

# **ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITY LANGUAGES:**

## **A Statement**

COMMISSION  
FOR RACIAL  
EQUALITY



## COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

The Commission for Racial Equality was set up by the Race Relations Act, 1976 with the duties of:

- (a) working towards the elimination of discrimination;
- (b) promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups generally; and
- (c) keeping under review the working of the Act, and, when required by the Secretary of State or when it otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit to the Secretary of State proposals for amending it.

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## A Statement

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## ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITY LANGUAGES: A STATEMENT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT IS TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION AND CONSULTATION DIRECTED AT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME TO CATER FOR THE LINGUISTIC NEEDS OF THE ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a result of the 1976 draft European Economic Communities (EEC) Directive on the Education of Migrant Children mother-tongue teaching has become the subject of open debate. The British reaction has focused largely on Article 3 of the Directive (July 1977) which states:

Member states, shall, in accordance with their national circumstances and legal systems, and in co-operation with states of origin, take appropriate measures to promote, in co-ordination with normal education, teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin for the children referred to in Article one (i.e. member states).

- 1.2 The then Secretary of State, Mr. Carlisle, in his opening speech at the European Communities Colloquium of the Bedford Pilot Project on Mother-Tongue Teaching (24 March 1980) stressed that the DES "intend to apply the Directive without regard to the country of origin of the children concerned."

- 1.3 In 1976, the Community Relations Commission (one of the two predecessors of the CRE) welcomed all the articles of the draft on both linguistic and cultural grounds:

Evidence from other countries . . . suggests that the learning of a second language is important when the pupil has a thorough knowledge of and ability to use his mother tongue . . . language is an integral part of both culture and religion and in order for the education system to carry out its responsibility in what is officially recognised as a plural society, the languages of minority groups cannot be left to haphazard support.(1)

- 1.4 Although education for a multi-racial society has made some headway, the linguistic diversity of British society has so far been either ignored or viewed as a liability rather than as a national resource. Furthermore, the potentiality and positive aspects of bilingual education programmes (English and mother tongue or language of the ethnic minority communities) have not merited significant attention either.

- 1.5 While debate and discussion have continued both nationally and locally, the work of voluntary classes in teaching the mother tongues of different ethnic minority communities has persisted. Long before any public attention was given to the teaching of mother tongues, these voluntary classes had already been in existence for two decades or more. Mostly financed and initiated by the communities themselves, such efforts warrant a serious response from the educational system, although it is recognised that the financial constraints at the present time will influence the pace and timing of that response.

- 1.6 Research evidence in the Fifties and early Sixties did not appear to be positive on bilingualism.(2) Peal's and Lambert's discussions (1963) were inconclusive in that variables such as social background and educational opportunities were not controlled in the researches and little attention was given to determine how bilingual or monolingual the children were.



However, over the past twenty years, later research has yielded positive results, as for example shown in Canada (Peal and Lambert 1962), Singapore (Torrance, Gowa, Wu and Aliotti 1970), Switzerland (Balkan 1970), South Africa (Ianco-Worrall 1972), Israel and New York (Ben-Zeer 1972), Western Canada (Cummins and Galestan 1973) and an eight-year study from Montreal (Scott 1973).

1.7 Against this varied background of research contribution, educational self-help, linguistic diversity or bi-lingualism, the significance of the teaching of the languages of the ethnic minorities to the *whole educational outlook* of the UK can no longer be ignored.

1.8 While the supreme importance of fluency in English is recognised, nevertheless it is necessary for central government, local authorities, unions and professional associations to come to terms with the added dimension of linguistic diversity as a feature of educational provision.

## 2. MODERN BRITISH SOCIETY

### Linguistic Diversity

2.1 Immigration to the UK from the New Commonwealth for the past 25-30 years has led to a diversity of languages never previously experienced in the country. In addition to the political refugees from the Eastern European countries who brought with them Polish, Latvian, Ukrainian; the Jewish communities also contributed in earlier decades to the linguistic diversity of the United Kingdom. And over the years the old indigenous linguistic minorities of the Welsh, Irish and Scots have also made an impact on British Society.

2.2 Two recent surveys have further verified not only the diversity but also the range within the diversity. Prof. Harold Rosen's survey (1977) and the ILEA (1981) census both confirm the rich linguistic diversity of the society as a 20th century phenomenon in the UK. Prof. Rosen's survey of 4,600 pupils in 28 schools on "Languages and Dialects of London School Children" concludes that 55 languages other than English exist in London including:

Greek, Turkish, Italian, Gujerati, Spanish, Cantonese, French Creoles, German, Portuguese, Bengali, Punjabi, French, Yoruba, Arabic, Hindi and Urdu.

2.3 The "1981 ILEA Census of those ILEA pupils for whom English was not a first language" identifies a total of 131 different languages on the school returns. Twelve foreign languages constitute the first language of more than a thousand pupils: Bengali, Turkish, Greek, Spanish, Gujerati, Punjabi, Italian, Urdu, Chinese, French, Arabic and Portuguese. Between them they account for 82.6% of pupils speaking a language other than English.

Other cities such as Leicester have a range of languages including Latvian, Ukrainian, Polish, Chinese, Punjabi, Gujerati, Bengali, Italian.

Although these surveys are based on the inner cities the phenomenon is by no means confined to metropolitan areas alone. In Bexley, Kent, for example, there are no fewer than seventeen languages and dialects.

### Linguistic Cultural Continuity and Voluntary Classes

2.4 It is significant that the languages brought to the UK by these different communities continued to exist despite the essentially monolingual attitude of the host society.



