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**BILINGUALISM AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT: A STUDY OF  
YOUNG BILINGUALS IN BIRMINGHAM SCHOOLS AND  
COLLEGES**

**VOLUME I**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed firstly to investigate current patterns of language use amongst young bilinguals in Birmingham and secondly to examine the relationship between this language use and educational achievement. The research then focussed on various practices, customs and attitudes which would favour the attrition or survival of minority languages in the British situation.

The data necessary to address this question was provided by a sample of three hundred and seventy-four 16 - 19 year olds, studying in Birmingham schools and colleges during the period 1987 - 1990 and drawn from the main linguistic minority communities in Birmingham. The research methods chosen were both quantitative and qualitative.

The study found evidence of ethnolinguistic vitality amongst many of the linguistic minority communities in Birmingham: a number of practices and a range of attitudes indicate that linguistic diversity may continue and that a stable diglossic situation may develop in some instances, particularly where demographical and religious factors lead to closeness of association. Where language attrition is occurring it is often because of the move from a less prestigious minority language or dialect to a more prestigious minority language in addition to pressures from English.

The educational experience of the sample indicates that literacy and formal language study are of key importance if personal bilingualism is to be experienced as an asset; high levels of oral proficiency in the L1 and L2 do not, on their own, necessarily correlate with positive educational benefit. The intervening variable associated with educational achievement appears to be the formal language learning process and literacy.

A number of attitudes and practices, including the very close associations maintained with some of the countries of origin of the families, were seen to aid or hinder first language maintenance and second language acquisition.

**Key terms:**                      bilingualism, diglossia, educational achievement,  
   language attrition, language maintenance.

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# **1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON BILINGUALISM**

## **1.1 Introduction**

The main concerns of this thesis are to examine some of the effects of bilingualism for the individual bilingual within the British educational system and the relationship between bilingualism and educational success, and, secondly, to study the behaviour of bilinguals, both as individuals and within their communities, in order to assess whether bilingualism is likely to survive within the British context.

The interest of such a study lies in the changing nature of British schools. The linguistically heterogeneous situation that pertained in many parts of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland until the mid 1960s meant that the British education system dealt mostly with monolinguals and that linguistic disparity, where it appeared at all, came as dialectal difference. Now the range of linguistic backgrounds to be found in British classrooms is far greater and the essentially monolingual education system must deal in many areas with a bilingual situation. This study hopes to make a small contribution to the debate by adding to our knowledge of how British bilinguals fare within the system and of how different behaviours within the bilingual communities aid or hinder educational success.

The review of the literature which follows is wider than the thrust of the thesis might suggest and does not limit itself to the bilingual situation in the British context. The reason for this is that bilingualism is not itself an academic discipline but a topic which can be discussed from many points of view and in the traditions of many academic areas. Bilingual research may stress the historical, the societal, the psychological, the educational, the philosophical or the linguistic aspects of the subject, but should never lose sight of the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Mackey [1968] and



Romaine [1989] both warn against the tendency to focus on some aspects of bilingualism and neglect others and Appel and Muysken [1987] stress that the disciplines are inextricably linked and can only be separated on an abstract, analytical level. The following review of the literature is, therefore, an attempt to clarify concepts, define terms and give a brief overview of the whole subject. Recent overviews with similar aims include Romaine [1989], Hamers and Blanc [1989] and Hoffmann [1992].

## **1.2 Concepts - definitions and descriptions of bilingualism**

Generally, two types of bilingualism are distinguished: individual and societal. In broad terms, the first refers to the individual capable of using more than one language and is sometimes termed "bilinguality" [Hamers and Blanc 1989], while the second refers to a community in which more than one language is used, not necessarily by all its individual members, and may be termed "bilingualism" [Hamers and Blanc 1989]. The classic definition of "diglossia" comes from Ferguson [1972] who categorized it as a bilingual situation in which two languages coexist and in which each language has a defined "domain"; one language is the language of public use, education and communication with the state and is usually considered prestigious; the second language is the language of private use and its domain the family, the social network and possibly the workplace.

### **1.2.1 Individual bilingualism**

Individual bilingualism is usually defined using four sets of criteria: competence or proficiency, domain or function, group membership and modes of acquisition. The terminology is extensive with most terms having "a theoretical basis biased on the side of the advocator's own professional discipline" [Abudarham 1987].



### **1.2.1.1. Competence**

The definitions of individual bilingualism relating to proficiency divide into two groups. Some definitions require only a minimal degree of competence in the second language (L2). Haugen [1953:7] called bilingualism "the point when the speaker can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language." Macnamara [1969] proposed that a speaker be called bilingual if he used two languages to whatever degree and if he had some second language skills in one of the four modalities (speaking, reading, writing and listening) together with his first language skills. Lehiste [1988] defines the bilingual as a person who is able to produce grammatical sentences in more than one language. Other definitions reflect the attitudes prevalent in the early part of the century and still adhered to by some writers, which accorded bilingual status only to the educated speaker of two prestige languages and not to a speaker who might use two or more dialects or less prestigious languages to survive in his daily life. Thus, the Encyclopaedia Britannica calls bilingualism "The mastery of two or more languages". Bloomfield [1935:56] says: "Bilingualism (is) native-like control of two languages". Siguan and Mackey [1987:18] characterize the bilingual

"by a comparable and very high degree of proficiency in two different languages, either of which he can use in any circumstances with equal ease and effectiveness."

Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens [1970], however, in recognition of the wide spectrum of linguistic attainment, coined the term, ambilingualism, for speakers of two or more languages who have total fluency in each language and no preference. However, this is an "ideal, theoretical model" [Haugen 1987:14] and few if any actually achieve ambilingualism: a point which Siguan and Mackey concede in the statement that the perfectly balanced bilingual of their definition does not exist in practice.

At the lower end of the competence spectrum, researchers and writers [Hansegard 1968, Cummins 1979, Skutnabb Kangas 1981, T'sow 1981] have noted the problem of atrophied language development in situations where a minority language child is forced at infant school to change to the majority language (1). In certain circumstances it appears that learning difficulties may occur and that neither language may be acquired to full monoglot competence leaving the speaker "semilingual" [Skutnabb Kangas 1981]. The learner appears to have given up learning the first language before having mastered it and never acquired the second to full competency. The concept is not a new one and the same effect had been noted in nineteenth century Alsace [Vermes 1988]. However, the debate about semilingualism has been controversial and confused and the concept has been hotly disputed in linguistic circles [Romaine 1989]. Both Cummins and Skutnabb-Kangas [1984] now reject the concept, feeling that it has outlived its usefulness and has been used politically in a way they had not intended. However, given the facts of underachievement amongst some linguistic minority groups, recent discussions of the phenomenon [Kalantzis, Cope and Slade 1989] come to the conclusion that it cannot be totally ignored and that it is closely linked to partial schooling and high drop-out rates.

Cummins [1986] has proposed two new terms: BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) which refer to the dichotomous linguistic position of many bilinguals who may achieve surface fluency in oral, context-embedded tasks in their second language but who experience difficulty with the cognitively demanding literacy necessary for academic achievement. Cummins suggests a framework where language proficiency is conceptualized along a continuum which measures the range of contextual support available for expressing or



receiving meaning. The extremes of this continuum are expressed as context-embedded and context-reduced communication. In the context-embedded situation the language user relies on paralinguistic and situational cues; in the context-reduced situation the language user has only linguistic clues to guide him. Taylor and Hegarty [1985] in a study of pupils of South Asian origin term this characteristic "deceptive fluency".

Codeswitching and interference are also aspects of competence. Spolsky [1988] gives competence as the basic determiner in his list of conditions for language choice with attitudinal factors as the secondary determiners.

Romaine [1989] reports, however, that codeswitching does not necessarily imply a process of language loss or of language impoverishment and may be a conscious discourse strategy amongst bilinguals, either to exclude non-speakers or to allow precision in an area which one language expresses more easily than the other. She also notes the social stigma that is sometimes attached to this mode of speaking both within the linguistic community as well as by outgroup members such as educators and how a lack of understanding of the process has fuelled the semilingualism debate.

Ambilinguals [Halliday et al 1970] are those who demonstrate a lack of borrowing or interference between languages and who function in each language with the native competence of monolinguals. The bilingual who has "a mastery of two languages match(ing) that of monoglot speakers of the respective languages" [Bactens Beardsmore 1986] may often be the intellectual or the linguist who has planned to become ambilingual and achieves this with great effort, rather than the member of a bilingual society who has achieved bilingualism through his everyday interaction.

Some researchers make a distinction between balanced bilinguality, which is equivalent competence in both languages and dominant bilinguality in which the competence in one language exceeds that in the other [Lambert 1955]. Dominance is often a result of a diglossic situation, where one language is used for one purpose and the other for another. Language choice may also be dictated by perceptions of prestige or lack of prestige.

#### **1.2.1.2 Function and domain**

Weinreich [1953:5] defined bilingualism as "the practice of alternatively using two languages." In practice this means that bilinguals have a preferred language [Dodson 1985] for each domain of their life. Few bilinguals will have complete mastery of both languages in every domain, for, as Fishman et al [1971] state, there is an inherent connection between proficiency and function, and bilinguals are likely to have preferred languages for certain activities and to develop linguistic proficiency in those areas. The language of work may not be the language of the home and the speaker may find it difficult to talk of work issues in the home language. Romaine [1989:18] points out that

"any society which produces functionally balanced bilinguals who use both languages equally well in all contexts would soon cease to be bilingual because no society needs two languages for the same set of functions."

Any society which becomes stably bilingual will usually do so because its languages are used in a complementary way in the community, as happens in a diglossic situation; one language has higher status than the other and is reserved for formal and public functions whereas the other is the language of the home and private life.



Functional bilingualism is the term used to describe the situation where the speaker uses a second language for limited purposes, e.g. work, study or trade. The minimalist version of such bilingualism is the airline pilot who uses English with the flight controllers at international airports [Baetens Beardsmore 1986]. The maximalist version is the student who studies through English because text books are not available in his first language. In another definition, functional bilingualism is also used as a term signifying the minimal second language competence necessary for transactions between two sections of population in a diglossic situation. [Abudarham 1987, Bugarski 1990]

#### **1.2.1.3. Attitudes towards group membership**

Hamers and Blanc's [1989] typology of bilingualism gives four possibilities for the bilingual's attitude to his group membership. He may have bicultural bilinguality and identify equally with both speech communities; he may have monocultural bilinguality, having competence in both languages but identifying with his mother tongue speech community only; he may have acculturated bilinguality, with competence in both languages and identification with the second language speech community; he may have deculturated bilinguality in which his membership is ambiguous and his identity anomic.

The cultural identification of the bilingual will affect language acquisition and use. Bilinguals may identify with both speech communities and be recognized as a member of each. In such a case they become bicultural as well as bilingual. However, a highly developed degree of bilingualism does not necessarily imply membership of both cultures, nor does cultural identification necessarily include language competence.

Abudarham [1987] describes the non-speaker who can understand what is said to him as receptive. Bilinguals who are only receptive in the mother tongue are often displaying rejection of the culture of the mother tongue speech community and a desire to be thought a full member of the second language community. Hamers and Blanc [1989] find that such integrative motivation leads to deculturation which causes firstly this receptive or passive bilingualism and secondly full first language loss. The status of the language is also a factor which influences the speaker's desire to move from incipient to full bilingualism [Diebold 1961]. Pohl [1965] describes arrest at the incipient or passive stage as asymmetrical bilingualism (2).

Allied to this description are the descriptions of marginal types of bilingualism developed by Dorian [1982]. Her low proficiency semispeakers and near passive bilinguals are able to manipulate a sentence when reminded of a lexical item and utter formulaic utterances appropriately in conversation. They understand everything, appreciate jokes, grasp significant points but in fact say very little themselves. However, they mark their desire for group membership by their readiness to use the little language competence they possess. They have arrested the loss of the L1, but at a very advanced stage in the process.

#### **1.2.1.4. Modes of acquisition**

Weinreich [1953] was the first to differentiate between modes of language acquisition. His work and the development of it by Ervin and Osgood [1954] formulated the following distinctions. Coordinate bilingualism implies an independent meaning system for each language spoken. One unit of expression correlates to one unit of content and the systems are functionally independent.

|        |          |
|--------|----------|
| "book" | "kniga"  |
|        |          |
| /buk/  | /kn'iga/ |

Compound bilingualism on the other hand has one fused concept with two forms of expression.

|        |   |          |
|--------|---|----------|
| "book" | = | "kniga"  |
| /      |   | \        |
| /buk / |   | /kn'iga/ |

Subordinate bilingualism occurs when a subject has learnt a second language with the help of his dominant language which thus provides the concept for both modes of expression.

|          |
|----------|
| "book"   |
| -----    |
| /buk/    |
|          |
| /kn'iga/ |

In research to test the validity of these distinctions, subjects showed that they might use all three types of thinking indiscriminately [Harding and Riley 1986]. Moreover, the early research was flawed in that it used only word meaning and vocabulary lists and evidently organization of language and meaning would be on a more complex plane than mere labelling. Siguan and Mackey [1987] criticize the theory for its failure to take into account psycholinguistic theories on the relationship of language and thought. Macnamara [1977] found that these descriptions rather than portraying distinct types, showed the extremes of a continuum and that most language speakers behave in a coordinate fashion in some circumstances and in a compound manner in others.

Weinreich's work gave rise to theories on the order of language acquisition. Lambert and Peal [1972] saw compound bilinguals as likely to be natural or



primary bilinguals who have "picked up" the second language at the same time as the first with no formal instruction. McLaughlin [1978] calls this process simultaneous bilingualism and gives the rather arbitrary age of three years as the cut off point beyond which this form of language acquisition no longer takes place. Such a bilingual is said to have two mother tongues, La and Lb. Consecutive bilingualism is the process wherein a bilingual acquires a second language (L2) early in childhood after the basic linguistic acquisition of the mother tongue (L1) has been achieved. Such acquisition usually occurs informally. Bilingualism is defined as successive when the second language is acquired probably through formal instruction after the first language is securely in place. Coordinate bilinguals are often of this group being

"those who had learned the second language at some time after infancy, usually after ten years of age and usually in a setting other than the family" [Lambert 1972: 38].

Adler [1977] calls this achieved bilingualism and it is also known as secondary bilingualism [Baetens Beardsmore 1986] and this implies formal instruction in the language. McLaughlin [1978] coins the term sequential bilingualism for any second language achieved after three years of age.

There has been much research on the optimum period for second language acquisition with many conflicting results and conclusions. Larsen-Freeman [1977], Asher and Garcia [1969] and Oyamo [1978] all have findings showing that younger children have the advantage. Burstall et al [1974], Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle [1978] have results that indicate that older children are more adept at acquiring language. This lack of firm evidence for an optimum period has obvious repercussions on the education system and is discussed further below.



When a second language is being acquired by whatever means, the subject is seen as being in a situation of ascendant bilingualism [Baetens Beardsmore 1986]. The normal transition would be from a more passive to a more active use of the second language. Recessive bilingualism is the opposite mode in which the active competence is falling into disuse. Both ascendant and recessive bilingualism may be closely tied with economic and social factors which are encouraging or discouraging the use of the language.

### **1.2.2 Societal bilingualism**

Siguan and Mackey [1987:27] define societal bilingualism as the name given to the "use of two languages as means of communication in a society, group or given social institution." Beziers and Van Overbeke [1968:133] proposed that it be seen as "un double moyen nécessaire ou facultatif de communication efficace entre deux ou plusieurs "mondes" différents à l'aide de deux systèmes linguistiques."

#### **1.2.2.1. Models of societal bilingualism**

Language is both a marker of ethnicity and group identity and a functional tool. Appel and Muysken [1987] developed a typology of societal bilingualism which represents the various motivations and situations in an ideal form.



Figure 1.1 Schematically represented forms of societal bilingualism

Source: Siguan and Mackey [1987:2]

In I the society contains two monolingual groups who have little to do with each other and, where communication is necessary, a few bilingual individuals take responsibility for intergroup communication. Such a situation is said to prevail in Belgium. In II most individuals are bilingual and use the mother tongue in the private domain and the national language within the public; approximations to such a diglossic situation may be found in India with its many official languages and local dialects and in Africa with its many tribal languages and use of *linguae francae*. In III one group is monolingual and the other bilingual. In many cases the bilingual group will be a minority who for political, economic and social reasons need to learn the language of the majority and the majority very rarely feels the need to reciprocate. Such a situation may arise from immigration or from the existence of indigenous linguistic minority groups within a country. The situation in Britain with Welsh, Gaelic and the languages of speech communities of immigrant origin corresponds roughly to this model; a situation of diglossia for the linguistic minority communities only. The reverse situation may also apply and the official language may be the language of a dominant minority as is the case in many colonial situations.

Pohl [1965], in his taxonomy of bilingualism, calls these three situations horizontal, vertical and diagonal bilingualism. Horizontal bilinguals will be those who speak two languages of equivalent status and who may well be the interpreter in Appel and Muysken's first model. (e.g. the educated Fleming in Brussels speaking Dutch and French) Vertical bilinguals will be those who use the high and low forms (diglossia) of a language (e.g. the Swiss who will use *Schwyzertutsch* and German or the Bengali who uses Sylheti and Bangla). This model will approximate to diagram II in Appel and Muysken with most people in an area able to use both forms. Diagonal bilingualism is the use of a high status language for official purposes and

education and a non-prestigious form of a genetically unrelated language for familiar uses. The Pushto speaker who uses Urdu for all dealings with the Pakistani authorities would belong to this group and also to model III in Appel and Muysken, since it would be most unlikely that Pakistanis outside the ethnically Pushto enclave would learn Pushto.

Most situations of societal bilingualism, particularly in vertical and diagonal bilingualism concern a minority group and a majority group. In the definition of "minority" the size of the group is often less important than questions of power. Minority status for a group often infers more than numerical size and points to political or economic disadvantage. Such circumstances are both cause and effect of the fact that mastery of the language of the state is often the passport to education and preferment. Those for whom the language of power is a second language may be debarred from promotion and self-advancement on linguistic grounds alone, even when there are no other blocks to the minority's access to power.

#### **1.2.2.2. Diglossia and diethnia**

The term diglossia was originally coined [Ferguson 1959] to refer to two or more varieties of the same language in use in a speech community in different functions. The high variety (H) is prestigious and is used in the public domain, the low variety (L) is confined to familial and familiar situations. A case of classic diglossia is the Arabic speaking world where in each country there are vernacular forms of Arabic spoken alongside traditional and international Classical Arabic. In diglossic situations the low variety is typically acquired at home as a mother tongue and the high variety in a formal educational situation; the prestige of the high variety often causes speakers to claim it as their mother tongue [Wright and Ager 1990 and below].



The term, diglossia, is now sometimes used more loosely to denote any societal bilingualism [Fasold 1984] and has been widened to include situations where more than two languages or language varieties are present. The terms endogenous and exogenous are used to denote whether the languages are present or not in the bilingual's social environment. Thus, endogenous bilingualism occurs when both languages are used as mother tongues in a community; exogenous bilingualism occurs when the L2 is institutionalized within the community and used for certain functions but is not a mother tongue for any part of that community. In many developing countries the H form is often a western language of cross-cultural communication [Cobarrubias 1983] and/or a favoured standardized vernacular while the L form is a local and perhaps less favoured vernacular [Fishman 1985]. In countries where there has been large scale immigration the H form is often the language of the host country and the L form, the language of the country of origin of the immigrants.

Diethnia is used to refer to societies "where there is more than one norm of ethnocultural behaviour" [Romaine 1989:37]. This is a relatively rare phenomenon compared with individual biculturalism [Fishman 1985], but is to be observed, for example, when Muslim or other strictly religious groups are living in a secular and very liberal environment. In the case of the individual, it is often to be found that the bilingual speaker is also bicultural, but this is not necessarily so and

"a person may become a fluent bilingual while remaining monocultural and identifying culturally with one of the groups only" [Hamers and Blanc 1989:11].

The converse is also to be observed where members of ethnic groups no longer mark their ethnicity by using the ancestral language but retain a variety of cultural practices which delineate them as a separate group [Fishman 1985].

### **1.2.2.3 Elitist and folk bilingualism**

The descriptions discussed in 1.2.2.1 reappear in the distinctions made by many authors, notably Tosi [1984] and Paulston [1980], between elitist and folk bilingualism. The horizontal bilingual is likely to be middle class, professional and educated. Elitist bilingualism is described as "the privilege of middle-class, well-educated members of most societies" [Tosi 1984:3]. Folk bilingualism on the other hand results from "the conditions of ethnic groups within a single state who have to become bilingual involuntarily in order to survive" [Tosi 1984:3]. The distinction is a crucial one as it shows that one group approach bilingualism in a voluntary way, aware that it will increase power, career prospects and mobility, whereas the other group has bilingualism forced upon it, by an education system controlled by others and by economic necessity (3).

The comparative status of languages within a society has profound effects on the speakers of the languages. The concept of additive and subtractive bilingualism is closely allied to the concept of elitist and folk bilingualism. Lambert [1974] defined additive bilinguality as occurring when both languages are valued by society and the speaker is made to feel proud of his bilingualism, which then contributes to his cognitive development. Subtractive bilingualism occurs when the speaker's mother tongue is devalued in the environment and neglected in education causing adverse effect to the individual's cognitive development [Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, Hamers and Blanc 1989]



Questions of prestige are central to bilingual education. The power relations existing in a community will have repercussions on the prestige and currency of languages present in the community and thus on language choices. Hamers and Blanc [1989] cite the example of a study of a Franco-Manitoban school. Researchers demonstrated that it was sufficient to introduce one English speaker into a francophone class in order for the class language to become English.

From my own experience this is also true in the Urdu-English or Panjabi-English classroom. Whether the bilinguals in the group consent to speak English because of power considerations, or because of a sense of greater prestige accruing to them from that language, or whether they are aware of the monolinguals' dislike of exclusion, is not clear. This research suggests that the last reason is possible [6.2.1.].

Moreover, languages of linguistic minority groups arising from economic migration are often, in the European situation, the less prestigious languages in former colonial relationships and diglossic situations. Whether the linguistic minorities' perceptions of their mother tongues is coloured by this is also not clear.

#### **1.2.2.4. The territorial principle**

The management of societal bilingualism has been various; some societies permit the speaker to choose (within defined limits) the language with which he interacts with the administration; other societies require speakers to use the language of the territory [Grosjean 1982]. The administration of the British Isles has always been in the second category and government has stipulated English as the language of communication with the state, with use

of Welsh or Gaelic permitted and allowed for in the Celtic areas of the country. In the 1980s, however, it became normal practice for local authorities with large numbers of non-English speakers to issue information in a variety of languages other than English. How this practice now develops in view of recent demands for a Muslim state within Britain [Siddiqui 1990] remains to be seen, since the practice may now be viewed as schismatic rather than multilingual and multicultural.

### **1.3. The place of minorities in society: historical, political and economic reasons for bilingualism and diglossia**

Grosjean [1982] estimates that there are currently more bilinguals than monolinguals in the world and quotes Lewis [1976:14]

"Bilingualism has been and is nearer to the normal situation than most people are willing to believe."

Predominantly monolingual Europeans often fail to appreciate this fact living in one of the areas of the world where each nation state tends to identify closely with just one language. [Edwards 1985]

Many countries have a linguistically diverse population and states are or become multilingual for a variety of reasons: they may have had, like India, a linguistically diverse population since time immemorial; they may have become multilingual, like Russia, as a result of comparatively recent expansion; they may have suffered, like Tanzania and Ghana, from colonial domination and the importation of cheap labour from other parts of the world; they may be ex-colonial powers, like France and the Netherlands, which have experienced immigration of different linguistic groups from former colonies; they may be the relatively underpopulated countries of the "new worlds", like Australia, the United States and Canada, which have attracted immigrants fleeing persecution or economic disadvantage in the



"old worlds"; they may have arisen from the drawing of artificial boundaries, which meant that heterogeneous populations found themselves, as has happened in many countries in Africa, arbitrarily part of one state rather than another.

"The structure and dynamics of a society always derive from changes which have occurred in the past and this is particularly clear in the case of a bilingual situation" Siguan and Mackey [1987:29].

Grosjean's thesis is that linguistic contact situations occur through migration, military invasion or perceived educational or economic advantage. It is possible to portray the whole of political history in terms of language contact, maintenance and shift, and yet, as Appel and Muysken [1987] point out, the study of people and nations very rarely reflects this and we know very little about the dynamics of languages in contact and conflict.

### **1.3.1. Conquest and imperialism**

Military invasion will cause bilingualism, for, if the invader stays in the country, the subjugated peoples will usually need to learn the conqueror's language or at least enough of it to fulfil the role the conqueror demands of them. Actual experiences can vary immensely. Not all imperial powers impose their language. The Romans did not impose Latin and in the early empire its use remained an exclusive privilege and an honour. Eventually its role as a lingua franca amongst all the peoples of the empire overrode any considerations of exclusivity and in this role it long outlived the political entity which had spawned it.



Another possible but less frequently encountered outcome is that the invaders have learnt the language of their subjects when those subjugated were more sophisticated and numerous than they [Grosjean 1982]. The Franks learnt Gallo-Roman along with customs and practices they judged superior to their own; the phonology and the lexis of the Frankish language thus constitute a substratum of French. The situation in Britain after the Norman conquest is yet another possible outcome of invasion: the eventual fusion, after several generations of the language of the invader and the language of the conquered (4).

European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century caused a similar development, creating a number of societies where "high-prestige European languages" [Appel and Muysken 1987:5] coexisted with the native languages of the conquered peoples. This contact resulted in the creation of new varieties of the colonial language: in North and South America, in South Asia and in Australia these new dialects bore close resemblance to the original English, French, Portuguese and Spanish; in the Caribbean, in West Africa and in the Pacific creoles and pidgins developed which were no longer mutually comprehensible to speakers of the parent languages. These developments depended in part on the relationships between the imperial powers and the people of their empires. The British, for example, had two approaches; in certain islands of the Pacific, they were content that their contact with the native peoples should be through pidgin English. In other areas, particularly in highly developed societies such as India, there was great linguistic zeal to convert speakers to English as Macaulay's "Minute on Education" of 1835 testifies. Macaulay and others were intent on producing an English medium, Anglo-Indian culture and to an extent were successful [Edwards 1985].

The proselytism of various religions has also led to linguistic imperialism: the Spanish Jesuits in South America, the British missionaries in Africa, the Arabs amongst the Berbers all share the belief in their language as the language of God and a zeal in teaching it to the converted.

Stable bilingualism is only rarely an outcome of invasion. In many of these examples the diglossic situation merely lasted a few generations, the time it took for one of the groups to make the language shift. However, some conquered peoples have clung tenaciously to their ethnicity as displayed by their language and, defying all attempts to eradicate it, kept it alive through countless generations by an effort of will, in situations where it seemed they must succumb to political and economic dominance and the language shift this often implies. In such a situation the language may survive in a very tenuous way as does Gaelic in Ireland, Occitan and Breton in France, Frisian in The Netherlands, the language of the Sami in Scandinavia [Edwards 1985, Appel and Muysken 1987].

Moreover, there is also the case of settlements so isolated that their populations were unaware of or impervious to linguistic influence and so resisted change. Thus the Basques in the Pyrenees and the Quechua speaking Incas in the Andean valleys of Peru and Ecuador avoided contact with successive invaders and the consequent linguistic assimilation [Siguan and Mackey 1987].

In the post-colonial era many countries still use the languages of erstwhile invaders. As Siguan and Mackey [1987] point out, the frontiers of the countries carved out by colonialism were artificial and disregarded ethnic and linguistic boundaries. This, coupled with the great linguistic diversity that existed anyway in many parts of Asia and Africa, has meant that



numerous newly independent countries have several linguistic groups within their boundaries. The solution has often been to retain the former colonial language as a convenience. In this way no indigenous group is seen to be imposing its language on another and in addition there is access to the international world of trade, higher education, science, technology and diplomacy. For example, in the Indian subcontinent both English and Urdu have survived the demise of the political structures they served and continue as *linguae francae*. In Africa there are examples of the choice of English and French as official languages.

