THE EAL TEACHING BOOK

Promoting Success for Multilingual Learners

REVISED 2ND EDITION

JEAN CONTEH

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC
www.fsc.org
FSC™ C013985

Contents

1 Introducing multilingual and EAL learners

> ## Learning Outcomes
>
> This chapter will help you to achieve the following learning outcomes:
>
> - develop understanding of the importance of recognising and reflecting on your own experiences of language diversity and ethnicity for your professional knowledge as a teacher;
> - gain awareness of the history of language and cultural diversity in England;
> - develop awareness of the diverse range of experiences and knowledge that multilingual and EAL learners bring to their classrooms.

Introduction

This chapter introduces you to the pupils you will be teaching who come under the umbrella term of 'EAL learners'. It shows the many different ways in which 'EAL' has been defined, and that there is still no agreed definition. It raises questions about how we define and label attributes such as 'ethnicity' and challenges you to consider your own views and perceptions of these issues. It begins by providing some background information about the cultural and language diversity of British society today. Then, it provides a set of vignettes of individual pupils, through which you will gain a sense of the rich diversity of the social and cultural experiences that many multilingual and EAL learners bring to their mainstream classrooms. Following this, there is an extended case study by Georgina Vince, who works in a secondary school attended by growing numbers of Roma and Gipsy pupils. Georgina describes the positive ways in which her school has developed strategies to work with the pupils and their families. Finally, there is a set of common 'myths and misconceptions' about teaching EAL learners which – after reading the chapter – you may have questions about. We will come back to these at the end of the book in Chapter 8.

One of the main aims of this chapter is to help you, as a beginning teacher or even a more experienced one, to understand the importance of recognising and valuing all the knowledge and experience that your multilingual and EAL learners bring with them to school. This is crucial, if you are to help them to become successful learners in the mainstream system. Interspersed through the chapter there are questions and activities to help you to think further about the ideas that you will read about, as well as begin to think practically about their implications for your own practice in different classrooms. There are some suggestions for further reading at the end of the chapter.

These are the main sections and subsections of the chapter.

1. **Defining difference**
   1.1   Behind the facts and figures

   1.2   'Superdiversity' in England

2. **Who are 'EAL learners'?**
   2.1   Advanced bilingual learners – Safina

   2.2   New to English pupils – Stefan and Jan

   2.3   Asylum-seekers and refugees – Joseph

   2.4   Isolated learners – Radia

   2.5   Sojourners – Hamida

   2.6   Roma and Gipsy pupils – case study by Georgina Vince

3. **Language diversity and learning – some myths and misconceptions**

1. Defining difference

1.1 Behind the facts and figures

Research Focus

Since 2009, the Department for Education has collected information about the languages spoken by pupils in schools as part of the annual schools' census data. In 2013 (NALDIC, 2013), the figures showed that about 18.1% of pupils in mainstream primary and 13.6% in secondary schools in England were identified as learners with 'EAL' (English as an additional language). It is not easy to find a figure for the total number of languages currently spoken by pupils in schools in England, but it is thought to be about 350 (BBC, 2007). The proportion of ethnic minority pupils is different from those defined as 'EAL'; currently this is 28.5% for primary schools and 24.2% for secondary schools. The data on ethnicity come from the national census, which is done every ten years. The most recent census was undertaken in 2011, and the categories for ethnicity used are shown in Figure 1.1 below.

The percentages for ethnic minority pupils are much higher than those for language diversity, so it is clear that there are many ethnic minority pupils in schools in England for whom English is *not* an additional language. But it is also clear that many pupils can be defined as *both* EAL and ethnic minority, because they belong to an ethnic minority group and also speak another language besides English. It is important to understand, especially for pupils such as those in this second group, that language knowledge and cultural knowledge are interlinked. This

idea is discussed further in Chapter 2, along with the implications for teaching. There are also pupils who would ethnically be part of the 'white' majority but who could actually be defined as 'EAL', because they do not have English as their first language and their families are from Europe or other parts of the world.

A. White
British
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British Irish
Gypsy or Irish traveller
Any other White background

B. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
White and Black Caribbean
White and Black African
White and Asian
Any other Mixed

C. Asian/Asian British
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Any other Asian background

D. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
African
Caribbean
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background

Other ethnic group
Arab
Any other ethnic group

Figure 1.1 Categories of ethnicity in the 2011 National Census

Activity 1.1
Who are you?

In Figure 1.1, you can see the categories of ethnicity used in the 2011 national census, which are different from those in the 2001 census. Look at them and think about the following questions.

1. Did you complete the most recent census? If so, which category did you place yourself in? If not, which category would you place yourself in?
2. Could you place yourself into more than one category?
3. Do you find it difficult to place yourself, and if so, why?
4. Would it be difficult to place anyone you know?
5. Would it be difficult to place any pupils you teach or have worked with?
6. How do you think these categories were arrived at?