- 2.5 In the absence of any government provision, the various linguistic communities from the New Commonwealth have had an enterprising record of fifteen to twenty years or more of voluntary part-time mother tongue teaching in the UK, not to mention the still earlier examples of Jewish and Polish classes.
- 2.6 Since the Second World War, the oldest voluntary language class is possibly the Polish group in Leicester which was established in 1950. New classes in different languages are continually being established, and the general impression is one of demand exceeding supply, except in towns such as Bury where there is a falling roll in some Asian classes owing to migration to find employment or the lack of demand or finance.
- 2.7 However, there have been expressions of concern in some quarters over the difficulty of recruiting adolescent children to these mother tongue classes, with one of the main reasons identified as the low esteem and lack of status of these languages:—

At present the children themselves do not want to learn their mother tongue when it is seen as an inferior language to French, German or any other modern language on the timetable, and when it involves extra time being spent in the evenings, or at week-ends, with few or no facilities available.(3)

- 2.8 Not all the classes have a continuous history. Some of them may appear and then disappear again but the sense of need to maintain a language persists. Similar instances in the US and Canada serve as comparable examples of the continued existence and value of language loyalty (see Fishman et al).
- 2.9 Some classes are held in schools with accommodation provided free of charge after school hours; others at weekends in temples, mosques, churches, community centres and local association premises. Most classes are held weekly, but a few, such as the Italian classes in Scunthorpe, and many Koran classes meet three times a week.
- 2.10 Italian and Spanish classes are mostly financed by their governments. About 70% of the Chinese language classes are supplied with books or small grants from the Hong Kong Government Offices in the UK. A small percentage receive some financial assistance but the vast majority are self-financed.
- 2.11 Most teachers are volunteers, with only a very small percentage benefiting from subsidised or salaried posts. The fee, if charged at all, can range from 5p a lesson for one class in Bolton to £10.00 a year for a Chinese language class in London.
- 2.12 Enrolment may vary from five to hundreds with an age range from 3½ to 16+ and in some instances even adults. The student/teacher ratio ranges from 10-1 to over 60-1. The third largest ethnic minority community, the Chinese, for example, has an estimated 60 language classes of varying sizes throughout the country.
- 2.13 Although all classes teach reading and writing in the mother tongue or languages chosen by the community, cultural activities such as dance, music and painting are also sometimes encouraged. English language for adults or tutorials for school children are also ancillary activities in quite a number of them. The Ukrainian classes in Bradford, for example, teach both history and geography as well as language.
- 2.14 The secular or religious nature of the classes depends largely on the character of the communities concerned. If religious teaching has first priority then language teaching becomes



secondary. In Blackburn, where 9% of the Asian population is Moslem, 13 mosques supply religious instruction in Arabic. In Preston, two mosques teach both Urdu and Arabic to a student population of 920 with 34 teachers of whom only two are paid. This service was established in 1966.(4)

2.15 Such linguistic maintenance may be attributed to the following reasons:

- 1) to enable children to develop and communicate with their parents effectively;
- 2) to ensure positive esteem and pride in their cultural and traditional heritage;
- 3) to facilitate religious instruction in some instances (Moslem, Sikh or Chinese Christian);
- 4) to develop a bilingual ability.

#### **Community Self-Help Education**

2.16 These continuing efforts by the communities to educate their own younger generation demonstrate not only a clearly felt need but also a serious desire to meet these needs. Initiated by concerned parents or associations, these voluntary classes outside school hours are also an important part of community education.

Voluntary schemes therefore exist in the UK for two reasons: because of the concern of minority communities to play a role in the education of their children and because of the lack of provision by the local authorities.

2.17 The community's self-assertion provides powerful motivation. Some groups within the various linguistic communities have in fact stopped soliciting help from government agencies and are instead advocating a strong self-help stance.

2.18 But the majority of the people contacted in our regional consultations on mother-tongue teaching expressed the conviction that the local education authorities should assume responsibility for providing these classes:

Participants . . . . . at the Consultation were concerned that LEAs should be made to realise that their responsibility under the EEC Directive was being carried out for them by voluntary groups to whom the LEAs should therefore be prepared to offer financial aid and other resources. Even in the event of state provision being introduced, the contribution of the voluntary sector would still be both necessary and desirable, so that financial assistance by the LEAs should be maintained.(5)

Both central and local government have yet to respond to these challenges.

#### **Problems and Needs**

2.19 Most of these voluntary classes, regardless of linguistic background, and whether religious or secular, are variously concerned with the problems of cramped premises, over-crowding, lack of resources to develop appropriate materials, transport problems to and from classes and difficulties in getting teachers.



2.20 The need for better accommodation was one of the major pleas of the 69 Chinese teachers interviewed in the CRE study on part-time Chinese language classes (CRE 1980-81). Thirty-one teachers in this study would like newer and bigger premises. This is also reflected in the response from about 300 voluntary mother-tongue classes and individuals consulted by the CRE from January to July, 1981.(6)

2.21 The lack of resources for developing teaching materials was repeatedly cited as a major difficulty in the series of regional consultations. Available texts are often out of date and inappropriate. Although some local groups have produced teaching materials, some of which are good, the quality of production often suffers because of the absence of proper equipment such as typewriters for their various scripts.

Nearly half of the 69 Chinese teachers from the survey considered the available books inadequate. The more frequently mentioned criticisms were that, the subject matter was not varied enough and that they needed different books for different levels. About two thirds of these teachers thought the other teaching aids and materials were also inadequate for their needs.

2.22 Staffing and teacher training were of general concern among all groups consulted. Voluntary teachers require training in teaching methodology appropriate to the teaching of mother tongues in a bilingual context; skills in the production of teaching material both written and audio/visual, and how to negotiate with the mainstream sector and local authorities. (See also Teacher Education).

2.23 In the absence of access to classes, some families have encouraged their children to speak their mother tongues at home. Thus oracy is often maintained but not literacy.

Children often experience problems in travelling long distances to classes, especially when passing through areas of racial tension.

### 3. BILINGUAL ISSUES

#### Language and the Community

3.1 These languages are not confined merely to the home but flourish in wider everyday exchanges in the UK. The dynamism of exchange and development are vital aspects of these languages as living experiences.

3.2 For example, wherever there are large groups of Punjabi speakers such as in Southall, we have large groups of Asian Punjabi speaking families forming a community of speakers outside the immediate family. The opportunity to use these languages outside the family, for communication, for shopping, for recreation and for finding out what is happening in the world, is an additional incentive.

3.3 Such linguistic dynamism is not limited to languages enjoying a long written tradition. The existence of West Indian Creole is also part of the linguistic and cultural reality. The use of such a language does not depend on the existence of a written form, but on the demand for it as a means of communication in a live situation.



