, there is a great deal of coverage about "problem schools" which in most cases have many bilingual pupils (e.g. Moult, 2007). This coverage may contribute to the negative connotations of multilingual classrooms in the public eye. However, it has to be noted that this is a complex topic, as images of linguistic variety in schools are influenced by an intersectionality of social class, religion and ethnicity (Lanehart, 2009). In addition, it is often believed that learning one language will suppress or even replace the first one.

If practitioners adopt this view it could lead to only the majority language being developed, as it is seen as more beneficial, which might lead to subtractive bilingualism (Baker, 2011). However, according to Cummins' (1982) theory of a Common Underlying Proficiency, languages are connected through the same central operating system, even though they may have different surface features. This would allow teachers to enable children to relish all their languages within the classroom because they acknowledge that there is a central operating system that they can develop in both languages.

During the last decades, the topic of bilingualism has gained higher importance (Lo Bianco, 2001). Political changes and increased mobility have changed the cultural make-up of Scottish classrooms, something that practitioners and policy-makers need to address. In 2001, Lo Bianco criticises the fact that Scottish language policies do not regard bilingualism as a resource but as a problem. He argues that seeing bilingualism as a problem often leads to an eradicating attitude. Instead, language should be regarded as a social, intellectual and cultural resource that can be an asset for a country.

Unfortunately, little has changed since then. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 also includes support for bilingual pupils. Whilst some bilingual children may need additional support to access the curriculum, the benefits of bilingualism are somewhat overlooked, thus creating a negative stigma.

In 2011, recommendations regarding the teaching of two additional languages starting in primary school were published in Scotland (the 1+2 approach, Scottish Government Languages Working Group), supporting the belief that bilingualism has many advantages. Despite this, the report focuses mostly on native English-speakers and how they should learn additional languages while very briefly touching on the situation of children who already speak a language other than English.

Research overwhelmingly suggests that using all their linguistic competences in the classroom helps bilingual children (Cummins, 2003). Nevertheless, many practitioners are wary of this finding (Smyth, 2003) and legislation does not take it into account. Proving that bilingualism benefits all children – without using many resources – could alter society's view. A new, positive and appreciative view would be needed to evoke political change and lead to legislation that accounts for recent research and supports bilingualism.

Literature review

The following section will outline the current research on bi- and multilingualism and its effects as well as the public and political situation in Scotland regarding the treatment of bilingual children. Baker (2011) indicates that many parents and professionals have the misconception that learning an additional language will hinder or replace the first language. Resulting from such a belief of a Separate Underlying Proficiency, practitioners often only support their bilingual pupils' development in the language of the classroom as they regard this as more important to their overall development. If children are not encouraged to use their home language, or if they feel that there is a negative depiction of their home culture, they might lose their competence in their first language, which could lead to subtractive bilingualism (Baker, 2011).

However, according to Cummins' (1982) model of Common Underlying Proficiency, children are more than able to live with two or more languages, and bilinguals will be able to transfer concepts and skills that they have learned from one language to the other. Furthermore, there are also cognitive benefits that arise from being bilingual, as

will be explained later. However, as will be seen, in order to benefit from bilingualism, both languages need to be developed (Cummins, 1976).

Despite research evidence, the view of a Separate Underlying Proficiency is to some extent still evident in Scottish legislation and policies today. Smyth (2003) highlights that even though "[t]here is no language policy in the UK which states explicitly that home languages other than English should be eradicated..." there is also no "...official policy document relating to the promotion of home languages" (p. 5). As Lo Bianco (2001) criticises, the many potential benefits that could come from regarding and accessing bilingualism as a resource are still not recognised, as it is still seen as a problem that needs to be overcome.

In Scotland, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act, 2004, lists bilingualism under the umbrella of additional support needs, assuming that all children might need additional support at some point to access the curriculum. Even though it is important that the entitlement of additional support to bilingual children is recognised – classing bilingualism as an additional support need contributes to the negative view that many people still have, linking to Lo Bianco's (2001) criticism. The document *Learning in 2(+) Languages* (LTS, 2005), gives an overview of research, theory and good practice regarding the education of bilingual pupils and highlights the importance of valuing children's cultural capital. The *1+2 Approach*, which is currently being piloted (SCILT – Scotland's National Centre for Languages, 2012), suggests that all children should learn two additional languages, starting in primary school (Scottish Government Languages Working Group, 2011). Even though the authors support their argument by referring to the many benefits of bilingualism, the recommendations for the place of bilingual pupils within this framework are rather vague. It is suggested that children should be supported in their development of their mother tongue and that schools should take community languages into account when planning for the languages that are being taught, but currently there is little guidance on how this should be done.