Despite the ever-increasing numbers of pupils from different ethnic and language backgrounds in our schools, the vast majority of teachers in England are still from 'white British' or 'English' backgrounds and do not speak other languages besides English. This means that most teachers who have pupils in their classes who speak other languages do not share those languages. This can sometimes feel like quite a challenge, on top of everything else you need to know about and be able to do as a teacher. Vivian Gussin Paley (2000) in her book *White Teacher*, describes her experiences as a 'white majority' teacher in a school with increasing numbers of pupils from diverse backgrounds. She soon realised that, in order to understand their needs and make the best provision for them, she had to understand more about her own identity and how it influenced her attitudes to her pupils. She concludes:

> *Those of us who have been outsiders understand the need to be seen exactly as we are and to be accepted and valued. Our safety lies in schools and societies in which faces with many shapes can feel an equal sense of belonging. Our pupils must grow up knowing and liking those who look and speak in different ways, or they will live as strangers in a hostile land.*

(131–2)

Ethnicity is a very hard concept to define, and because we often talk about 'ethnic minorities' we sometimes think of it as a term only relevant for people who are different from ourselves and can be thought of as belonging to a 'minority' group. Of course, the reality is that we all have ethnicity. We all belong to different ethnic, cultural and social groups. But ethnicity is only one part of what makes us who we are. In thinking about your role as a teacher, perhaps the notion of **identity** is a more useful one than ethnicity, as it helps you think about all the factors that contribute to your individuality, and the personal and social issues that are so important in teaching and learning. As suggested in Chapter 2, it is vital that you understand how your personal identity is an important aspect of your professional identity as a teacher, especially when you are teaching pupils from different language and cultural backgrounds to yourself. You need to understand how important your own ethnicity, language knowledge and other aspects of your personal makeup are to you, and how you night feel if any of them were threatened or undermined. This will help you understand the needs of the pupils you will be teaching. As Gussin Paley argues, this is an essential step to developing positive, trustful relationships with the pupils you teach and with their families.

The following activity will help you to think about your 'ethnicity' as part of your identity, in other words, who you are.

Activity 1.2
How does it feel to be different?

You can do this activity on your own. But it would be better if you could do it as a group discussion task, with some of your fellow trainees, or colleagues in a school setting.

- First, think about how you would define your identity. Is it enough just to think about your 'ethnic background' as defined in the categories of the census? What other aspects of your identity are important to you? Where your family comes from might be an important part of your identity, but what else might count for you?
- Make a list of 6–8 attributes that you would say were important aspects of your identity.
- Can you think of a time when you were made to feel different and that you did not belong? This could have been when you were a child, or as an adult in a work situation or in a social context. What did you feel was different about you? How would the quote from Vivian Gussin Paley reflect your feelings? Write a few sentences about how it felt to feel different and perhaps excluded.

1.2 'Superdiversity' in England

In about 120 AD, soldiers from the Roman Empire built a fort at the mouth of the river Tyne and named it Arbeia (Wikipedia, 2013). You can still see the remains today, in South Shields near Newcastle upon Tyne. Some historians think the Romans who lived in the fort named it after their original homelands in what are now Syria, Libya and Spain. Britain has always been multicultural and multilingual – a small island which has experienced successive waves of immigration and emigration from and to all over the world. The English language reflects this, as it contains words from all the languages of the people that have come to this island and enriched its vocabulary over the centuries.

Over recent years, with the growth of the European Union (EU) as well as more global events, the population of England has changed greatly. The addition to the EU of the A8 'accession countries' in 2004 and more recent changes have meant that people travel within Europe much more than they used to. It has become quite normal for people from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and other eastern European countries to come to England to work, and then return to their countries of origin or move on elsewhere. This has been described as 'circular migration', and is a worldwide phenomenon. Many British cities now, are what have been called '**superdiverse**' communities. People with vastly different languages, histories, cultural and social backgrounds and religions live side by side. Sometimes, new migrants arrive and join with communities from their countries of origin that have lived in the city for generations.

Vignette

A superdiverse corner shop

This photo of a corner shop in a Yorkshire city shows clearly the effects of 'superdiversity' on everyday life in a typical community.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Figure 1.2 Shop front in a 'superdiverse' city

A Lithuanian heritage family owned the shop from the 1950s until they sold it to a Pakistani heritage family in the 1980s. A few years ago, this family sold the shop to a Polish man. He put up a new sign, covering up the old Lithuanian name. He kept the small '**halal** meat' logos from the Pakistani heritage owners at the edges of the sign to show that he still provides meat for the local Muslim community. He also sells phone cards to customers from all over the world. He placed a bright yellow banner in the shop window (at the bottom right of the picture) to show how he catered for the changing community around the shop: 'Everyone welcome English, Arabic, Kurdish, Polish, Slovakia', it says. There are now many multilingual communities like this in cities all over England, where many of our multilingual and EAL pupils live.