## Bilingual Experience

- 3.4 The existence of such speech communities indicates a historical bilingual phenomenon among linguistic minorities in the UK.
- 3.5 At some stage of their life, though not necessarily in a consistent way, children from ethnic minority homes have some kind of bilingual experience. This facility, be it of whatever combination: home/school; home/society; ethnic minority community/society at large, should not be ignored by the educational system.
- 3.6 It is in this context that the comments of the Home Affairs Select Committee should be seen:
- It is common ground among parents and educators that it is in the best interests of those children who do not speak and read English to learn it as thoroughly as possible. Ability to speak and read English is in practice a necessary pre-requisite for full participation in British life, whatever the recent tribunal decisions that it should not be made a necessary pre-requisite for certain jobs.<sup>(7)</sup>
- 3.7 The Commission would not disagree with this statement as it stands. But we do not accept that the argument for competence in English is an argument against the teaching of minority community languages in our schools. The teaching of minority languages, on the other hand, should not be allowed to militate against the effective learning of English. In the plural society which Britain is today, English and the mother tongue have a place, both in the home and in the school.
- 3.8 Children from ethnic minority homes are most likely already bidialectal or bilingual before they start their schooling. They may be used to listening and speaking two or three Asian or other languages in addition to the English which they acquire from their environment, for example, through television and playgroups. Such a background should be regarded as an important resource, especially where teachers are strongly committed to 'child-centred' education.
- 3.9 Such a consideration involves regarding the child as a rich resource since language is not merely a code but a tradition as well. In recognising, acknowledging and making use of the children's bilingual background and identity, the teacher ensures that their capacity to learn is also increased and extended.
- 3.10 Furthermore, the different languages which a child speaks and understands should be used by our schools as a *positive* resource. The languages brought into the classroom should be seen as a challenge to develop the linguistic skills of the class as a whole. This can be assisted by teachers learning one or more of the minority languages of the children they teach. Bilingualism can assist in the development of skills in English, as well as enriching the culture of all those experiencing it.
- 3.11 Moreover, it is crucial, too, to recognise that the process of learning these languages is not only a matter of acquiring linguistic skills, but an educational experience which liberates the learner from parochialism. The process of learning another language is also an apprenticeship in 'empathy', in seeing how the world looks from someone else's viewpoint.
- 3.12 The extension of the bilingual context from home to school is an acknowledgement too



of the existence of other *languages* in this society. In a *multi-racial society* the recognition of such languages would enable the ethnic minorities to be consistently themselves in their home, at school and in society at large.

- 3.13 At present mother tongue and English exist in separate situations. Mother tongues are to be found in the voluntary classes, in the home, on the street in a few districts; while English is the formal language of school and society at large. Efforts should be made in the maintained sector to close the gaps of linguistic separatism, divisiveness and compartmentalisation. The languages spoken at home should also be taught in the day schools in the modern language departments.

#### Which Languages Should be Taught

#### 3.14 Selection and Choice

These languages may be the mother tongues actually spoken at home or community languages which are chosen to be studied as literary languages or the medium for instruction.

- 3.15 Throughout Asian history groups of people have expressed a desire to learn another language which they see functionally more relevant than their own. Asian children who speak Punjabi at home may well want to learn Urdu instead of Punjabi because this was the traditional language of learning for their parents. Those from the East Punjab may choose to study Hindi for religious reasons. A minority of Cantonese-speaking Chinese children may choose to learn Mandarin which is the national spoken language of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan.

- 3.16 In responding to the multi-lingual pattern of the community, schools should develop curricula capable of catering for such preferences.

#### 3.17 Concentration and Dispersal

In districts with dense settlement of minorities from one particular part of the world, most schools might have substantial numbers of children with common mother tongues, e.g. the Indian languages such as Punjabi or Hindi, or the Cypriot languages, Greek and Turkish. In such cases, the aim might be to introduce a teaching facility in these high-concentration languages into the majority of local schools. Where demand for a language is small in terms of an individual school but substantial when the local education authority's area is considered as a whole, the teaching facility might be introduced into just one or two schools in the area and this fact should be given wide publicity in the local press and media, so that parents would know they could, if they wished, send their children there.

- 3.18 Where the numbers wanting tuition in one language in any one authority area are inadequate to justify a special class, then the authority might find it difficult to make special provision. However, numbers might well be adequate between neighbouring authorities, and in such circumstances, individual authorities should explore the position with their neighbours, with the aim of introducing reciprocal pooling arrangements, in which the transition would be made as easy as possible for the families concerned. Such pooling arrangements often exist between authorities for particular forms of special education and the introduction of such arrangements to deal with language diversity should not create too great a problem.



## Assumptions and Misconceptions

### Attitudes in society

- 3.19 In a strong monolingual or monolectally committed society (in spite of the historical presence of Welsh, Irish and Scots), the concept of any form of bilingualism is rejected. At the turn of the century, children in Wales were still physically punished for speaking in Welsh at school. In Ireland the native language was suppressed until independence.
- 3.20 Furthermore the development of English as the international lingua franca has reinforced such an outlook. The dominance of English may be an obstruction to the recognition of other languages. Consequently, an important first step in acknowledging the existence of other languages in contemporary British society is the national acceptance of the idea of bilingualism.

### Research Evidence

- 3.21 A number of researches have indicated that language learning does not take place in the bilingual context without acquiring the attitudes of the target language community i.e. English (see Lambert, Ervin-Tripp, Haugen). If the mother tongue is regarded as inferior in any way, progress will be impeded, and resentment or undesirable behaviour will result (Haugen, 1956). Bilingual children when placed in alien circumstances characterised by strain and conflict, may suffer in attainment in both their mother tongues and target languages. This can be a major hindrance to the provision of genuine equality of opportunity in education.
- 3.22 In addition to the society's inherent reluctance to accept or acknowledge bilingualism as a linguistic, social and cultural reality, there are also some wrong assumptions among educators about mother-tongue teaching and bilingualism.

The generalisation that bilingual children are handicapped because they cannot develop in one consistent system of verbalising is an over-simplification of several factors. This is only true if the child has to *change* from one language to another while no harm is done if a second language is added while the first continues in operation.