Referring back to Lo Bianco's (2001) critique of seeing bilingualism as a problem, it is evident that Scottish legislation and policies are very much concerned with the needs of bilingual pupils and tend to disregard the potential benefits for all children. Learning and Teaching Scotland (2006) states that bilingual pupils can be an asset to the whole school. Apart from gaining personal benefits through sharing their home language, the suggested is made that monolingual children will be enabled to explore and develop an appreciation for different languages and cultures. Similarly, CILT – The National Centre for Languages, (2006) states that successful language learning requires the learner to engage with both the language and those who speak it. Additionally, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted, 2005) suggests that it enhances the experience of the whole class if teachers build on pupils' cultural back-ground. However, this view is not yet supported by relevant legislation.

According to Baker (2011), possible linguistic benefits of bilingualism include meta-linguistic awareness – an awareness of the functions of language an ability to reflect on them. For example, bilingual children often think more creatively than their peers because they know that words are not attached to their meanings and that there are different names for the same thing; they can see the world from two different perspectives and they can mix them together and form a new interpretation (LTS, 2005). This links closely to the social benefits of bilingualism, as children also have access to two or more cultures, their traditions and experiences (Baker, n.d.). As a result, bilinguals often have a greater acceptance of cultural diversity. Bialystok, Craik, Green, and Gollan (2009), argue that bilingualism also has cognitive advantages; since the two languages are constantly

active, bilinguals learn to filter unwanted information and focus on the relevant, benefiting them in all areas of the curriculum and beyond. In addition, Cenoz (2003) suggests that bilinguals have an advantage in learning additional languages in comparison to monolinguals, due to benefits such as cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness. Lastly, children will take pride in being able to switch between two languages, which will raise their self-esteem (Baker, n.d.). However, it is suggested that these benefits are dependent on the bilingual's development in both languages. According to the Threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 1976), children need to be balanced bilinguals in order to experience any benefits.

It is proposed by Learning and Teaching Scotland (2005) that children can be at various stages of bilingualism, with stage one starting the first day that children enter a classroom or another environment in which they are surrounded by materials in another language and accept this as part of their daily life. If the first stage of bilingualism does not require the child to fully understand the language, it would be possible for teachers to create such a situation for all children in the class by surrounding them with different languages and enabling them to explore them. The question that derives from this, and which is not sufficiently researched yet, is whether some of the benefits of bilingualism could also be achieved for monolingual children, if triggered through a multilingual environment as proposed by Learning and Teaching Scotland (2006). Arguably, they will probably not develop an additional language to fluency, which means that, according to the threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 1976), they will probably not reach any of the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. However, it could be argued that engaging with different languages and cultures might stimulate their attitudes towards cultural and linguistic diversity and might widen their horizon, whilst increasing their confidence by learning bits of other languages. These possible outcomes would support the stated aims of the Scottish Curriculum (Scottish Executive, 2009), in developing confident individuals, responsible and global citizens, and preparing children for a multicultural world.

Aukrust and Rydland (2009) conducted a study to identify whether, and if so, how, pre-school and first grade pupils in Norway talk about ethnicity. They found that the children naturally had ideas about ethnicity and regularly included ideas about the different ethnical backgrounds and languages of their peers into their conversations and during play. The researchers concluded that the children saw ethnicity as an interesting, though sensitive topic. They talked about ethnic diversity and languages for various reasons, within humorous situations and to engage others in an interesting conversation, to mock others but also to form alliances or in/exclude other children, particularly after disputes.

Ata, Bastian, and Lusher (2009) studied the impact of intergroup contact on social distance, which can be defined as "feelings of unwillingness among members of a group to accept or approve a given degree of intimacy in interaction with a member of an out-group" (Williams, 1964, p. 29). They found that contact with members from another group reduces negative attitudes towards this group. This is not surprising, as contact can also reduce prejudices, and familiarity might lead to liking differences (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The researchers highlight that the context in which this contact is happening plays an important part and suggest that a supportive environment, both at home and in school, can have a positive effect on social distance. According to Hughes (2007), a school ethos that supports the building of intergroup relationships is crucial. Hughes finds that a bilingual environment can have a positive effect on children's attitudes towards other groups. Further, language and culture are intrinsically connected (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, n.d.), as language is part of cultural diversity, not only as a means of communication but also as a way of expressing culture and cultural affiliation (Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011). Therefore, the suggestion could be made that engag-

ing with different languages might have a similar effect as it means that children will also become more familiar with other cultures.