It is important also to remember, as we see below in section 2, that an increasing number of multilingual and EAL now also live in towns or villages where they may previously have been very few other such pupils.

Activity 1.3
Language and cultural diversity in school

If you have a placement in a school where there are pupils learning English as an additional language, or in the school where you work, try to find out the following information.

- How many pupils in school are defined as 'EAL learners'?
- How many different languages are spoken by pupils in the school?
- How does the school find out about and record the languages?
- Does the school have a policy for EAL or language diversity?
- How are EAL issues managed in the school?

If you cannot undertake this activity in your placement school, see if you could arrange a visit to a school where it would be possible to do it.

2. Who are 'EAL learners'?

Sometimes the term 'EAL' is applied only to pupils who are new arrivals in school and who are better thought of as being 'new to English'. 'EAL' is an umbrella term, used for many different groups of pupils who bring a vast range of experience and knowledge of languages, literacies, cultures and schooling to their mainstream classrooms. The title of this book refers to 'multilingual' and EAL learners to make the point that we cannot think of the pupils whose learning we are considering as one, uniform group. Different terms have been used over the years in policies and strategy documents to describe the EAL learners you may meet in your classrooms. Here is a list of them.

- Learners who are second and third generation members of settled ethnic minority communities (*advanced bilingual learners*).

- Learners who are recent arrivals and new to English, some of whom have little or no experience of schooling, and others who are already literate in their first languages (*pupils new to English*).

- Learners whose education has been disrupted because of war and other traumatic experiences (*asylum-seekers and refugees*).

- Learners who are in school settings with little prior experience of bilingual pupils (*isolated learners*).

- Learners whose parents are working and studying and are in England for short periods of time (*sojourners*).

Activity 1.4
Thinking about multilingual and EAL learners

Before you read the vignettes that follow, think about the pupils in your current class, or one you have recently taught. Do you think any of them would fit into any of the groups listed above?

Write a list of the names of the pupils, and identify which group you think each would belong to.

What follow are five vignettes, and one case study by Georgina Vince, who works in a large secondary school in Leeds. They will help you to understand something about the pupils that belong to each of the groups listed above and to develop your understanding about who could be defined as 'EAL learners' and the complexity of the term 'EAL'.

2.1 Advanced bilingual learners – Safina

Safina is 13 years old and in a **Year 9** class in a large, multilingual secondary school in a city very like the one where the photo above was taken. Most of her classmates are from similar backgrounds to herself. She represents the largest group in our list of different categories of EAL learners – advanced bilingual learners. She was born in England, the granddaughter of a man who arrived from the Kashmir area of Pakistan 40 or 50 years ago to work in the woollen mills in the city. Safina is multilingual. English is her dominant language, so 'EAL' is not really a helpful way to describe her. As well as English, she speaks Punjabi and Urdu. She is also **multiliterat**e (Datta, 2007). With her sisters and female cousins, she is learning the Koran in Arabic from a Muslim teacher who visits her home. Her brothers go to the local mosque, which is in a converted cinema close to their house. Her mum is teaching her to read and write Urdu, their national heritage language. All these languages have important, but different, roles to play in her life. While English may be the most important, there is no sign that the other languages are fading away. Indeed, the signs are that they will continue to be important for Safina and her community (see Chapter 3). Punjabi has an important, though unofficial, role in British society; it is the foreign language most commonly spoken by British people, with over half a million speakers. Pupils whose families originate from Bangladesh would have very similar histories, with Bengali and Sylheti as their community languages. Bengali is the second most commonly spoken foreign language by British people (Wikipedia, 2014). Safina is doing well in school so far. She is very talkative and keen to answer questions, but is finding things increasingly difficult as she progresses through secondary school. She struggles to understand the range of subjects she is expected to study and to meet the demands of written assessments.

At the end of Year 2, in the KSl **Standardised Attainment Tasks (SATs)** Safina attained level 2 in English and level 3 in mathematics, and in the KS2 SATs, she attained level 4 in English and level 5 in maths, which is above the standard expectation. But, the data over the years show that she may struggle to attain such a high level in her GCSEs, when they come around. Her family are very supportive of her education. Her father helps her a lot in mathematics at home, in Punjabi. Her mother and aunts do a lot of sewing, and Safina is very good at this and other practical activities. When she was younger, her grandma told her and her siblings lots of stories from Pakistan, in Punjabi. She loved this and knew many of the stories by heart. In her primary school, where most of the pupils were multilingual, teachers encouraged the pupils to tell the stories in school, which had a big benefit for

Safina's literacy. It helped her to understand story structures and the kinds of language found in stories, which is different from spoken language. Pupils like Safina are exactly those whom Deryn Hall describes as 'living in two languages' (Hall *et al.*, 2001), and who are discussed in Chapter 3.