- 3.23 Recent studies seem to reveal a close relationship between language and thought, although language is not to be regarded as *equivalent* to thought and intelligence. Examples of these are Chomsky's language universals (1965) in which he developed the theory that all human beings have an innate device for language learning, Dell Hymes 'Communicative Competence' (1971) which emphasises the situationally appropriate usage of language, Bruner's 'Analytic Competence' (1975) in which everyday ordinary discussion is the precursor to higher meanings and abstract thought, Piaget and Vygotsky's theories of language and thought. There may be a distinctive relationship between language development and cognitive ability but a low intelligence is not to be equated with slow progress in language learning. In J B Carrol's language aptitude tests, for example, it is clear that intelligence is not a major single factor in learning languages but a combination of several skills including rote memory, mimicry, phonetic discrimination and the ability to develop meanings inductively. The often crude implications of the assumption that 'You do not speak English, therefore you are stupid', can trace its origin to this confused equation between intelligence and language learning and the society's traditional rejection of any language other than English.



3.24 In the integrationist approach which has been so far adopted, there is sometimes a tendency to see mother tongue or first language instruction as undermining and interfering with the teachers' efforts to teach children English. Parents, eager for the success of their children, and responding to institutional pressure try to use English in communicating with their children at home as they feel that the use of mother tongue or first language may confuse their children and reduce their chances of success. Such negative views of the effects of bilingualism are sometimes based on misconceptions regarding the central role which language plays in children's educational development and the specific ways in which bilingualism affects this development.

3.25 Such assumptions and misconceptions reflect two of the major fears: one, the possible creation of linguistic ghettos, and two, the concern that language maintenance in schools, other than Modern European Languages, will retard the development of English.

3.26 Consequently, the society's traditional rejection of bilingualism coupled with the misconceptions of some teachers and administrators, reinforces the view of linguistic diversity being a liability rather than an asset.

3.27 Earlier negative evidence against bilingualism often based on inadequate research was also the result of failure to take into consideration the poor performance and emotional conflicts experienced by ethnic minority children as a consequence of the school's rejection of their mother tongue and culture.

3.28 In a large number of studies over the past 20 years some of which are cited in the Introduction (I), however, the positive effects of bilingualism have been identified in five areas:—

- (a) ability to analyse and become aware of language;
- (b) overall academic language skills (e.g. reading and writing);
- (c) general conceptual development;
- (d) creative thinking;
- (e) sensitivity to the communication needs of the listener.(8)

3.29 Major evidence from North America offers the following conclusions which are reviewed in J Cummins' studies:(9)

- (1) the results of research into bilingual education programme show that minority children's mother tongue or first language proficiency can be promoted in school at no cost to the development of proficiency of the major language.

Furthermore, it must not be ignored that concepts play a central role in the children's overall intellectual and academic development and once these concepts have been developed in LI they can be easily transferred to L2, given adequate exposure to L2.

- (2) the development of full bilingualism in minority children through promoting LI proficiency both in the home and the school is a positive force in children's academic and intellectual development and,
- (3) misconceptions about bilingualism in the inappropriate use of IQ tests can act in a self-fulfilling manner to turn this potentially positive force into an educational liability.



- 3.30 In the UK, the EEC Sponsored Bedford Project in teaching Italian and Punjabi, and the DES Bradford Project on Rising-Fives also confirm the positive effects.

In the Bradford project, although the pattern of response from the children is complex, the results favour the bilingual curriculum (Punjabi and English). In particular the results demonstrate the positive effect of the bilingual curriculum in developing the child's use of mother tongue and English, in facilitating the child's general adjustment to formal education and in supporting the bilingual curriculum within the first school ethos. The implication of this is particularly relevant to the overall educational development of the children.

- 3.31 On the other hand, the Home Affairs Select Committee Report observed:

'It remains a matter of fine judgement as to whether children gain from such teaching. Research and pilot projects, partly funded by the EEC in Bedford and Bradford, and one about to start in ILEA, may yield results, but they are unlikely to be conclusive and, as the Department (DES) observe, the debate in this country is still at a very early stage.'

- 3.32 The Commission would not accept this limited view. If more evidence is required, then there should be continuing and increased support of action-oriented pilot projects in this country. In many other countries bilingualism is the general practice in schools. In the many countries where English is taught as a standard second language, evidence does not suggest that this impairs command of the native tongue. A more progressive approach is needed in Britain to overcome the monolingual attitudes of the past.

## 4. STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

### 4.1 Language Education

It is important that language education in a non-specialist and general sense should permeate all language teaching (ESL, Modern Language, Ethnic Minority Community Language) as well as subject teaching. In fact, there is a gathering momentum in many schools for the inclusion of 'awareness of language' in the curriculum.<sup>(10)</sup> Only through such courses can we hope to provide a meeting place in the curriculum for the discussion of language issues that cut across mother-tongue boundaries and bring teachers of languages and specialist subjects together in joint teaching projects.

- 4.2 With specific reference to bilingual education, such a pervasive language education programme should embrace several aspects:

- (a) an awareness of the linguistic diversity of Britain's multi-racial society;
- (b) a knowledge of both the cultural and linguistic characteristics of these languages;
- (c) a recognition that these languages should have a place in formal education and,
- (d) a basic knowledge of some of the misconceptions about bilingual education as outlined above.

### Teaching Objectives

- 4.3 The specific objectives of teaching the languages of the ethnic minority communities should be made clear so that effective training can be realised. Three positions can be outlined:



- (i) to teach mother tongue to native speakers e.g. dialectal or standard form of first language;
- (ii) to teach it as a second language to non-speakers e.g. standard form of first language;
- (iii) to use and develop it in bilingual programmes e.g. direct input.

With these positions in mind, the objectives of teaching these languages could be categorised as follows:

#### 4.4 (a) Promotion

There should be a programme of teaching the mother tongue in both oral and written forms and the promotion of the culture throughout the formal education system from infant to Higher Education.