Merisuo-Storm (2007) researched further effects of bilingual education with regards to children's attitudes towards language learning. It was found that pupils in bilingual classrooms had more positive attitudes towards foreign languages in comparison to their peers in monolingual environments. Overall, these children were more interested in and willing to learn other languages. These findings raise the question whether exploring other languages, in contrast to fully speaking them, might produce similar results.

One example of successful multilingual classroom practice, as well as an effective home-school partnership, is the Didenheim project (Young & Hélot, 2008): The teachers and parents at a French school worked together in order to introduce the children to different cultures and languages, combining their cultural and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers and parents valued each other and this demonstrated to the children that their teachers were taking a real interest in their culture since they were learning alongside them. Over-all, mono- and multilingual children gained an insight into the different cultures of their peers and the researchers reported an improved class ethos as everyone felt included and welcome. Similiarly, the series *medien interKulturell* (Ulich & Oberhuemer, 1991), aimed to bring traditional Turkish tales into German classrooms by recording them on audio-cassettes with German and Turkish speakers. The German speaker would reveal just enough for the German children to understand the Turkish part of the dialogue. While the German children gained insight and appreciation of the Turkish language and culture, the Turkish children were proud to hear their home language being part of school life and could make use of their linguistic skills (Ulich & Oberhuemer, 1997). Fundamentally, both languages played an equally valued part – enriching the children's learning. Whilst these projects showed positive results and were beneficial to both mono- and bilingual children, it seems they would be challenging to recreate for standard classroom practice. They require intensive involvement from other parties (Young & Hélot, 2008), special resources (Ulich & Oberhuemer, 1997) or often staff with foreign language skills (Merisuo-Storm, 2007). The question is how teachers can create such a multilingual environment with few resources. Since, crucially, bilingual children have to develop both languages (Cummins, 1976) and their language and culture have to be valued in the classroom (Cummins & Early, 2011), one idea might be to ask bilingual pupils to share their home language, as they arguably have more knowledge of this. In turn, monolingual children will get an insight into a different culture.

Baker (2006, p. 298) states that "a language divorced from a culture is like a body without a soul" and suggests the importance of learning about the cultures associated with different languages. Moreover, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) (2006) clarifies that support for bilingual pupils should include tasks and resources that represent diversity and question prejudices. An inclusive class topic with a focus on ethnicity and different countries – exploring cultures and languages, could be used as a starting point. As proposed by Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001), children have ideas about ethnical concepts from an early age but tend to hide these from adults, as they sense it is a sensitive issue (Pollock, 2004). However, though adults may be cautious to talk about the differences between people and cultures, children still get ideas from society. It could be argued that teachers need to discuss these topics in school so that children are not left to deal with them by themselves and are able to actively explore concepts and ideas and build their own opinions (Malakolunthu, 2010). Overall, there is evidence that multicultural education diminishes children's prejudices and raises their tolerance towards people from different cultures (Bernstein, Schindler-Zimmerman, Werner-Wilson, & Vosburg, 2000).

Sanders and Downer (2012) further found that pupils' acceptance of diversity is influenced by many different factors within the classroom, including materials and activities. They suggest that a cultural mismatch between children and teacher can promote acceptance of diversity, simply because diversity is more visual and becomes almost automatically a topic. The authors also propose that a positive emotional climate and approaches that encourage cross-cultural exchange are crucial.

From this, it seems that all teachers should be able to create a multicultural and multilingual environment in their classrooms. Although it might help for them to be bilingual or from a different culture than the pupils, it might be more important for the teacher to create an ethos that is supportive of and values diversity while giving children the opportunity to explore different cultures and languages.

Certain areas of exploration have developed from my review of the literature. First of all, I want to ascertain whether there are any effects of a multilingual environment on mono-and multilingual children, as reported by some of the researchers mentioned in the literature review (e.g. Ulich & Oberhuemer, 1997; Young & Hélot, 2008), and if so, what these are. Relating to this, I want to research whether some of the discussed benefits of bilingualism could also be triggered by a multilingual environment, for example, whether children will experience any social benefits, as suggested by Learning and Teaching Scotland (2006). As for the practical side of the study, I want to examine how a teacher can create this multilingual environment with few resources. For example, for this project, I will try to use materials that are freely accessible through the internet or the library and ask children to contribute their own knowledge and artefacts that they might have at home. I recognise that these are emerging questions that I want to start exploring in this project, but I would like to conduct further research in the future. This will further continue to inform my practice as a teacher.