2.2 New to English pupils – Stefan and Jan

Stefan and Jan are both ten years old, and in the same **Year 5** class in a small Roman Catholic primary school in a big, multilingual city in the north of England. They have both been attending the school for a couple of years, having arrived from Poland at almost the same time with their families. About 40% of the pupils in the school are from Pakistani-heritage backgrounds, and the numbers of pupils from Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are steadily growing – currently it is about 10%, that is two to three pupils per class. Stefan and Jan's class teacher is a bit puzzled by the two boys. When they entered her class from Year 4, she checked the school records, and noticed that, since coming to the school, both new to English, their progress had been very different. They seemed to start off from a relatively similar position in relation to their knowledge of English. Both have become fairly confident and fluent in spoken English over the two years they have been in the school. They can answer questions in class, hold conversations with their teachers and their peers and take part in social activities in school. But, while Stefan has made good progress with reading and writing and is beginning to perform in assessments at similar levels to his peers, Jan is struggling. He has taken part in various intervention activities, but never seems to be able to catch up with Stefan or his other classmates.

The class teacher is considering what can be done to support Jan to help him catch up before he encounters the KS2 SATs in Year 6. She wonders whether yet another intervention activity is the answer. In studying part-time for her MA, she comes across the work of Cummins (see Chapter 3) and other writers on bilingualism and multilingualism. She finds their ideas about the links between languages in pupils' learning very intriguing and decides to find out a little about Stefan and Jan's knowledge of other languages, especially their home language, Polish. To her surprise and interest, she finds out that Stefan is an accomplished reader and writer of Polish, and that he regularly attends the Polish Saturday school in the city, where pupils study Polish to GCSE and A level (see Chapter 7, section 2.1). Jan, on the other hand, can only read and write a little Polish – his early schooling in Poland was disrupted because of his family situation. He went to the Saturday class for a short while, but then dropped out.

As an experiment, the teacher asks Stefan if he can bring some of his Polish books into school and tell the class about some of the things he does in the Saturday school. Stefan's dad comes along too, and tells the class a story in Polish, which Stefan translates into English. The visit is a huge success. Afterwards, to her surprise, the teacher notices how Jan seems much more

enthusiastic and motivated. So she decides to give the pupils in her class opportunities, from time to time, to work together in same-language groups where they can discuss things with each other, using their home languages and then report back or write in English (see section 2 of Chapter 4 for more information about planning and organising groupwork and Chapter 7 for discussions of using home languages in school). As time goes on, Jan's reading and writing slowly begin to improve, while his confidence steadily grows.

2.3 Asylum-seekers and refugees – Joseph

Joseph is 15 years old and is moving in to **Year** 11. He came to England as a baby with his mother, Jenneh, who had had to escape from her home town in Sierra Leone, when it was overrun by fighting during the civil war that ended about 12 years ago. His father was a solicitor and his mother an administrator in a large secondary school in the town. At first, Joseph and his mother lived temporarily in bed and breakfast accommodation in London, and after 18 months they moved to a small town in the north west of England where Jenneh had a Sierra Leonean friend. Other friends helped with accommodation and Jenneh found a job in a supermarket. They settled fairly well, although they were the target of racial abuse for a while. But they had lost touch with Joseph's father because of the unsettled situation in Sierra Leone. Jenneh applied for political asylum and, after a long struggle, she gained it.

Though they had been in their new home for two years by the time Joseph began school, their future was still uncertain. Events in Sierra Leone had calmed and Jenneh had made contact with her family, but Joseph's father had died. All the problems she faced were a great strain on Jenneh and she became depressed. The school was a fairly small, Church of England primary school with very few non-white pupils. At first, Joseph was a well-behaved little boy and he made a good impression on his teachers. He was very polite and spoke good English, as Jenneh had been careful to teach him because English is the official language of Sierra Leone. However, the teachers knew nothing about his home country apart from the awful events that had sometimes been shown on television. This made the teachers feel sorry for Joseph, and they did not push him very hard in his work. There were other ethnic minority pupils in the school, but none from Africa. As time went on, Joseph's attendance at school was sometimes irregular as he had to stay at home to look after his mother when she was unable to go to work. His school work suffered and he did not make many friends.

Joseph did not do well in the KSl SATs at the end of KSl (Year 2), and was placed in a special needs (SEN) group, where he became very withdrawn. He got further and further behind in his work, and his behaviour also began to suffer as his anxiety about his mother grew. No one at school knew of his home situation. When he reached Year 6, he attained level 3 in both maths and English, which was commendable in many ways, but not a reflection of his true ability and below the national expectation. Most of his classmates in primary school moved on to the local secondary school which was very much part of the community. Joseph did not

18

get a place there, and was instead given a place in a large, inner city secondary school where he knew nobody, and the teachers knew nothing of his background. No one suggested to his mother that they could appeal against this decision. Joseph has had a tough time in secondary school. In Years 7 and 8, he was very isolated and withdrawn, and as he moved into Year 10, he got into a bad set of friends and began truanting from school. The school took a somewhat punitive line on this, which led to Joseph being excluded on a couple of occasions. Now, as he approaches his GCSEs, his school record is very patchy and the signs do not look very good for his success.