#### 4.5 (b) Direct Input (both as teaching medium and resource)

- (i) There should be provision for the use of mother tongue and target language (English) as the dual media of teaching English as a second language (ESL) as well as other subjects. One example could be the use of mother tongue for children who have arrived late in this country to facilitate and speed up learning.
- (ii) the actual incorporation of mother tongue as both a direct and supportive element for learning in bilingual projects.

#### 4.6 (c) Immersion

The use of mother tongue in bilingual education programmes like the US model of providing education in the vernacular in the initial stages of schooling and then introducing English by degrees.

#### 4.7 (d) Facilitation/Transition

The use of mother tongue to facilitate the transition from home to school especially at the infant and nursery stage.

#### 4.8 (e) As Community Languages of the UK (not foreign languages)

The teaching of such languages which should be made available to all children and adults who would like to learn such languages and not by virtue of their ethnic background only. In this sense, they are not foreign languages but languages of the various communities in the UK.

#### 4.9 (f) Vocational Consideration

Consideration should be given to the vocational aspect of these languages in both training and work situations, in education, commerce and industry, so as to accelerate the learning of new skills.



- 4.10 Parent and teacher education should be activities worked out in close co-ordination with these objectives.

A general enlightenment programme on matters which concern parents (such as the assurance of a non-separatist approach) could also be devised to help them to participate actively in the education of their children.

**(a) Teacher Education**

**4.11 Teachers of Voluntary Mother-tongue Classes.**

Teacher education is an exceptionally important area for future development.

- 4.12 At present virtually all the teachers are volunteers, and although their academic qualifications are varied and may be extremely high they are not specifically qualified and trained as language teachers.(11)

- 4.13 The question of ethnic minority members with qualifications from their countries of origin but which are not recognised by the DES should also be examined.

- 4.14 They need short part-time courses. A pilot course drawn up by training institutions and voluntary teachers would be valuable. As most of them are fully employed elsewhere, a full-time course would be out of the question.

**(b) In-Service Teacher Training**

- 4.15 The great decline in new appointments in the schools gives greater importance to in-service education.

- 4.16 Local Education Authority courses and school-based courses during term time would help to train both teachers of English and teachers of other mother tongues who are interested in this area of teaching. Here it is vital to provide both language education in the more general sense as discussed in 4.1 and up-dated language training with specific reference to the linguistic background of the children concerned in the maintained school sector.

- 4.17 Serious consideration should be given to the possibility of enabling some of the interested individuals among the estimated 4000 to 5000 ethnic minority teachers in the maintained sector to transfer to mother-tongue teaching or bilingual courses.

**(c) Initial Teacher Training**

- 4.18 The objectives of initial training for teachers should be clarified according to whether the goal is:

(1) training for mother-tongue teaching;

(2) training for teaching languages of ethnic minorities as second languages;

(3) training for bilingual education, in curriculum development and teaching methodology;

(4) or training for language awareness for the general teaching qualifications, i.e. BEd., PGCE.



- 4.19 Where a BEd degree, offered by colleges and polytechnics, has a modular structure, this could lend a new flexibility to the development of specialist options within which the above areas could be incorporated.
- 4.20 In the PGCE which is being taken by substantial numbers of young teachers, the first degree syllabus could take into consideration the subsequent teaching subjects of these candidates. For example, a student with a BA degree in Modern European Languages should have some background knowledge of the languages of the ethnic minority communities.
- 4.21 At present no facilities exist for young people from ethnic minorities to get specialist training as teachers of the languages of the ethnic minority communities. In this respect, the CRE has initiated a preliminary meeting with eight teacher training institutions to explore the feasibility of such training.
- 4.22 However, two aspects of training should be borne in mind. It should be related to a professional promotion structure with the normal professional mobility to cater for the placement of the qualified teacher in a detached multi-cultural service, for example.
- 4.23 The training in language should also be extended to educational psychologists and clinical psychologists, who are concerned with testing and assessing children from ethnic minorities. The wrong labelling of ethnic minority language children as 'low ability' or even 'mentally deficient' on the basis of tests administered in their weaker language will remain a real possibility so long as issues relating to the educational development of minority language children continue to be neglected in the training of teachers, psychologists and counsellors.

#### 4.24 The Role of Parents

Positive home support in both general language education and the learning of mother tongue is vital to the cognitive and linguistic development of the children. As good models of speech and verbal exchange, parents have a significant contribution to make to mother-tongue teaching and bilingual education.

- 4.25 The level of home support should be raised for the mutual benefit of both parents and children in oracy and literacy. Adult literacy classes could fulfil the need for those parents who require such compensatory education. A general enlightenment programme on matters which concern them, such as some of the misconceptions discussed above, could also be devised to help them to participate actively in the overall education of their children.

#### Resources

- 4.26 The lack of resources for developing teaching materials is a major difficulty which was mentioned again and again in our regional consultations.<sup>(12)</sup> Available texts are too often out of date and inappropriate. Although some voluntary groups have produced teaching materials, the quality of production varies because of the absence of proper facilities, e.g. typefaces in appropriate scripts. Local authorities are beginning to produce materials (e.g. the ILEA's 'The World in a City' and Birmingham's 'Let us Learn'),<sup>(13)</sup> but these are few and far between. Scarcity of funds is a continual restriction.
- 4.27 A constraint on the introduction of minority language classes in the maintained sector can often be the non-availability of teachers. There would appear to be three ready ways to overcome this difficulty. Often minority community teachers can be found in schools teaching other subjects; they might be encouraged to teach their mother tongue instead of, or as well



as, their current subject. Teachers might be recruited from the voluntary classes. Parents might be encouraged to teach full or part-time. In such classes, competence in the language might be considered as good a qualification as possession of a certificate, with adequate support and assistance provided, as necessary. In addition, more members of the minority communities should be recruited into the teaching profession while, more native-English and other language speakers might be encouraged to learn the minority languages.

#### Teaching Other Subjects

- 4.28 The Commission would of course not advocate that minority languages should replace English as the everyday language in schools, nor are we prepared at the time to advocate that other subjects, e.g. geography or the sciences, should be examined in languages other than English.
- 4.29 However, this is not to say that no other subjects should be taught in minority languages, especially when the learning process could be accelerated. On the contrary, to get adequate proficiency in, and respect for, the minority languages, they can be used as a medium in learning other subjects. Bilingualism will not become a reality if learning the minority languages is restricted to a very small number of classes a week, while every other class is taught exclusively in English. The challenge to the curriculum is to be able to accommodate *some* teaching in both majority and minority languages.