Research design

The empirical research was conducted in a P5 class in Glasgow, consisting of 31 children, five of whom were bilingual, but all fluent in English (none had EAL support). The researcher stayed in the class over a period of ten weeks. To address the issues identified above, the research took the form of an ethnographic study. As a final year student teacher on placement, I had considerable whole-class responsibility. I participated in classroom life by teaching, while watching, listening and asking questions to gather all obtainable data that would relate to the research questions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Through this, I was able to observe and interact with the children in their natural environment rather than in an artificially created experimental situation.

The ethnography was conducted within the context of a storyline approach. As proposed by Harkness (2007), a storyline uses the structure and components of a story within which the children discover the environment, their characters and the plot through different activities from various curricular areas. Thus, the children developed their own characters and families from different cultural backgrounds, in many cases guided by the bilingual children. All these families lived together in the same house, and through different tasks the children collected information about the country, culture and language of their family and shared this with the others. The class also worked on a short topic about the Chinese New Year to prepare for an assembly, exploring Chinese stories, dance, art, music and language. This was strongly supported by a Chinese pupil in the class. In addition to specific multilingual teaching initiatives, I tried to integrate different languages throughout the day, for example when taking the register. For this, I used my knowledge of German, as my mother tongue, as well as other languages that I knew

somewhat. I also built on the children's previous knowledge and invited them to share this with the class.

Working with people meant that ethical and social principles had to be considered (Mills, 2011). I made sure that, particularly the bilingual children who contributed their knowledge and experience, did only whatever they felt comfortable with, through regular conversations about their attitudes and feelings towards this activity. I made it clear to the children that they were invited to share their culture, language and knowledge in accordance with what they felt good with.

Historically, ethnographies were conducted to study other cultures (Walford, 2008). Since, culture and language cannot be separated (Baker, 2011), ethnography complements the topic of research, investigating how children engage with different cultures and languages. Walford (2008) further proposes that ethnographies are highly suitable for research within educational settings since there are similarities between how a researcher conducts ethnography and how children learn. Returning to the aspect of culture, the parallel here is that children often experience different cultures at home and in school; by creating an ethnography, researchers go through a similar process of getting to know a new (school) culture and can understand this much better by being alien to it themselves. Using ethnography as a method of research permitted greater flexibility as there are no fixed methods or questions, as opposed to questionnaires or the collection of quantitative data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Instead, I was able to employ a range of methods that suited the research questions and note down any relevant findings. Possible limitations of an ethnographic study are issues surrounding trustworthiness, as I am the only instrument and involved with the participants at the same time (Guba, 1981). Similarly, researchers might be biased and interpret observations in line with preconceived views. For this study, the aim therefore was to be as neutral and non-judgmental as possible and to report, in my field notes, what objectively happened rather than offer an interpretation of it (Delamont, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The interpretation and analysis happened in the next stage, as will be explained later. Of course, this is accounted for from the ethnographer's perception. As Walford (2008) highlights, the advantage of using the researcher as the instrument is that they have a wealth of knowledge about theory and are able to build on this for interpretations, something that a questionnaire cannot do. In addition, even though I selected and interpreted the data, ethnography is not heavily centred on my view, but takes the participants' perspectives into account, through my interactions and observations – thus reflecting a wider picture.

Another limitation about the current study is that it might be difficult to generalise any findings, as the research was undertaken with a small group and, as a characteristic of ethnographic research, dependent on the context of the class (Guba, 1981). However, working with a small group allows for a more in-depth study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and the results provide answers to the research questions within this classroom setting and therefore may be transferrable to similar contexts (Guba, 1981).

Data collection

Data were collected through two methods. First, I took field notes during daily observations, mostly as an *active participant observer,* teaching at the same time but occasionally as a *privileged, active observer*, during breaks or golden time (Mills, 2011). Researching this project as a student teacher brought some limitations. It was not always possible to note down all relevant observations immediately during teaching time. To get the most accurate evidence, notes were made as soon as possible after an event, at least once daily. Occasionally photos were also taken in order to capture displays or other pieces of children's work, to add to the data for subsequent analysis. Considering the type of evi-

dence to record, Delamont (2008) suggests recording everything that is happening. Due to time restrictions, this was narrowed down to language- or culture-related incidents and conversations once a first description of the classroom setting had been done. To ensure high objectivity, notes were descriptive (Guba, 1981). This also means that the context, and through it the transferability of the results to similar contexts, are both clear. However, potentially not all relevant events were recorded due to simultaneous observing and teaching. The other method applied was conducting informal ethnographic interviews. The unstructured nature of these conversations meant that I could react spontaneously to events as they happened and inquire directly about these new issues (Mills, 2011).

Of the 31 children in the class, five were bilingual and two others had backgrounds other than Scottish. Since I worked with the children and observed them in the classroom, anonymity is not possible, but all names have been abbreviated in order to ensure confidentiality (Mills, 2011).