2.4 Isolated learners – Radia

Radia is in **Year** 4 in a primary school in a village near to a small city in the south west of England. The family have been living in England for five years altogether. She has been attending the school for two years, after moving to the village with her family when her father began a job at the local university, where he had recently completed his PhD. When the family first arrived in England from their home country, Algeria, they lived in the city, near the university. Radia attended a large, busy, multilingual primary school where she had some friends whose parents were also students. She did very well and was happy. When the job offer came, Radia's parents decided to move to the village in order to have a bigger house and garden and – they hoped – better schooling for their three children, of whom Radia is the eldest.

All is not going as well as they hoped. Radia's mother is finding it lonely living in the village with no Algerian friends nearby. Although her neighbours are very pleasant, none of them visit her as regularly as she would like, and she often spends days alone with her young child. She takes the two older pupils to school every day and would like to be able to talk to their teachers more than she does. But she never seems to be able to engage them in conversation. Radia has not settled very well into school. She misses the friends she made in her old school, and has not really made any new friends in the village school. She is the only 'EAL' pupil in her class, and one of only eight or ten in the whole school, all of whom are from well-educated, middle-class backgrounds, some from Islamic countries in the Middle East and others from China. Their parents are either students or former students, like Radia's, or professionals working for companies in the city.

The school has taken steps to find out how to support their new pupils. One teacher has been given responsibility for their induction, and went on a training course, which was part of the *New arrivals excellence programme* (DfE, 2011). But she did not find anything very relevant for the pupils coming to the village school. They all seem to be very fluent in English so language does not seem to be an issue for them. One of the strategies recommended on the course was to form good relationships with the pupils' parents, and she would like to be able to do this. But when she meets them as they bring their pupils to school and come to collect them, she finds it difficult to think of ways to generate conversations with them. She has not had much prior experience of people from different cultural backgrounds. She raises this in a staff meeting, and

this leads to a long discussion. One of the outcomes is a decision to organise a social event to give parents an opportunity to meet their pupils' teachers and see something of the work they do in class. This proves a great success, and greatly helps the processes of communication in the school.

2.5 Sojourners – Hamida

Hamida is five years old and in **Year 1** in a large, mainly white school in a prosperous city in the south of England. She arrived in the city with her family from Saudi Arabia at the start of the school year. Her father is doing a PhD at the university, and her mother also has plans to study, once childcare arrangements are made for Hamida and her two younger brothers. Hamida speaks Arabic and is learning to read and write it in a Saturday class run by the wife of another Saudi Arabian student. Her parents are very keen for her to maintain her skills in Arabic, as they will be returning home in three or four years' time. They are also very eager for her to learn to speak English – indeed, this was one of the main reasons why they decided to bring her to England with them, rather than leaving her at home with relatives, as other students have done with their children. They want her to learn 'proper' English so that she speaks as far as possible with a **Received Pronunciation (RP)** accent, which will afford her high status in Saudi Arabia. They also, quite naturally, want her to retain her Muslim identity, and hope that the school are aware of, and sensitive to, Islamic rules and practices.

The class that Hamida has joined comprises mostly 'white British' pupils, though there is one other multilingual child, whose parents are students, like Hamida's. He is from Indonesia and – like Hamida – his family is Muslim. Both pupils are new to the school, and so have not been through the Foundation Stage in the English system. The class teacher is very positive and enthusiastic about having them as her pupils, but is having to work hard to find relevant background information and resources such as stories and information books from their home countries. She is a little wary of the anticipated requirements related to the pupils' Muslim identities but willing to find out and to be flexible in her teaching. She is very keen to establish good relationships with the pupils' families as she sees this as a support for her in meeting the needs of their pupils.

Activity 1.5
Understanding diversity

Each of the six pupils in the vignettes have particular experiences and knowledge that can be seen as strengths as they benefit their learning in mainstream school, and particular gaps in their experience that may create issues for their progress and their **achievements**. Make a chart like the one below and, in discussion with other trainees or colleagues in your placement school, list what you think could be seen as each child's strengths and needs, from the vignettes. There are some suggested answers at the end of the chapter.

Child	Strengths	Needs
Safina		
Stefan		
Jan		
Joseph		
Radia		
Hamida		

2.6 Roma and Gipsy pupils – case study by Georgina Vince

When I first started working in my current school six years ago, we had 12 Roma students in the school, which was considered a challenge at the time. Since then, the number has increased dramatically so that we now have more than ten times as many and they are one of the largest ethnic groups in school. We have learnt a lot about this group, their backgrounds, the issues they face and how best to work with them and support them. I hope to share some of this experience with you here although I cannot say that we have any magic solutions and I know that there is still much more that we need to do and learn to continue to close the achievement gap and enable students in this group to achieve their potential.