#### Examinations

- 4.30 Which languages are going to be examined has a very major impact on the curriculum of all schools. A relatively short-term aim should be for a large number of minority languages to be provided by several boards at CSE, 'O' and 'A' levels.
- 4.31 The Schools Council exercise on Assessment in a Multi-Cultural Society will be reviewing examination provision at 16+ to see how far this meets, or can be developed to meet, the needs of multi-cultural society. Three of the ten areas chosen for study in the first instance are languages of the ethnic minority communities in Britain – Hindi, Urdu and Modern Greek. The aim is to develop examinations which promote the maintenance and development of the mother tongue and culture and which will be accessible to all pupils regardless of their cultural background.
- 4.32 Similarly, minority languages should be introduced as examination subjects in further education. The Council for National Academic Awards, the Business and Technical Education Councils and similar validating bodies, should recognise the importance of minority languages when developing examination subjects and syllabuses.

### 5. OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND RESPONSES

#### Bullock Report

- 5.1 Two recent documents, the Bullock Report,<sup>(14)</sup> and the EEC Directive, have advocated the teaching of the languages of the ethnic minorities.

Chapter 20 of the Bullock Report states:—

In a linguistically conscious nation in the modern world, we should see mother tongue as an asset, as something to be nurtured, and one of the agencies that should nurture it is the school. Certainly the school should adopt a positive attitude to its pupils' bilingualism and whenever possible should help maintain and deepen their knowledge of their mother tongue.



Furthermore, it is also noted in the same chapter that 'confidence and ability in this language (i.e. mother tongue) will help children to the same qualities in their spoken English.'

#### DES Curriculum Advice (1981)

- 5.2 The recent DES document 'The School Curriculum' acknowledges the fact that today many pupils have a first language other than English (or Welsh):

Far more pupils than in the past have a first language which is not English or Welsh. This constitutes a valuable resource, for them and for the nation. How should mother-tongue teaching for such pupils be accommodated within modern language provision so that this resource does not wither away and the pupils may retain contacts with their own communities?

However, no DES policies have yet followed such acknowledgement.

#### EEC Directive (1977)

- 5.3 The EEC Directive on the Education of Children of Migrant Workers deals with two areas of education: the teaching of the official language and languages of the host country and the promotion of the mother-tongue and culture of the country of origin.

#### Article 3 stipulates:—

Member states shall in accordance with their national circumstances and legal systems, and in co-operation with States of origin, take appropriate measures to promote, in co-ordination with normal education, teaching of the mother-tongue and culture of the country of origin for the children referred to in Article 1.

- 5.4 Although there has been undue concern over the repatriation motive of the Directive, the EEC has clarified that it is only one of the reasons for the promotion of mother-tongue.<sup>(15)</sup> An EEC statement has extended the applicability of the Directive 'to offer nationals and children of nationals of other member states, of the countries and of non-member countries who are not covered by this Directive, better facilities for their education and training.'

- 5.5 In the UK, both the directly EEC sponsored projects, the Bedford Pilot Project (now completed): and the recent Schools Council Project (1980-1983), have included non-EEC member languages: Punjabi in the former, and Bengali and Greek in the latter.

- 5.6 The Schools Council project is preparing guides and specimen materials for teachers of pupils speaking Greek and Bengali in mainstream and voluntary mother tongue classes; the experience of working with these mother tongues is being closely monitored and documented with a view to preparing a handbook of procedures and strategies to guide teachers wishing to maintain and develop any mother tongue.

- 5.7 Further clarification and endorsement of the extended applicability of the EEC Directive was stated by the then Secretary of State, Mr. Mark Carlisle, in his opening speech at the EEC Colloquium on the Bedford Pilot Project on Mother-Tongue Teaching (24 March 1980):

First let me stress that we intend to apply the Directive without regard to country of origin of the children concerned. That means that we will be concerned about provision



for about 650,000 pupils, only a small proportion of whom will be from community countries.

- 5.8 On 25 July 1981, four years subsequent to notification, all member states were required to have taken the necessary measures to comply with this Directive in accordance with their national circumstances and legal systems. The EEC see the Directive as imposing obligations to promote mother-tongue teaching and to take appropriate administrative and legal steps. However, the DES sees such promotion as not necessarily more than further research into how the educational benefits of bilingualism can best be secured in pursuit to the suggestions of Chapter 20 of the Bullock Report.

- 5.9 Both the DES Linguistic Minorities Project (1979-82) and the Bradford Rising Fives bilingual programme (Punjabi and English 1980-81) demonstrate what the then Secretary of State stated in the same speech:—

We are in a rather different situation with regard to the last part of the Directive, on mother-tongue teaching. Because of the general integrationist approach that has been adopted, we have had little experience in this field. We therefore need to develop strategies on mother-tongue teaching and the resources — both human and material — that will enable us to pursue it.

- 5.10 It is regrettable that the Secretary of State's view does not acknowledge the long history of the voluntary provision. As no finance is allocated to implement Articles 2 and 3, the 'co-ordination with normal school' is left to the local level.

**DES Circular 5/81 — Directive of the Council of the European Community on the Education of Migrant Workers, 31 July 1981.**

- 5.11 In this circular, the DES has indicated that it sees its responsibilities under the EEC Directive as follows:—

For its part, the DES is sponsoring research related to the provision and educational implications of mother-tongue teaching, as well as taking a close interest in EC-sponsored initiatives in this country. Issues arising from the Directive are also within the terms of reference of the Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, which was set up in 1979 and is expected to submit its final report in 1983. Local education authorities and others may wish to make their views on this subject known to the Committee.

- 5.12 In the same circular, the Department sees it as the responsibility of local education authorities to explore ways in which mother-tongue teaching might be provided, whether during or outside school hours. Its scope should be extended, however, to encourage co-operation between mother-tongue teachers and the teachers responsible for the same children in ordinary schools and to provide material help such as accommodation for classes.