- Two children (ZM and ZR; boy and girl) whose families are from Pakistan and speak Arabic, ZM also Punjabi, Urdu and Farsi; both are Muslim.

- Two girls (cousins, P and KR) whose family is from India and say they speak "Indian" (after further investigation, I now know they speak Punjabi at home); both are Sikhs.

- One girl (LN) whose family is Chinese and speaks Mandarin (she also learned Spanish at her old school); she is a Buddhist.

- R is from England.

- JE's father is from Somalia.

All bilingual children were fluent in English, most of them sounding Glaswegian and/or having a very high standard of writing; none of them get EAL support. Not all children's backgrounds are explained above and other abbreviations used later in the article refer to monolingual children born in Scotland.

The class teacher spoke English, French and Italian and was particularly enthusiastic about teaching French, including it wherever possible (e.g. for the register), and included games in her lessons. As a result, the children looked forward to the French lessons.

Analysis

The field notes were colour-coded, organised into two, sometimes overlapping, categories relating to the two research questions (Walliman, 2006). Even though the field notes include mostly observations, some interpretations made at the time of recording are marked with arrows. In the second-level coding process, verbal codes according to the themes of the evidence were added. A list of the verbal codes was developed to ensure traceability. Subsequently, it became apparent that patterns and key themes were developing into overarching categories that would lead the discussion. To confirm the categories and the analysis, a part of the text was cross-coded by another student teacher (Thomas, 2006), confirming my results.

Table 1 – List of codes		
Code	**Meaning**	**Category**
Children's Attitude+	The children display a positive attitude towards languages and other cultures	Attitude
Children's Attitude-	The children display a negative attitude towards languages and other cultures	
Children's Attitude B	The attitude of the bilingual children towards the multilingual environment	
Children's Interest	Children show an interest in another language/culture	
Play	Children play with language or stereotypes of cultures and have fun	
Children's Contribution	Group of monolingual children or whole class contributes knowledge/artefacts etc. about a culture/language and share with the teacher/class	Contribution
Children's Contribution B	Bilingual children contribute knowledge/artefacts etc. about a culture/language and share with the teacher/class	
Children's Knowledge	Things that the children know but also misconceptions they may have	
Different=Interesting	Someone being "different", being from another culture/speaking another language triggers an interest and a conversation.	Reaction to Difference
Not Different=Not Interesting	Children find their own language/culture normal and not very interesting	
Familiar=Comfortable	Children makes choices based on what they know and feel more comfortable with this	
Different=Difficult	Children find a task difficult because they are unfamiliar with another culture or language	
Little Confidence	Children display little confidence regarding their skills in another language/knowledge of another culture that is new to them	

Role Model	A language/culture become more interesting to the children once they can connect it to a person	Reaction to Difference/Teacher
Teacher's Attitude	The teacher's attitude is affecting the children's interest and enthusiasm about other cultures and languages.	Teacher
Proud of Achievement	Children are proud of their achievements in another language/knowledge of another culture	Effects Within Class
New Topics	Engaging with other languages and cultures opens up/leads to new topics/topics that are new to the children	
MB Dialogue	Mono- and bilingual children engage in a dialogue about the bilingual children's home culture/language	
Inclusion	Mono- and bilingual children bond through multilingual/-cultural activities	
New Knowledge	Children demonstrate new knowledge regarding other languages and cultures	
Place of Culture	The place and value that cultures are given in the classroom life	Classroom
Place of Language	The place and value that languages are given in the classroom life	
Resources	Children make use of resources to develop their understanding of another language or culture	
Difficulties	Difficulties with creating a multilingual and –cultural environment	

I shall now discuss the seven categories arising from my analysis.

Attitude

The monolingual children showed a very positive attitude and interest towards the other cultures and languages and posed many questions to all bilinguals in the classroom, both adults and children. These concerned words in other languages, as well as inquiries about customs of the other cultures.

The class seemed amazed by this insight into another culture. For example, when LN showed the other girls how to write *Happy New Year* in Mandarin, they were very vocal

about their appreciation. Similar reactions occurred on many occasions when children brought in artefacts from their home culture and the class clapped when LN practised a speech in Mandarin. RS pointed out that she particularly enjoyed learning from the other children about their languages and cultures, stating that "[t]hey just made it more interesting".

Children seemed to engage with the other languages and stereotypes they had in a playful way. I observed children incorporating other languages into their play on one occasion, when a group of girls played *English family* and put on very posh English accents, to the amusement of the children around. During the project, the groups included greetings in their families' languages into dialogues they wrote.