### **1.3.2. Migration**

Bilingualism is also one of the outcomes of migration. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have witnessed population movement on a scale hitherto unknown. Nineteenth century migration resulted most typically from colonialist expansion with European emigrants fleeing pogrom or famine to seek freedom and economic advantage. Twentieth century migration is "in some sense a reverse migratory movement" [Appel and Muysken 1987], with an influx of people from post colonial Third World societies into the industrial world, usually for economic reasons but also fleeing persecution in certain cases. Although Grosjean [1982] suggests that those who migrate for economic reasons will tend to have no objection to assimilation in the host community since they have freely chosen their new association, while those who are fleeing political or religious persecution will tend to conserve language and culture and to retain strong emotional ties with the land they have been forced to leave, surveys of immigrants to Britain [Wilding 1981, Ash 1976, Ganguly and Ormerod 1981] and some recent conferences [SEC working conference May 1988] indicate that many of those migrating for economic advantage still wish to keep alive their language and culture.

"Sociolinguistics is not like chemistry, and when you put two languages together the same thing does not always happen" Appel and Muysken [1987:5].

At least two distinct models appear: immigrants pass through a period of bilingualism and then become fully integrated into the host community within a critical period of three generations, after which a language may not survive unless there is an extrinsic reason for it so to do [Fishman 1985]. In other cases it has been the norm for immigrant groups to remain cohesive for generations and retain distinct ethnic groupings within their host community, reproducing themselves and keeping their culture and language intact, as in South-East Asia [Siguan and Mackey 1987].

The third possibility is the creation of a new language, a fusion of aspects of the two languages in contact. According to Schumann's [1978] polygenetic theory of pidgin generation this will happen by spontaneous generation whenever and wherever the need arises, in situations of immigration as well as situations of colonialism. Clyne [1984] indicates that new pidgins are appearing in several European and North American industrialized countries with large numbers of foreign workers.

### **1.3.3 Linguistic nationalism and the nation state**

The right to use one's mother tongue in dealings with the state and within the education system is a relatively recent demand, expressed for example in the 1987 UNESCO Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. The concern of the ordinary man throughout much of recorded history has, however, been to satisfy his basic needs and assure his physical safety. Although there is little record to inform us it would seem unlikely that the ordinary European peasant in most early medieval societies would have been preoccupied with questions of language other than in its basic utilitarian



aspect. In the hierarchy of liberties, the right to use one's own language must have ranked far below the basic liberties of existence, safety, freedom and religion. Moreover, the isolation of many communities produced a dialectal fragmentation that meant that language loyalty and language identity, if they existed at all, existed for small numbers of people within the parameters of a very small area.

It was the arrival of the nation state that promoted the concept of language as the outward sign of a "group's self identity and uniqueness" [Connor 1978], a sure means of promoting its cohesion. Edwards [1985:23] finds  
"the linking of language with identity and with nation is in large part a product of the German romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries." (5)

However, France is an example of a situation where language laws and language planning were used from the mid-sixteenth century onwards to promote the idea of a unified language for one people and create a centralised state and cohesive nation [Ager 1990].

François I, Louis XIV, Talleyrand, Napoleon all believed in the political value of one single medium for a united nation and translated this belief into policy. Since Napoleon French governments of all political hues have maintained this stance:

"Les patois sont combattus sciemment. Tous les gouvernements français ont une politique linguistique qui tend à la suppression des patois" [Wartburg 1946:213].

They have largely been successful; the other original languages of France are extinct or in retreat: Occitan, Breton, Alsacien and Basque are only kept

alive by a handful of speakers [Ager 1990]. Until comparatively recently it was also possible to write that the successive waves of immigrants who had settled in France had been

"assimilated by a nationalistic melting pot into one monolithic national culture" [Dignan 1981:139].

Whether linguistic assimilation will continue to be achieved remains to be seen: the ethnic unrest in the suburbs in the early summer of 1991 and Corsica's struggle for limited independence both have linguistic implications.

The territorial principle of one state one language has become the established policy of many other European countries as well. All immigrants and migrants to such countries are expected to conduct public life in the official language; education aims to assimilate. The linguistic minorities caught within the frontiers as each nation state constituted itself have often suffered injustice or neglect, deportation or repression [Bourhis 1984, Rigaux 1992]. Grosjean [1982] gives the example of the exchange of the Greeks and the Turks in 1922, the annexing of the Sudetenland in 1938 and the migrations of the Sudetens to Germany in 1945 as just two unfortunate consequences of linguistic nationalism and the nation state. Edwards [1985] cites the Celts, the Basques and the Sami as peoples who have long been under linguistic attack and centralised pressure. Romaine [1989:23] suggests that the marginalization of the languages and cultures of minority peoples in the European states can be viewed as "internal colonialism". Recent events demonstrate that this issue is still of great importance: in part the struggle of minority groups in Eastern Europe to define their ethnicity is focussed on linguistic demands; the problem of Kurdish self determination is a current political problem which has a linguistic element.



Fishman [1972] discusses the tension between the pragmatic need for a linguistic medium through which to rule a multilingual country and educate a heterogeneous population, which he terms nationalism, and the need to respond to the wishes of linguistic minority groups that their language be recognised and used as a marker of their identity along with culture, religion and history, which he terms nationalism.

Many indigenous linguistic minorities have continued to fight for the recognition and acceptance of their language over periods of decades and centuries. The nation states are never sympathetic to linguistic diversity which they see as ultimately divisive and disadvantageous in economic terms [Fasold 1984]. In such circumstances, it is unlikely that immigrants to such countries will find it easy to affect the one nation one language philosophy.

#### **1.3.4. Assimilation or pluralism**

Driedger in his essay on ethnic and minority relations [1980] defined six possible theoretical positions for minority ethnic groups in majority societies. The first hypothesis imagines that the minority group will be assimilated by the majority and be indistinguishable after a generation from the dominant group. The second hypothesis is that the two groups will amalgamate and lose individual ethnic identity in a true "melting pot". In both these cases the minority language is inevitably lost. The third possibility is multivariate assimilation which recognises that minority groups may well assimilate in cultural practice and language, particularly in public life but that they may not be allowed complete structural assimilation. For example, there will be many mainstream institutions which are effectively closed to the minority group. The fourth term, modified

pluralism, allows for differences in culture and practice within a unified society, but often the minority language dies out since there are other markers of ethnicity which demand less commitment from the individual. Cultural pluralism, however, allows for permanent, harmonious diversity, including the maintenance of separate languages. The final hypothesis is a position of conflict where group maintenance of differences leads to confrontation and violence.

Most pluralistic societies now tend to see some form of multivariate assimilation or modified pluralism as their goal. In the 1960s and the 1970s there was a definite movement, in the United States and in Europe, away from the philosophy of the "melting pot" towards an acceptance of cultural pluralism, often called multiculturalism in the British, Canadian and Australian contexts [Taft and Cahill 1981, Verma and Mallick 1981, Smolicz 1981, Lynch 1986]. That there might now be a backlash appears possible. One small indication in Britain is that the Government has bent to pressure from the Radical Right and in its 1988 Education Reform Act returned the school curriculum to an ethnocentrism from which it was beginning to emerge [Wright and Ager 1990, Macey 1990 and below]. Right wing nationalism and even fascism have surfaced, albeit in a very minor way, in several European countries, profiting from the economic recession of the early 1990s to whip up feeling against minority groups.

This movement towards cultural pluralism has been called both the "ethnic revival" [Fishman 1985] and the "new ethnicity" [Novak 1971]. At its most extreme it is rather simplistic in the way it assumes pluralism to be always good and assimilation always bad. Also at its most extreme it prefers the rights of the group over the rights of the individual to choose his own destiny. Gordon [1981] attacks militant pluralism and calls for individuals



to be allowed to preserve as much or as little of their cultural heritage as they wish. Gleason [1984] points out that while militant pluralists attack the racist treatment of minority groups, they themselves are classifying and delineating along racial lines.

It seems that the realities of existence make the extreme position of cultural pluralism a difficult position to maintain (6). Even the original architect of cultural pluralism, the American sociologist Kallen, was never clear on how cultural pluralism would be possible within a democratic and liberal society [Gleason 1984]. The minority groups who wish for positive relations with mainstream society and who wish to be part of it risk that sooner or later they will be fully integrated, which may not have been their aim. If they do not seek relations with the mainstream, then they remain segregated and in the margin of mainstream society which can have serious economic effects [Hoffmann 1991].

### **1.3.5 Language shift and loss**

Ultimately it is the attitude of the individual within the social situation which will be the decisive factor in the creation of a stable diglossic situation. A variety of factors are pertinent: economic advantage for the individual, size and concentration of speech populations, vigour and strength of religious and cultural life.

#### **1.3.5.1. Economic influences on language shift**

Authorities are divided on the importance of economic motivation. For some it appears to be the most influential contemporary reason for language loss. Appel and Muysken [1987:32] state

"More and more speakers use the majority language in domains where they formerly spoke the mother tongue. They adopt the

majority language as their regular vehicle of communication often mainly because they expect that speaking that language gives better chances for upward social mobility."

Edwards [1985] says that it is often a pragmatic assessment of utility which influences language shift in an immigrant community. Many immigrants find themselves in the low income groups and the language of the host community is the language of education, commerce, power and a passport to economic success. Dorian [1982] has also pointed out that language loyalty persists as long as the economic and social circumstances are seen to be conducive to it, but, if some other language proves to have greater economic value, a shift to that other language begins.

This reduction of language survival to a cost-utility analysis is not a popular position with other authorities. Fishman [1985] sees in the ethnicity movement an attempt to stem the language shift caused by economic considerations. Alladina and Edwards [1991] believe that the ethnicity movement is beginning to make itself felt in the British setting.

#### **1.3.5.2. Demographic influences on language shift**

Demographic patterns are a major factor in language maintenance or language loss. Minority populations who stay grouped together for whatever reason, religious or otherwise, will have a greater likelihood of retaining their language. [Appel and Muysken 1987] Dispersal, integration and migration of others into the linguistic minority communities have the immediate effect of language shift. To illustrate this one can compare the retention of Chinese amongst third generation Chinese Americans in China towns in the United States with a comparable group living outside the

Chinatowns. Amongst the former only 30% of 20-39 year olds had adopted English as their first language compared with 50% in the latter [Li 1982].

#### **1.3.5.3. Cultural and religious influences on language shift**

The identification of a language with a religion has strong positive effects on the maintenance of that language, perhaps more enduring than any other since the use becomes ritualized. The survival of Latin into the twentieth century was due to its role in the Catholic church and in France the rebel bishop, René Lefevbre, fought a long rearguard action for its retention, despite his expulsion from the church. Hebrew had not been a national language since 200 AD, but its use as a religious language ensured its survival until its reintroduction as a national language this century.

Whereas an immigrant or minority speech community might be criticized by the host or majority community for minority language use in many spheres of public life, minority language use in religious institutions and religious practice is in a privileged and relatively unassailable position in many countries. The language is not under threat when used in this liturgical role and benefits from the state's protection of religious liberty and diversity [Fishman 1985]. In its religious role Arabic has made inroads wherever strong Muslim beliefs are held and has often been introduced along with Islamization. The Muslim community in Britain will often choose to study Arabic although it is a mother tongue for only a small minority.

Immigrant communities with strong religious beliefs often have a pattern of marriage within the community and a tendency to group together near centres of worship, both of which maintain the language longer than in a less cohesive group. Thus the Serbs in Birmingham and the Poles in Wolverhampton have retained some language competence into the second



generation born in Britain. In Berkshire in 1988 the main gurdwara school had a regular attendance of four hundred pupils for its Panjabi class [Polling in conversation with researcher 1988] which improves the likelihood of Panjabi continuing into the next generation.

#### **1.4. Bilingualism in education: aspects of language acquisition and educational organisation**

Thus far, this review of the literature on bilingualism has dealt with the linguistic definitions of and the sociolinguistic explanations for bilingualism. The next chapter is going to deal in detail with educational policy in Britain, both at governmental and at local level. This section aims to bridge the two, examining first of all aspects of the acquisition of a second language and evaluating the importance of this in educational terms, and then observing the impact of societal and individual bilingualism on the management of education systems.

##### **1.4.1 The foundations of language**

Lenneberg [1967:28] argues that

"once the individual mammal attains freedom from the intrauterine influence, he is neither a passive tool that may be put to any arbitrary use nor a tabula rasa into which behaviour can be arbitrarily inscribed. There are biological limits to its future behavioural repertoire, and these express themselves as species-specificities. Such specificities are ever present and there is no behaviour (including language) that is exempt from them."

In this he concurred with Chomsky who believed that there was some genetic programming in every human which permits the very fast onset of language in the child and which cannot be explained by behaviourist stimulus-response mechanisms.

Lenneberg's work in Harvard Medical School brought him to the conclusion that the onset of speech habits is relatively unaffected by the most dramatically abnormal speech environment. Chomsky [1965] and McNeill [1966] in different disciplines had also concluded that, no matter how inadequate the model, all children acquire basic linguistic competence in their first language. Piaget's research [1926], had found that the first words appear about the time that walking is accomplished and that this concordance between speech and motor co-ordination is the same for both western and primitive society. By the time the child can walk backwards, tiptoe or jump from about two foot high, he will be communicating fluently. Developmental studies [Piaget 1926, Lenneberg 1967] support the view that no natural language is inherently more complicated or simpler to learn than any other.

#### **1.4.2 Age in L1 acquisition**

It has also been suggested that there is an optimum time for language acquisition before the brain loses its early plasticity. Penfield and Roberts [1959] postulated that a child was more likely than an adult to relearn speech after an accident to the dominant left cerebral hemisphere. Lenneberg's work on traumatic aphasia provided further evidence that a right-handed child with damage to the left hemisphere of the brain, might recover the use of language, but that a right-handed adult with left hemisphere damage would be unlikely to recover lost language ability. From extensive studies he concluded that children's lateralization was not fixed and post trauma they appeared to be able to reorganize areas of specialization if necessary and were able to switch language activity from one hemisphere to another if the hemisphere responsible for language in the pre-morbid state had been

damaged. This did not seem to be possible once the patient had reached the critical age of thirteen or fourteen years.

#### **1.4.3. Age in L2 acquisition**

These research findings led to interest in the question of age in second language acquisition and to a formulation of a critical period hypothesis. Lenneberg suggested that children were likely to acquire a second language automatically from mere exposure as long as they were young enough. This automatic acquisition

"seems to disappear after this age, and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and laboured effort"  
[1967:176].

Seliger [1978:11] took the thesis to the extreme conclusion that

"The biological fact of adulthood is enough to establish an insurmountable obstacle in most cases for complete language acquisition. The incompleteness of the adult learner's second language system has a physiological basis and concomitant cognitive correlates."

Like Lenneberg, Seliger based his theories on pathological evidence, which was later called into question by Harley [1986] and Whitaker et al [1981] amongst others (7).

Other studies of the question of age in foreign language acquisition have not been based on clinical evidence. Krashen [1975,1985] and Rosansky [1975] put forward the formal operations hypothesis, which postulated that the older learner's ability to construct abstract hypotheses to explain phenomena might inhibit the individual's natural aptitude for language learning.



"The adult's desire to have a conscious understanding of language may be just what prevents him from attaining full competence" Krashen [1975:220].

Nevertheless, because of more systematic organization and a problem solving approach the adult may acquire language more quickly than the younger learner.

McLaughlin [1978] and [1987] suggested that all language learners progress from some form of controlled language learning to automatic second language use and that there is no evidence of biological limits to L2 acquisition. The process that the adult uses is basically the same as the strategies adopted by the child, although motivation and affective considerations may be different for each.

Other authors went as far as to propose that the suggested advantage of younger learners in language learning was a myth. Ausubel [1964] maintained that advanced cognitive maturity might actually be an advantage, since the older learner did not have to acquire concepts but only verbal symbols for concepts he already possessed. Moreover, children are limited to the much less efficient approach of discovering syntactic rules through repetitious exposure to models and corrective feedback [Harley 1986]. The fact that there is no conclusive evidence for an optimum period for second language acquisition has led to a situation of confusion. There is no accord on the best age to introduce children from linguistic minority communities to schooling in the medium of the majority community and as we shall see below this has led to a diversity of practice.

In the context of formal language acquisition, Macnamara [1974] formulated the fundamental principle that all language teaching in the classroom should

provide natural, comprehensible input, which focussed on the communication not the code. In the early stages of language learning this is likely to favour the younger learner who can accept the non-intellectual nature of discourse based on the immediate environment in classroom interaction, whereas the adult might want the content of the discourse to outstrip the form. As progress is made in the acquisition of the second language it is likely that the older learner will have advantages over the younger since the comprehensible input and the conversation demands on the older learner can be greater and rely on cognitive systems already built up in the first language.

#### **1.4.4. The importance of the L1 in L2 acquisition**

Cummins in Canada [1976, 1986] and Skuttnab-Kangas in Scandanavia [1981] had formulated similar hypotheses from their work on immigrant communities and language acquisition. They believe that children will more quickly acquire academic skills in their second language, if their first language skills are fully developed. Cummins' [1976] BICS and CALP theory [1.2.1.1.] differentiates between the language of basic interactive communication (BICS) and the language of cognitively demanding academic study (CALP) and describes the situation where the second language learner achieves surface fluency but fails to cope with an educational system which demands a precise elaboration of the linguistic message. Cummins proposes that cognitive maturity is an asset primarily in dealing with the relatively context reduced and cognitively demanding language skills which are related to school achievement. This leaves intact the empirically based theories that younger children learn more easily in interactive, context-embedded situations.



#### **1.4.5. Immersion and submersion**

Skuttnab-Kangas [1981] differentiates between the submersion and immersion models of L2 acquisition. In the first situation, L1 speaking children are expected to learn through a new L2 in a classroom where there may well be native L2 speakers. The teacher does not speak the L1 and cannot render the L2 input comprehensible to the L1 speaking pupil. In the second situation L1 speaking children are taught through the L2, but are in a classroom where there are only other L1 speakers in the same situation and where the teacher knows both L1 and L2 and can clarify in either language where necessary. In the first situation there is no alternative of L1 medium education for the child and if he is to succeed he must do so within the L2. In the second situation there is the possibility of reverting to an L1 medium class, if the immersion child finds the L2 medium too difficult.

An example of an immersion programme is the Canadian experiment [Swain and Lapkin 1981; Genesee 1987] with English speaking children educated through French. The programme is undertaken voluntarily and, as the child's first language is one which is both prestigious and official in Canada, such bilingualism is additive. Examples of submersion are to be found in the western European countries which have migrant or immigrant workers and in the United States [Baker 1988]. The children of these workers are often expected to cope in mainstream education without any special help. The situation is then subtractive [Lambert 1977]; the L1 is not underpinned by literacy or societal or institutional support and the L2 is not always presented in a way conducive to second language learning. The child's linguistic proficiency in the L1 may decline faster than the L2 is acquired, leading to a situation of "semilingualism" where both languages are fragmentary and incomplete [Skutnabb-Kangas 1981 and 1.2.1.1.].



Evaluations of immersion models of bilingual education [Swain and Lapkin 1981, Genesee 1987, Cummins and Swain 1986] found that immersion programmes were successful and more successful if started early in the child's school career. These findings are, however, irrelevant to the submersion situation and Skutnabb-Kangas [1981] and Swain and Cummins [1986] warn against extrapolating from them. In a minority situation, where there is overwhelming support for the second language in the wider environment, but little support and prestige for the first language, time spent in school on the first language may be crucial to the development of bilingual proficiency and cognitive development.

Cummins' threshold theory [Cummins 1976 and Cummins and Swain 1986] states that

"there may be threshold levels of linguistic competence which a bilingual child must attain both in order to avoid cognitive disadvantages and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to influence his cognitive functioning" [1986:18].

According to this theory the level of linguistic attainment in both languages acts as an intervening variable on the effect bilingualism may have on academic achievement. Such a theory explains why certain kinds of bilingualism are seen as advantageous in an individual's educational development and other kinds are experienced as disadvantageous. In the first case the two languages are usually prestigious and it has been thought appropriate that the young bilingual should acquire advanced linguistic skills in both, including literacy in both. In the second case, the bilinguals' mother tongue is seen as having little prestige and the L2 as being the language which must be acquired for educational progress; literacy is only thought

necessary in the L2 and the L1 is not underpinned by any kind of formal language learning.

#### **1.4.6 Language and mind**

An understanding of the relationship between thought and language is essential to those engaged in educating bilinguals. If different languages have distinctive cognitive legacies this may well have an effect on mental processes. Unfortunately much of Western linguistic philosophy has been carried out by monolinguals and this has skewed theory away from insights which bilinguals could have brought to the area.

##### **1.4.6.1 The monolingual perspective**

That man is most clearly distinguished from other animal species by his capacity for language and that the relationship between the mind and our perception of the external world is expressed through language have been amongst the main points at issue in European and American philosophy since the seventeenth century. The British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, claimed that our perception of the external world is merely the passive acceptance of sense impressions and their theories have been very influential on the physicalists, the determinists and latterly the behaviourists. On the other hand, rationalist philosophers such as Descartes claimed that the mind is the prime source of human knowledge and that our perceptions and understanding of the external world stem from a number of ideas which are innate and not derived from experience.

The empirical tradition is seen in the twentieth century in the work of the logical positivists, such as A.J. Ayer, who, following Wittgenstein (8), argued that all elements of language could be translated into sense datum or natural categories of sense experience, and in the writings of the



structuralists, amongst whom the American, Bloomfield, was the most influential. Bloomfield was influenced by the behaviourists with their assumption that language can be reduced to a set of learned behaviours with no particular relationship to the set of behaviours labelled cognitive. He forged a link between American linguistics and behaviourism which influenced several decades of linguistic enquiry and eclipsed the philosophical question as to whether language might shape thought.

The structuralists, elaborating on the work of Saussure excluded from the realm of linguistics any study of the relationship of language to any other sphere in favour of a rigid and empirically accurate description of language as a system. This belief that a language can be viewed as a structured whole, self-contained, an autonomous entity which is consistent with itself was particularly suited to the mainly monolingual, western tradition and fails to explain the interconnectedness of language experienced by the bilingual [Romaine 1989]. Moreover, for languages where no standard form exists the speaker's experience of his language is of "parole" (language in action) not "langue" (language as a system).

In the other strand of philosophical tradition are the philosophers who believe that there exists a realm of cognitive structure which provides the foundation for language acquisition and which is a uniquely human attribute. Noam Chomsky is seen by some to be the present successor to this Cartesian tradition [Leiber1991] which sought to differentiate between the surface structure of language and deep structure. Chomsky's early work on Universal Grammar maintained that:

"The underlying deep structure with its abstract organization of linguistic forms is "present to the mind" as the signal, with its surface structure, is produced or perceived by the bodily organs.



And the transformational operations relating deep and surface structure are actual mental operations, performed by the mind when a sentence is produced or understood" [Chomsky 1968:18].

This theory of core grammar has been frequently misunderstood to mean that all languages have the same deep structure [Botha 1991]. However, Chomsky's thesis was that core grammar is only an idealized construct - what the brain or the language faculty would develop under conditions of homogeneity of linguistic experience.

Chomsky's belief that the structure of language is determined by the structure of the human mind relies heavily on the fact that a child learning a language does so creatively.

"The child's ultimate knowledge of the language obviously extends far beyond the data presented to him" [1968:171].

His early work which posited a realm of cognitive structure providing the foundations for language acquisition and which sought the universals in the process of that language acquisition was used as a major argument against behaviourism (9).

Chomsky's Universal Grammar and Government/Binding theory have been the basis of extensive research in second language acquisition [Cook 1988]. Later work, "Knowledge of Language" 1986 and "Language and Problems of Knowledge" 1988, further developed the concept of the innate quality of human language.

#### **1.4.6.2 Language and mind - the bilingual perspective**

Chomsky's thesis that there are certain properties of language and thought common to all members of the species regardless of their actual language is intuitively satisfying. There are more obvious similarities between all

human languages than there are dissimilarities. However, languages are different and several linguists have investigated the role that different language systems play in the development and functioning of thought. In his introduction to the "Handbook of American Indian Languages" [1911] which revolutionized approaches to non-European languages, Boas argued that linguists had distorted the languages of the North American sub-continent by attempting to impose the thought processes of traditional Greco-Latin grammar upon them. Certain classifications such as singular and plural were not obligatory in some Indian languages. Other categories, such as animate at rest and animate moving, which were obligatory for the Indians, did not exist for the European mind.

Sapir, working in the same area, suggested that language and culture are inextricably linked and that human beings

"are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality without the use of language....We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" [1929:207. Quoted in Wardhaugh 1986:212].

His student, Whorf [1956], extended the theory. For him the predisposition becomes an inescapable reality and man is conditioned and determined by the language he learns.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been challenged by subsequent argument which puts the case that no language is ever inadequate for the purposes to which its speakers put it. All human societies of which we have knowledge

speak languages of approximately equal complexity and there is no evidence to support an evolutionary theory of human language [Chomsky 1968].

Bloom [1981] reexamines some of Whorf's theories in the light of his own research on the impact of language on thinking in China and the West. Chinese does not possess schemas for expressing counterfactual propositions and Bloom reports that Chinese speakers are confused and annoyed by questions of a counterfactual nature. His research found that Chinese subjects were usually unable to follow complex counterfactual argument unless they had been exposed to English for a reasonable period. His hypothesis is that

"postulating false premises for the express purpose of drawing implications from them about what would be the case if they were true is a psycholinguistic act" [1981:33].

He further proposes that such a lack of theoretical orientation led to the absence of scientific tradition as we know it in China. His argument supports the thesis that the languages we learn influence the development of the parameters of the cognitive schemas in which we come to think and that language and thought are inextricably linked.

Halliday [1990] shows that the Whorfian hypothesis is still perceived as relevant to the theory and practice of linguistics.

#### **1.4.6.3 The practical relevance of theory**

These theories have relevance for the cognitive and metalinguistic development of bilingual children in that they question the relationship of form to meaning. If it is true that

"an early separation of linguistic form from meaning ... will lead to a more analytic orientation to language and to the substance it



conveys, thus enriching conceptual development" [Cummins and Swain 1986:3].

then bilingualism should benefit cognitive development.

However, there have been many studies of bilingual subjects which have shown that bilingualism is deleterious to cognitive development as well as many that have shown that bilingual children perform much better than monolingual children. Baker [1988] gives a critical overview of both strands of research. He finds the work of the early researchers, who mostly believed that bilingualism was a disadvantage and that mastery of two languages reduced the amount of power or space available for other intellectual functions, flawed through deficiencies in testing, experimental design, statistical analysis and sampling. Later studies, using research methods which were more methodologically sound and rigorous, compared the performance of bilinguals and monolinguals and found positive cognitive effects resulting from bilingualism. The most famous and influential of these was Peal and Lambert's [1962] study of young Canadian bilinguals. Further research showed correlations between bilingualism and divergent, creative thinking [Torrance et al 1970; Cummins 1977], between bilingualism and an analytical approach to language [Ianco-Worrall 1972; Swain and Cummins 1979], between bilingualism and Piagetian conceptual development [Macnamara 1970; Cummins 1976], between bilingualism and communicative sensitivity [Skutnabb-Kangas 1981] and between bilingualism and field independence [Witkin et al 1971]. Baker [1988] suggests caution in accepting all findings uncritically since the present pro-bilingual research climate may be affecting results and interpretations in the same way that the anti-bilingual stance influenced the results of earlier studies.