- 5.13 It is the Commission's view that the DES is being far too restrictive in its interpretation of the EEC Directive. The EEC would seem to share the Commission's view.<sup>(17)</sup> There is now a wealth of experience in this country on teaching mother tongues. This is true in the State sector in the case of Welsh and in the voluntary sector (and certain local authorities) in the case of European and Commonwealth languages. What is now wanted is proper provision within schools for teaching ethnic minority languages as a standard part of the modern languages curriculum.



## **Fifth Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1980-81, Racial Disadvantage**

- 5.14 The Home Affairs Select Committee Report<sup>(18)</sup> states that there can be no suggestion that the UK is under any legal obligation to provide mother-tongue teaching, particularly to those who are neither from Member States nor presumably intending to return to their own or their parents' country of origin. On the role of the Local Education Authorities, the Report concludes:

We are not convinced either that a local education authority is under any obligation to provide mother-tongue teaching or that it is necessarily in the general interest that they should do so.

- 5.15 However, the Report goes on to state that any argument in support of such provisions must be on the merits of the case:

This does not mean the case is hopeless, for many years education in some parts of Wales has been carried on wholly or partly in Welsh.

- 5.16 One positive aspect of the Report is that the Committee supports fully O and A level examinations in mother-tongues, recommending that the DES should actively encourage the incorporation of Asian languages into the modern languages curriculum and that details of such examinations be published in the annual statistics of the Department.
- 5.17 While welcoming this recommendation, the Commission are struck by the paradox of the Committee's discouragement of mother-tongue teaching by local authorities. Providing for Asian languages at examination levels involves no more than placing them in the curriculum of the secondary school. But the acceptance of mother tongues as legitimate languages of modern Britain, as the Commission recommends, means the use of the languages at all levels of schooling from infant/nursery school, through primary to secondary rather than not beginning until the secondary level. In addition provision needs to be extended to cater for pupils not sitting examinations.
- 5.18 The Committee recognises the value of the voluntary contribution, and in acknowledging rising demands, the Committee indicates a view that the work of the voluntary classes should be integrated into the normal school curriculum. Although admirable as an ultimate objective, the Commission believes that there will always be a role for voluntary self-help. More particularly, until the state system can begin to make adequate provision, it is quite clear that proper levels of aid will be required by the voluntary classes.

### **Responses by the Local Authorities**

- 5.19 A general awareness of the issue of mother-tongue teaching and bilingualism is indicated in the responses by local authorities to a Commission national survey.<sup>(19)</sup> Several authorities have made statements and produced reports on multi-cultural education such as Bolton, Cleveland, Coventry, Derbyshire, ILEA, Manchester and Nottinghamshire. Others, such as Berkshire and Sandwell, have them in preparation. The general response from authorities is one of qualified support. A small number find it arguable that the mainstream should provide for mother-tongue bilingual teaching. However, some authorities with small student populations from minority linguistic background, e.g. Durham, East Sussex, Solihull and Stockport, have expressed interest as well as a willingness to accommodate such demands should they arise.
- 5.20 Although quite a number of authorities have done some work in education for a multi-racial society, mother-tongue teaching and bilingual education are usually excluded. The authority's



main job is seen to be that of providing teachers to teach English by the Direct Method. The positive side of mother-tongue teaching is still far from recognised.

- 5.21 For authorities which have subscribed to some kind of support, there is the predominant tendency to relegate mother-tongue teaching to voluntary classes rather than to place it in the maintained sector. Most respond by providing premises free or for a small rent, but this is becoming increasingly difficult owing to financial cutbacks. In addition to this, some authorities also fund the voluntary classes: ILEA has funded ten voluntary classes which are to be monitored by the Authority. Other authorities have resorted to Urban Aid, the Inner Area Programme and Section 11 to fund salaries.
- 5.22 Coventry has appointed three full-time and two part-time mother-tongue teachers, Manchester has a staff complement of six mother-tongue teachers and Bradford has four, other authorities have mother-tongue advisers. Oldham has a pilot scheme in primary education. Nottinghamshire has embarked on a feasibility study of mother-tongue teaching and maintenance in school-time. Buckinghamshire has initiated an officers' working party.
- 5.23 While these are indications of serious thinking, initiatives tend to be mainly for the primary school, while very few secondary schools and hardly any colleges are involved.
- 5.24 However, in the GCE O level and A level examinations several languages are now offered: Bengali, Punjabi, Gujerati, Urdu, Hindi, Polish, Chinese, mastered after a short period of study at the level of competence of foreign languages. In Scotland, Strathclyde Regional Council, for example is making preparations for the teaching of Hindi, Punjabi and Chinese in selected secondary schools.

#### Commission Initiatives

- 5.25 In our evidence on the Education Bill to the Secretary of State for Education in the last Government, we urged that the Government should provide financial support for local authorities wishing to provide some tuition in the mother tongue of a substantial number of their pupils.
- 5.26 In our policy paper to local authorities on the education implications of Sec. 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act, we give paragraphs (3.14-3.18) of advice on mother-tongue teaching. On Caribbean dialects we say: 'The denial of dialect as a valid linguistic form is not only an insult to its speakers, harmful to their motivation and self-respect, but prevents the school from building on the linguistic and expressive skills many of its pupils bring with them to the classroom.'
- 5.27 In our written evidence on secondary curriculum and examinations to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, we say that: 'A considerable minority of children in secondary schools (particularly in urban areas) are bilingual and their knowledge of and ability in languages other than English should be recognised and seen by the school as a rich linguistic and intellectual resource that should be encouraged and built on. Curriculum development that encouraged mother tongue teaching would not only contribute to the self-respect of linguistic minorities but would strengthen school/community links.'
- 5.28 In September 1980 the Commission held a Mother Tongue Teaching Conference jointly with Bradford College. This focussed on issues related to mother tongue teaching and on the strategies appropriate to the implementation of ideas that would not necessarily incur additional expenditure. In October, 1980 the Commission published a statement on the EEC Directive,



which was distributed widely. This was followed by a national survey of Local Education Authorities on mother-tongue teaching in December, 1980. Between January and July 1981 eight regional consultations with voluntary classes were held, which contributed to the drafting of the Commission's official statement. The proceedings of the Conference and regional consultations have been published with financial assistance from the European Community.