Negative attitudes were rarely observed. When the groups were established, B made it clear he did not want to join any family other than Scottish, exclaiming: "I'm Scottish, I don't wanna go anywhere else!" However, after some discussion he changed his mind and agreed that his comment might be hurtful to others and decided to become a member of the Italian family. I saw children being shy or wary. Generally, though, they were very excited about the opportunity to discover the different cultures and languages and asked about the project repeatedly.

Contribution

The children, especially the bilinguals, contributed enthusiastically with knowledge or artefacts they brought from home. I observed initial shyness, and LN reported bad experiences from her old school, where children asked her about her language, only to make fun of it. She was very happy to share her culture though and showed the girls step-by-step how to write in Mandarin. During this situation, CL also demonstrated making creative connections, comparing the Mandarin writing (from right to left) to Egyptian. KR and P brought in many different artefacts and also specifically stated that they enjoyed sharing their religion with the class. ZR also found the project worth telling her family about.

One thing that became apparent is that, although the bilingual children have a wealth of knowledge and experience with their home culture and language, they also have misconceptions, and there are things they do not know. For example, KR and P were unsure of the exact name of the language they speak at home and had questions about their own religion, when telling stories about it.

Reaction to Difference

Children demonstrated limited confidence when first engaging with new languages, although they were largely positive. In fact, children appeared intrigued with everything that was different, and my own bilingualism started conversations, with children asking me questions about Germany and the language, which continued throughout the placement. Whenever I used German, the children stopped and listened.

In contrast, they did not seem to find their own language very special. However, they found the use of Glaswegian slang very interesting and funny. During the allocation of the families, children tended to choose the languages they were familiar with (the Scottish, French and German families were most popular). It showed that a connection to the language made it more interesting, as more children wanted to join the Italian family after the class teacher announced that she spoke Italian.

Teacher

Over the course of the two projects, I was always very positive about other cultures and languages and welcoming towards children who wanted to share anything related to that. I regularly asked the bilingual children how they felt about sharing and tried to support them where possible in sharing their culture. I was interested and learned with and from the children, while helping them in their teaching with guiding questions. At the same time, I noticed negative attitudes and made the children reconsider their attitude, as in the discussed situation with B.

Effects within Class

Even children who were not initially confident with other languages succeeded quite easily and were proud about this. For example, RT put up his hand when asked who was learning how to write in Arabic after ZM and ZR showed him how to do it for a poster. The bilingual children also developed some of the best pieces of work, building on their knowledge, and experience and the poster received excellent feedback from the class. In particular, the bilingual children were happy about the appreciation of their culture and language by their classmates.

Engaging with cultures and languages also led to other relevant topics; when discussing why people might leave their countries, JE told the class about how her father came from Somalia and stayed in a refugee camp. Unfortunately, it was not possible to follow up, as this happened at the end of the lesson. Furthermore, children started discussing new concepts, such as "What is culture?" R brought this question up after I used the term *culture*. Before establishing a definition with the class, I returned the question to the children, who related it to different religions, countries and cities. While the bilingual children engaged more with their own culture, they built up knowledge about other cultures along with everyone else.

Both bi- and monolingual children started discussing the bilingual children's home cultures and languages, showed interest, and bonded. In particular LN seemed to integrate a lot more throughout the topics. While she told me at the beginning that she felt quite lonely in the class, she socialised more with the other children over her knowledge about Chinese culture and even cried at the end about having to leave the class.

Classroom

I made sure that language and culture were given time, place and value in the classroom by incorporating them wherever possible, for example during the register. During discussion of language, reference was made to culture, and vice versa. The children were provided with a range of resources, such as books and dictionaries, which they started using independently. They also brought resources from home and started to learn from each other.

Some difficulties became apparent, too. For example, there was not always enough time for all children to fully present artefacts they had brought in. Also, the monolingual children in the Chinese group tended to rely very much on the knowledge of LN and let her do most of the work. Lastly, I found it difficult to justify my planning for a multilingual classroom within the guidelines of the Scottish Curriculum (Scottish Executive, 2009).

Discussion

The initial, emerging research questions were as follows:

- What are the effects, if any, of a multilingual environment on mono- and multilingual children?

- Could some of the benefits of bilingualism also be triggered
  by a multilingual environment?

Some of the suggested effects of bilingualism were observed in both some of the bilingual and monolingual children. These findings will be discussed below.

Consistent with Baker's (n.d.) and Bernstein et al.'s (2000) suggestion, there was evidence of greater acceptance of cultural diversity. The children showed great interest and positive attitudes right from the beginning, but also those who were somewhat negative (e.g. during the described incident with B), became more accepting and understanding. Overall, the more the children learned, the more enthusiastic they became about the other cultures.