Our school is a secondary school serving a highly diverse multicultural, economically deprived inner-city catchment area. Approximately 65% of our students are EAL and about 50% were born overseas, with students from a huge variety of backgrounds. Large numbers of international new arrivals come each year. Initially, most of our Roma students were new arrivals, but this has changed over time as the community has become more established. So now we have many Roma students who transfer from primary school, and even some who were born here. The majority of our Roma students are from the Czech Republic and Slovakia with smaller numbers from Poland and Romania.

Understanding and celebrating Roma history and culture

When we first started working with the Roma, we knew very little about them. 'Funds of knowledge' research (see Chapter 2, section 2.3) suggests the importance of recognising the culture of different ethnic groups. I think this is especially true for the Roma, who may well have had to hide their culture in the past in their countries of origin. We worked with organisations such as the local Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement Service in Leeds (see website details at the end of the chapter) and used different resources to learn more. This knowledge was further enhanced by visits to the Czech Republic, which I describe below.

$\rightarrow$

As you may know, it is believed that the Roma originated in India and gradually migrated to and across Europe over 500 years ago. There are now Roma living in most countries of Europe and further afield. We tend to use the word Roma to refer to Eastern European Roma but English Gypsies are believed to have the same origins. Most of our Roma students were completely unaware of this history until we did some assemblies about it with the students. What particularly brought it home to them was the language. Some of the resources we used showed the similarities between the Roma language and languages of India and Pakistan and it made their history seem more real when the Roma students realised how close numbers were in the Roma language to those in Urdu and Punjabi, familiar to our Pakistani-heritage students. This also helped to build bridges between the different groups of students in our school.

Following this initial assembly, we continued to have regular activities to teach students about Roma history, particularly during Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month in June (see website details at the end of the chapter). We have also brought issues around the treatment of the Roma in the Holocaust and discrimination into history and PSE curriculums. However, the most significant difference was made in recognising and celebrating Roma culture. We first found out about the musical abilities of some of our Roma students by chance as they turned up in the music rooms and started playing. Many of the boys especially were found to be highly skilled musicians, playing regularly at home and in the community – largely self-taught and playing by ear. We initially used music as a way to get them to feel happier at school and encourage attendance, before trying to encourage them to perform in public. As we got to know them, we also found out that many of them, especially the girls, did traditional Roma dance, so we set up a group at lunchtimes and bought some skirts. Initially they were reluctant to perform in front of the wider school and it took a lot of support and practice before they took part in a musical and dance performance for the school diversity day. This was a real breakthrough as, prior to this performance, the Roma students had been largely viewed negatively as students who didn't come to school and didn't speak English. Suddenly, people could see how skilled they were. Other students and staff came up and told them how great they had been, which was a huge boost to their confidence and made them feel like a real part of the school.

We followed this up by a Roma festival, organised by local schools and the council and held at our school. Roma students and parents from all over the city came and performed. This was so successful that we are now looking to organise a future festival ourselves. We have also tried to bring their culture into school in other ways, such as including Roma artists in art and music lessons and stories about Roma in English lessons.

One important point to remember is that not all Roma will want to celebrate their culture and may find it patronising to be told to, preferring for example hip-hop dancing, but it is important that their culture is there, as part of wider opportunities.

Understanding the situation of Roma in their home countries

As more and more Roma continued to come to our area, we started to wonder what it was that was causing them to leave their countries of origin. As we got to know our students, we gradually learnt more and this was reinforced by a project in which we took part, which linked

→

schools in England with schools with large numbers of Roma in the Czech Republic. On visits to the Czech Republic, we found out more and saw how the Roma lived. This helped us understand some of the issues we faced with our Roma students.

Roma and Gypsies have faced huge amounts of discrimination throughout history; I believe that many were kept in slavery in Romania for a long time and this culminated in their treatment in the Holocaust in which nearly all Czech Roma were wiped out. This discrimination still continues to a lesser extent and is the main reason why so many Roma leave. Although some Roma in eastern European countries now live a more integrated life with the non-Roma community, many continue to live separately, often in very deprived conditions. They suffer discrimination in areas such as employment and education. Prior to one of my visits to the Czech Republic, there had been large anti-Roma protests and attacks on Roma in a nearby town. While there, I experienced Roma going to largely segregated schools despite this now being illegal. This is partly due to Roma living in such segregated communities and also due to Czech parents not wanting their children taught along with Roma. Some of these schools were quite negative towards their Roma students while others seemed more positive, but even in these schools there was never the expectation that Roma could achieve, such as going to university. Roma children also tend to be overrepresented in special schools.

This can be a sensitive subject – Czech people may deny it and obviously not all Czech people feel this way. Some Roma children may also be unaware of the true situation in their country. However, it is worth bearing this in mind for example when looking for a Czech interpreter as Roma parents will quickly pick up on any prejudice.