Cummins [1976] and Toukomaa and Skutnabb-Kangas [1977] explain the diversity of opinion on the relationship of bilingualism and cognitive development by positing that the levels of competence attained by a bilingual in his two languages function as an intervening variable which affects either positively or negatively the subject's cognitive growth. Skutnabb-Kangas describes the way language is used as a tool which a child uses to explain and operate upon the environment:

"She investigates and organizes the environment in a Piagetian sense. The bilingual instrument is more complex and so more difficult to master, but once mastered, it may also have greater potential than the unilingual instrument for promoting cognitive growth. But if for a long period a child is forced to operate with the help of the less well mastered language, it is likely that her interaction with the environment, both input, processing and output, may be less conducive to cognitive growth" [Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:222].

Belief in the divisibility or indivisibility of language and thought will influence the choice of language acquisition strategy. The choices can be broadly summarized in the terms developed by Cummins and Swain [1986]. The common underlying proficiency model (CUP) of bilingual activity describes the mental processes of the bilingual as a common core of concepts developed by both languages, as a result of interaction between the two languages and accessed through both languages. In this model of bilingual proficiency languages are interdependent and a common language proficiency underlies both languages. The opposing view, explained by Cummins as the separate underlying proficiency model (SUP), maintains that there is no common core and that language skills are not transferable. Belief in the first possibility will lead to L1 maintenance programmes as a



route to efficient L2 acquisition. Belief in the second theory will lead to submersion or immersion programmes.

While researchers and theorists have moved away from the belief that bilingualism is educationally deleterious, this is not totally the case amongst educational policy makers. The Cummins [1980] Separate Underlying Proficiency model of proficiency still seems to be the theory that underpins much policy:

"It is frequently argued in opposition to bilingual education for minority students that if students are deficient in the school language (henceforth English) then they need intensive instruction in that language. Attempting to remedy English language deficiencies through instruction in students' first language (L1) appears counter-intuitive to many policy makers and educators" [Cummins and Swain 1986:80].

Cummins and Swain argue that this maximum exposure theory is simplistic and treats a bilingual's language proficiency as if language and conceptual thinking could be compartmentalized; and that there is no serious research to uphold the model. They propose that the Common Underlying Proficiency model of bilingual proficiency is much closer to actuality and suggest that the literacy related aspects of a bilingual's proficiency in both the L1 and the L2 are interdependent and that cognitively demanding tasks are dealt with in a non-language specific area which underlies both languages and from which and into which both languages feed. Cummins and Swain cite the evidence from U.S. and Canadian bilingual education programmes and studies relating bilingual use in the home to academic achievement [Carey



and Cummins 1983; Cummins and Mulcahy 1978; Dolson 1984; Yee and Laforge 1974] as evidence for the validity of the CUP model.

#### **1.4.7. Educational management of bilingualism**

The theories and ideas discussed above have not, however, always been the deciding factor in the organisation of the education of bilinguals. Political expediency and social engineering have also played a part. The educational solutions to a multilingual population are various: the best take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the bilingual's position; the worst have little theoretical underpinning and are mostly responding to political pressures from majority monolingual communities. Before examining the British system in detail it would seem useful to have an overview of the range of possibilities.

##### **1.4.7.1 A typology of educational responses to bilingualism**

Skutnabb-Kangas [1981] identifies five possible educational programmes in a bilingual situation. In the first, the minority language child may be placed in an L2 class with other L2 speakers and no support given (submersion/hard assimilation). In the second, the minority language child is taught with other minority language children in the L1 with no access to the L2 (segregationist/apartheid). In the third, the minority language child is given L1 instruction, moving to L2 instruction when the first language is securely in place (transitional/soft assimilation). In the fourth, the minority child is given instruction in the L1, moving to the L2 as in 3 but with some L1 classes (language shelter/bilingualism). In the fifth the majority language child is given instruction through the minority language once the L1 is securely in place (immersion/enrichment).

She makes the point that hard assimilation often assimilates without educating and that individuals from such a group who achieve success within the system are often detached from their group. In the segregationist model the programme prepares a whole group for return to their country of origin (e.g. Turks in some Länder in West Germany) or for a defined economic role (Blacks in South Africa). The transitional programmes which lead to soft assimilation are less harmful in the short term but leave the child just as rootless as hard assimilation in the long term (bilingual programmes in the U.S.). Language shelter programmes appear a solution to diglossic situations and the Swedes and Finns have some successful examples of such programmes [Wande 1990]. However, Skuttnab-Kangas does not discuss the situation of the child who belongs neither to the majority language community nor to a numerous minority speech community. Language shelter for a large minority could leave such a child in a double minority position [Inder Gera 1988]. Finally, immersion programmes give children with a prestigious L1 the added advantage of high level skills in another language, usually prestigious too. Canada has some examples of success in such programmes. Skuttnab-Kangas believes that shelter and immersion programmes lead to additive bilingualism, both hard and soft assimilation to subtractive.

#### **1.4.7.2 Assimilation and pluralism**

Adjustment and integration, as well as assimilation, are the most usual responses to a bilingual situation in Western Europe. European education systems dealing with heterogeneous populations mostly brought about by economic migration mainly operate within the boundaries of these terms. Bhatnagar [1981:14] defines assimilation as

"the adoption by the immigrant of the mannerisms, language, traditions, cultural mores and values of the host society. Over a



period of time the immigrant becomes indistinguishable from the members of the host society. The original language and culture are all but forgotten."

Adjustment is described as the

"process through which the immigrant learns to live in harmony with his new environment. It implies coexistence of the old values and traditions with the new. It means that one has to make concessions to the requirements of the new society but it does not necessarily involve giving up cherished cultural values" [Bhatnagar 1981:14].

Integration is the most demanding of the host community and implies that the immigrant will integrate his old culture with the new, that the two cultures will be made compatible in his personality.

"The host society, on its part, will also accept ,not only intellectually but also emotionally, the significance of the culture which the immigrant brings to his new land. Integration implies a multicultural society, a society based upon an explicit assumption that its cultural mosaic consists of many constituents, the contribution of the minority group no less valuable than that of the majority" [Bhatnagar 1981:15].

### **1.5. Conclusion**

To be bilingual in the world today is to be in an ambiguous position. As has been discussed above [1.3.] bilingual populations are usually so because of disadvantage, either political or economic. The bilingual individual, however, within a monolingual population may be advantaged. Grosjean [1982] notes the role of bilingualism in the definition of the "educated man".



In Roman times the educated man spoke Greek; in the Medieval era, Latin; in nineteenth century Russia, French and in twentieth century scientific circles, German and then English. Today to be an educated Indian, East African, Norwegian, Dutchman means to speak English (if only to have access to text books and works of scholarship not published in languages where large sales are not guaranteed). Siguan and Mackey [1987] point to the role of bilinguals in the promotion of trade and commerce. Throughout history at the great meeting points, at the Mediterranean ports, along the great caravan routes and in the large fairs and markets, there was always a place for the bilingual intermediary. Today the same role is played by the bilingual interpreters, secretaries and employees of the great industrial business centres, the supranational organizations and the tourist industry.

The interesting question that arises is whether bilingual advantage or disadvantage is anything more than a question of prestige; does the difference simply reside in the "currency" of the two languages spoken? If a bilingual possesses two languages of world wide significance does this automatically confer advantage? If a bilingual speaks a mother tongue with no prestige and perhaps no norm, no written form, does this automatically infer disadvantage? If this is not so what are the variables, both in the system and in the individual, that cause bilingualism to be experienced as a disadvantage or an advantage? This was the starting point of my enquiry.

## **NOTES**

1. Of course social and economic factors must be brought into account since the group affected are often disadvantaged in many other ways apart from linguistically and it may

"well be that inadequate development of either of a bilingual's languages may be attributable to the peculiar social circumstances of certain immigrant populations, where ghetto-like conditions isolate

the speaker from the rich linguistic environment of the host community, driving him back into the more restricted world of the home group. This home group, cut off as it is from the varied range of linguistic input that would have been available in the country of origin, could well be the origin of certain atrophied language development" Baetens Beardsmore [1986:11].

2. Productive bilingualism is rarely to be found on its own without receptive bilingualism since the accepted model of how people learn languages is to assume that a period of passive understanding precedes any active language production. However, Baetens Beardsmore [1986] cites the example of the French student of English in Newcastle who can produce meaningful utterances that are understood but not comprehend the local dialect. No doubt this pattern could be reproduced in all societies with diglossic usages.

3. Many migrant and immigrant communities display characteristics of both elitist and folk bilingualism and one may feel that it is simplistic to categorize them into just two groups. Immigrants have often migrated for career prospects and a higher standard of living as well as from dire necessity and this is often reflected in their attitude to the language of the host community which is then seen as a passport for them and their children to a better way of life. At the same time there is often no alternative on offer from the host community. The issue is perhaps more complex than Paulston or Tosi allow.

4. A further possibility is the Sprachbund: where groups in a situation of contact each continue to speak their own language, parallel development may occur, leading ultimately to a linguistic alliance [Lehiste 1988].



5. The theories linking language and the nation state and making language a marker of identity and ethnicity were popularised by Herder, Fichte and the German nationalists and later proved immensely attractive to other nationalist movements in Europe: the Slavs in the Austrian Empire, the Celtic speakers in Britain, the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, the Basques in Spain, the German speakers in the Sudetenland.

However, several authorities question the basic premises of linguistic nationalism. Renan [1882] saw language as only a part of nationhood, and as by no means the most essential. He argued that a common history and the desire to be seen as a unit are more important. Smith [1971] also argues that there is no essential link between language and nationalism and that one can exist without the other. He suggests that language is often pressed into the service of nationalism, following the growth of nationalistic fervour, but not creating it. Edwards [1985:27] makes the point that language is important "but possession and/or promotion of an ancestral group language is not a necessary condition of either ethnic or nationalist sentiment."

6. The vast majority of ethnic activists are not extreme and see the value of a pragmatic approach. The American activists interviewed by Fishman [1985:297] on the subject of the ethnic revival and its consequences for language were very clear that they did not see their commitment to their mother tongue as precluding the learning and the using of English. They saw the economic advantage of being English speakers and the emotional and psychological importance of their mother tongue. The 142 French, Spanish and Yiddish speakers interviewed were concerned to teach their language to their children and generally refused to contemplate that it could die out. The French activists in Louisiana point to the new bilingual education laws in their state and argue that the danger of language loss is

now past. The Hispanics cite new immigration and visits to the mother country as safeguards against language loss. The Yiddish speakers were not so confident that their language could be maintained but felt that the religious links might be enough to preserve it and if the language were to be lost, the culture would certainly survive.

7. In the same area, Albert and Obler working in Jerusalem on behavioural neurology and neurolinguistics were led to investigate the traditional theories of cerebral organization for language because of their clinical observations of bilingual patients. For example, they were seeing more aphasia in right-handers with right hemispheric lesions than would normally have been the case. This led them to hypothesize that the fact of being bilingual was influencing the patient's cerebral organization of language. As they point out, it is an accident of history that most neurobehavioural investigations of language have been carried out in monolingual societies and the implications for cerebral lateralization in polyglots has not been fully studied. Their case studies of polyglot aphasia led them to conclude that in some cases language was clearly organized bilaterally. However, as they documented over one hundred cases of polyglot aphasia from all available sources they found that in fact it is only in rare cases that there are different patterns of loss and recovery. Nevertheless, these cases do exist and together with other evidence from postmortem studies of polyglot brains, which showed that knowledge of a number of languages has anatomical consequences and from neuropsychological experiments on healthy bilingual speakers, which showed a relative degree of cerebral bilateralization, they led Albert and Obler to the suggestion that "the fact of learning a second language seems to distinguish the bilingual from the monolingual, not only in language skills but also in perceptual strategies and even in patterns of cerebral organization. The facts of bilingualism indicate



that the right hemisphere plays a major role in the learning of a second language, even in the adult. The brain is seen to be a plastic, dynamically changing organ which may be modified by processes of learning." [1978:x]

8. Wittgenstein, also bound by this tradition, contributed to the debate on language and mind. In his "Philosophical Investigations" [1953] he argues that language is a set of meaningless verbal tools which are manipulated to achieve a desired effect. He maintains that we have mistakenly assumed that because we have words such as "reading", "understanding", "thought", there must exist processes and structures which correspond to them. However, since these words cannot be said to be more than verbal tools which change in meaning according to the context, they cannot assume the role of keys to our understanding of the cognitive world. This is not to say that Wittgenstein denies the important influence language must have on it. His thesis is that we cannot make use of the words our language provides to understand that world. Since we have no other means but language with which to achieve an understanding of the cognitive world, the question of whether language shapes thought lies outside the capability of human reasoning at the present state of our understanding.

9. As Lyons [1970] has pointed out, since we cannot prove that any language not conforming to Chomsky's substantive universals would be unlearnable, we can withhold our assent to his hypothesis that these universals are innate. In the light of future knowledge we may be able to explain the universality by a common origin for all languages in the remote past and the preservation of the formal principles of the source language in all present languages. Nevertheless, Chomsky's work has broadened the scope of linguistics and

"has shown that there is nothing inherently unscientific about the assumption that competence in speaking a language implies that the speaker has in his "mind" (whether they are innate or learned) a number of generative rules of a highly restricted kind and is capable of storing and operating upon abstract mental structures in the course of producing or analysing utterances." [Lyons 1970:114]



## **2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

### **2.1 The response of the U.K. Government to bilingualism and multilingualism**

#### **2.1.1. The linguistic minority population**

England, in contrast to the other countries of the United Kingdom, has no surviving indigenous linguistic minorities and it is the recent immigration of different ethnic groups which has brought linguistic considerations into English educational policy making. However, as Watson [1988] and Craft [1986b] point out, Britain is much less a multi-ethnic society than most of the world's bilingual states. It is estimated that only about 3.2 million (5.7%) of the total population of 56 million are from families of overseas origin [Watson 1988:533]. Moreover, not all of these immigrants will have come from non-English language environments. Thus, the possible proportion of such bilinguals in Britain will not exceed 5% and is likely to be less (1). The ethnicity question in the 1991 census will confirm or disprove this assessment, although one cannot, of course, simply equate immigrant and bilingual.

Compared with our closest neighbours our plurality is not significant: in France over 8% of the population comes from an immigrant family; in the Netherlands this figure is thought to be 10%; the former West Germany has a labour force of which 9.5% were Gastarbeiter [Watson 1988]. Not all of these people will be full bilinguals but the statistics give an indication of the probable maximum size of the bilingual population.

#### **2.1.2. Geographical location of the linguistic minorities**

Although the national statistics for Britain may be relatively insignificant, the concentrations of bilingual immigrant families in certain British towns and cities are important. Many urban L.E.A.s have school populations where bilingual pupils make up a sizeable minority of the total school population and a majority in the schools of certain districts within the town. A Schools Council survey (1982) showed that only

56 of the 104 L.E.A.s in England and Wales had one or more primary schools with 10% or more of pupils whose mother tongue was not English, and that only 35 L.E.A.s had significant numbers of non-English speakers [Watson 1988]. In an N.F.E.R. survey of provision for bilingual pupils in the academic year 1986 -1987, thirty-seven local education authorities completed language surveys estimating the number of bilinguals amongst their school populations. Eight authorities estimated the percentage of bilinguals in the school population as 25% and higher, six estimated that the figure was between 15% and 24% and ten estimated the percentage between 5% and 14%. Altogether this accounted for nearly 250,000 pupils.

This survey confirmed the findings of the 1982 study and indicated that bilinguals within the British education system are concentrated in a few areas which can be identified as those receiving most government funding for educational special needs for ethnic minorities. In the table below only those local authorities receiving more than one million pounds per year from central government through the provisions of Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 have been listed.

**TABLE TWO:1**  
**THE AMOUNT OF GRANT PAID TO EACH LOCAL AUTHORITY 1986 - 1987**

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Avon            | £2 069 709 |
| Bedfordshire    | £1 626 113 |
| Buckinghamshire | £1 338 887 |
| Derbyshire      | £1 093 997 |
| Lancashire      | £3 058 418 |
| Leicestershire  | £2 166 370 |
| Nottinghamshire | £1 533 529 |
| Birmingham      | £4 833 975 |
| Bradford        | £4 276 685 |
| Coventry        | £2 141 701 |
| Kirklees        | £1 156 167 |
| Leeds           | £1 238 054 |
| Manchester      | £2 037 018 |
| Oldham          | £1 616 729 |



|               |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| Sandwell      | £1 638 593  |
| Sheffield     | £1 428 204  |
| Wakefield     | £1 475 603  |
| Wolverhampton | £1 853 276  |
| Inner London  | £16 904 347 |
| Outer London  | £18 087 766 |

(Source: Home Office, December 1988, "A Scrutiny of Grants under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966", Table 1)

The unevenness of settlement has resulted in the grouping of bilingual speech communities in urban areas and in particular in many of the old northern industrial towns, as well as the metropolis. The need to consider and cater for bilingualism has, therefore, been a phenomenon limited to certain areas only.

### **2.1.3 Government reports and actions**

It has been noted [Macey 1990, Mason 1990] that central government has tended to show a certain indifference to the problems of the bilinguals in the British education system and to respond unenthusiastically to moves at school and local authority level towards a pluricultural dimension to the curriculum and to react very negatively to any suggestion of a plurilingual approach.

There are major differences between government policies at national level and local initiatives in multi-ethnic L.E.A.s, who have struggled to respond to the special needs of bilingual students, perhaps since central government mindful of the overall percentage of non-ethnic English in the population at large tends to legislate for the majority, while local government tends to see the situation in terms of its own local majorities (or significant minorities) in certain schools and areas.

A series of government reports - Plowden (1967), Bullock (1974) and Swann (1985) - reflected a growing awareness of the implications for education of a culturally



heterogeneous society. A reversal of this trend was noted at the end of the 1980s, when it appeared that even the limited concessions these reports made to cultural pluralism were to be curtailed. The 1988 Education Reform Act makes it clear that central government sees the British education system as essentially a monoglot, monocultural system to which ethnic minorities must accommodate or from which they must opt out to provide separate education.

#### **2.1.3.1. The 1960s: cultural homogeneity and assimilation**

The emphasis in education in the 1960s was on minimising cultural difference to preserve the cultural homogeneity of the host society [Craft 1986b]. The Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council gave assimilation as the goal of the education system which could not "be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups" [1964]. There was an effort to ensure that no school had more than 30% of immigrant children [Tosi 1988] and this was to be achieved by bussing if no other solution could be found. There was no effort to test non English speakers in any way except that of the mainstream system of assessment designed for monolinguals and no recognition that standardized IQ tests might be culturally biased.

The Plowden report [1967], on primary schooling in socially and economically deprived neighbourhoods, although not primarily concerned with the education of the newly arrived families of immigrant workers, found that the problems of inner city schools were exacerbated by growing numbers of children whose culture and language were different from the majority and for whom the schools had neither the skilled teaching staff nor the appropriate curriculum. On this question the Plowden Report recommended funding and support in four areas: the curriculum of primary schools with large intakes of immigrant children should take account of their previous experiences in other countries and prepare them for life in this one; there should be initial and in-service teacher training for teaching English to immigrant children and on

the cultural and religious background of children; there should be relevant material development; schools with large numbers of immigrant children should have increased staffing.

In response to the report, Educational Priority Areas were set up, money allocated for a school building programme and salaries increased for staff in "difficult" schools. The government provided funding under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act to implement the recommendations on the children of immigrants. A further response to the Plowden report was the funding in 1972 of five action-research projects in educational priority areas (Birmingham, Liverpool, London, West Riding and Dundee) under the direction of A.H.Halsey. These areas had been assessed as E.P.A.s on the number of immigrant children in their school population amongst other criteria. The findings from the projects [Department of Education and Science 1973] indicated that educational disadvantage needs a wholesale social, political and economic approach and that E.P.A.s alone could not solve the problems of disadvantage.

#### **2.1.3.2. The 1970s: cultural integration but linguistic assimilation**

In the 1970s Britain's economic problems affected the overall level of funding available for the needs of the disadvantaged [Department of Education and Science 1977].

However, the June 1977 White Paper, "Policy for the Inner Cities" gave substantial commitment to disadvantaged inner city areas and Birmingham was once again designated an area for special treatment and took part in the Inner City Partnership, where central and local government worked together to regenerate the area.

The 1970s saw continued large scale immigration in spite of the limitations imposed by the immigration act of 1971 and an increasing need to make proper provision for a school population that was no longer homogeneous. The governmental response was well meaning but very assimilationist, seeing the goal as immigrant achievement within



an unchanged British education system, an outcome that was unlikely [Bhatnagar 1981]. Roy Jenkins [1971] showed that there was some appreciation in government circles of the shortcomings of assimilation, but the move from assimilation to integration was slow and patchy [Watson 1989].

A series of committees and reports assessed the situation: in 1969 the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration produced a report on the problems of coloured school-leavers, which recommended that teacher quotas be increased specifically to meet the needs of immigrant children; in the early 1970s Her Majesty's Inspectorate produced a series of documents on the special needs of immigrant children. The August 1974 White Paper, "Educational Disadvantage and the Educational Needs of Immigrants" established three new publicly-funded units to monitor and advise on educational disadvantage: the Assessment of Performance Unit; the Educational Disadvantage Unit; the Manchester centre for advice on Educational Disadvantage (2).

Despite this funding, Tomlinson [1983] reports that there was little provision for linguistically diverse children in the British schools of the 1970s according to the surveys, government enquiries and union reports she reviewed.

The evidence of certain studies [quoted in Townsend and Brittan 1972 and in the Bullock Report 1974] was that children of immigrants soon made the move to English and that the experience of several years of schooling in the medium of English eradicated the educational disadvantage noted amongst those speaking a language other than English at home. Thus, multilingualism amongst the British school population was seen as a transitory "problem" which would disappear with time in the same way as linguistic problems always had in the "melting pot" situation of early twentieth century U.S.A.. The "disadvantage" suffered by non-English speaking groups would end once a language shift to English had taken place.

The inspectors for the Bullock committee who reported on the provision for English as a Second language as part of the appraisal of the state of English and English teaching in British schools questioned such optimism. They found deficiencies both in educational theory and practice: almost all the trained ESL teachers available were employed in provision at the initial stage; very little sustained provision was available; the effect of the L1 was not taken into account; bilingualism was neither understood nor valued.

The committee thus recommended that English Language support should be made available for a longer period. They found it unrealistic to expect an immigrant child to function in the monolingual classroom and to compete on equal terms with monolinguals after an induction period which lasted typically less than eighteen months. They emphasised the long-term nature of the issues involved and pointed out that even if the inflow of newcomers and their families were to slow down, the needs of the children already here were likely to continue for a considerable period since progress in English would always be influenced by the language of the home. They also noted that for a child from a linguistic community other than English who went back to that speech environment after every school day there would be an on-going linguistic influence:

"His whole experience of English, the language and the culture has more or less to be mediated through school. The Indian child virtually goes home to India every night. His participation in mixed social activities outside school is limited, and this is particularly true in the case of girls. Weekends and holidays are times when the child may hear next to no English spoken at all" [Bullock Report 1974:290].

The committee distinguished between the processing of language in informal every day situations and the language processing required in most academic situations:



"Although after a year he may seem able to follow the normal school curriculum, especially where oral work is concerned, the limitations to his English may be disguised; they become immediately apparent when he reads or writes. He reads slowly, and often without a full understanding of vocabulary and syntax, let alone the nuances of expression. His writing betrays his lack of grasp of the subject and a very unsteady control of syntax and style. His mistakes or deviations from Standard English, often bear a superficial resemblance to those of the slow learning native speaker, whom he resembles in his limited range of expression" [Bullock Report 1974:290].

Such a description is an example of the theoretical construct put forward by Cummins and discussed above (1.4.3.). and resulted, as the inspectors for the committee witnessed, in classroom situations where one and the same second language speaker may be judged both competent and incompetent; communication in the second language will tend to be judged successful and competent by the teacher when it is oral, context-embedded, supported by interaction and feedback, and unsuccessful and incorrect when it is written, context-reduced with few non-linguistic clues to meaning.

The report also criticized the lack of attention paid to the multilingual nature of many classrooms:

"The importance of bilingualism, both in education and for society in general, has been increasingly recognised in Europe and in the U.S.A. We believe that its implications for Britain should receive equally serious study. When bilingualism in Britain is discussed it is seldom if ever with reference to the inner city immigrant population.... Their bilingualism is of great importance to the children and their families, and also to society as a whole. In a linguistically conscious nation in the modern world we should see it as an asset, as something to be nurtured

and one of the agencies which should nurture it is the school [Bullock Report 1974:293].

The report did not give guidance on how this was to be achieved. Indeed overall its contribution had been to identify the problems; it remained for the solutions to be found.

#### **2.1.3.3. The early 1980s: gains and losses**

The 1976 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration had considered West Indian under achievement. A direct result of its report, "The West Indian Community", [Great Britain Home Office 1977], was the establishment of a committee of enquiry with a brief to investigate the whole question of educational needs and response in a multi-racial society. The committee was established in March 1979 and, to meet the requirements of a specific request in its terms of reference, published an interim report, known as the Rampton report, "West Indian Children in Our Schools" [Great Britain House of Commons 1981]. Although this report was welcomed by some [Edwards 1983; Parekh 1988] who saw it as at least an attempt to clarify the needs of young West Indian children and to discuss their linguistic repertoire, others [Cohen and Cohen 1986] criticized it for treating the young non-achievers from the black community as the problem and not as casualties of the problem.

For reasons that were never totally clear, Mr Rampton, chairman of the committee was forced to resign and Lord Swann, former chairman of the BBC, took over. The report which was eventually published sought to address the criticism of the interim report and examined British society as a whole, rejecting both extremes of separate development and total assimilation and searching for an accommodation of minority and majority rights and expectations in a society which is both multiracial and multicultural. The report dealt comprehensively with models of education in an ethnically diverse situation, with racism and prejudice, with achievement and underachievement of



minority group students in British schools, with curriculum implications, particularly with regards to linguistic, religious and cultural pluralism. In the production of the final report there were many resignations from the committee which indicate that its findings were not universally accepted by the educational establishment as a whole. This reflects the fact that, until the 1980s, race had not been a central issue in the education debate [Craft 1986a], and as the topic came to be discussed widely it became clear that positions were polarised.

In its contribution to the debate on bilingualism the report introduced a new approach in British education to the teaching of English to non-English speakers and reaffirmed traditional British attitudes to the teaching of the mother tongue. Both sets of recommendations, it may be argued, are flawed. Firstly, it was considered that the teaching of English to British-born speakers of other languages should no longer be undertaken in separate language classes or language centres. The committee regarded such classes as an element in an assimilationist policy preparing non-English speakers for insertion into an unchanged majority system. Instead they proposed that each teacher become an English teacher and that English language learning should be

"integrated provision within the mainstream school as part of a comprehensive education programme of language education for all children" [Swann Report 1985:392].

The committee pressed the advantages of mixing those acquiring English with native English speakers in the classroom and of sensitizing all teachers to their role as English teachers. Specialist teachers of English as a Second Language should work in tandem with their colleagues to provide support within the classroom for non-native speakers.

The section of the report explaining this strategy is very short and not backed up by any indication of research to prove the viability of the assertions, except in the vaguest terms. However, the recommendations have been translated into policy with remarkable

speed in most L.E.A.s, including Birmingham. One might suggest, cynically, that the implementation was speedy since, at a time when education services were being financially squeezed, the policy allowed considerable savings from the closing of separate centres and accommodation for non-native English speakers. Theoretically, it seemed an unwise return to a form of linguistic submersion, the method attacked by various authorities [particularly Skuttnab-Kangas 1981] as condemning non-native speakers to limited participation and frustration (3).

Secondly, the committee were reluctant to recommend the provision of teaching in community languages except in a very limited way. A distinction was made between bilingual education (using the mother tongue as a medium), mother tongue maintenance (developing a student's fluency in the L1) and mother tongue teaching (teaching community languages as part of the modern language curriculum).