As suggested by Baker (n.d.), the bilingual children were very proud of their language skills; they were pleased about the appreciation that their classmates showed them. As in similar projects (Ulich & Oberhuemer, 1997; Young & Hélot, 2008), seeing their language and culture being part of the classroom made them feel valued. They enjoyed sharing them, contributed with knowledge and resources and even reported about the experience to their families. I observed monolingual children who initially had little confidence regarding unknown languages. However, although it was relatively easy for all children to learn a few words and to achieve this quickly, it felt like a big accomplishment to them and made them very proud. Bi- and monolingual children likewise showed increased self-esteem, confirming current research (Baker, n.d.).

It is difficult to say whether the multilingual environment increased children's interest in learning additional languages as the class showed enthusiasm from the very beginning. However, as the class progressed, an increasing number of children used resources such as books and dictionaries to find words independently. Whilst this is not clear evidence, it suggests that exploring different languages raises children's interest in a similar way as attending a bilingual classroom does (Merisuo-Storm, 2007). Further research would be necessary though to fully verify this.

No analysis can be made about the cognitive effects of engaging with different languages and cultures, as this was not the aim of the research, and other methods would need to have been applied to study this. However, monolingual children showed signs of making creative connections, setting information about other languages into context by building on previous knowledge. Furthermore, the topic led to questions about related issues (e.g. "What is culture?"), which shows that the children were actively thinking about the ideas associated with language and culture. This suggests that exploring languages and cultures can be used to plan for meaningful learning experiences.

Generally, the children developed new knowledge about the different cultures and languages involved in the storyline. While in particular the bilingual children contributed with their wealth of knowledge, it was also evident that there were things that they did not know about their own culture. This supports the idea of the importance of including bilingual children's home languages and culture in the classroom (Baker, 2011). Another argument for the inclusion of home languages is the fact that it was the bilingual children particularly who created excellent pieces of work. Being able to build on their full linguistic and cultural capital enriched and improved their writing in English, giving them ideas to write and talk about. This strongly contradicts the view of there being a Separate Underlying Proficiency among bilinguals (Cummins, 2003) and the idea of teaching bilingual pupils only in the majority language.

As suggested by Aukrust and Rydland (2009), the children proved to have ideas and concepts about other cultures and used them in a playful way. In contrast to the research, I did not observe any situations where children used ethnicity in a negative way. However, they might have done this unobserved by adults, as was found by Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001). Generally, the classroom ethos improved, which supports the research of Ulich and Oberhuemer (1997) and Young and Hélot (2008). The integration of LN particularly shows this and also supports the theory that intergroup contact reduces social distance (Williams, 1964). While she felt very alone in the beginning, sharing her culture and language led to conversations with the other children, to whom she became closer.

Not all aspects of the research question can be fully answered by analysing the collected evidence. However, monolingual children showed that they achieved some of the benefits of bilingualism by being surrounded by different languages and cultures. At the same time, the bilingual children thrived in this environment and became more integrated. Overall, all children gained from the topic. The findings support Lo Bianco's (2001) argument and highlight that bilingualism can be a resource for all children in the class.

How can a teacher create a multilingual environment with few resources?

The findings show that it is possible for teachers to create a multilingual environment with few resources. It should be noted that only factors that emerged in the project can be analysed and that there might be other relevant contributors that are not considered here.

The first factor that became apparent is the inseparable connection between language and culture (Baker, 2006). It became evident that often discussing one led to the other and that the children made these connections themselves, for example, including greetings in their families' language in their dialogues to present the country. As in the mentioned example, making both language and culture a topic in class put the learning into context and gave the children more opportunities for exploration. This raises the question whether it is even possible to teach a language without including its culture and vice versa. The observations in the class would suggest that it is not and highlight the fact that teachers need to recognise this when attempting to create a multilingual classroom environment. Referring back to the stated goals of the Scottish Curriculum (Scottish Executive, 2009), to create global and responsible citizens I propose that it would thus be relevant to include language diversity in support for multiculturalism. However, although the curriculum highlights the importance of exploring other languages within literacy across the curriculum, there are no clear guidelines are given for teachers as to what should be taught here, which made planning problematic.

