

**Proposal for *Researching multilingually* seminar, University of Manchester, May 22-23, 2012**

**Tensions between ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’: researching multilingually in home, school and community learning contexts.**

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Our paper presents findings from ongoing, longitudinal, qualitative research with primary-aged children, their families and teachers in a post-industrial, multilingual city in the north of England. Using a linguistic ethnographic framework (Blackledge and Creese, 2010), we analyse and interpret the findings across the layers of interaction from global to local, thus exposing the tensions between the two policy and pedagogic goals of promoting ‘diversity’ while striving for ‘inclusion’ for all pupils. The children are all multilingual in languages including Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Polish, Slovakian and English. They belong to minority ethnic groups often identified in policy as ‘underachieving’ (DCSF, 2009: 4). They attend different mainstream schools, and all attend a complementary, bilingual Saturday class, begun in 2003 and currently funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The complementary class teachers, themselves bilingual, qualified mainstream primary teachers, aim to promote the children’s learning through a bilingual pedagogy which includes working with their families to harness ‘funds of knowledge’ (Gonzalez et al. 2005).

We work as co-researchers, benefitting from the synergies of our different expertise in language and sociocultural knowledge, and research, academic and professional experience. This has particular benefits for observing in multilingual classrooms (both mainstream and complementary) and for analysing multilingual classroom interaction. Data have been collected in small-scale qualitative case studies of individual children and their learning in home, mainstream school and complementary class, including photographs, video and audio recordings of classroom interaction and children’s work from both classroom contexts. These are contextualised in interviews with their mainstream teachers, observations in their classrooms and visits to their homes to interview their parents and observe family learning settings. A recent article (Conteh, 2011) reports some early findings and outcomes from the work.

Drawing on sociocultural models of learning and theoretical frameworks offered by the concept of ‘funds of knowledge’ and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), our paper shows how tensions between diversity and inclusion play out in the lives of the families. Data reveal the family histories, both locally and globally, and their interactions with the different education settings that the children inhabit. They show how multilingualism is a normal and natural feature of their everyday lives, and how they construct their identities as members of second- and third-generation immigrant heritage British citizens. Data from mainstream contexts demonstrate how the children’s rich experiences of home and community learning are often invisible in their classrooms and in national

régimes of assessment. They also show how mainstream teachers construct their professional roles and identities in working with multilingual learners in a monolingualising system.

### ***References***

Blackledge, A., and Creese, A. (2010) *Multilingualism: critical perspectives*. London: Continuum.

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Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. and Amanti, C. (eds.) (2005) *Funds of knowledge: theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms*. New York: Routledge.