They counselled prudence on the introduction of any bilingual education initiatives since

"there do not appear to be particularly compelling arguments on the basis of promoting the academic achievement of the individual minority language child, for choosing between monolingual and bilingual education" [Mitchell 1978 quoted Swann 1985].

To quote a review of literature already seven years out of date when so much research and discussion had taken place in the intervening years which would bring into question its conclusion seems to indicate at best a lack of awareness at worst a need for politically acceptable recommendations. All evidence from abroad was dismissed as

"their relevance to the British situation must not automatically be assumed" [Swann Report 1985:403].

Bilingual education was also felt to be socially divisive and to lead to a situation of inequality of opportunity since



"the key to equality of opportunity, to academic success and, more broadly, to participation on equal terms as a full member of society, is good command of English and the emphasis must therefore we feel be on the learning of English" [Swann Report 1985:407].

It was allowed that some bilingual provision in infant reception classes might be justified to ease the induction of non-English speaking five year olds into the education system, a measure for which the National Council for Mother Tongue Teaching had been campaigning for some time. This must be recognised, however, as part of a soft assimilation policy [1.6.1.2.] rather than as a policy of support for the L1.

Any maintenance of minority languages was seen to be the responsibility of the minority linguistic communities themselves, although it was also recommended that there be some financial support from L.E.A.s for the purchase of books and equipment and that free use of school premises after school hours be available (4).

The committee did, however, give its wholehearted support to the teaching of minority community languages as part of the normal modern languages option in secondary schools. They questioned the advisability of the pre-eminence of French and German and argued for diversification to include the mother tongues most widely spoken in Britain, for which there is a standard literary form. They also pressed for such qualifications to be taken into account in educational progression and employment. In response to the Swann report, N.F.E.R. carried out a survey to see how local education authorities were responding to multilingualism in their schools [Bourne 1989].

#### **2.1.3.4. The end of the 80s and the Education Reform Act 1988**

This Act aimed to provide the British education system with a core curriculum and to raise standards through the introduction of attainment targets for each age group. As the

bill was moving through committee stage it became clear that the ethos of the legislation was the promotion of the Western European cultural legacy. The attempts that had been made by the Schools Council and local education authorities over the past years to provide a non-European dimension to all British children's education [Tomlinson 1990] were dismissed:

- History was to have a British focus; the History working party was criticized by the Secretary of State for Education for emphasizing world history rather than the "British experience" [Macey 1990]

- There was no requirement that English Literature include those writing in the medium outside Britain; under government pressure the English working party withdrew from its stance that the literature studied be multicultural [Times Educational Supplement June 1990]

- The Mathematics working party stated explicitly its opposition to multiculturalist approaches which it branded as potentially "confusing" [Department of Education and Science 1988]

- Most contentiously, Religious Instruction and the daily act of worship were to be of a broadly Christian character. Subsequent lobbying has attenuated this so that school governors of school with a non-Christian population may now ask for a "determination" which permits acts of worship distinctive of another religion. This seems to encourage the formation of religious enclaves and does not encourage a collective approach. Muslim groups, in particular, seem to support this segregationist approach [Hiskett 1989].

- Finally, Modern Languages were to be taken to mean first and foremost the languages of the European Community. This provoked intense lobbying from local



authorities, schools, educationalists and the minority language groups to influence the list of languages permissible as foundation subjects and when the first draft of the bill appeared concessions had been made and the languages of the linguistic minorities had been included. However, the 1989 Draft Order for Modern Languages specified two categories of languages. The first were the working languages of the E.C. (Schedule 1 Languages) and the second category included Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Panjabi, Russian, Turkish and Urdu (Schedule 2 languages). The order stated

"Those in Schedule 1 are foundation subjects in any circumstances.

Those in Schedule 2 will only be foundation subjects if the school concerned also offers pupils who are required to study a modern foreign language as part of the National Curriculum the alternative of studying at least one of the languages in Schedule 1 as a foundation subject"

[Department of Education and Science May 1989].

The Modern Languages Working Party set up under the chairmanship of Professor Martin Harris to comment on the languages section of the National Curriculum advised the government to abolish the schedule lists in order to eradicate all implication that there exists a hierarchy of languages [Department of Education and Science October 1990]. However, the working party recommendations remain in essence the same:

"We believe that each pupil must be offered the opportunity to study a working language of the E.C. to meet the National Curriculum modern foreign language requirements. Thus if a school offers only one foreign language for pupils aged 11 to 16 that language would have to be an E.C. working language" [Department of Education and Science October 1990:71].

If the school offers more than one language, a non-EC language could be offered and

"pupils could then choose to study the *non-EC language as their foreign* language foundation subject within the National Curriculum"  
[Department of Education and Science October 1990:71].

The working party also advised that bilingual pupils should have the opportunity of studying their mother tongue if they so wished but "*wherever possible* to study a language new to them" [Department of Education and Science October 1990:71] (my emphasis).

Other sections of the Educational Reform Act which permit schools to "opt out" of local education authority jurisdiction give linguistic minorities the opportunity to set up separate schools. There is no widespread campaign for separate schooling on linguistic grounds but Hindu, Sikh and Muslim groups are actively considering separate schooling for religious reasons. Were their bids to be successful, such separatism might result in mother tongues other than English being the medium of education for some linguistic minority pupils. However, this separatism would result in the segregationist model of bilingual education described by Skuttnab-Kangas [1981] and would lead to the isolation of young bilinguals from the majority [Wright and Ager 1990].

#### **2.1.3.5. Withdrawal of Section 11 funding**

The tenuous position of minority community languages was further eroded in May 1990 when the Home Office issued a directive which forbade the funding of mother tongue teachers from the Section 11 allocation. The peripatetic mother tongue teaching teams who provide classes within the modern languages option in secondary schools throughout a local education authority are often grant-aided in this way. If individual schools wished to continue to give bilingual students the opportunity to study their mother tongue at secondary level they would have increased costs since they would now have to fund the post from their own budget. Since the National Curriculum also



stipulates that they must offer an EC language to all 11 - 16 year olds, the costs in the languages department are already vastly increased in many schools.

Section 11 money was now to be used only for English as a Second Language.

However, funding would henceforth only be available for special projects and not for general provision of English Language support, unless it could be reclassified as a special project. General support would have to be provided from the school budget or from the central local education budget now much depleted after the introduction of local financial management for schools.

The assumption set out in this Home Office directive appears to be a belief that the English language problem was fading since the rate of immigration has slowed down and the ethnic minority pupils and students within schools and colleges, being born in Britain and receiving all their education through the medium of English, were now English speakers similar in competence and profile to their peer group in the majority host community. The other explanation of the ruling may reside in a preference for the SUP model of second language acquisition [1.4.3.] and a continuing belief that bilingual pupils are best served when education focusses exclusively on perfecting the L2.

The Department of Education and Science also acted as if it considered the whole school population was moving to monolingualism in English. The GCSE reform was used as an opportunity to remove all the alternative English matriculation examinations that had been developed for non-mother tongue English speakers. In the first year of GCSE, 1987, there had been a specific ESL English examination which was demoted in the second year of the scheme to a certificate and then withdrawn on the grounds that it did not fulfil the GCSE criteria, despite many protests from teachers in multilingual schools. During the past decade there has been a general decline in the number and variety of English examinations specifically for bilingual students: the Ordinary Level

alternative syllabuses, e.g. London Board Syllabus B, disappeared when GCSE was introduced. The AEB Test in English for Educational Purposes was withdrawn in 1991. Now English examinations are either designed for the monolingual linguistic majority (e.g. G.C.S.E. or A.E.B.'s Certificate of Further Studies or N.V.Q.'s Diploma in Vocational Education) or for foreign students of English (e.g. Cambridge Proficiency). Any ESL examinations that are still available tend to demand that entrants have less than ten years residency in Great Britain (e.g. JMB Test in English for Speakers of Languages Other the English). New syllabi and examinations being developed (e.g. London University Certificate of Attainment in English) have tended to be publicised outside Britain but not within it. The Department of Education and Science appears to be taking the line that it is unlikely that pupils and students in British education will not be fluent English speakers and that there is thus no need for separate certification. Department of Education and Science spokesmen [Birmingham GCSE training 1987] commented that it would be against Department of Education and Science policy to provide "a two tier system", which while laudable did not address the problems posed by the actual linguistic situation.

Taylor and Hegarty [1985] had noted that the British school system was still dealing with a large number of students for whom English was very much a second language and whose competence in English was not sufficient to allow them to realise their potential. Taylor and Hegarty suggested that contrary to the continuing popular assumption amongst educationalists,

"there remains a considerable need for E2L teaching, which is likely to continue for several generations, not only for pupils on entry to school, but in many cases throughout their schooling" [1985:280].

Their summary of research showed that in terms of examination performance in English language, students with South Asian mother tongues do not perform as well as native speakers. Subsequent research in the late 1980s [Nuttall et al 1990 for ILEA and Department of Education and Science], which was given extensive coverage in the



national press, suggested that, on the contrary, ethnic minorities were performing well in public examinations. A close examination of the statistics shows, however, that this was not the case for the ethnic minorities where L1 use was still widespread; they performed very badly [Times Educational Supplement 18.9.1987; Daily Mail 29.6.1989; Daily Mail 17.1.92]. Whatever the reason for this poor performance and whatever the motivation for the press reports, it is clear that the language factor is still an important variable which has not yet been resolved.

There was further research which countered the apparent expectation of language shift. The questionnaires and interviews of the Linguistic Minorities Project [Khan et al 1985] in the early 1980s, showed a high level of L1 maintenance in the linguistic minority communities they monitored and provided evidence that the minority linguistic communities of Britain were conserving their languages. Alladina, Edwards et al [1991] also show that language shift, where it is taking place, is a slow and complex process and that many linguistic minority communities have become aware of the loss and have taken steps to preserve their linguistic heritage.

By the end of the 1980s it had become increasingly evident that the reality experienced by classroom teachers and the findings of individual researchers were not reflected in the education policy decisions taken at government level. The insights of the Bullock and Swann reports seemed to have been eclipsed in an era of commitment politics and the educational debate, seemed to be underpinned by opinion rather than fact.

For the educational establishment in Birmingham this was disheartening; the work of a decade of experiment and innovation to find strategies to cope with a linguistically disparate population was being ignored by central government, whose own agenda was often at odds with diversity.

## **2.2 The linguistic diversity of Birmingham**

Birmingham is a city of immigrants. In the seventeenth century it was little more than a large village and a farming community. However, its position and resources favoured its growth during the industrial revolution and within two centuries it had grown to the present city of one million people. Birmingham has always attracted immigrants to provide the workforce needed for its industry. In the early years of the city they came from other parts of Britain. In the twentieth century they have come from further afield and today the city is composed of people from many different countries of origin. Some ethnic minority statistics were collected from 1966 to 1972 by local education authorities but then discontinued through fears of the misuse of such statistical record. The 1981 census gives an indication of the size of linguistic minority groups through the record of place of birth.

### **1981 CENSUS CITIZENS OF BIRMINGHAM BY COUNTRY OR REGION OF BIRTH: INDIA, BANGLA DESH, FAR EAST, PAKISTAN, EAST AFRICA.**

| <b>AREA</b>   | <b>INDIA</b> | <b>B.D.</b> | <b>FAR EAST</b> | <b>PAK</b> | <b>E.AFRICA</b> |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|
| ACOCKS GREEN  | 238          | 84          | 30              | 306        | 156             |
| ALL SAINTS    | 816          | 27          | 25              | 215        | 84              |
| ASTON         | 462          | 535         | 38              | 1261       | 94              |
| BILLESLEY     | 90           | 4           | 26              | 28         | 88              |
| BRANDWOOD     | 125          | 6           | 55              | 912        | 135             |
| DERITEND      | 490          | 188         | 69              | 1180       | 199             |
| DUDDESTON     | 47           | 47          | 75              | 75         | 32              |
| EDGBASTON     | 450          | 37          | 179             | 286        | 238             |
| ERDINGTON     | 140          | 2           | 32              | 55         | 26              |
| FOX HOLLIES   | 130          | 26          | 30              | 83         | 123             |
| GRAVELLY HILL | 246          | 29          | 28              | 336        | 115             |
| HALL GREEN    | 323          | 14          | 58              | 168        | 235             |
| HANDSWORTH    | 2356         | 349         | 116             | 1377       | 636             |
| HARBORNE      | 602          | 15          | 78              | 89         | 93              |
| KING'S NORTON | 127          | 27          | 41              | 46         | 95              |
| KINGSTANDING  | 79           | 9           | 12              | 19         | 28              |
| LONGBRIDGE    | 69           | 11          | 44              | 38         | 44              |
| NEWTOWN       | 293          | 332         | 24              | 353        | 67              |
| MOSELEY       | 426          | 9           | 115             | 772        | 294             |
| NORTHFIELD    | 79           | 6           | 44              | 24         | 33              |
| OSCOTT        | 72           | 5           | 11              | 10         | 28              |
| PERRY BARR    | 159          | 5           | 27              | 6          | 36              |



|                   |       |      |      |       |      |
|-------------------|-------|------|------|-------|------|
| QUINTON           | 172   | 3    | 37   | 38    | 31   |
| ROTTON PARK       | 1202  | 63   | 54   | 696   | 141  |
| SALTLEY           | 203   | 285  | 27   | 3677  | 83   |
| SANDWELL          | 2966  | 134  | 108  | 283   | 350  |
| SELLY OAK         | 370   | 86   | 151  | 145   | 149  |
| SHARD END         | 50    | 6    | 6    | 23    | 17   |
| SHELDON           | 54    | 8    | 24   | 19    | 23   |
| SMALL HEATH       | 860   | 318  | 55   | 3547  | 421  |
| SOHO              | 4380  | 246  | 73   | 696   | 34   |
| SPARKBROOK        | 815   | 714  | 70   | 3005  | 535  |
| SPARKHILL         | 2239  | 161  | 16   | 3277  | 1996 |
| STECHFORD         | 68    | 2    | 28   | 82    | 33   |
| STOCKLAND GREEN   | 125   | 3    | 49   | 44    | 47   |
| WASHWOOD HEATH    | 180   | 100  | 33   | 2421  | 66   |
| WEOLEY            | 148   | 11   | 180  | 27    | 49   |
| YARDLEY           | 70    | 2    | 3    | 34    | 72   |
| SUTTON COLDFIELD  | 105   | 7    | 40   | 23    | 40   |
| SUTTON COLDFIELD2 | 142   | 11   | 53   | 20    | 50   |
| SUTTON COLDFIELD3 | 119   | 13   | 33   | 27    | 45   |
|                   | 22087 | 3940 | 2197 | 25733 | 7361 |

The 1981 census underestimates the number of possible bilinguals in that it does not record British born members of linguistic minority families and is of course ten years out of date. The 1991 census which will be shortly available will give a clearer picture and does of course include a question on ethnic origin. The statistics are only a very rough indication of possible language allegiance and use and for some areas of very limited use: for example, being born in East Africa could result in membership of a wide variety of linguistic groups. The local authority assesses that between one quarter and one third of the citizens of Birmingham belong to families with roots outside England [Birmingham Museums 1991], but once again this is an imprecise indication of the number of bilinguals since it includes speakers from anglophone countries (5).

### 2.2.1. South Asian language speakers in Birmingham

Emigration to Britain from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh has mostly been from the eight regions marked on the map. In Birmingham there are ethnic groups originating from each of the main areas [Department of Employment 1982]. Families of Pakistani origin tend to have come from the North-West frontier, which is Muslim and Pushto speaking, the Mirpur border area which borders on Kashmir and is Muslim and Mirpuri speaking and the province of Punjab which is Muslim and Panjabi speaking.



Illustration removed for copyright restrictions

## **MAIN AREAS OF EMIGRATION FROM INDIA, PAKISTAN & BANGLADESH**

Source: Department of Employment Race Relations Employment Advisory Service  
1982

Families of Indian origin tend to have come from Punjab state which is mainly Sikh with some Hindu and Panjabi speaking, from Gujarat which is Hindu and Muslim and Gujarati speaking and from The Kutch which is again Hindu and Muslim and Gujarati speaking. Families of Bengali origin tend to come from the Sylhet border area, which is Sylheti-speaking and are mainly Muslim or from Maritime East India which is Bengali speaking and Muslim.



There are also families of Indian origin who have come to Britain from East Africa. Their ancestral languages tend to be the languages of Bombay and the coastal regions, although the use of these languages may have died out, and the members of this group may have acquired competence in Swahili or other African languages.

### **2.2.2 Chinese speakers in Birmingham**

A central area of the city is known as China town. Here there are Chinese restaurants, Chinese supermarkets, Chinese speaking accountants and solicitors and the Chinese Community Centre. Chinese is regularly heard in the streets and shops of that area but it is not a residential area and the Chinese speaking community lives in scattered pockets in all parts of the city as the census statistics show. The Chinese Community Centre estimates that there are about 20,000 Chinese speakers in the Birmingham area, a number slightly higher than the census suggests and accounted for by the fact that immigration mainly took place in the 1960s with families following in the 1970s and therefore there are a large number of British born Chinese speakers. Birmingham Chinese speakers came originally from rural farming communities in the New Territories to the north of Hong Kong and are Hakka speaking, from Hong Kong itself and are Cantonese speakers or they are Chinese speaking Vietnamese nationals and arrived in Birmingham as refugees in the late 1970s or 1980s.

### **2.2.3. Speakers of Eastern and South-Eastern European languages in Birmingham**

Both the Serbian Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox churches have communities in the city, particularly in the south. The arrival of the Yugoslavs dates from the Second World War and the immediate post war period; the Yugoslavs also include a number of Catholic families. The Greek speaking community has come mainly from Cyprus and arrived over a longer period. The greatest concentration of Poles in the West Midlands is not in Birmingham but in Wolverhampton, although the Polish community in Birmingham is large enough to support both a Polish Lutheran church and a Polish

Catholic association. A small number of the Polish community are former soldiers who remained in Britain after World War Two. A special government plan, the 1947 Polish resettlement act, had included an education section which provided both for English as a second language instruction and for mother tongue maintenance.

#### **2.2.4. Speakers of Arabic in Birmingham**

The Arabic speakers of Birmingham have come mainly from the Yemen. There are also very small numbers of Saudi Arabians Iraqis, Syrians, Egyptians, Algerians, Tunisians and Moroccans, some of whom are only transitory residents and who are studying at the universities. Some of the groups are composed more of political refugees than of economically motivated immigrants. The Arabic speakers are usually Muslims and have close connections with the Urdu speakers, sharing mosques and Islamic community centres.

#### **2.2.5. Refugees**

The Midlands Refugee Council report (A.M.Aziz in conversation with researcher 1990) that Birmingham has small numbers of political refugees from Chile, South Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Some groups are big enough to sustain community associations and language classes, e.g. Pushto evening classes, taught by an Afghan refugee, are available at one further education college.

#### **2.2.6 Other ethnic groups**

There are also large minorities of West Indian origin and of Irish origin. Both these groups do, of course, have ancestral languages and creoles. However, they have not been included in this present study, since members of the two groups are less likely to have studied formally and taken examinations in the languages.



## **2.3. The response of the Birmingham Local Education Authority to bilingualism and multilingualism**

### **2.3.1. Submersion - lack of special provision**

Immigration on a large scale from non-English speaking countries, usually of young men, started in the 1950s. By 1960 many of them were sufficiently well established to send for the wives, fiancées and children they had left behind and so, for the first time, the Birmingham Education Authority was faced with the task of providing education for non-English speakers. Early responses to the arrival of these children in Birmingham schools approximated to the process described as linguistic submersion [1.3.6.]:

"That is, with or without preliminary or concurrent ESL provision, the children have to follow a school programme which assumes native speaker competence in English and familiarity with English cultural norms. Large numbers of their classmates are likely to be native English speakers, and the pace of work is often geared to native speakers' needs. The teacher is not very likely to speak the minority children's languages, or to be closely familiar with all their cultural backgrounds" [NCLE 1982:9].

The following example concerns a bilingual Birmingham teacher and serves as a graphic illustration of what "submersion" meant in personal terms. Saima, a graduate now teaching Urdu and English in Birmingham, recounts that in 1967 she arrived from Pakistan at the age of nine speaking no English and was placed in the second year of a Birmingham junior school where she was the only non-English speaker apart from one Bengali girl. The teacher, though kind, had no training nor skills in second language acquisition and her state of ignorance about the languages of the Indian sub-continent was so great that she put the Bengali speaker and the Urdu speaker together so that they would each have someone with whom to communicate! Saima passed her first year in school bemused by what was happening and unable to make contact with anyone.

There was no provision for English as a Second Language and she cannot remember actually speaking in class until secondary school. An extremely intelligent person, she survived that induction into the British education system and as the Plowden Report had predicted "picked up" English, but she reports that other members of her generation in her family who went through the same ordeal opted out at the first opportunity. Research studies of this situation elsewhere have shown that such educational experiences normally result in low levels of academic achievement [Cummins 1976 and Cummins and Swain 1986], in semilingualism [TSou 1981; Skutnabb-Kangas 1981] and subtractive bilingualism [Lambert 1977].

Birmingham Education Authority did not follow the practice, current in the 1960s and encouraged by the D.E.S., of "bussing", a policy designed to avoid a situation where some schools had large concentrations of non-English speakers. In Birmingham this was rejected as being against the ethos of neighbourhood schools [Craft 1986a].

### **2.3.3 Assimilation - provision of ESL**

Birmingham education authority attempted to address the problems posed by the presence of non-English speakers in the classroom by a series of training initiatives and projects some of which were funded by Birmingham's designation as an educational priority area and some by the provisions of Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. By the end of the 1960s there were more than fifty teachers employed by the education authority to provide English language support for non-English speakers. This support ranged from home-based pre-school English language schemes, a peripatetic team of English as a Second Language specialists in primary and secondary schools to reception and assessment centres for new arrivals.

The provision of English language support was of varying quality, for the peripatetic service was always bedevilled by the lack of career progression and so did not always attract the most able and effective teachers. The lack of continuity in teacher



secondments to schools, the lack of adequate classroom space and resources led to low morale. The best work was often done amongst the first stage learners, and as the Bullock Committee had found, the work with second stage learners was less easily defined and less effectively executed (6). Nevertheless, however imperfect the service of the peripatetic team might have been, it was preferable to the other solution for those with E2L difficulties, which was to assign them to the school's remedial unit.

#### **2.3.4. Individual pluralism - provision of community languages**

The Bullock Committee had suggested that confidence and ability in the L1 would facilitate L2 acquisition. They did not say how this would be accomplished within the British system and the Swann committee had made it clear that the government wished the speech communities themselves to be responsible for language provision.

Taylor and Hegarty [1985] record that there were three schools in Birmingham which were offering Urdu and Bengali to O level as early as 1976. "The classes had started through the interest and enthusiasm of Asian staff, not as a result of LEA policy" [Taylor and Hegarty 1985:233].

By the early 1980s these classes had expanded and been adopted by the L.E.A. A peripatetic team of 15 language teachers, funded by a section 11 grant and providing tuition in Bengali, Gujarati, Panjabi and Urdu, was available for city schools. In the early years of this Community Languages Unit, classes were often held in the lunch hour or after school. In 1984 the EC funded a three year project (7) to study the feasibility of the inclusion of community languages into the normal curricular arrangements of local education authority maintained schools in England and Wales, of which Birmingham L.E.A. was part. An international conference, held at Warwick University in 1987, to report on the findings of the project gave South Asian languages a high profile in Birmingham educational circles and was perhaps one of the reasons why it became progressively easier for those who wished to introduce the languages of

the ethnic minorities into the curriculum to persuade Birmingham headteachers to timetable community languages alongside modern European languages within the school day. (8)

Three major problems were associated with the introduction of community languages into the mainstream curriculum. Firstly, as demand grew, it became progressively more difficult to find trained teachers. Those who had been teaching their languages in community, gurdwara and mosque classes often did not have the necessary qualifications to enter mainstream teaching. Teachers trained abroad were accepted reluctantly by the DES and only as instructors. University departments of education and teacher training colleges began to organize courses but they too were hampered by a lack of trained expertise acceptable to the DES [Houlton 1986]. Secondly, examinations in community languages were either very old-fashioned, not available or only available in a Mode 3 scheme [Reid 1982] and teachers, who were often new to language teaching, had the onerous task of providing themselves with the examination system they needed. Thirdly and most difficult to solve was the decision on which languages should be offered to which pupils.

The provision of community languages stemmed first and foremost from the L.E.A.'s wish to respond to an expressed request from some sections of the ethnic minority communities for a language maintenance and literacy programme, but also because some research [Skuttnab Kangas 1981, Cummins 1976, T'Sou 1981] argued the advisability of underpinning pupils' L1 with literacy for successful cognitive development in the L2.

The relevant languages that were available in the early and mid 1980s within the British examination system at C.S.E. and/or G.C.E. were Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Gujarati, Hindi, Panjabi and Urdu. Each of these examinations tested the standard literary language. The Birmingham school children



who elected to follow the courses offered and take the examinations were not always mother tongue speakers of the standard language. The members of the Bengali classes were sometimes Sylheti speakers, a dialect which has a close relationship with standard Bengali but which has different morphology and lexis. Many Kashmiri, Mirpuri or other Western dialect Panjabi speaking students chose to study Urdu because they perceived it to have prestige and utility, and to be associated with Pakistan and Islam. The Panjabi of the Panjabi classes, which might well have been closer to their L1, was not considered as an option because the classes were taught by Sikh teachers, using the Gurmukhi script and for these Muslim Panjabi speakers, national and religious affiliations were stronger than linguistic. Arabic classes were often attended by speakers of Urdu, Farsi, Panjabi and Bengali who, being devout muslims, wished to learn Arabic for Koranic study. As a result Arabic classes usually had a very disparate set of students with a wide range of levels of attainment in the language. Young Chinese Hakka speakers tended to devalue their L1, seeing it as the language of an older generation with little formal education. The generation educated in Britain may see English as the language of education and career success, but if they do wish to study Chinese formally their choices are limited to Cantonese or Mandarin (Putonghua) [Roger Li, Chinese Community Centre, in conversation with researcher 1989].

A further complication is the development of new dialects formed on the interface of English and the languages of the ethnic minority communities. "Punglish" is the most widely developed and recognized of these [Tosi, Bilingual Education Conference, Wolverhampton, March 1989, Mahandru 1991] and is prevalent amongst the younger generation. It is to all intents and purposes a new language and speakers of Punglish will have to approach Panjabi almost as a foreign language. A student who has gained oracy skills in Britain and internalized the systems and rules of Punglish will find these systems and rules in conflict with some aspects of the standard Panjabi which the student will meet in a British GCSE examination. Thus, as Tosi argues (Bilingual Education Conference, Wolverhampton, March 1989) there is a need for an awareness

of the discrepancy between the mother tongue and the standardized language offered as part of the curriculum. In many instances the attempt to build on the students' existing language knowledge results in the introduction of what is in fact a third language. Tosi attacks the language GCSEs for being prescriptive and the educational establishment for being more concerned to instil a linguistic repertoire than value the linguistic diversity of the pupils. However, this situation, in which the taught language is invariably different from the home language, which is not recognised as a language of education, is one which taxes educators in every continent. The problem arises in the Asian sub-continent [Pattanayak 1981], in the United States with both immigrant groups and the American Indians [Ohannessian 1975] and in the USSR [Grant 1981]. The list could be extended endlessly, for every group whose mother tongue has no written form or no tradition of education and literacy will have this problem. Perhaps the most important point is a pragmatic one; not whether the educational establishment values these languages, but whether the speakers of the languages wish to remain within their speech community or want access to the standard language. In Birmingham it has been noted that the students themselves are keen to acquire the standard language which has prestige in their communities and families and gain access to the literature and culture of that language.