Ascription

One issue that we regularly come up against is the reluctance of families to ascribe as Roma. This is understandable, given the situation they may face in their country if known as Roma and the advantages to hiding their identity. There may also be some misunderstanding as most feel that they are both Roma and Czech and therefore Eastern European. It could be argued that it is not important what it says on the official records as long as you know who your Roma pupils are and can monitor and support them. While this is true to a certain extent, I think it is important that students feel safe to acknowledge who they are and are proud of their identity. They should not feel they have to hide this. Imagine if you always had to keep such an important thing about yourself hidden; it cannot be good for a child growing up. In addition to having Roma culture visible around school, a strategy we have used is to use a Roma student who is happy to identify as Roma in admissions meetings with new students. It is essential that all staff are aware of the issues around ascription and do not undermine work done by asking about it in an insensitive way.

Attendance

One particular problem schools often have with Roma students is attendance. Our Roma attendance has improved greatly over the years with strategies we have put in place and although Roma attendance is still below the school average, it is above Gypsy Roma attendance nationally.

→

We have found that a mixture of 'carrot and stick' approaches works best. Firstly, it is important that the families understand the system in this country, which is very different to that in the Czech Republic and many other eastern European countries where attendance is not monitored and followed up in the rigorous way it is in this country. This is an area where a Czech-speaking worker who can communicate with the families is invaluable. We first employed a Czech worker two years ago and it has made a huge difference and led to an immediate improvement in attendance. She meets all new Czech and Slovak families and ensures they know the consequences of not coming to school, and what to do if a child is absent. In addition, as families have been in the country longer and have got used to the system, attendance has improved anyway. Employment of a Czech worker has also helped greatly in following up absences and visiting families with attendance issues, whereas before this we had no real way of communicating with our Roma families.

However, I think that more important in improving Roma attendance has been the fact that they now feel part of the school community and happier at school. In addition, as their language has improved, they feel more confident to participate in lessons and see they are making progress. In addition to this, we have organised attendance groups where students who struggle with attendance meet our Czech worker each week and improvements in attendance are rewarded.

Working with families

Some of our feeder primaries have built up good relationships with families as parents bring their children to school each day, but we always struggled to get parents in to school. However, I think we have started to have something of a breakthrough in the last year. This is partly due to the employment of the Czech worker who tries to meet all families before they start at the school, either in admissions meetings for new arrivals or by visiting primary schools and organising meetings for the parents of Year 6 students who will be joining the school. She is also able to ensure that there is good communication with parents through letters and phone calls in Czech telling them about important events in school. We have found that once parents understand what is happening at school they are in most cases keen to support their child and attendance at parents' evenings especially has improved greatly. It is also important to recognise that many of the Roma parents may have had very negative or little experience of school themselves – a number of our parents are not literate. We therefore tried to encourage them to come into school for fun events, such as music shows and the Roma festival, which proved successful. We have also offered them support through such things as ESOL classes and drop-in sessions with our Czech worker for help with benefits and job applications.

Raising aspirations and achievement

Once we had developed our understanding of our Roma students and their attendance had improved, we realised that this was not enough and that we needed to do more in order to raise their achievement. I had noticed the low expectations of Roma students at schools in the Czech Republic and this was reinforced when a number of our students who were predicted

$\rightarrow$

very good GCSEs said that what they wanted to be were hairdressers or mechanics. When we told their parents they had the potential to go to university, they were nearly in tears. We realised that we had to do more to raise students' aspirations, so last year we introduced a student mentoring programme with some of the older Roma students mentoring some of the younger students and we are looking to develop this further this year. We also identify students with potential in the lower years and take them to visit universities. We are now looking to develop this further by getting university students to mentor some of our older students and getting some of our Roma students who have done well and gone on to higher study to come back and speak to the younger students. In addition, we noticed that some of the students who were joining us from primary school were struggling due to their lack of literacy in Czech or Slovak so we are looking at introducing Czech lessons at school and also going into some of our feeder primaries to tackle these literacy issues at an earlier stage. I hope that you have found our experiences useful and have learnt something. If you are interested in learning more, there are some sources of further information/support listed at the end of the chapter.

3. Language diversity and learning – some myths and misconceptions

This brief, final section is intended to raise some questions about the best approaches to teaching pupils with EAL. You may already have experience of teaching English to pupils or adults in other countries, which is normally defined as **English as a Foreign Language (EFL)** teaching, and you may even have done a **Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)** course. There are parallels between EFL and EAL learners and some ideas from TEFL teaching can be very useful in EAL. But, there are also important differences, as the vignettes and case studies in this chapter show. Some ideas from TEFL teaching may seem obviously appropriate, like common sense. But they may not seem to be so helpful when you understand something of the complexities of the experiences of many multilingual and EAL learners. You will read a lot about theories of language, learning and multilingualism in Chapters 2 and 3, which will develop your understanding of the needs of multilingual and EAL learners. They will also help you to see how these myths and misconceptions can sometimes be unhelpful. So, here are my 'myths and misconceptions' – we will return to them at the end of the book, in Chapter 8.