## 6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### In General

- 6.1 In the interest of good race relations and equality of opportunity in education, there should be provision for teaching ethnic minority community languages through a planned programme of development.

### The Department of Education and Science

- 6.2 The DES should issue a circular to all local authorities on (1) the teaching of the ethnic minority community languages (with reference to both maintenance and active bilingualism) inviting LEAs to participate in schemes which should be evaluated and monitored; and (2) policies for taking examinations in these languages. The availability of help from Section 11, Urban Aid, Inner Area Programmes and other existing sources for mother-tongue support should be made clear.

Government should make special grant aid provisions to local authorities which provide for the teaching of ethnic minority languages and the teaching of other subjects through the medium of these languages.

### To Local Authorities

- 6.3 Local Education Authorities, as part of their commitment to the promotion of equal opportunity and good relations (Section 71, Race Relations Act 1976) should seek both educational and administrative means to teach these languages during school hours and within the school curriculum from pre-school to secondary school. This would involve:
- a) surveys of language diversity among both pupils and staff;
  - b) development of policy statements providing guidelines to schools and institutions;
  - c) the selection of criteria to set up:
    - i) School-based classes for teaching these languages in areas which have substantial linguistic concentration so that several schools in the same area could co-operate in teaching different languages;
    - ii) centre-based classes for pupils in schools where demand is more limited.
  - d) the setting up of training courses, especially in-service training for the existing mother-tongue teachers employed in the authorities and for the monolingual teachers in the mainstream;
  - e) the development of curriculum support and teaching material;



- f) encouraging and devising links with voluntary mother-tongue classes to enable both voluntary mainstream teachers to exchange experiences and participate in staff development;
- g) where numbers are insufficient in any authority to justify special classes, then authorities should establish reciprocal pooling arrangements with their neighbours.

#### **To Post-School Education**

- 6.4 Post-school education should provide opportunities for enhancing the educational and vocational stature of these languages. Further Education should consider the teaching of these languages not only at GCE 'O' and 'A' level, but also in vocational courses. Higher Education could incorporate these languages in degree programmes as well as in diploma courses. Adult Education has an important role to play in providing literacy classes in the mother tongues of the parents.

#### **To Examination Boards**

- 6.5 The various examination boards, especially the consortia of GCE and CSE Boards which are now considering what examinations should be offered under the new 16+ Examination System, should recognise the importance of ethnic minority languages as examination subjects.

#### **To Validating Boards**

- 6.6 The Council for National Academic Awards, Business Education Council, Technical Education Council and other validating bodies should devise and run courses incorporating such languages.

#### **To Teacher Unions/Professional Bodies**

- 6.7 Teacher unions and associations, possibly in conjunction with the TUC, should co-ordinate, in co-operation with the media, a language education programme aimed at promoting the idea of linguistic diversity as a national asset in the UK. Positive statements by the unions and associations on the teaching of ethnic minority languages would indicate a clear commitment to the education of ethnic minority communities in the UK.

#### **To Both Sides of Industry**

- 6.8 At the workplace, the use of minority languages could facilitate communication, develop skill and competence, enhance morale and also provide another valuable opening into markets at home and abroad.

**Note:**

For further information on this area of education please contact the officer responsible, Ming Tsow



FOOTNOTES

- 1 *Education and Community Relations*, Vol VI, No 2, CRC, 1976
- 2 As reviewed in Macnamma's *Bilingualism and Primary Education: A Study of Irish Experience*, 1966
- 3 CRE/CRC Returns on Local Mother Tongue Information, 1981
- 5 *Summary of the Main Issues of Regional Consultations With Voluntary Classes on Mother Tongue Teaching in the UK*, CRE 1981
- 6 as above
- 7 *Racial Disadvantage, Fifth Report of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee* 1981
- 8 'The Language and Cultural Issues in the Education of Minority Language Children,' J Cummins, *INTERCHANGE*, 10: 1979-80
- 9 Reviewed in 'Success for Canadian Minority Children – The Role of Mother Tongue Development,' J Cummins, OISE, Toronto, 1980
- 10 The National Congress of Language in Education based on CILT has set up a Working Group under John Trim representing Schools experimenting in such courses. Eric Hawkin has also argued for this in his *Modern Language in the Curriculum*, 1981
- 11 CRE Pilot Survey of Chinese Mother Tongue Classes 1980-81
- 12 *Summary of the Main Issues of Regional Consultations with Voluntary Classes on Mother Tongue Teaching in the UK*, CRE 1981
- 13 *The World in a City* CRE/ILEA 1982, *Let us Learn – Urdu, Punjabi etc* City of Birmingham Education Department, Birmingham 1981
- 14 *Learning for Life, The Bullock Report*, HMSO, 1975
- 15 *Mother Tongue Teaching Conference Report 9-11 September 1980*, CRE/BC
- 16 *The EEC's Directive on the Education of Children of Migrant Workers and the implications for ethnic minority groups in the UK*, CRE 1980
- 17 as above
- 18 *Racial Disadvantage, Fifth Report of the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee*, 1981
- 19 *CRE National Survey of Local Education Authorities on Mother Tongue Teaching 1980-81*

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## CRE Publications (Mother-Tongue)

CRE Bradford College Mother Tongue Teaching Conference Report, 1980. £1.50.

EEC Directive and the Implications for Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, 1980.

Regional Consultation with Voluntary Part-time Language Classes (eight in all) Reports, free, January-July 1981:  
West Midlands, East Midlands, North West England, Greater London, North East England, Scotland, South  
East England and South West England.

Summary of the Main Issues of the Regional Consultations with Mother Tongue Classes, July 1981.

CRE Statement on Ethnic Minority Community Languages, 1982.

"The World in a City" (originally ILEA Project, printed by CRE) 40 bilingual cards in several languages. 1982.  
£3.00 per pack.

A Survey of Chinese Part-time Language Classes in the UK (Pilot Study), 1982.

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