The question of provision of courses in the standard written language of the L1 for bilingual students is, therefore, not clear cut and pupils studying South Asian and Far Eastern languages are sometimes underpinning their L1 with literacy, and learning the written form of the spoken language they use habitually. Sometimes, however, they are to all intents and purposes learning a new modern foreign language. The achievement of a qualification such as GCSE or A level is sometimes a recognition of L1 linguistic skills and sometimes an award for the mastery of a foreign language. A Birmingham L.E.A. policy document issued June 1990 presses for the recognition and equality of all L1s. While this is admirable from the point of view of equality, the question of what it would mean in practical language learning terms has not been addressed.



### **2.3.5. Modified pluralism: multiculturalism in the curriculum**

Research initiatives in the late 1970s [Taylor and Hegarty 1985] had marked the beginning of a more informed phase of policy making at local education authority level on educational provision for an ethnically diverse population. A variety of initiatives and projects in Birmingham implemented this new philosophy of limited pluralism: the primary section of the peripatetic English as a Second Language team took courses in Urdu, Panjabi and Bengali; bilingual assistants were employed to work alongside monolingual primary and infant teachers (9); funding was obtained from the Educational Support Grant for dual language and L1 text books in the academic year 1985-1986. Although South Asian languages were not offered to monolingual English speaking children as they had been in neighbouring education authorities (10), Birmingham local education authority was attempting to influence the schools' curricula towards a reflection of the multicultural nature of the city [Birmingham L.E.A. 1981]. The pressure had some success and the content of History, Religious Education, English and other school subjects moved away from rigidly ethnocentric syllabi to show "regard for the ethnic, cultural, historical, linguistic and religious backgrounds of the pupils" [Birmingham L.E.A. 1981].

These developments have not been without problems and are always under threat. The first problem is intractable. The pattern of language use in the city has caused one specific problem whenever any policy of bilingualism has been introduced: when it was possible to offer bilingual support at primary school level to a large minority, the pupils of the less numerous speech communities felt more alienated by a classroom using two languages, neither of which they understood, than by a classroom where there was only English. In such a situation the pupil is in a double minority with the bilingual approach impeding his access to English [1.6.1.2].

Secondly, for some Birmingham school children/students their contact with the surrounding community as a whole has apparently conditioned them to consider English as the appropriate medium of communication in the school environment. They have allotted domains for each of their languages and any deviation from this provokes a situation in which they are lost for words [Bengali teacher in conversation with researcher 1989]. Individuals have varying degrees of South Asian and Anglo identificational patterns which need to be both known and respected when second language support and bilingual programmes are being organised. Many school children with South Asian surnames have developed cultural orientations that would not fit easily with a bilingual approach and no one solution will suit the whole school/student population of apparent bilinguals.

Thirdly, provision of English language support for "third stage learners" (6) was constantly hampered by lack of recognition and underfunding. The new styles of support for English language learning in the mainstream classroom demanded double staffing in the class and time outside it for the subject and ESL teachers to meet and plan. In the 1980s, a period of cuts and dwindling resources, the ideal conditions rarely prevailed and the ESL service could not provide the support needed. It was not only the Birmingham education authority who felt this pressure; many LEAs were realising that the Swann recommendations needed more not fewer staff than the old methods of withdrawing pupils for ESL provision. [Bourne 1989]

Fourthly, as has been discussed, the National Curriculum and the changes in Section 11 funding make it progressively more difficult to continue the promotion of bilingualism and the multicultural curriculum.

Finally, the possibilities provided by the Education Reform Act for "opting out" of the state system may mean that any future developments in the multilingual multicultural area may now take place outside mainstream education. Faced with a school curriculum



that reflects the majority ethnic group and neglects the minority ethnic groups the pressure to move to separate schooling is building amongst some of the latter. It is principally the minority groups with strong religious beliefs who are leading the move to establish minority group schools with a curriculum and organization that reflect their ideology and private religious schools already exist in the city. In the long term such separate development could lead, in a pessimistic view, to incomprehension between groups, to ghettoization and perhaps to confrontation.

## **NOTES**

1. This study intends to focus on the newly arrived linguistic minorities, ie those arriving since 1945. There are of course indigenous linguistic minorities of long date within the British Isles (in Wales, in Scotland, in Ireland and until recently in Cornwall) [Jones 1966, Dodson et al 1968, Sharp 1973, Sharp et al 1973, Dorian 1981], and immigrant groups of long standing (e.g. the Jews and the Gypsies) [Taylor 1988]. However, this study will concentrate on the linguistic situation amongst the new minority linguistic communities which are evolving and which may be establishing themselves.

2. However, the Warnock report, 1978, a government enquiry into special educational needs, contained only one paragraph on the assessment of bilingual children. It stated that when such children were being assessed for special education programmes one of the assessors should be able to understand and speak the child's language [Department of Education and Science 1978:64]. There was no further guidance on this area.

3. In practice, it has sometimes proved very difficult to provide a coherent language programme in team teaching situations. The "richness and variety of English" which the L2 learners were supposed to hear in the mixed classroom often became incomprehensible input which effectively excluded them from participating. Tensions

arose where fluent speakers of the L2 perceived L2 language support to be intrusive. Timid L2 learners in the mixed class were less likely to seek help than in the smaller withdrawal group. The language teacher could only react to incomprehension and language difficulties rather than build a positive language acquisition programme. Only the very best teachers were able to make a success of the strategy [Birmingham ESL teachers in conversation with researcher 1988, 1989 and 1990]. The separate language centres in Birmingham have now been closed after a long and bitter struggle to keep them open [Birmingham Post 26/1/1991]

4. The EC Directive on the Education of Children of Migrant Workers, issued on 25th July 1977, required that member states shall

"take appropriate measures to promote in coordination with normal education, teaching of the mother tongue and culture of the country of origin for the children (of any worker who is a national of another member state)."

The Swann committee reaffirmed the British government's position that since this directive was passed

"with a view principally to facilitating their possible reintegration into the member state of origin" [Swann 1985:402],

its application was not appropriate in Britain where minority ethnic children

"neither perceive themselves nor wish to be perceived as in any sense "transitory" citizens of this country" [Swann 1985:402].

The committee argued that the case for maintaining and fostering the multilingual diversity of British society could not found its case on this directive, "intended to meet an entirely different educational situation" [Swann 1985:402].

5. In 1983 the Linguistic Information Network Co-ordination of the Linguistic Minorities Project found the following speech communities in Birmingham while



making their survey of school children's languages: Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Gaelic, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Jamaican, Polish, Panjabi, Serbo-Croat, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian and Urdu.

6. No precise definition of the stages of L2 acquisition is currently being used in British education [Bourne 1989]. The ILEA 1985 census gave a working definition for its own survey:

"Second stage learners: These pupils have become quite fluent in spoken English but still make non-native errors. Their command of vocabulary and syntax is uneven and this makes many areas of school learning much harder for them than for their English speaking peers.

Third stage learners: Their spoken and written English shows far fewer signs of non-native use, but pupils lack the full range of native speakers of English of the same age and ability. Third stage learners tend to achieve below their potential in subjects like English and History where language experience is important" [ILEA 1986:2].

7. The project was chaired by Harold Rosen, Professor at the University of London, Institute of Education, and co-ordinated by John Broadbent who was seconded from the London Borough of Brent's Language Service. Three language areas were chosen: Italian, Panjabi and Urdu, and three education authorities: Birmingham, Inner London and Nottingham. The Panjabi and Urdu teachers from the Community Languages Unit were all involved and the Birmingham contribution to the pilot project took place in the sixth form college which provided data for this research as well as two schools well-known in the city for their promotion of Asian languages. The outcomes, documented in a report [Broadbent 1987] and an E.C. sponsored conference at Warwick University September in 1987, were the production and dissemination of quality teaching materials, new ideas on methodology and assessment and proposals for the inclusion of community languages in the main curriculum.

8. A report from one school in Coventry showed that the inclusion of community languages on the main timetable was not confined to the pilot areas and that in a very tentative way Asian languages were now being offered to students for whom they were not a first language. The school abolished twilight classes for community languages in 1985 and made space for them on the main timetable by slightly reducing the time available for Maths, English and French. Every first year pupil took part in a language awareness course

"designed to make them think why they should learn a foreign language and make them aware of the fact that 78% of the pupils at the school had access to a community language" [SEC Conference Report 1988;15].

They were all given taster lessons of Gujarati, Panjabi, Urdu and Hindi and asked to choose which language they wished to learn alongside French. Those students who did not wish to take part were given the alternative of continuing with the language awareness course until the end of the year. The initial objections of non-Asian language speakers to the taster sessions were "overcome with sensitive handling" [SEC Conference Report 1988:15], with the head explaining the educational value to parents who objected. The staff involved felt that the whole exercise had achieved status for Asian languages and status for bilingual students within the school. It is, however, now unlikely that such a programme will continue because the Educational Reform Act 1988 makes it compulsory to offer one EC language to all 11 - 16 pupils. Language awareness would have to be an additional study and it would be most unlikely that there would be enough space on the secondary timetable for it. In any case it could not be part of a core curriculum.

9. There was also a limited programme at primary level to use bilingual methods to help non-English speakers learn English. An EC funded programme brought together a research team from the Department of Language, University of Wales, Aberystwith under Professor Dodson and the Birmingham primary ESL team. The work started in



March 1983 and still continues although no longer funded by the EC. The main thesis was that a child learns an L2 using different strategies from those used in acquiring the L1; principally comparing and contrasting and asking for equivalents. In order to enable small children to do this, bilingual "facilitators" were employed to work alongside classroom teachers and progress monitored. Some of the facilitators were coincidentally members of the college sample who worked in the schools in a voluntary capacity to help small children who found themselves in the same situation that they themselves had experienced.

10. Schools in Wolverhampton became involved in a battle with parents of non-Asian language speakers when they tried to introduce a very limited South Asian language programme . The local and national press took up the story and, misinterpreting, perhaps intentionally, the modest aims of the initiative, made it politically difficult to continue the experiment [Wolverhampton Express and Star 18/10/1984]. In any case, the reforms envisaged by the Educational Reform Act 1988 meant there was no place in the curriculum for the modular approach and the language awareness courses with which Wolverhampton teachers had been experimenting as a way of offering Asian languages to non-speakers.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 The origin of the research**

The hypotheses of the present research derive from the researcher's experience of teaching bilingual students in a sixth form college in Birmingham for seven years and working with local education officers on policy formulation. There seemed to be a number of aspects of the education of students with a mother tongue other than English which merited investigation. Firstly, from the experience of a number of these students who began to study their L1 in a formal way, it seemed that this formal study and the acquisition of literacy in the L1 were accompanied by educational development in other subject areas. Secondly, from monitoring the progress of all students with a mother tongue other than English, it appeared that the length of time that the student had been resident in Britain did not necessarily correlate with that student's level of mastery of English. Thirdly, from the opinions expressed by different groups, it seemed clear that the bilingual student body could not be treated as a cohesive whole. In this seven year period there seemed to be number of policy decisions at governmental, local authority and institutional level on language education for linguistic minority students which did not address the actual situation that could be observed amongst this population. These educational policies appeared to be based on a number of assumptions about language use which were directly contrary to these observations and with which they could not be reconciled.

It seemed that research was necessary, therefore, to contribute to a more accurate understanding of the present linguistic situation and to assist ultimately in the formulation of an educational policy which would respond to actual needs. The intention was to examine current practice within schools and colleges in the context of a number of the bilingual and educational theories discussed in Chapter 1. If certain patterns of linguistic behaviour were shown to have educational



consequences for bilingual students and if it were it to be established that these patterns of behaviour were widespread amongst certain linguistic minority populations, then such evidence could contribute both to theoretical understanding and refinement as well as to practical policy making.

### **3.2 Research hypotheses**

The starting point of the research was thus the questioning of a number of assumptions, current in educational circles, whose validity seemed to be doubtful.

#### **3.2.1. Hypothesis 1**

**Assumptions:** The expectation in the educational establishment based on patterns of language shift noted amongst other immigrant populations [Fishman 1985], is that the diglossic situation in Birmingham will only be of limited duration. Since new immigration has slowed considerably and many linguistic minority groups are now entering the third generation, there is an expectation of a move to monolingualism amongst the younger members of these communities.

**Observation:** Some linguistic minority communities are exhibiting signs of great linguistic vitality. Linguistic enclaves within the city and close links with countries where the minority languages are widely used encourage the maintenance of the mother tongue.

**Hypothesis:** The expected language shift to English in Birmingham has not yet taken place or is taking place very slowly.

#### **3.2.2. Hypothesis 2**

**Assumption:** It is believed that bilingual students in a diglossic situation who use their mother tongue (L1) extensively in the private domain and their second language (L2) as a medium of study will tend to be disadvantaged in educational

situations compared both with bilinguals who use the L2 more extensively and with mother tongue speakers of the L2.

**Observation:** This assumption appears to have empirical support in the case of some students. However, it is not a universally applicable rule and other bilingual students who use the L1 extensively seem to succeed in the L2. For bilingualism to be a disadvantage or an advantage in educational terms appears to depend on the levels of competence attained in both languages. Bilingualism as a disadvantage seems to be associated with illiteracy or low levels of literacy in the L1. When bilingual students are encouraged to achieve high levels of language competence, including literacy and formal language study, in both their languages, bilingualism is observed to be an advantage.

**Hypothesis:** The opportunity to study their L1 formally and to achieve literacy in it may be a necessary condition for bilingual students to draw benefits from their bilingualism in educational terms.

### **3.2.3. Hypothesis 3**

**Assumption:** There is a belief in the educational establishment that the longer a non-mother tongue English speaker spends in the British education system the greater his English language skills, and that progression to higher level courses and fulfilment of potential will be achieved by presence in and experience of the British education system (1).

**Observation:** A number of students have spent a considerable amount of time in the British education system, but yet continue to experience severe difficulties with English medium education and do not progress. Conversely, other students arriving from non-English medium education system insert quickly and successfully into the British system.



**Hypothesis: Length of time within the system is a factor in success within the L2 system, but its effect is relatively weak and is dependent on the presence or absence of other variables.**

#### **3.2.4. Hypothesis 4**

**Assumption:** Because in a monolingual education system a bilingual is often disadvantaged when measured by the criteria of that monolingual system, there is sometimes a tendency for monolingual educators in the monolingual system to believe that it is in the best interest of the child to move from bilingualism to monolingualism.

**Observation:** Many young bilinguals, whilst wishing to succeed with the L2 system, also appear to value their L1 and desire to remain bilingual. The pressure to shift to monolingualism to aid personal educational and economic chances in the wider community, is countered by considerations of group identity, of group loyalty, of heritage and by perceptions of prestige and utility.

**Hypothesis:** Young bilinguals who express satisfaction with their present bilingual situation, will be those who will wish to perpetuate a situation of functionally differentiated language use into the next generation.

### **3.3 Research method**

In order to test how far these hypotheses could be shown to have validity it was necessary to establish the patterns of use of the L1, to assess L1 continuity or attrition, to analyse the extent and nature of support for bilingualism, to correlate the degree of support for it with the educational success of individual bilinguals, to analyse patterns of educational behaviour, to evaluate the perceptions of the utility

and value of individual bilingualism and to assess patterns of loyalty and identification. The nature of the research problems indicated that more than one approach would be needed and it was hence decided that research must be both qualitative and quantitative: survey methods would provide evidence of trends within the population and general applicability; interviews would provide insight into possible interpretations of the data and allow for in depth investigation.

Two large-scale questionnaires with a sample of 374 bilingual 15 - 19 year olds studying within the Birmingham local education authority were administered and in-depth interviews with a smaller sample selected from the main group were conducted.

### **Testing procedures**

#### **3.3.1. Design of Questionnaire 1 (see Appendix 1)**

This first questionnaire was destined for bilingual pupils in their fifth year of secondary school and was designed to ascertain:

1. The language considered by the student to be his mother tongue.
2. Any other language learnt before the student learnt English.
3. The student's assessment of how well he now speaks, understands, reads and writes his first language.
4. The student's patterns of use of both his first language and English.
5. The support the student has received for his first language in the past.
6. The support the student is now receiving for his first language.
7. Where this support has come from.
8. The length of time the student has been resident in Britain.
9. The student's religion.
10. The student's country of birth.
11. Present studies.
12. Intentions for future studies



### 13. Career aspirations.

A review of the literature had yielded no single instrument which would gather all this information, although the Secondary Pupils Survey questionnaire, as used in the Linguistic Minorities Project [LMP 1985], covered some of the ground. The sections of this survey in which bilingual students were able to give an account of their linguistic experiences were used as a model, "since it is a well-evaluated survey instrument" [Houlton 1986], and further sections included.

A pilot version of questionnaire 1 was constructed and tested in order to avoid problems of ambiguity and misunderstanding, since questionnaires would be completed in the subject's second language.

After consultation with members of teaching staff from the three schools adjustments were made and the tests administered by the researcher together with the class teacher.

#### 3.3.2. Design of Questionnaire 2 (see Appendix 2)

Questionnaire 2 was to be administered to students aged 16 -19 within a sixth form college. The subjects were older than the members of the school sample and with a greater proportion from the top of the ability range. It was felt, therefore, that questions could be more sophisticated in questionnaire 2 than in questionnaire 1. Questionnaire 2 was designed to elicit the same basic information as questionnaire 1 and in addition posed some questions which were hypothetical, some which solicited solutions to perceived problems and a number which asked respondents to give their opinion. A draft version was discussed with the pastoral tutors who would help to administer it and with Sociology and English Language A Level groups, who would pilot it. Questions were modified after discussion, if they were felt to be ambiguous.

The final version of the questionnaire aimed to identify in a series of closed questions:

1. The languages other than English spoken by the subject.
2. The subject's assessment of his ability in the four skill areas of understanding, speaking, reading and writing this language. (Where the subject was trilingual, it was left to him to choose the stronger language and comment upon that.)
3. Patterns of language use in interaction in the family, in the neighbourhood, in the college and in social networks.
4. Patterns of language use in leisure activities and in private reflection.
5. The period of time spent in the monolingual host community.
6. The support given to the first language while studying in the British education system.
7. The subject's desire for formal study of his first language.
8. The subject's perceived difficulties in English, both receptive and productive.
9. The subject's perceived solutions to any problems encountered in studying through his second language.

The second section of questionnaire 2 was compiled with reference to the model constructed by Dorian [1981]. To evaluate the motivation of Gaelic speakers in language maintenance, she divided the possible reasons into six categories:

preservation of a tradition;

community solidarity;

intellectual stimulation;

aesthetic quality;

utility;

exclusionary effect.

The most relevant of these categories provided the starting point for the construction of a battery of nineteen statements [Appendix 2] which aimed to identify attitudes



towards group membership, to discover whether bilingualism is perceived as an advantage or a disadvantage, to evaluate perceptions of prestige, to assess motivational orientation, to discover the perception of attitudes of the host community towards the L1, to compare language, religion and culture as preferred ethnic markers, to identify elements contributing to language vitality and to language attrition. The Attitude/Motivation and Test Battery [Gardner et al 1979] was consulted and led to the adoption of the Lickert format. The questions on bilingualism itself were included to obtain respondents' evaluation of its effect and utility, since this is an area sometimes neglected in bilingual attitudinal research which has tended to focus on attitudes to the separate languages [Baker 1988]. Discussion with bilingual students from the groups who piloted the questionnaire led to modification and additions in this section, where it was felt that their intimate knowledge of the bilingual experience provided a valuable insight. It was borne in mind that the measurement of attitudes is an imprecise science and that three possible things were being measured: the actual attitudes held by the respondent; the attitudes the respondent would like to hold; the attitudes the respondent would like others to believe he holds. Where respondents gave answers that seemed contradictory they were interviewed.

### **3.3.3 Analysis of results**

From the replies to the closed questions in both questionnaires, data could be extracted to show a variety of frequencies and distributions including patterns of language use, patterns of L1 support, length of time in the British education system etc, and these were to be correlated with results from public examination results taken later in the academic year, with employment destinations where known, with school and college records of failure to present for examination or failure to complete the course and with school and college profiles where available. Answers to the attitudinal section, based on a five point Lickert scale, were analysed and used together with information from the interviews to give an

attitudinal profile for the whole sample. Comparisons were made between subjects from different language groups, male and female subjects and subjects at different levels of educational achievement.

At an interim stage of the research results were fed back to the institutions concerned and discussed with teaching staff and members of the sample.

#### **3.3.4. Organization of interviews**

In-depth interviews were set up to clarify and evaluate findings from the questionnaires. The interviews elaborated and elucidated the trends apparent from the statistics. 41 respondents were asked to participate. They were identified either by replies of central importance to the research hypothesis given in their questionnaire responses or because they appeared to typify a certain segment of the bilingual population and would provide insights into and an evaluation of the raw statistics obtained from that section. All those approached agreed to take part.

The interviews were openended and unstructured and mostly of one hour's duration, a period which was long enough for interviewees to develop their subject and short enough for critical awareness not to lapse [Measor 1985]. The data was recorded in different ways according to the situation: recorded on audio-tape, notes taken during the interview, records written up at the conclusion of the interview. All the interviewees were more open as the research progressed and they were reassured that the content of the interviews remained anonymous. In the text they have all been assigned false names to protect their anonymity, as they requested.

#### **3.3.5. Setting within normal curricular arrangements**

Both questionnaires were introduced as part of the normal curriculum: the school questionnaire as an element of a course on language awareness; the college questionnaire as part of a study of multiculturalism in a General Studies course



taken by all students (one lesson per week for the whole student body, organized in mixed ability groups and based on discussion of a topic of cross-curricular interest). Thus the subjects responded in context rather than in ignorance and within discussions on language acquisition, patterns of language use and attitudes towards bilingualism. The climate of opinion amongst those questioned appeared to be positive, interested and approving.

### **3.3.6. Ethos of the educational institutions**

The teaching staff who helped to administer the questionnaires had attended training sessions with the researcher to clarify the aims of the questionnaire and the context in which it should be introduced. The ethos of all four establishments both supports and promotes multiculturalism and multilingualism and the request to take part in the research was received positively by the staff, many of whom offered advice on aspects of questionnaire design and implementation.

## **3.4. Potential bias**

### **3.4.1. Bilinguals' self assessment**

One major problem of data collection was the difficulty of evaluating the subjects' bilingualism objectively and obtaining an accurate description of each individual's linguistic skills, particularly in the L1. In the large scale study with the possibility of more than six hundred bilingual subjects and seventeen L1s, it seemed that the only available course would be the students' self evaluation. Being aware of the dangers of this and of the dissatisfaction felt towards such a method [e.g. Siguan and Mackey 1987], care was taken to formulate the questionnaires in such a way that the evaluations could be cross-checked and anomalies questioned, to discuss the criteria for assessment of competence with the subjects so that there should be equivalence and coherence. Self reporting was only used as evidence of bilingualism in general. Evidence on levels of language proficiency used in correlations were obtained from examination results and objective tests. In the

smaller, in-depth study it was possible in most cases to make an attempt at objective measurement of the type and level of the students' bilingual competence with the help of bilingual teaching staff. Examples of the students' written work in the L2, and the L1 where available, were used to give further evidence of attainment in each language.

#### **3.4.2. Research in the home institution**

The growing importance of teacher research has been well documented [Burgess 1985]; teachers are well placed to increase understanding of issues and may well be the first to apprehend changes in attitudes and practices. However, when both the researcher and the sample belong to the same educational establishment, they introduce a hidden variable, the characteristics of the institution, which may well bias the results. The educational establishment, which provided much of the data for this study and in which the researcher was employed, had already made a commitment to the support of bilingualism amongst the student body. Thus, it was important for the researcher to remain aware that her objectivity was always in question and that she would have to guard that her positive attitude towards bilingual support did not emphasize the positive aspects of the findings and underplay those that might be negative.

#### **3.4.3. Researcher's perspective**

Lastly, but not least, the researcher's own group membership needs to be mentioned. As a member of the majority, a native English speaker, it is clear that she does not have the minority speaker's firsthand experience of bilingualism in the British situation. As Skutnabb-Kangas [in Spolsky 1986:165] has said:

"....many of the (researchers) come from the majority groups. They often do not know the language of the minority they are studying. They ask research questions which are important for the majority society and its administrators (i.e. for the ones that pay them) for controlling the



minorities. But, instead of admitting this many of the (researchers) claim to be neutral, on nobody's side."

She adds that since most majority societies and their administrators want assimilation believing it to be less divisive, researchers often tend to echo this in order to attract research funds.

It is necessary to be aware that such criticisms may be levelled at this research and the researcher is aware of the very real dangers inherent in her position. However, from the point of view of experiencing bilingualism, she, herself, grew up in the bilingual environment of Quebec, and is bilingual English/French. Her work in the period 1984 - 1990 was the setting up of a large Asian and European languages department, and close involvement with other bilingual colleagues in curriculum development and examination design has given insights into and empathy for the minority speaker's point of view. Of course, this leads to the possibility of reverse bias and again this has been guarded against as far as possible.

### **3.5. Composition of the sample**

To identify a statistically significant number of bilingual subjects four educational establishments agreed to provide data for the questionnaires: three 11 - 16 secondary schools and the sixth form college which was the natural progression for many of the students from the three schools. In the three 11 - 16 schools all the fifth year students present on the chosen day were asked to fill in questionnaire 1 (see Appendix 1). The sample size eventually obtained was 95. The population drawn from the college was self-selected in that all the subjects proposed themselves as bilinguals. A number of known bilinguals (approximately 125 - 150 out of the estimated 400 - 450 bilinguals in the college) did not participate and some of the reasons for this are discussed below. However, out of approximately six hundred students present in college on the day chosen to administer the questionnaire, 279 did identify themselves as bilinguals and took part in the research.

The transversal studies in the schools were carried out by questionnaire 1 during the academic year 1987 - 1988 and the transversal study in the college, using questionnaire 2, took place in April and May 1989. Those students in the schools who took part in the research and who then attended the college were amongst those chosen for in-depth longitudinal studies, which thus allowed a three year study of their development. The longitudinal studies were carried out in the academic years 1987 - 1991 for the majority of the subjects (35) and 1988 - 1991 for a minority (6) and consisted of a series of in depth interviews with the subjects at regular intervals and the recording of their educational progress through the internal college profiling assessment process and through external national examinations. This smaller group did not reflect the relative importance of linguistic groups within the city, but their diversity, with subjects presenting differences with regard to sex, age, educational level, language, religion and country of family's origin and date of arrival in the U.K..

### **3.5.1. Composition of the sample by language community**

The population from which the subjects of this research have been taken can be broadly identified as the "bilingual community" in Birmingham. This is of course a very imprecise research construct, outside the normal definitions of a single speech community [Ager and Wright 1990]. The heterogeneity of the subjects' language backgrounds was thus a very important variable and linguistic membership would influence the subjects' attitude towards L1 maintenance and L2 acquisition [Taylor and Hegarty 1985].

#### **3.5.1.1. The school population**

|                   |   |      |
|-------------------|---|------|
| Bengali speakers  | 6 | 6.3% |
| Chinese speakers  | 1 | 1.1% |
| Gujarati speakers | 1 | 1.1% |



|                       |          |             |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------|
| Mirpuri speakers      | 1        | 1.1%        |
| Panjabi speakers      | 71       | 74.7%       |
| Pushto speakers       | 6        | 6.3%        |
| Urdu speakers         | 8        | 8.4%        |
| <u>Welsh speakers</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>1.1%</u> |
| Total                 | 95       | 100%        |

The largest group, the Panjabi speakers, is composed of both Panjabi speaking Sikhs, whose families are mainly of Indian origin and Panjabi speaking Muslims, whose families are mainly of Pakistani origin. These two groups will speak differing versions of Panjabi (see Appendix 3). The attempts by the researcher to distinguish the two groups by discussing varieties of Panjabi was met with incomprehension. To these younger pupils their L1 is Panjabi and indeed, perhaps, Punglish, and they could make no differentiation between dialects. However, one of the schools had a predominantly Sikh catchment area and the other predominantly Muslim, so when necessary broad comparisons could be made.