As anticipated, my bilingualism generated a natural interest in the children and started a discussion about languages, which fits with current research (Sanders & Downer, 2012). Being bilingual helped in creating a multilingual environment, as I was able to build on my knowledge of German. However, it seemed that the teacher's attitude is even more important. By being positive and welcoming, the bilingual children especially felt encouraged to share their culture. At the same time, I was aware of negative attitudes in the class. Together, this seemed to influence the children, as they became more enthusiastic. This conforms to Sanders and Downer's (2012) suggestion that a positive emotional climate and approaches that encourage cross-cultural exchange are crucial for children's acceptance of diversity. The relevance of a cultural mismatch cannot be fully determined through this research though as there is no comparison with monolingual teachers. It can be deduced from the evidence that it is possible for monolingual teachers to create a multilingual classroom by being enthusiastic about languages and cultures.

I observed that the children seemed to be more interested in exploring a culture when they knew a person connected to it. At first, the children seemed to be particularly interested in their teachers' cultures. During the allocation to groups, for example, the teachers' languages were more popular. However, the children were possibly choosing the "easy" route and trusted the teachers' knowledge and support more. As the topic continued and the children had more time to engage with each other, this changed and they became more interested in their peers' cultures, too. Therefore, the class reacted positively to the inclusion of the bilingual children and their backgrounds, as suggested by Ofsted (2005). This could be done by any teacher in a classroom with bilingual children. It became apparent the teacher has to be sensitive, as I observed children who did not feel comfortable with this in the beginning. As in the Didenheim project (Young & Hélot, 2008), it further helped to support the person who shares their knowledge in their teaching. By having some background knowledge, I could guide the children with questions when necessary, in order to introduce relevant discussions. As suggested by Lo Bianco (2001), bilingualism proved to be a resource, which the monolingual children started to access naturally by asking their bilingual peers for help. In one group, the monolingual children relied too much on their bilingual group member and expected them to do most of the work – so teachers have to be attentive to this.

Another successful factor in creating a multilingual environment was the incorporation of the majority language; as stated by Ulich and Oberhuemer (1997), it is important to show the equal value of languages in the classroom. Not only did the children find this fun and engaging, it also meant that everybody could contribute. Resources that represent different cultures proved to further support the equal value of languages, as proposed by Sanders and Downer (2012).

Apart from the positive factors, some difficulties also emerged. As already mentioned, there were some issues concerning planning for a multilingual classroom within the Scottish Curriculum (Scottish Executive, 2009). Additionally, it was not always easy to make time for children to present things they had brought from home and it might be advisable to plan a regular lesson for this.

The evidence shows that most of the suggested factors had a positive impact on creating a multilingual environment, though there are some limitations to the findings about the role of a bilingual teacher. Overall, it is possible for teachers to do this with few resources. The research further exposed some difficulties, but it seems that they could be avoided through careful planning.

Conclusion

The results of the study clearly indicate that there are positive effects arising from a multilingual classroom environment. Children's emerging bilingualism, as well as the teacher's own bilingualism, can be a valuable and practical resource to enable teachers to achieve such positive results. Even though there are some limitations to the results, there is strong evidence for this conclusion. However, since this was a small study the results cannot be generalised, meaning that a larger study in more schools in a variety of settings is necessary in order to identify whether the findings of the study are widely applicable. Similarly, some relevant classroom interactions may not have been captured due to my teaching commitment. Therefore, a study conducted by a full-time researcher may gain more accurate and possibly more objective results. Even though I tried to be as objective as possible, I had to analyse my own attitude and this might be easier from a different perspective. Furthermore, there were many changes in the planning of my placement due to an assembly, and the results would possibly be stronger and more conclusive if everything had gone according to plan.

Another issue worth researching would be different approaches to creating a multilingual environment, for example the effectiveness of a storyline approach in comparison to others. Interestingly, monolingual children showed signs of creative thinking, stimulated by the multilingual environment, and it is worth researching how teachers can use languages to create meaningful learning contexts.

Despite the difficulties, ethnography worked well for this research, as I was allowed a real insight into the class and could record and analyse the children's development over time. I was able to engage them in conversations when I felt it was suitable in order to obtain even more relevant evidence. Also, it enabled me to consider everything that happened rather than having to stick to prepared questions.

Overall, a larger study with more reliable results that can be generalised, as well as research into approaches and studies with monolingual teachers, could possibly influence policies and practice in schools. Increased research and scientific evidence on the benefits and effectiveness of bilingualism and multilingual environments would compel politicians and professionals to rethink their view on bilingualism and see it as an opportunity for all children, as proposed by Lo Bianco (2001). As part of this, it would be necessary to review how the Scottish Curriculum can support teachers in incorporating different languages across the curriculum. This seems particularly important with regards to its aim of developing responsible, global citizens (Scottish Executive, 2009), since the results of the study support the strong connection between language and culture (Baker, 2006). However, the findings indicate the teacher's attitude is crucial, suggesting that it is possible to create a successful multilingual environment despite legislative barriers.

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