- Languages should be kept separate in the classroom, or learners will become confused (*this is sometimes called 'language interference'*).
- Pupils will 'pick English up' naturally in the classroom; they do not need to be explicitly taught (*this is sometimes called 'immersion'*).
- Language diversity is a 'problem', and it is better if pupils speak English all the time in classrooms.
- It is impossible, or very difficult, to learn a new language beyond a young age (*this is sometimes called 'the critical period'*).

25

Learning Outcomes Review

This introductory chapter has provided you with background information about the pupils who are categorised as multilingual and EAL learners, and their families and communities. This should have helped you gain awareness of the history of language and cultural diversity in England, and the diverse range of experiences and knowledge that multilingual and EAL learners bring to their primary classrooms. One of the aims of this is to help you think about the importance of recognising and reflecting on your own views on language diversity and ethnicity for you as a primary teacher.

Self-assessment questions

1. In what ways do you think your own identity might influence your views and perceptions of the pupils you teach? Think about specific situations where this may have happened.
2. Why do you think it is important to understand something about the family backgrounds of the pupils you teach? (You will read more about this in Chapter 3.)
3. Think about the teachers mentioned in each of the vignettes in this chapter. Following what you have read in this chapter, if you had been the teacher for any of the pupils described, would you have responded in the same way, or might you have done something different?
4. Think of a group of multilingual and EAL learners you know. Which of the categories introduced in section 1.2 would your learners fit into? Write a brief vignette of one of your learners, along the lines of those in the section.
5. What distinctive factors influence the learning and achievement of Gypsy and Roma pupils? How do you think stereotypes in the media may affect their success in school?

Suggested answers to
Activity 1.5 – Understanding diversity

Child	Strengths	Needs
Safina	Strong speaking and listening skills Supportive home and community Diverse experiences of learning at home	Sustained support in developing writing skills in English
Stefan	Strong literacy in home language Opportunities to develop expertise and take exams in home language	Continued support in developing writing skills in English
Jan	Teacher who is interested in understanding the problems he is facing Positive attitude in class to recognising pupils' home languages	Personalised provision to develop his skills in English

Joseph	Good level of English language Loving relationship with mother	Understanding (on the part of his teachers) of the broader cultural background of Sierra Leone Personalised provision to help him catch up
Radia	Supportive home and family background Positive attitudes in school towards EAL pupils	Improved communication between home and school
Hamida	Supportive home and family background Positive attitudes in school towards EAL pupils	Greater awareness on the part of the school of cultural and religious factors underpinning Hamida's experiences

Further Reading

Gussin Paley, V. (2000) *White Teacher*, 3rd edn. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
This a personal account of teaching in a school which becomes increasingly diverse. Paley reflects on the way that even simple terminology can convey unintended meanings. She vividly describes what her pupils taught her over the years about herself as a 'white teacher'.

Hayes, D. (2011) Establishing your own teaching identity. In: Hansen, A. (ed.) *Primary Professional Studies* (pp. 118–33). Exeter: Learning Matters.
This chapter encourages readers to think about their own values, motivation and self-identity, and the impact these have on becoming a teacher.

Sources of information about Gypsy Roma pupils:
http://www.natt.org.uk/ – National Association of Teachers of Travellers
http://www.grtleeds.co.uk/ – Leeds Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement Service
http://grthm.natt.org.uk/ – Gipsy Roma Traveller History Month
http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Norway-to-Russia/Roma.html – information about Roma
http://qualirom.uni-graz.at/home.html – Roma language teaching resources
http://www.romaninet.com/?sec=home – Roma language and culture resources
http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/# – Manchester University's Roma resources, including excellent language DVD link

References

BBC (2007) *Multilingualism* http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/yourvoice/multilingualism2.shtml (archived and accessed 17 November 2014).

Datta, M. (2007) *Bilinguality and Biliteracy: Principles and Practice*, 2nd edn. London: Continuum.

Department for Education (DfE) (2011) *The National Strategies: New Arrivals Excellence Programme: CPD Modules*. London: DfE. http://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/ NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/nswsneapcpdmodule0004108.pdf (accessed 19 September 2014).

Gussin Paley, V. (2000) *White Teacher*, 3rd edn. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hall, D., Griffiths, D., Haslam, L. and Wilkin, Y. (2001) *Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Pupils: Living in Two Languages*, 2nd edn. London: David Fulton.

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) (2013) *The Latest Statistics about EAL Learners in our Schools*. Reading: NALDIC. http://www.naldic.org.uk/research-and-information/eal-statistics/eal-pupils (accessed 17 November 2014).

Wikipedia (2013) *Arbeia* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arbeia (accessed 17 November 2014).

Wikipedia (2014) *Bengali Language* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengali_language#Geographical_distribution (accessed 17 November 2014).