The results from the third school have not been included as the headmistress would not release examination data, although she had previously agreed to do so. Without full records it was not possible to include this group in the statistical study. Interviews with these pupils have only been included in two cases where the individuals concerned continued their education at the college.

#### 3.5.1.2. The college population

|                   |    |      |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Arabic speakers   | 8  | 2.9% |
| Bengali speakers  | 26 | 9.3% |
| Chinese speakers  | 9  | 3.2% |
| Farsi speakers    | 1  | .4%  |
| Gujarati speakers | 18 | 6.5% |

|  |          |             |
|--|----------|-------------|
| Hindi speakers   | 12       | 4.3%        |
| Mirpuri speakers   | 66       | 23.7%       |
| Panjabi speakers   | 65       | 23.3%       |
| Pushto speakers  | 8        | 2.9%        |
| Swahili speakers   | 1        | .4%         |
| Urdu speakers  | 55       | 19.7%       |
| Vietnamese   | 2        | .7%         |
| Other (Italian, German,<br>Welsh, Portuguese,<br><u>Twí, Ko and Menon)</u> | <u>8</u> | <u>2.9%</u> |
| Total  | 279      | 100%        |

The largest of the language groups was composed of those who claimed Mirpuri as their mother tongue. These students are from families who originated in Pakistan and their mother tongue may be Mirpuri or one of the other dialects of Pakistani Panjabi; in particular the Kashmiri speaking students elected to call themselves Mirpuri speakers as Kashmiri had not been included on the original questionnaire. There is a strong probability that Mirpuri/Kashmiri/Pakistani Panjabi speakers will also speak Urdu and if they are literate, it will be in this language, which they will write in the Perso-Arabic script.

The second largest group is the Indian Panjabi group. This group tend to be Sikh and from families of Indian origin. If they are literate in their mother tongue they will write it in the Gurmukhi script.

These two groups are therefore quite discrete, but at the same time they are both from speech communities whose languages are mutually comprehensible and which originate from areas geographically adjacent.



The third largest group is the Urdu speakers, who may be from families where Urdu is genuinely the L1 or who may be claiming it as a mother tongue despite its true status within their family as an L2 or L3. In this second case the subject has usually used Mirpuri or another dialect up until school age and then moved to Urdu because of its higher status and use as a lingua franca. It can be seen from this that Urdu and Mirpuri claimers are often trilingual. This explains what at first appeared to be inaccurate or unlikely self reporting: a number of subjects claimed Sylheti and Mirpuri as second languages which seemed contradictory in that speakers are unlikely to move from the standardized prestige form of a language to a dialect. However, the interviews revealed that some subjects were claiming Urdu as an L1 rather than the dialect for prestige reasons and that some trilingual parents had chosen to teach their children the standardized variety of the L1 to simplify the linguistic situation. However, the dialect version will continue to exist in the home, perhaps spoken by grandparents, and the children may have receptive/passive knowledge of it.

The Bengali speakers and the Gujarati speakers are the only other speech community groups whose numbers are significant enough for valid comparisons to be made. The sizes of other sets are too small for them to be representative of their language group as a whole. However, Arabic and Chinese speaking members who arrived in the college in September 1989 were approached and interviewed to give a larger base from which conclusions could be drawn and so that findings could be extended to cover these linguistic communities wherever it was feasible.

### **3.5.2. Composition by Social and Economic Status**

#### **3.5.2.1. School population**

The schools are all situated within the central division of Birmingham L.E.A. and in the political divisions of Ladywood, Nechells and Sparkhill. They are local comprehensive schools which serve areas with a high proportion of linguistic

minority families. The social and economic status of the parents of members of the sample was not collected since, after discussion with members of the schools' staffs it was felt to be misleading; many parents are either unemployed, or employed in work for which they are overqualified, or employed by relatives in work for which they are not necessarily qualified. This is a common phenomenon of recent economic migrants in the period in which they are establishing themselves [Smith 1977]. Employment beneath one's level of competence and educational qualification is also an effect of institutional racism which may or may not be suffered by the parents of the subjects studied.

It was decided that the proportion of claimed free school meals in the three schools would give an indication of economic hardship or prosperity and was the only objective measure made of social class. Eligibility for free school meals is calculated mainly on a combination of low income and number of dependents.

#### Free school meals

|          |           |     |
|----------|-----------|-----|
| School A | Ladywood  | 33% |
| School B | Nechells  | 40% |
| School C | Sparkhill | 38% |

Source: school offices

These figures are relatively high and suggest some measure of economic deprivation in the three schools.

#### 3.5.2.2. College population

The college is situated geographically in the inner city and in south central division of the L.E.A.. In theory it serves the whole city of Birmingham and in practice there are some students from every political ward in the city. However, the majority of students are drawn from firstly the Edgbaston, Sparkbrook, Sparkhill, Small Heath areas and secondly the Handsworth, Aston, Nechells, Ladywood areas. Thus, the college draws mainly from the inner city for its student body.



The observed social composition of the parents of the college population is mainly semi-skilled and unskilled manual. There appear to be very few skilled working class. There is, however, a large minority of small business proprietors and a small minority of professionals. Some linguistic minority groups appear to have representatives from each of the social class categories. This, however, is an observation which is not statistically proven, since such records are not kept and as above there is an inbuilt inaccuracy in that some immigrant parents are not able to acquire work which reflects their level of education and training.

The only objective measure of S.E.S. which was made was the number of free dinners issued at the time of the questionnaire. This gives a very rough indication of numbers in social classes 4/5 and/or single parent families.

Free school meals

College population - 702

183 (26%) regularly receiving free dinners.

Source: college office.

This suggests that the college sample might perhaps be drawn from a slightly more prosperous population than the school samples.

**3.5.3. Composition of the sample by sex**

**3.5.3.1 School sample**

The school sample was skewed in that there were 64 male respondents and 31 female. This reflects the imbalance in the schools which had more male pupils in that year than female. The ratio was not affected by student choice, since all the fifth years present in the schools on the chosen days were asked to fill in a questionnaire. Members of the schools' teaching staff suggested that the eventual composition of the reporting sample may have a variety of causes: it may reflect the

tendency for families with members in both Britain and the country of origin to keep the sons in education in Britain and to send the daughters to grandparents or mothers in the country of origin; it may reflect a tendency for a higher level of absenteeism amongst Muslim girls than Muslim boys; it may reflect the preference of parents of girls for single sex schooling and the existence of an all girls' comprehensive in the city which permits this. Checking questionnaires showed that no female respondent with a name that might suggest membership of a linguistic minority community had declined to participate.

### **3.5.3.2. College sample**

The college sample was also skewed, with more male respondents than female. The percentage of females in the survey was 29.4% (82), but in the college 43.7% (307) and so this skew had not been predicted. As the sample was self selected it seemed necessary to investigate the reasons for this imbalance because it could not be explained in the same way as the skewedness in the schools. Further lines of enquiry were suggested by the findings of two studies carried out in the earlier part of the decade, which had already shown sexual differences in language loyalty; a tendency for young males to conserve the mother tongue and for young females to relinquish it. Ganguly and Ormerod [1981] reported that South Asian boys with positive attitudes towards English sometimes retained positive attitudes towards their mother tongue, whereas South Asian girls did not. Kitwood and Borrill [1980] had found South Asian boys more consistently and positively loyal to their mother tongue than South Asian girls. These attitudes are age related and these findings do not hold true for the older generation in South Asian communities, amongst whom it is the women who are more likely to conserve the language than the men [Robinson 1980, Taylor and Hegarty 1985], although this may be attributed more to the fact that they are homebased and lack opportunity for second language learning than because they have made a conscious choice (2).



It was not possible to contact all the female bilingual non-respondents as the research had been permitted within the college providing that it remained a voluntary exercise. However, the researcher contacted the following female students in an informal way and they agreed to be interviewed on the reasons for their reluctance to participate in the research.

Saima, interviewed June 1989.

Born in Britain. The male and younger female members of the family speak Panjabi(Mirpuri)/Urdu/English and the older female members Panjabi(Mirpuri)/Urdu. At sixteen she had an arranged marriage and left school. At twenty, she divorced and returned to full-time education. She plans a degree and a career.

"I have to go on speaking Panjabi because of my mother. She understands English but she won't speak it. So I just use it for her. I wouldn't want to use it for anywhere else. I want to escape it. It's linked with all the things I'm getting away from - my husband (laughs).....I get so cross with the other women (Muslim). They are so passive. I want to get away from all that."

Yasmin, interviewed September 1989.

Born in Yemen and came to Britain fourteen years ago. She has had all her education in Britain. Her mother works in the health service and her father is currently unemployed. Arabic/English used at home, Arabic mainly between parents.

"I think that they (the older generation) use the language classes to keep us younger ones in order. They want to keep to the old traditions and the best way to do that is to send us to the Yemeni school. I had to go. I couldn't stand it. I was tired from school and I had to go again. ....In any case I

didn't like them (the teachers in the Yemeni school). They divide the sexes and treat us different."

Sapna, interviewed June 1989. Sapna, a Bengali speaking Muslim, was born in Sylhet province, Bangla Desh, and came to Britain at the age of twelve. Uses Sylheti dialect.

"I'm not interested in Bangla. I want to get good in English and I don't want them finding me a boy from home. If I can't speak it, I can't marry him."

Satvinder, interviewed June 1989.

Born in the Indian Punjab. Came to Britain aged four. Uses Panjabi at home with parents and grandparents.

"I didn't want to fill the questionnaire in. I had too much work to do. I'm not very interested. Why do you want to know anyway?"

Rajinder, interviewed June 1989, with Satvinder.

Born in Britain into Panjabi speaking family of Indian origin. Uses Panjabi with parents, grandmother and older female members of her family.

"Same as Satvinder. I'm just not interested. I'm going to use English in my job, aren't I?.....(In response to being asked whether she would teach her children Panjabi) I don't know. I might. It depends. I'm not very interested now. That's all."

Baljit, interviewed November 1989

Born in New Delhi. In Britain since the age of five. Uses Panjabi with all the older members of her family, English with siblings and cousins.

"I've been avoiding you.(I had sent a message via her tutor asking if she would come and have a chat.) I thought you were going to try



and get me to take Panjabi classes. (Assured this not the case). X  
(Panjabi teacher) is always on at me..... I don't want to do it. I  
can't see the point. I've got enough to do. It's not useful."

Mava, interviewed July 1989.

Born in India to Indian/Irish parents. Father was in diplomatic service and family  
has travelled extensively. Mother has career as a dress designer. Early years spent  
in Iran with Farsi speaking nanny. Some time spent in Spain and Turkey.

"No, I don't speak an Indian language. I spoke Farsi when I was  
little or so they tell me. I can't remember any. Just a little Hindi. My  
father's parents find it easier to speak Hindi than English and I've  
learnt some Hindi to speak to them. Not much though, it's too  
difficult. We don't use anything but English at home. We're like a  
lot of my friends are going to be. (Asked to explain) We just speak  
English. We've lost the other languages except my dad and he just  
uses it for work reasons."

Nathalie, interviewed September 1989.

Born in Britain to Italian father, English mother. Has regularly spent summer  
holidays in Italy.

"I didn't think you meant me, just the foreign languages. (Asked to  
explain) The Indian languages. I don't speak good Italian. We don't  
speak it at home because mum can't understand and she gets moody  
....well, you know, thinks we're having secrets and excluding her.  
I speak it with my cousins and aunt (in Italy) so I'm good on  
anything about hunting and motor bikes and cooking and food, but  
I'm not very good at other things. (Asked whether she might teach  
her children Italian) I might - they could take a GCSE in it."

Ella, interviewed September 1989

Born in the New Territories, Hong Kong. Came to Britain at the age of ten.

"My father speaks - not like Cantonese - different.\* My mother speaks Cantonese. They speak Cantonese or English. We (Ella and brother) speak English. Not Chinese. Why speak Chinese in Britain?.....They (Chinese speakers in Chinese restaurant area of Birmingham) speak Chinese because they don't know English. They are not very educated. (Asked whether she might teach her children Chinese) I couldn't could I? (Asked whether she might learn Chinese herself one day) I don't think so. Would it help?"

\* Probably Hakka.

These nine young women show clear signs of disaffection and language loss and transition. The replies were remarkably consistent within cultural and religious boundaries.

The three girls with Muslim backgrounds were quite clear on why they had rejected their languages. They had identified language classes and language maintenance with a repressive, male dominated community in which they felt they were not valued and from which they hoped to escape. They had ceased to identify with their mother tongue because of their questioning of and rebellion against the community which spoke it. At the moment their rebellion goes only as far as the language and they remain practising Muslims.

The three girls with Sikh backgrounds responded rather aggressively when asked for interviews and it is difficult to know whether this was because they truly lacked interest as they claimed or whether it was because they had more complex reasons for rejecting the language, bound up with its status as a symbol of the Sikh community or my membership of both another speech community and the teaching staff. Despite their reluctance to take part in the research, it is clear from their home



situation that they lead a truly bilingual life with education in English and home life mostly in Panjabi. Their desire not to discuss the subject and their stated lack of interest in their mother tongue might well have its roots in any one of a number of variables: a feeling of alienation towards their community; youthful rebellion against their parents; antagonism towards what they perceive as an intrusion by the researcher; a desire not to be sidetracked from the mainstream curriculum.

The other three girls were clearly in a more advanced position of language loss and had genuinely thought that their limited use of a language other than English would not qualify them as bilinguals. Nathalie and Mava are in fact the third generation in Fishman and in Hamers and Blanc's model. The shift was aided, no doubt, by the parents being part of a dual language couple.

From the skewedness of the sample and from the evidence of these interviewees it seemed that gender might be an important variable in the research with influence on perceptions of social valorization of the mother tongue, on loyalty towards the mother tongue, on patterns of use of the mother tongue.

However, the sample that was eventually obtained seemed in many other respects representative of the linguistic minority students in Birmingham colleges. The ratios of the language groups show the relative importance of the different linguistic minorities and there was a range of students from all the courses being followed by members of these groups.

## **NOTES**

1. The success of insertion into the British education system depends on a number of variables, including continuing patterns of L1 use, continued support of L2 acquisition, motivation and group attitudes towards education; individual ability will of course be the key variable.

2. However, the language use studies of adults in other speech communities show adult women to be more willing than men to abandon traditional language allegiances. In studies in Norwich amongst monolingual adults on the retention and loss of English dialect forms, Trudgill [1983] showed women to be less linguistically conservative than men and more likely to use standard English, whereas the men were more likely to retain the dialect.



#### **4. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS (1)**

##### **SUPPORT FOR THE L1 AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

The first section of the findings comprises a report on and a discussion of the use of the L1 amongst the sample: extent and patterns of L1 use; level of formal support for the L1; fluency and literacy achieved in the L1. These patterns of L1 use, of support for the L1 and of L1 proficiency are then tested to see if there is any relationship between them and educational success achieved within the British education system and through the medium of English. Evidence of possible correlations between bilingualism and cognitive development and between educational support for a subject's L1 and academic success achieved through the subject's L2 is examined.

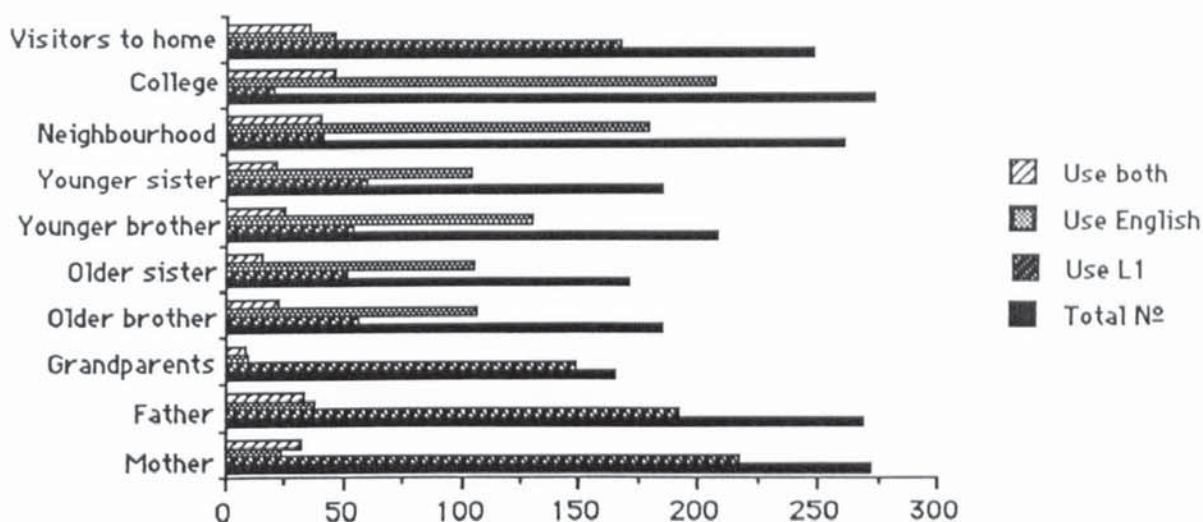
##### **4.1. Patterns of language use in the L1**

The basic pattern and degree of spoken L1 use were established through questions 9 - 21 in Questionnaire 1 and through questions 11 - 20 in Questionnaire 2. These questions asked respondents to catalogue the language in which they usually communicated with family and friends. A further ten questions in Questionnaire 2 elicited information on a range of cultural or intellectual activities, which may be broadly classed as needing passive language skills and on another set of activities which may be categorized as using language for private rather than public activity.

##### **4.1.1. The L1 in spoken communication**

The following table establishes the patterns of communication in the L1 for the bilingual sample from the college; who speaks what to whom.

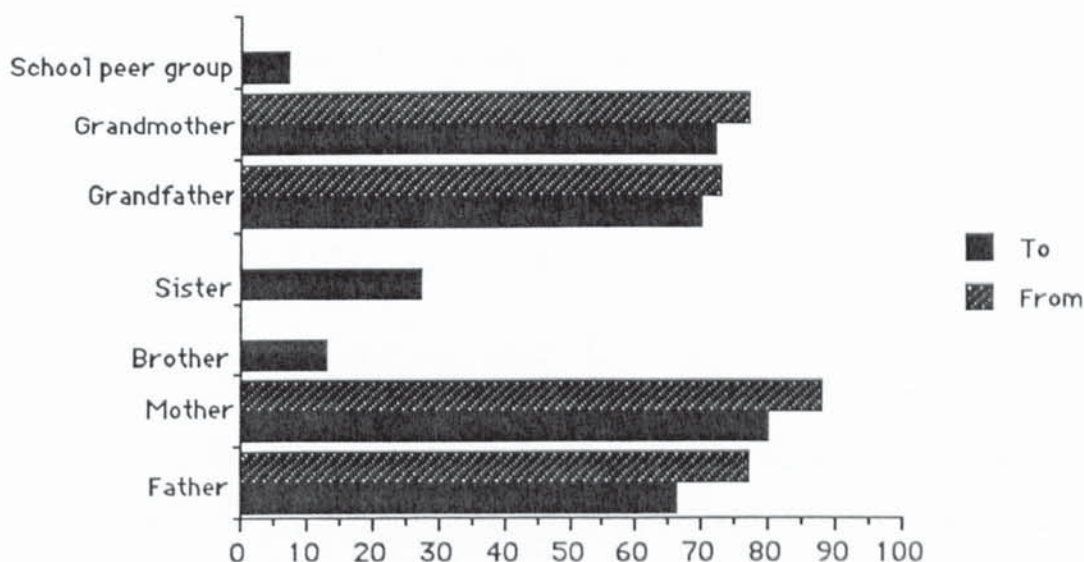
**TABLE 4:1 PATTERNS OF L1 COMMUNICATION (COLLEGE)**



No subject had an entry for every group and the black bar gives the total number of students with such a relationship. Use of both languages has been included because respondents added that category to the questionnaire. For discussion see below.

**TABLE 4:2 PATTERNS OF L1 COMMUNICATION (SCHOOLS)**

**Percentage of pupils who use the L1 in this situation**



n = 95

This second table shows the patterns of communication in the L1 for the bilingual samples from the schools. In communication with older generations, the black bar indicates active use of the L1 and the striped bar passive use.



Both questionnaires had asked subjects to report the main language of communication. Given the option of mixed code, some respondents reported that codeswitching was an important characteristic of their spoken communication patterns as is shown in the following table:

**TABLE 4.3 PATTERNS OF MIXED CODE (L1 AND L2)**  
**COMMUNICATION**

|         | <u>With sisters</u> | <u>With brothers</u> | <u>With college friends</u> |
|---------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| College | 10%                 | 11.7%                | 16%                         |
| Schools | 24.7%               | 25.8%                | 28%                         |

no = 279 (college)

no = 95 (schools)

These results are conservative since discussion at the time the questionnaire was administered drew the attention of some groups to this phenomenon. It became clear that many subjects had been codeswitching and that, until the matter was discussed, had not reflected upon the fact. Moreover, gatherings where generations mixed also tended to imply L1 use. The interviews revealed that much social life is family based in all linguistic groups and that in this situation L1 communication would dominate, but with substantial code-switching and tag-switching amongst the younger members

Thus, what, at first sight, appears to be signs of a language shift amongst young bilinguals in Birmingham with linguistic choice determined by the age of the interlocutor and the setting, is in some cases a much more complex situation, with conversation amongst young bilingual siblings and friends commonly including intersentential code-switching, intrasentential codeswitching and tag-switching.

#### **4.1.1.1. Examples of codeswitching**

The corpus for the study of this phenomenon came from observation of groups and individuals, discussion with groups, interviews of individuals which revealed the form and domains for this reported dual use. Romaine's remarks on random sampling [1982b] were noted and it is recognized that statistical standards cannot be applied in their strictest sense to linguistic data. The following examples are included as an indication of what is taking place but are not exhaustive.

Lexical borrowing in the educational domain is so great from English to the South Asian languages that the researcher, a non-speaker of these languages, can broadly follow conversations on educational topics in Urdu, Panjabi, Gujarati, Pushto and Bengali simply from the number of lexical items borrowed from English. There are many other areas where there is heavy lexical borrowing and these include the house, where vocabulary items, such as kitchen, front room, back room, reflect house architecture in the British situation, clothing, where words such as button, zip etc reflect fashion acquired in Britain, and food, where vocabulary items such as chips, crisps, pies reflect eating habits acquired in Britain. Also, since window shopping and shopping as a leisure activity do not exist to the same extent in the Indian sub-continent as in Birmingham, it would be normal to ask:

"Shopping geliyai jarna hai?"

Do you want to go shopping? (Urdu)

Getting money from the bank also provokes lexical borrowing:

"Mai bank jaria ha"

I'm going to the bank. (Punjabi)

As do interviews:

"Zer interview thi pora sum"

I am going for an interview (Pushto)



Interviewees reported that codeswitching happens largely at the sub- or semi-conscious level; further evidence that this is so came from Questionnaire 2 in which 170 subjects agreed that they sometimes changed languages without realising that they were doing so.

There is also a process of grammatical interference and integration at work. Loan words from the South Asian languages to English such as "gori" to denote a white girl, "rozae" to denote a fast, follow English plural rules, which then also becomes usage in the South Asian language. The "s" plural has also come to be applied to nouns which have not undergone this borrowing. Thus for instance, Bengali speakers make the plural "aloos" for "aloo" - potato.

Conversely, lexical items borrowed from English are subjected to South Asian language syntax and morphology. For example English verbs may be treated according to the Urdu verbal system:

"Mainae apna roof insulate karna hai" (Urdu)

I am going to insulate the roof

"Mainae apne car MOT karani hai" (Urdu)

I am going to get the car MOTed.

"Mainae apne baal perm karani hai" (Urdu)

I am going to get my hair permed.

Concepts expressed in one language but not in the other are extended. Thus Bengali "eats" water but this jars to the ear of a bilingual Bengali/English speaker, who borrows "drink" to use in the Bengali sentence.

Many of the interviewees with L1 skills that were diminishing started a sentence in the L1 and were unable to finish it. e.g.

"Ap vo sharheer jantai hai, which begins?..... (Urdu)

Do you know that poem which begins?.....

This is typical of discourse in situations of language shift.

Phonic interference in English was a feature noted in the course of conversation with many of the interviewees. Bilingual staff reported that the interviewees tended to exhibit examples of grammatical and lexical interference in their L1s but that examples of phonic interference were rare. This is what could be expected: acquisition of native accent in the L2 appears to become more difficult with age [Harley 1986].

In the interviews there was evidence that the medium of sibling communication was dictated largely by the topic and that to discuss a subject usually discussed in the L1 in the L2 and vice versa caused linguistic confusion. Thus, for example, interviewees reported that studies and some leisure activities would be discussed in English, whereas for family matters siblings would tend to use the L1. In Questionnaire 2, 183 subjects reported that one of the criteria for choice of language was subject matter and situation as well as the language preference of the person addressed.

#### **4.1.1.2 Extent of language shift in the college sample**

Despite this evidence of codeswitching, it is clear that language use with members of the older generation within the family circle is predominantly in the L1, and that language shift is in progress, even if this progress is slow. In the college sample 80% of 272 and 73% of 261 reported predominant L1 use with parents, but only 26% of 208 and 32% of 184 record predominant L1 use with siblings. The school sample shows similar patterns of use.

The reported use of the L1 rose again steeply (72.4%) for the category of L1 speaking visitors to the home. This statistic shows the existence of strong social



links within the British based speech community and with speech communities abroad. Patterns of social interaction revealed in the interviews showed that visiting within and between family groups was a common leisure activity and almost always entailed use of the L1. For the age group represented by the sample, such meetings were often closely connected with investigations for the suitability of partners in either arranged or free choice marriages. Another category of interaction mentioned frequently was visits by members of the extended family from the country of origin. Further categories of visitors who occasioned L1 use were members of the various religious establishments, members of ethnic minority support groups and ethnic minority political lobbies. The impression is one of ethnolinguistic vitality in some of the linguistic minority communities.

The language shift which appears to be taking place is not an overly rapid process since 60.2% of the sample are British born second and third generations and might be expected to be further along the continuum of language shift. Language shift typically takes place over three generations [Fishman 1985, Hamers and Blanc 1989], with the first generation being dominant or monolingual in the L1, the second being fully bilingual and the third being dominant or monolingual in the L2 [1.5.2.]. The rate of language shift is affected by a number of variables, some of which seem to be at work here and which may slow the rate of shift. These will be discussed below.

#### **4.1.1.3. The effect of gender on language use**

The college questionnaire tested for difference in patterns in language use with older and younger, male and female siblings. However, the pattern for language use remained reasonably constant with all four groups. This was contrary to the expectations of the researcher who had been expecting that reported use with older sisters would be slightly less than reported use with older brothers, since the interviewees seemed to be indicating that the male section of the sample was more

conservative in language matters and more committed to language maintenance and that the female section was leading the move to English and language loss. There is, however, only a minute difference between reported use with older brothers and older sisters in the full sample and, therefore, the existence of this pattern could not be established as a general phenomenon. It is possible too that the skewed sample might have affected results.

#### **4.1.1.4. Active and passive bilingualism**

Questionnaire 1 (schools) allows for discrimination between active and passive use of the L1. There was a slightly higher reporting of the passive use of the language but the percentage difference was not as great as might be expected in a situation of language shift. Some interviewees reported that they perceived themselves to be inferior in lexical and syntactical use of the L1 compared with older members of the family and that they often replied in the L2 to discourse instigated in the L1.

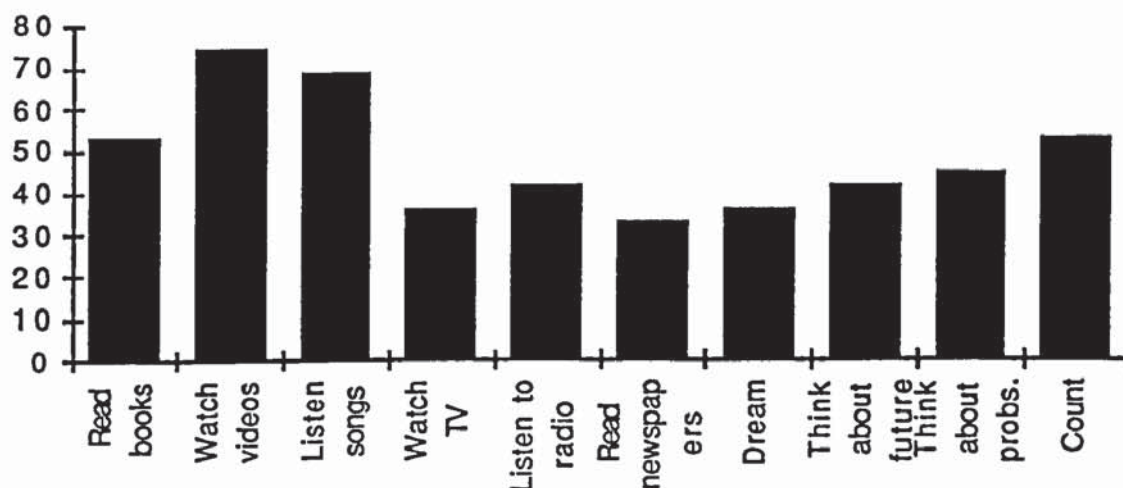
Aftab, from Mirpuri/Urdu speaking family, uses L1s (Urdu and Mirpuri) passively and L2 (English) actively with all older members of family: "When I talk with my parents I mess it (L1) up.....I don't know what correct word (in L1) to use...When I argue with my parents I have to do it in English or I don't win."

#### **4.1.2. Intellectual, cultural and reflective activities in the L1**

Use of the L1 as a medium for intellectual, cultural and reflective activities was assessed from answers to questions 21 to 30 in questionnaire 2. The following table shows the range of activities undertaken in the L1 by the college sample.



**TABLE 4:4 - ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN THE L1 (COLLEGE)**



#### **4.1.2.1. Cultural activities**

As expected the popularity of bhangra music and Indian films amongst the South Asian language speakers pushed these two categories into first place. The wide availability of these tapes and videos shows that bilingualism is not only supported in the home but also by a lively local speech community which retains the cultural traditions of the country of origin. The videos tend to be imported from the countries of origin but music, in particular bhangra, tends to be a British product, an amalgam of the styles of the ethnic majority and the ethnic minority.

The percentage who reported themselves as literate in the L1 matched closely the percentage who reported reading books in the L1. Several interviewees mentioned the availability of books in their L1 both in the college and city libraries as something that they valued and used. A smaller percentage claimed to read a newspaper in the L1 and some interviewees expressed unfavorable opinions on the content and presentation of minority language newspapers, claiming they did not

reflect young people's interest and concerns and that the layout often seemed amateur and confusing. In interviews and in discussion of the questionnaire, respondents regretted the very limited number of L1 medium programmes on both radio and television and many claimed that they would watch and listen if there were a greater choice. Again a major criticism was that there was no attempt to cater for the tastes of young L1 speakers and that the content of programmes usually reflected the preoccupations and interests of middle-aged and old people.

It is worthy of note that the material that is available and which is used by the respondents is at all intellectual levels. There is indeed a preponderance of pop music and videos but also a wide range of intellectually stimulating and demanding reading matter. Arabic and Urdu poetry, in particular, were mentioned by several interviewees.

#### **4.1.2.2. Reflection in the L1**

For the categories which asked about personal, reflective, non-communicative usage of the language, respondents sometimes reported confusion over the medium in which they carried out these activities. It prompted some of the liveliest discussion at the time of presentation of the questionnaire and revealed that this area had largely been a sub-conscious area of language choice about which many members of the college sample had not thought before. Because of respondents' uncertainty about what in fact was happening, it is doubtful whether the reported use is accurate enough to be worthy of interpretation. However, the fact that more than 50% claimed to count in the L1 seemed to suggest that early learning activities undertaken at home before the onset of L2 schooling were deeply rooted and had not been affected in every case by many years of Mathematics in the L2.



### 4.1.3 Language diaries showing nature and regularity of L1 use

As a check to the self-reported and remembered patterns and domains of language use, subjects were selected randomly and asked to keep a language diary for one week. The random selection was from the numbers assigned for data protection and every tenth person was approached. From the twenty-seven possible participants five produced complete linguistic records of their week.

**TABLE 4:5 LANGUAGE DIARIES**

| <u>Female Chinese</u> | <u>M</u> | <u>T</u> | <u>W</u> | <u>TH</u> | <u>F</u> | <u>S</u> | <u>SU</u> |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| READ BOOK             |          |          |          |           |          |          | *         |
| WATCH VIDEO           |          |          |          |           | *        |          |           |
| LISTEN SONG           | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| WATCH TV              |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| LISTEN RADIO          |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| READ NEWSPAPER        |          |          | *        |           |          |          |           |
| DREAM                 |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| PLAN                  |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| PROBLEMS              |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| COUNT                 | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| WITH PARENTS          | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| WITH SIBLINGS         |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| IN NEIGHBOURHD        |          |          |          | *         |          |          | *         |
| AT COLLEGE            |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |

| <u>Male Mirpuri</u> | <u>M</u> | <u>T</u> | <u>W</u> | <u>TH</u> | <u>F</u> | <u>S</u> | <u>SU</u> |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| READ BOOK           |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| WATCH VIDEO         |          |          |          |           |          | **       |           |
| LISTEN SONG         |          |          | *        | *         |          |          |           |
| WATCH TV            |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| LISTEN RADIO        | *        |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| READ NEWSPAPER      |          |          | *        |           |          |          |           |
| DREAM               | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| PLAN                |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |
| PROBLEMS            |          |          |          |           |          | *        |           |
| COUNT               | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| WITH PARENTS        | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| WITH SIBLINGS       | *        | *        | *        | *         | *        | *        | *         |
| IN NEIGHBOURHD      |          |          | *        | *         | *        |          |           |
| AT COLLEGE          |          | *        |          |           |          |          |           |

| <u>Male Gujarati</u> | <u>M</u> | <u>T</u> | <u>W</u> | <u>TH</u> | <u>F</u> | <u>S</u> | <u>SU</u> |
|----------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| READ BOOK            |          | *        | *        |           |          |          |           |
| WATCH VIDEO          |          |          |          |           | *        |          |           |
| LISTEN SONG          | *        | *        | *        |           | *        |          |           |
| WATCH TV             |          |          |          |           |          |          |           |

LISTEN RADIO  
 READ NEWSPAPER  
 DREAM  
 PLAN  
 PROBLEMS  
 COUNT  
 WITH PARENTS  
 WITH SIBLINGS  
 IN NEIGHBOURHD  
 AT COLLEGE

Female Panjabi      M      T      W      TH      F      S      SU

READ BOOK  
 WATCH VIDEO  
 LISTEN SONG  
 WATCH TV  
 LISTEN RADIO  
 READ NEWSPAPER  
 DREAM  
 PLAN  
 PROBLEMS  
 COUNT  
 WITH PARENTS  
 WITH SIBLING  
 IN NEIGHBOURHD  
 AT COLLEGE

Male Urdu      M      T      W      TH      F      S      SU

READ BOOK  
 WATCH VIDEO  
 LISTEN SONG  
 WATCH TV  
 LISTEN RADIO  
 READ NEWSPAPER  
 DREAM  
 PLAN  
 PROBLEMS  
 COUNT  
 WITH PARENTS  
 WITH SIBLINGS  
 IN NEIGHBOURHD  
 AT COLLEGE

These diaries bore out the findings of the questionnaire that for this generation of bilinguals use of the L1 is predominantly to communicate with parents and older family members, to enjoy cultural aspects of the L1 and for semi-automatic activities learnt in the L1 in early childhood. Some cultural activities are undertaken in languages allied to the L1. For example Hindi/Urdu films are watched by



speakers of those languages and by other linguistic groups with varying degrees of comprehension.

#### **4.2. Patterns of L1 use and educational achievement**

If there is any validity in the theory that the mental processes of the bilingual draw from a common core of concepts developed in and through both languages (Common Underlying Proficiency model: 1.4.3) then it ought to be possible to see indications amongst the test population that active maintenance of the L1 by the subjects does not hinder their academic progress in the L2 and that study of the L1 and achievement of literacy may well correlate with high academic performance in subject areas other than that language itself [1.3.5.; 1.4.3.]. It seemed some assessment of this hypothesis could be made by testing for relationships between patterns of L1 use, attendance at L1 classes and the number of L1 examination qualifications gained with the subjects' performance and attainment as measured by course level and examination results in subject areas apart from language.

##### **4.2.1. Pattern and degree of L1 use and educational attainment**

In the following cross-tabulations students from different courses in the college sample were compared according to patterns of L1 use with mothers, fathers, grandparents, older and younger siblings, with friends in their neighbourhoods, with friends at the college and with family visitors. The figures show the percentage of that group of students who would choose to use their L1 in interaction with the family member or category of person shown. In discussion of this question, respondents showed that in some categories subject matter rather than interlocutor would decide the language used [4.1.1.1]. In this case they were requested to claim L1 use only if L1 use was likely to be predominant.

The courses available to the students were Advanced Level and Advanced Supplementary Level, the most intellectually prestigious; General Certificate of

Secondary Education, which, in a Sixth Form College implies resitting courses failed in the previous academic year; BTEC First, which is equivalent to GCSEs in level but more vocationally oriented; Royal Society of Arts and Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, both of which are lower level vocational courses. The Access course is in content very simple, since it is the introduction to English medium education for the non-English speaker; the students may be of any intellectual calibre.

**TABLE 4:6 PATTERN OF COMMUNICATION IN LI AND COURSE LEVEL**

|               | WITH MOTHER         | WITH FATHER        | WITH GRAND-PARENTS | WITH OLDER BROTHER | WITH OLDER SISTER |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| ACCESS (n=11) | 100%                | 90%                | 100%               | 83.3%              | 100%              |
| CPVE (n=40)   | 90%                 | 81.6%              | 100%               | 33.3%              | 25.9%             |
| RSA (n=5)     | 80%                 | 60%                | 100%               | 0%                 | 0%                |
| BTEC (n=21)   | 85.7%               | 73.3%              | 100%               | 15.4%              | 30.8%             |
| GCSE (n=110)  | 93.3%               | 87%                | 93.7%              | 38.7%              | 33.9%             |
| AL (n=92)     | 87.8%               | 84.3%              | 90.7%              | 30.9%              | 29.4%             |
|               | WITH YOUNG BROTHERS | WITH YOUNG SISTERS | WITH NEIGHBOURS    | WITH FRIENDS       | WITH VISITORS     |
| ACCESS        | 66.7%               | 100%               | 36.4%              | 9.1%               | 18.2%             |
| CPVE          | 34.4%               | 51.6%              | 27.5%              | 7.5%               | 62.5%             |
| RSA           | 50%                 | 50%                | 0%                 | 40%                | 40%               |
| BTEC          | 15.4%               | 9.1%               | 0%                 | 0%                 | 38.1%             |
| GCSE          | 32.4%               | 33.3%              | 15.5%              | 12.7%              | 56.4%             |
| AL            | 21.3%               | 26.8%              | 9.8%               | 0%                 | 73.9%             |

("n" is a maximum since no subject had entries for every category and percentage shows the percentage of people who have that relationship, not necessarily the whole group.)



It is to be expected that those whose L2 skills are more developed will have been able to cope best with the educational system and will be following higher level courses. Generally speaking there is a discernible increase in reported L1 usage with lower level courses but the differences between courses are only slight. The Access students were, as was expected, the greatest users of the L1. The AL students reported more use of the L1 than might commonly be expected of a group whose English language skills were sufficiently advanced to deal with that level of work. The BTEC students report a fairly consistent lower level of mother tongue use than the GCSE students, a group with whom they may be compared from the point of view of course levels, and this is perhaps consistent with the profile of these two groups of students. The work in the BTEC requires an acceptance of student centred teaching styles, research and project work. The approach in many of the GCSE courses, particularly in the sciences, is often more didactic, teacher-centred and traditional. A student who has expectations of education formed by the cultural norms of the Indian sub-continent or the Far East may find BTEC difficult to accept. Thus it may be the case that the student from the traditional home, where the language is maintained, will also be the student who wishes to retake GCSEs, even when the course is not totally appropriate and progression to ALs and higher education not likely. The bilingual BTEC student, on the other hand, manifests a familiarity with and an acceptance of recent British educational practice and an acculturation that permits him to feel comfortable with BTEC methods and philosophy.

The low percentages for L1 use within the college may reflect the feeling that languages other than English are regarded as a secret code by some members of staff and discouraged and this is discussed below [6.2.1.]. These figures may also suggest that the college does not divide up along linguistic/ethnic divisions and that the multilingual nature of the college demands the use of English as a lingua franca.

It also underlines the well-known phenomenon of bilingual use where one language is for one sphere of activity and the other for another. Here it is clear that most bilingual students regard college as the domain of English, even those (the Access Unit) for whom it is a very difficult medium.

To test the hypothesis that course level and heavy use of the L1 might be related a Chi square test was applied. Each subject was assigned to one of two groups: those who use the L1 with most family members and regularly in situations outside the family; those who report far less extensive use of the L1, e.g. with grandparents and with L1 speaking visitors to the home. Fourteen subjects were extracted from the test for various reasons: they did not live with family members; they were members of a very small speech community with little opportunity to use the L1. This resulted in the following table:

**TABLE 4:7 COURSE LEVEL AND COMMUNICATIVE USE OF THE L1**

|   | <u>Less use of L1</u> | <u>More use of L1</u> |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Level 1<br>(Access, CPVE, RSA students) | 26                    | 28                    |
| Level 2<br>(GCSE and BTEC students)     | 97                    | 29                    |
| Level 3<br>(AL and AS students)         | 58                    | 27                    |

no = 265

The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.995}$  for two degrees of freedom is 10.6 and for  $\chi^2_{.999}$ , 13.82. Since the  $\chi^2$  for Table 4.7 is 14.48, it can be concluded that the relationship is probably significant and that those who use the L1 extensively will tend to be on lower level courses. From this it is not possible to say that a high percentage of L1 use bars students from educational progression, but it may be one factor amongst perhaps many. (Full tables are to be found in Appendix 4)



As there appeared to be a possible relationship between extensive L1 communication and lower course level, it seemed appropriate to investigate whether subjects who use the L1 in a range of largely passive language activities also tended to be in the lower level course groups. Two hypotheses were possible: that cultural and intellectual activities are stimulating to the individual regardless of the language in which they are undertaken and that there would no negative correlation between such activities in the L1 and course level; that once again greater reported use of the L1 would correlate with lower course levels. The following table was compiled using questions 19 to 28 in questionnaire 2

***TABLE 4:8 COURSE LEVEL AND RECEPTIVE USE OF THE L1***

|                                      | <u>Less use of L1</u> | <u>More use of L1</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Level 1 (Access, CPVE, RSA students) | 16                    | 40                    |
| Level 2 (GCSE and BTEC students)     | 51                    | 80                    |
| Level 3 (AL and AS students)         | 57                    | 35                    |

no = 279

In the event the second hypothesis was upheld. The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.999}$  for two degrees of freedom is 13.816 and, therefore, since the  $\chi^2$  for Table 4:8 is 18.77 it can be concluded that the relationship is probably significant. Once again increased use of the L1 seemed to be associated with slower academic progression.

As this result might simply be showing that a large proportion of time spent listening to bhangra and watching popular Asian films has the same deleterious effect on studies as non-stop Radio One and a constant diet of low quality video films, the Chi square for the relationship between course level and reading activities in the L1 was calculated. The habits of reading newspapers and books in the L1 was examined for those in the lowest category of course and for those in the highest category of course.

**TABLE 4:9 READING IN THE L1 AND COURSE LEVEL**

|                                      | <u>Habitually reads in L1</u> | <u>Does not read in L1</u> |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Level 1 (Access, CPVE, RSA students) | 41                            | 15                         |
| Level 3 (AL and AS students)         | 38                            | 54                         |

no = 148

Once again greater activity in the L1 correlated with lower course level. This was a surprising finding in view of the results in 4.4 which indicate that formal language study is associated with higher course levels and educational achievement (1).

#### **4.2.2. Patterns of L1 use and examination results**

The students from the college who had taken a GCSE course and had taken examinations in the Summer session were withdrawn to provide a subgroup. The students who are permitted to take GCSEs at the college must give some indication (past exam record or profile) that they are capable of taking five subjects and that there is some likelihood of passes at the "C" level. If this is not so they are directed towards less academic courses. The group, therefore, may be deemed to be slightly above national average in intelligence. The expectation here was that they would all achieve a measure of success in GCSEs, and the test was to see whether those with wider experience of English would achieve higher results than those who report a greater use and range of activities in the L1. Points were awarded and totalled for each subject's GCSE grades. Clearly this measure covers all academic subjects and assumes both equality of marking scales between subjects and also that taking more subjects is itself a criterion of greater academic success. However, it was the most objective, widely available and easily computed measure which could be accessed for the sample. The subjects were then divided into those with high GCSE points in the 1988 examination (16 points or more: a minimum of four C passes or the equivalent) and those with low GCSE points in the 1988 examination (15 points or less: a maximum of three C passes and a D or the equivalent). This division is logical since it effectively sorts those who will be permitted to continue to more advanced courses in the Birmingham LEA from those who would not, four Cs



being the minimum entry qualification for AL or BTEC National courses. These two groups were then subdivided into those who reported using the L1 extensively for cultural and intellectual purposes and the relationship tested by Chi square.

**TABLE 4:10: GCSE SUCCESS AND CULTURAL AND PASSIVE USE OF THE L1**

|                                | <u>More use of L1</u> | <u>Less use of L1</u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Students with high GCSE points | 28                    | 23                    |
| Students with low GCSE points  | 29                    | 16                    |

no=96

The Chi square test produced no significant relationship.

The Chi square test was then applied to the same GCSE group, divided in the same way according to examination success, to detect whether there was any relationship between those who use the L1 extensively within the family and the neighbourhood and those who use the L1 less frequently.

**TABLE 4:11: GCSE SUCCESS AND COMMUNICATIVE USE OF THE L1**

|                                | <u>More use of the L1</u> | <u>Less use of the L1</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Students with high GCSE points | 25                        | 26                        |
| Students with low GCSE points  | 23                        | 22                        |

no = 96

Again no relationship could be detected. These last two findings suggest that once the level of English necessary to study at this level is achieved, greater or lesser use of the L1 does not have a significant effect on achievement in the L2 as measured by examination success.

### 4.3. Correlation between formal L1 study and level of educational attainment.

#### 4.3.1. Correlation between formal L1 study and level of course

As the research developed, it seemed that formal support for the L1 might be a variable which affected academic progress in the L2 medium education system. One test of how far bilinguals receive support for language maintenance is to identify those who have been enabled to proceed to formal L1 study. The questions in the questionnaire 2 on when and where the student had been encouraged to study his mother tongue were included to see if there were relationships between formal L1 study and success within the education system as measured by the course level to which the student had progressed.

**TABLE 4:12 FORMAL STUDY OF THE L1 AND COURSE LEVEL**

|                       | <u>SECONDARY SCHOOL</u> | <u>COLLEGE</u> | <u>COMMUNITY SCHOOL</u> | <u>MOSQUE</u> | <u>GURDWARA</u> | <u>CHURCH</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| <u>ACCESS</u><br>n=11 | 0%                      | 72.7%          | 18.2%                   | 0%            | 0%              | 0%            |
| <u>CPVE</u><br>n=40   | 47.5%                   | 25%            | 2.5%                    | 52.5%         | 0%              | 0%            |
| <u>RSA</u><br>n=5     | 0%                      | 60%            | 0%                      | 0%            | 0%              | 0%            |
| <u>BTEC</u><br>n=21   | 14.3%                   | 9.5%           | 4.8%                    | 33.3%         | 9.5%            | 0%            |
| <u>GCSE</u><br>n=110  | 13.6%                   | 37.3%          | 10%                     | 27.3%         | 11.8%           | 2.7%          |
| <u>AL</u><br>n=92     | 21.7%                   | 40.2%          | 12%                     | 31.5%         | 4.3%            | 3.3%          |

(Note: the very high numbers for CPVE are due in part to misreporting; some had studied while abroad.)

The high number of students who have studied or are studying their mother tongue formally as a modern foreign language within the British education system shows the wide availability of community languages on the curriculum of Birmingham schools and colleges in the late 1980s. The vitality of the voluntary sector is also evident. Attendance at community language classes and study of the L1 are not clearly linked to any kind or level of course and this seems to indicate that such



study of the L1, unlike simple use of the L1, is not associated with slow progress through the British education system and may indeed have been a definite support for cognitive development.

#### **4.3.2. Correlation between formal study of the L1 and examination results**

To test whether formal study of the L1 had any effect on academic success a Chi square test was applied to compare the examination results of those who had attended formal L1 classes with those who had not. Both AL and GCSE results were examined and once again the total number of GCSE or AL points gained in the 1989 summer examination session by students taking full-time GCSE or AL courses was computed.

**TABLE 4:13 FORMAL STUDY OF THE L1 AND EXAMINATION RESULTS (GCSEs: COLLEGE)**

|                           | <u>L1 classes</u> | <u>No L1 classes</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Students with high points | 36                | 15                   |
| Students with low points  | 36                | 9                    |

no = 96

The Chi square test failed to detect any relationship. It had become clear in the course of subsequent interviewing that some subjects who had replied "yes" to study of the L1 in secondary school, had in fact undertaken this study in secondary schools in the country of origin. Such study may or may not have provided support for the subject's bilingualism, depending on whether the school was also using English as a medium. To counteract the effect that this might have on the calculation, seven students were extracted from the records and the test repeated.

**TABLE 4:13 (b) FORMAL STUDY OF THE L1 AND EXAMINATION RESULTS (GCSES: COLLEGE)**

|                           | <u>L1 classes</u> | <u>No L1 classes</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Students with high points | 36                | 15                   |
| Students with low points  | 29                | 9                    |

no = 89

The Chi square test again failed to indicate any relationship.

A similar test was applied for the students in the sample studying for Advanced Level and who took and were awarded the examination in 1989. High points were considered to be eight points or more at Advanced Level, ie minimum two "D"s or seven points if there were a mixture of ALs and ASs. Such points would be the minimum necessary for entry to higher education, albeit in subject areas and in institutions for which there is relatively little competition.

**TABLE 4:14 FORMAL OF THE L1 STUDY AND EXAMINATION RESULTS (ALs: COLLEGE)**

|                           | <u>L1 classes</u> | <u>No L1 classes</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Students with high points | 9                 | 5                    |
| Students with low points  | 19                | 13                   |

No = 46

Once again there was no statistical relationship. Thus it seemed that mere attendance at mother tongue classes did not correlate either with enhanced educational achievement in the L2 or discernible negative educational effects. Moreover, interest in and commitment to L1 maintenance were to be found at all levels of ability, as measured by course membership.

However, the qualitative research revealed the issue to be extremely complex. The interviews showed that there were a number of variables at work which enhanced



or decreased the value of the mother tongue classes for those attending them and which need to be considered when interpreting the statistics.

Firstly, the linguistic situation in Birmingham is dynamic and fluid and the languages of the linguistic minorities are in contact and conflict as has been discussed [2.4.4.]. Non-standardised languages with no written form have to compete with standardised languages with prestige accruing from association with a religion or status as a national language. The former will not be offered as subjects of study, the latter will. In order to simplify a complex linguistic situation speakers of the non-standardised language may shift to an allied standardised language and elect to achieve literacy and send their children to class in the latter. This has been the case in this study and in interview a number of non-Urdu speakers explained that they had chosen to study Urdu for political/national reasons and to simplify a complex linguistic situation [6.2.2. and 6.3.1.] . Attendance at these classes cannot, therefore, always be assumed to be promoting bilingual development, in the sense of underpinning the mother tongue with literacy.

Secondly, the large number of languages other than English claimed as mother tongues by linguistic minority students in Birmingham schools makes the provision of mother tongue classes for every group problematic and as Inder Gera warned [Birmingham LEA training workshops March 1991] can easily lead to a situation where small linguistic minorities find themselves in the position of double minority when mother tongue language classes are provided for the larger linguistic minorities only. In this complex situation, students from the smaller linguistic minority groups may choose to study languages related to their mother tongue or pertinent to their situation in some way, either because they are vehicles of a cultural legacy or function as *linguae francae*. Such study does not, however, underpin and extend knowledge of the mother tongue.

Thirdly, the relationship of language and religion is of paramount importance. The large numbers studying at the mosque were expected. The language studied will of course be the Arabic of the Koran and, therefore, is more indicative of religious affiliation than language loyalty since the majority of those who attended mosque school to learn Arabic, were not Arabic mother tongue speakers. Indeed, for the Urdu, Bengali and Mirpuri speakers, Koranic study will not underpin their L1 but may even constitute a third or even a fourth language.

Fourthly, when classes in the L1 are made available either by the local education authority or by the linguistic minority communities themselves, there is no restriction on who may attend them. Thus students who attend classes may be there for the variety of reasons discussed above as well as in order to learn to read and write in their L1. This range of motivations: desire to learn the mother tongue of a close friend, group of friends or fiancé(e); desire to learn the language associated with one's religion; desire to learn the national language of the country of origin of one's family for reasons of prestige or utility, has led to a situation in Birmingham education where a mother tongue class at secondary and college level may include both mother tongue speakers and those for whom the language is a L2. This latter group may include both those for whom the language is closely related to their mother tongue and those for whom it is a true foreign language and must be studied as such. Thus, mother tongue classes may contain a wide range of attainment levels and be quite difficult to teach as a homogeneous group.

Fifthly, the classes provided for students in their L1 may be within the British education system and thus subject to quality control; or provided by voluntary bodies and thus not subject to inspection or imposed standards. Members of the sample reported that the voluntary classes were of varying quality and rated them variously as "time-wasting", "propaganda", "very useful", "fun". They may take the form of short meetings, more youth club than formal class, in which L1



speakers are given a setting where they may use the L1 outside the family environment (e.g. Birmingham Chinese community school), in which case they are merely providing further opportunity for communicative language use. On the other hand they may take the form of a parallel education system run outside British school hours and covering a variety of academic subjects taught through the L1 (e.g. Birmingham Yemeni community school), in which case they are underpinning communicative competence in the L1 with literacy. Classes organized by Muslim groups, such as those of the Yemeni school, have as their principal aim and objectives the provision of elements of education considered essential in the Muslim context and absent from mainstream British education. This involves each child in a very heavy workload as each schoolday consists of several hours within the British system and several hours within the parallel system. When assessing the value of mother tongue classes, the possibility of fatigue and the danger of overloading must, therefore, be borne in mind.

Since the linguistic situation is so complex and since mother tongue classes are so disparate it is clear that from the present study it would not be possible to estimate the overall educational effect of attendance at mother tongue classes. There are too many variables - aims, objectives, methodology quality and content of the class; study of both mother tongues and foreign languages - which have not been controlled to make the findings of this section conclusive. However, it can be said with some confidence that attendance at these classes, if not conclusively beneficial to overall educational achievement, is certainly not deleterious to L2 medium education.

#### **4.4. Correlation between success in L1 examinations and educational attainment**

Those who had attended formal examination classes within the British education system were, however, a more cohesive group who had followed defined and

comparable syllabi and who had been assessed externally by national examination at 16+ and 18+. The findings were still affected by those who had elected to study languages which were not strictly their L1, but in this case the languages chosen for study were mostly those closely allied to the mother tongue, e.g. standardised Bengali as opposed to non-standardised Sylheti. Any student who achieved a high GCSE grade or an AL in their L1 or an allied language would by definition have some mastery of the written form of the language and could for the purposes of this research be said to have achieved a degree of literacy in the L1, a level of achievement which was only true for a proportion of those who had attended mother tongue classes.

Ninety-seven out of the two hundred and seventy nine students in the college survey had had enough support in the L1 for them to be able to take GCSE/O level/CSE in their L1 and to obtain a pass at C/Grade 1. In global terms this is not a significant amount of support for the L1 but within the British educational system it is quite rare [Taylor and Hegarty 1985]. These examinations promote literacy in the L1 and test equivalence and transfer from one language to the other encouraging bilingual skills which might otherwise be lost in our integrative system.

Correlations were drawn to assess whether the achievement of a high level of skill in oracy and literacy in the L1 bore a relationship to scholastic achievement in the L2. Firstly, results in L1 examinations were tabulated for each course group and then tests applied to seek a relationship.

**TABLE 4:15 - L1 EXAMINATIONS AND COURSE LEVEL (TABLE)**

|                   | <u>CSE</u> | <u>GCE</u> | <u>GCSE</u> | <u>AL</u> |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| ACCESS<br>(no=11) | 0%         | 0%         | 9.1%        | 0%        |
| CPVE<br>(no=40)   | 0%         | 0%         | 10%         | 0%        |



|          |      |      |       |      |
|----------|------|------|-------|------|
| RSA      | 0%   | 0%   | 20%   | 0%   |
| (no=5)   |      |      |       |      |
| BTEC     | 19%  | 0%   | 9.5%  | 0%   |
| (no=21)  |      |      |       |      |
| GCSE     | 6.4% | 4.5% | 25.5% | .9%  |
| (no=110) |      |      |       |      |
| AL       | 4.3% | 9.8% | 25%   | 8.7% |
| (no=92)  |      |      |       |      |

**TABLE 4:16 L1 EXAMINATIONS AND COURSE LEVEL (CHI SQUARE)**

|                                     | <u>L1 examination</u> | <u>No L1 examination</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Level 1<br>(CPVE and RSA students)  | 5                     | 40                       |
| Level 2<br>(GCSE and BTEC students) | 47                    | 84                       |
| Level 3<br>(AL and AS students)     | 44                    | 48                       |

no =268

(Note: no Access students, since they may not have been within the system long enough to take examinations)

The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.995}$  for two degrees of freedom is 10.6 and for  $\chi^2_{.999}$ , 13.82. Since  $\chi^2$  for Table 4.7 is 17.71, it can be concluded that the relationship is probably significant. This result gave some support to the hypothesis that formal study of the L1 leading to the achievement of a formal qualification in the L1 correlates with the other measures of educational achievement, such as course level.

The second hypothesis in this section was that those who had taken study of the L1 to the point where they were able to pass a public examination in the language would also be those who were succeeding in examinations in other subjects taken through the medium of the L2. The Chi square test was applied to the following table.

**TABLE 4:17 EXAMINATION SUCCESS IN THE L1 AND EXAMINATION RESULTS IN OTHER GCSEs SUBJECTS (COLLEGE)**

|                           | <u>L1 examination</u> | <u>No L1 examination</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Students with high points | 31                    | 20                       |
| Students with low points  | 10                    | 35                       |
| no = 96                   |                       |                          |

In the event the hypothesis was upheld. The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.999}$  for one degree of freedom is 7.88 and, therefore, since the  $\chi^2$  for Table 4:17 is 30.96 (corrected), it can be concluded that the relationship is likely to be significant.

The same test was applied for those who had taken the AL examination.

**TABLE 4:18 EXAMINATIONS IN THE L1 AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT - ALs AT THE COLLEGE)**

|                           | <u>L1 examination</u> | <u>No L1 examination</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Students with high points | 10                    | 4                        |
| Students with low points  | 9                     | 23                       |
| no = 46                   |                       |                          |

In the event the hypothesis was upheld. The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.975}$  for one degree of freedom is 5.02 and, therefore, since the  $\chi^2$  for Table 4:17 is 5.86 (corrected) it can be concluded that the relationship is possibly significant.

#### **4.5. Conclusions**

According to Cummins' threshold hypothesis [1.3.6.], subjects exhibiting high levels of language skill in both L1 and L2 could expect that their bilingualism would



be of positive benefit cognitively, that it would be bilingualism of the additive kind and that it would be allied to a successful educational experience. There was some evidence for this hypothesis since subjects from the sample who could show high levels of achievement in L1 literacy, as measured by national examinations (4.4), did tend to achieve examination results in other subjects which were higher than the norm for this bilingual sample (2).

The conclusions that may be drawn, therefore, from this section are:

1. that bilingualism appears to be associated with lower achievement in terms of academic progression to higher courses in an L2 medium education system when the L1 is widely used outside the educational environment;
2. that, once the required level of English is acquired to progress to a particular level of course, greater or lesser use of the L1 does not appear to be associated with better or worse examination results in subjects examined through the L2;
3. that the association of greater use of the L1 and lower course levels does not hold true when greater use of the L1 includes formal language learning in either state or voluntary classes;
4. that when literacy in the L1 is achieved, evidence of disadvantage in L2 medium education seems to decrease still further.

The findings from this section seem to suggest that within a rigidly monolingual education system, such as the British system, bilingual students who study their L1 formally and achieve literacy in that language attenuate to a small degree the educational disadvantage they experience through having a mother tongue different from that of the linguistic majority and the education system.

## **NOTES**

1. To take this finding further it would be necessary to investigate what the subjects had been reading. If they had included Koranic study as reading in the L1 this may

explain the apparent mismatch. Discussion with Muslim respondents at the time of the questionnaire on the place of Arabic in their lives revealed a very strong allegiance to the language, comparable to the allegiance felt for the true L1. Reporting from these subjects is confused, doubly so when they are also the subjects who have Mirpuri/Urdu/English backgrounds. The researcher noted a tendency amongst the group to treat any of their languages as their L1. They have been kept within the study because they are an example of the complexity and dynamic nature of the linguistic situation in Birmingham.

2. One note of caution is necessary as success in one set of examinations is being correlated with success in another and there are obviously transferable skills and attributes that would favour one subject rather than another in both situations, e.g. nervousness or lack of nervousness. However, this difficulty is inherent in all such studies of the relation of cognition to language since they are not separable and may even, arguably, be a measure of the same thing.



## **5. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS (2)**

### **LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN BRITAIN AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

In the second set of findings the relationships between length of time in the British education system and linguistic and educational achievement and behaviour are examined. The different patterns of linguistic and educational behaviour of subjects born in Britain and of subjects who have come to Britain since birth are investigated, compared and related to several indicators of success or failure within the British education system.

As was discussed in 3.1, it was felt that predictions were being made by policymakers that were not borne out by events. One key policy prediction was that a rapid shift from bilingualism to monolingualism (English) was taking place amongst linguistic minority pupils, with the result that, the longer a student spent in Britain, the less difficulty he experienced in using English as a medium of education and the less need there was for English language support. Working with linguistic minority students, however, provided some indication that the expected language shift to English [1.3.5] was not taking place as quickly as forecast, that a form of stable diglossia was developing with consequent implications and that a series of practices were ensuring that the use of some of the languages of linguistic minorities in Britain would not diminish.

If it is true that a language shift to English is taking place amongst linguistic minority groups settled in Britain then it should be possible to see a difference in linguistic behaviour and, hence, educational behaviour, between students born in Britain and students who have come to Britain during their schooling.

To establish accurately how much time had been spent in different linguistic environments it was first necessary to ascertain patterns of behaviour. The first hypothesis was that although the percentage of students born outside Britain was falling, there exists a firmly established practice in some linguistic minority communities of sending younger members for extended visits to relations and friends in the country of origin and thus exposing them to a non-English linguistic environment. Depending on how widespread this practice was, belief that a rapid language shift is taking place might be based on false assumptions.

The second hypothesis to be tested concerned the relation of residence in Britain with English language acquisition and progression to higher levels of education. If it is true that a shift to English is taking place and that English language problems are diminishing or disappearing with length of residence in an English speaking country and greater length of time within the British education system, the proportion of linguistic minority students progressing to higher level courses should be greater in the cohorts who have been longest in that system. Academic ability is clearly the prime factor in such progression but such a factor would be unlikely to correlate with length of time within the system. Linguistic ability in English, however, which must also be a factor in the academic success of the bilingual student, would correlate with length of exposure to the language within the British education system, if, as supposed, the students' linguistic ability was increasing.

Thirdly, the study wished to test the proposition that, if it is true that English language problems diminish or disappear with length of residence, the proportion of linguistic minority students succeeding in public examinations will be greater in the cohorts who have been longest in the British education system.



Fourthly, the study wished to test the proposition that, if it is true that English language problems diminish or disappear with length of residence, those who have been longest within the British education system may be less likely to withdraw from courses or fail to present for exams, since although they will suffer the same pressures as other groups, they should not have English language problems to the same degree as those who have come to the system in the course of their scolarity.

To test these hypotheses, students were interviewed to obtain their views and experiences and variables from the statistics gathered from the questionnaires were plotted against the length of residence in Britain. These were firstly, level of course achieved, secondly, exam results achieved, thirdly, failure to attend for an examination, fourthly, failure to complete the course.

### **5.1. Length of residence in Britain**

#### **(college)**

It is too crude to use the date of coming to Britain as an indication of length of residence in Britain since many students have returned to their country of origin for periods varying between months and several years. Thus subgroups were devised to take into account not only date of entry to Britain but periods spent outside Britain since that date. In the following tables the progression is from least time in Britain to most time in Britain in each case.

**TABLE 5:1 RESIDENCE IN BRITAIN**

|                            | <u>Frequency</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Came between age 15 and 20 | 21               | 7.5%              |
| Came between age 10 and 15 | 23               | 8.2%              |
| Came between age 5 and 10  | 32               | 11.5%             |
| Came before 5 years old    | 36               | 12.9%             |
| Born in Britain            | <u>167</u>       | <u>59.9%</u>      |
|                            | 279              | 100%              |

**TABLE 5:2 YEARS SPENT ABROAD SINCE ARRIVAL IN  
BRITAIN OR SINCE BIRTH**

|  | <u>Frequency</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Spent more than 3 yrs abroad                             | 35               | 12.5%             |
| Spent up to 3 years abroad                               | 10               | 3.6%              |
| Spent up to 2 years abroad                               | 17               | 6.1%              |
| Spent up to 1 year abroad                                | 38               | 13.6%             |
| Since arriving in Britain,<br>have lived only in Britain | <u>179</u>       | <u>64.2%</u>      |
|  | 279              | 100%              |

**TABLE 5:3 COMBINED TABLE SHOWING LENGTH OF  
RESIDENCE IN G.B.**

|   | <u>Frequency</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| Came to Britain between 15 + 20<br>and spent more than 3 years abroad   | 2                | .7%               |
| Came to Britain between 15 + 20<br>and spent up to 3 years abroad       | 0                | 0                 |
| Came to Britain between 15 + 20<br>and spent up to 2 years abroad       | 0                | 0                 |
| Came to Britain between 15 + 20<br>and spent up to 1 year abroad        | 2                | .7%               |
| Came to Britain between 15 + 20<br>and spent no time abroad             | 17               | 6.1%              |
|   |                  |                   |
| Came to Britain between 10 and 15<br>and spent more than 3 years abroad | 1                | .4%               |
| Came to Britain between 10 and 15<br>and spent up to 3 years abroad     | 0                | 0                 |
| Came to Britain between 10 and 15<br>and spent up to 2 years abroad     | 0                | 0                 |
| Came to Britain between 10 and 15<br>and spent up to 1 year abroad      | 3                | 1.1%              |
| Came to Britain between 10 and 15<br>and spent no time abroad           | 19               | 6.8%              |
|   |                  |                   |
| Came to Britain between 5 + 10<br>and spent more than 3 years abroad    | 5                | 1.8%              |
| Came to Britain between 5 + 10<br>and spent up to 3 years abroad        | 0                | 0                 |
| Came to Britain between 5 + 10<br>and spent up to 2 years abroad        | 0                | 0                 |
| Came to Britain between 5 + 10<br>and spent up to 1 year abroad         | 7                | 2.5%              |
| Came to Britain between 5 + 10<br>and spent no time abroad              | 20               | 7.2%              |



|   |            |              |
|---|------------|--------------|
| Came to Britain between 0 + 5<br>and spent more than 3 years abroad | 7          | 2.5%         |
| Came to Britain between 0 + 5<br>and spent up to 3 years abroad     | 2          | .7%          |
| Came to Britain between 0 + 5<br>and spent up to 2 years abroad     | 3          | 1.1%         |
| Came to Britain between 0 + 5<br>and spent up to 1 year abroad      | 3          | 1.1%         |
| Came to Britain between 0 + 5<br>and spent no time abroad           | 21         | 7.5%         |
|   |            |              |
| Born in Britain<br>and spent more than 3 years abroad               | 20         | 7.2%         |
| Born in Britain<br>and spent up to 3 years abroad                   | 8          | 2.9%         |
| Born in Britain<br>and spent up to 2 years abroad                   | 14         | 5%           |
| Born in Britain<br>and spent up to 1 year abroad                    | 23         | 8.2%         |
| Born in Britain<br>and spent no time abroad                         | <u>102</u> | <u>36.6%</u> |
|   | 279        | 100%         |

This combined table (TABLE 5:3) shows that any statistic that took place of birth as an indication of having been exclusively educated through the British education system would be misleading. The percentage of students born in Britain is 59.9% but the percentage of students who have been born in Britain and lived only in Britain is much lower, at 36.6%.

From the college sample a number of students who had been born in Britain had spent the majority of their childhood in the country of origin of their parents. From the interviews it was revealed that this practice has three prime motivations: help with child-rearing when both British based parents were working long hours; a desire to see children grow up surrounded by the cultural norms and religion of the country of origin; desire for the mother to spend time with extended family in the country of origin. Two examples from the sample illustrate what this means in human terms.

Example 1. Shakeel, born in Britain in 1972. His very young mother had returned to her family in Pakistan, very soon after his birth, being unable to settle in Britain, where she had no extended family, no friends and whose language she did not speak. His father, who remained in Britain, visited the family in Pakistan irregularly. At 14, Shakeel came to join his father in Britain. Although statistically British born, Shakeel had virtually no competence in English and culturally felt himself to be part of the Asian sub-continent rather than identifying with the culture of the country of his birth. It was necessary for him to spend eighteen months in a reception centre following courses for intensive English before gaining access to mainstream British curriculum.

Example 2. Dipak is the third son in a large family of four daughters and five sons. The family run a successful builders' merchants and chain of hardware stores. His mother is the accountant for the business and both sets of grandparents in India have cared for the children of the family for differing amounts of time. Dipak was born in Britain but spent two periods with his grandparents: four years from 3 to 7 and two years from 10 to 12. In the grandparents' family the most commonly used language was Hindi. During the second visit to India he attended English medium school and on return joined the second year of the British secondary system. He says that he found his British secondary education very difficult both from the point of view of language and curriculum content.

#### **5.1.1. Length of residence and L1 use.**

As a further investigation of how far advanced language shift might be within the sample, the respondents to Questionnaire 2 were asked to evaluate the level of their language skills in the L1. While this is notoriously unreliable as an indication of true levels of skill, it is a very good measurement of attitude towards the L1 and arguably a reflection of how much the respondent uses the particular skill area. Bearing this in mind, Chi square tests for relationships were applied to see whether



any particular group from the continuum established for residence in Britain (Table 5:3) was reporting a different level of language skills compared to the others.

**TABLE 5:4 UNDERSTANDS THE L1**

|                       | <u>High level skills</u> | <u>Average or poor skills</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Most time in Britain  | 137                      | 86                            |
| Least time in Britain | 44                       | 12                            |
| no = 279              |                          |                               |

**TABLE 5:5 SPEAKS THE L1**

|                       | <u>High level skills</u> | <u>Average or poor skills</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Most time in Britain  | 107                      | 116                           |
| Least time in Britain | 33                       | 23                            |
| no = 279              |                          |                               |

**TABLE 5:6 READS IN THE L1**

|                       | <u>High level skills</u> | <u>Average or poor skills</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Most time in Britain  | 117                      | 106                           |
| Least time in Britain | 39                       | 17                            |
| no = 279              |                          |                               |

**TABLE 5:7 WRITES IN THE L1**

|                       | <u>High level skills</u> | <u>Average or poor skills</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Most time in Britain  | 106                      | 117                           |
| Least time in Britain | 36                       | 20                            |
| no = 279              |                          |                               |

These tests revealed some relationship between estimated language skills and length of residence. The critical value for  $\chi^2$  .975 for one degree of freedom is 5.02 and since the  $\chi^2$  for Table 5:4 is 5.05 the relationship may possibly be significant. For Tables 5:6 and 5:7, the  $\chi^2$  reached the .025 level of significance. The Chi square test for Table 5:5 could not detect a relationship.

From these comparisons it is possible to say that a higher proportion of those born in Britain or those who have spent the most time in Britain evaluate their language skills at a weaker level than is the case for those who have come to Britain more recently.

However, the percentage of those with long residence who claim to have very good language skills in all aspects of the L1 is still very high. Over half this group claim to understand the L1 (61%) and read the L1 (52.5%) very well. Slightly under half claim to speak the L1 (47.9%) and write the L1 (47.5%) very well. This may be indicative of a move from active language use to passive language use but the discrepancy between active skills and passive skills is not great; evidently a high proportion of this group perceive themselves to be highly competent users of the L1 in all its modalities.

## **5.2. Correlation between length of residence and course level**

The students from the college sample were following any one of the following courses: Access; Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE), Royal Society of Arts Diploma (RSA), BTEC First certificate (BTEC), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Advanced Supplementary Levels (AS) and Advanced Levels (ALS). The courses were grouped as before [4.2.1.] to show progression in prestige and in the cognitive and linguistic demands made on the student.

The academic progression of the sample was compared with the length of time that students had spent in Britain to see if length of time in the British educational system had a relation with students' progress to higher courses. The 279 students in the college sample were divided into two groups: 167 students who had been



born in Britain were taken as the first group, 112 students who had been born outside Britain were the second.

### **5.2.1. Students born in Britain**

Of the students in the first group, 102 had spent no time outside Britain, 23 had spent up to one year abroad, 14 had spent between one and two years abroad, 8 had spent between two and three years abroad and 20 had spent more than three years abroad and were so grouped for purposes of comparison.

**TABLE 5:8 COURSE LEVEL AND YEARS OUT OF BRITISH  
EDUCATION SYSTEM (BORN IN BRITAIN)**

|                                  | <u>Level of course</u> |          |          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------|----------|
|                                  | <u>1</u>               | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> |
| More than 3 yrs out of ed system | 5                      | 12       | 3        |
| Up to 3 yrs out of ed system     | 1                      | 3        | 4        |
| Up to 2 yrs out of ed system     | 4                      | 8        | 2        |
| Up to 1 yr out of ed system      | 2                      | 10       | 11       |
| Remained with ed system          | 9                      | 49       | 44       |
|                                  | 21                     | 82       | 64       |

n=167

NB no Access students, 1 = RSA and CPVE, 2 = GCSE and BTEC, 3 = AS and AL

Such absence from the education system appeared to affect the students negatively and students who had been out of the country showed a slight tendency to be on lower level courses than those who had remained within the system throughout their schooling. The correlation between level of courses and length of time out of the system was Pearson coefficient .2128, significant at .003.

### **5.2.2. Students born outside Britain**

The students born abroad were grouped according to how many years they had spent outside Britain to give an interval progression of five bands which took into account both their date of arrival in Britain and their subsequent periods of residence outside Britain. This table presents a slight statistical problem in that the interval progression may be slightly inaccurate since we are dealing with bands. For

example a student who came to Britain between 5 and 10 and who subsequently spent more than 3 years out of the system might possibly, if their period abroad was lengthy, have spent more time out of the system than a student who came to Britain between 10 and 15, but is shown in the raw statistics as having spent less. Whenever it was discovered that respondents had been out of the system a considerable amount of time they were reassigned.

**TABLE 5:9 COURSE LEVEL AND NUMBER OF YEARS IN  
BRITISH EDUCATION SYSTEM (BORN ABROAD)**

|  | 1  | <u>Level of course</u> |    |    |
|--|----|------------------------|----|----|
|  |    | 2                      | 3  | 4  |
| Least time in British education system | 0  | 0                      | 0  | 2  |
| Next band                              | 7  | 0                      | 9  | 4  |
| Next band                              | 3  | 9                      | 10 | 5  |
| Next band                              | 0  | 10                     | 12 | 14 |
| Most time in British education system  | 1  | 5                      | 17 | 4  |
|  | 11 | 24                     | 48 | 29 |

n = 112

1 = Access (1), 2 = RSA and CPVE, 3 = GCSE and BTEC, 4 = AS and AL

Each band = 3 years

For the students who had come to Britain since birth the correlation between level of course and length of time within the British education system was positive but slight (Pearson coefficient .1483) and not quite within the acceptable measures of significance. Thus, the hypothesis that time within the British education system is an important variable in progression to higher level courses cannot be said to have been demonstrated for this group of students.

A possible explanation for this may reside in a difference in motivation between linguistic minorities who have been long established in Britain and more recent arrivals and which was observed in discussion with several interviewees. A very high regard for traditional academic courses was expressed by members of South Asian and Chinese families, who described themselves as "traditional", who have



recently come to Britain or who have retained very close ties with the country of origin. This attitude is responsible for a variety of positive and negative effects.

On the positive side, for some the impetus of immigration appears to heighten ambition and cause the individual, backed by his family to make the greatest effort to succeed within the new system. One of the outcomes of this is the acceptance of a prolonged scolarity to achieve set goals in an L2 medium education system and a majority of the college sample (59.9%) were older than the average for their course or academic year. Ambition expresses itself in the decisions made about which courses the children from these families will be allowed to follow: science and mathematics GCSE and AL are considered to be very high status; medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and allied vocational training are the most prized destinations in higher education, followed closely by legal and business studies.

On the negative side, the desire to succeed within the new system causes in some cases both the individual and the family to set academic goals that are quite unrealistic. This results in a reluctance on the part of the family to permit CPVE and BTEC courses in place of GCSE because they are not perceived as academic courses and so family pressure sometimes pushes students into the academic streams, even when this is not in the best interests of the student. The results of this attitude are shown by the very small numbers of students in BTEC and CPVE from the groups with a short period of residence in Great Britain. A number of examples from the sample could exemplify this point, amongst them the following:

Mosabbir, aged 18 and a Bengali speaker, was withdrawn from the Sixth Form college where he had been advised to follow a CPVE course which would include some English language support, following an assessment of his abilities by bilingual Bengali/English staff. He was sent to a local further education college where there was open access recruitment onto GCSE courses, but where no

specialist English support would be available to him. He failed to complete the course.

This high regard for academic courses and the aspirations of recently arrived families may, therefore, be a contributory factor to the lack of correlation between course progression and length of residence noted amongst the sample, although it appeared that there are other additional factors at work, which would need further investigation.

### **5.3. Correlation between length of residence and indicators of success (examination passes)**

To this end, the relationship between length of time in Great Britain and educational achievement was plotted. The students from the college sample who took the Advanced Level examination in 1989 were taken as a sub group and their results examined against length of time in the country.

**TABLE 5:10 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN G.B. AND A.L. POINTS (COLLEGE)**

|                                  | <u>High points</u> | <u>Low points</u> |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Born in GB and lived only in GB  | 7                  | 14                |
| Born abroad or spent time abroad | 7                  | 18                |
| No 46                            |                    |                   |

These figures give no indication of any correlation between length of residence in Britain and higher points. The number of students who took the AL examination and failed to achieve a pass in any subject was 4 for the group born in Britain and who had been educated completely in Britain and 1 for the group who had either been born abroad or spent some time abroad. These figures are of course too small to examine statistically. Perhaps the most interesting point in the figures is the comparatively large number of AL examination entrants from this group who failed



to get the equivalent of two D passes or above and so the passport to move on to higher education. A number of this group resat the examinations in 1990 and improved their grades.

In the next table the results from the group who took GCSE were aggregated as they had been in Chapter 4 and compared to the data collected in Table 5:1.

**TABLE 5:11 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN G.B. AND GCSE POINTS (COLLEGE)**

|             | <u>Born in GB</u> | <u>Came in primary</u> | <u>Came in secondary</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Low points  | 26                | 16                     | 3                        |
| High points | 34                | 7                      | 10                       |

no = 96

The Chi square for this table (8 corrected, significant at the .005 level) indicated that there was some relationship between date of arrival and subsequent examination results. The relationship, however, does not appear to be that those who have come late in their school career to Britain are likely to do less well; on the contrary on this sample they have succeeded better than the other two groups. The band where success is less likely is that which includes those subjects who came to Britain during their nursery or primary schooling. These are students who would have experienced "submersion" at the start of their school career (1.3.5.). From these figures it appears that this group may have particular problems and they will be further investigated below to see whether there are further indications that they are experiencing educational difficulties.

The other groups studied for the purposes of examining the relationship between length of residence and examination success were the GCSE pupils from two of the schools, whose results were also plotted against length of residence. They were divided into two groups: those who had been born in Britain or who had spent

more than ten years in the country; those who had come to Britain since the age of five or who had spent less than ten years in the country.

The first finding was that pupils who had come recently to Britain were more likely to be taking an examination package which included City and Guilds, A.E.B and R.S.A. examinations alongside GCSEs. Such examinations are held, in popular educational opinion, to be for students in the less academic streams. The following crosstabulation shows how entry for examination was linked to time within the British education system. In the schools monitored where pupils were assessed internally through a negotiated profiling system rather than through systematic objective testing, the evaluation by the classteacher rather than internal school examination result would be the main criterion for external examination entry.

**TABLE 5:12 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND ACADEMIC/NON-ACADEMIC PACKAGE (SCHOOLS)**

|                          | <u>Academic GCSEs</u> | <u>Less academic<br/>GCSEs/other</u> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Less than 10 years in GB | 9                     | 32                                   |
| More than 10 years in GB | 28                    | 26                                   |

no = 95

The critical value for  $\chi^2$  .995 for one degree of freedom is 7.88 and, therefore, since the  $\chi^2$  for table 5:12 approaches this very closely at 7.55, it may be assumed that there was some link between length of residence and the package of examinations for which the pupil was entered, with those who had been longest in the system most likely to be those taking the more academic package.

However, the pupils' performance at the end of the academic year did not follow the same pattern: the public examination records for the school sample show that



those with shorter residence took fewer GCSE examinations but achieved a comparable number of higher grades to those with longer residence who took more examinations but had poorer grades in a higher proportion of them.

**TABLE 5:13 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND NUMBER OF GCSE C+ PASSES (SCHOOLS)**

|                          | <u>No passes at C or above</u> | <u>Passes at C or above</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Less than 10 years in GB | 31                             | 10                          |
| More than 10 years in GB | 37                             | 17                          |
| no = 95                  |                                |                             |

The Chi square test failed to detect any relationship between the two sets of figures. This suggests that the teachers' perception of ability and forecast of success is not borne out by the examination results. Despite the fact that they were more often entered for fewer GCSE examinations, pupils who had had less time in Britain did not do significantly better or worse than pupils who had had more, when actual performance in the form of the number of C passes and above achieved at GCSE was used as the measure of success.

Examining performance in individual subjects gave only slightly different results. From the school samples 70 subjects took GCSE English, 25 English literature and 48 mathematics. The same groups were used to compare results in these subjects with a grade "D" or above being taken as the measure of success, in order to have large enough numbers to apply the test.

**TABLE 5:14 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE RESULTS**

|                          | <u>English GCSE (D+)</u> | <u>Failed to obtain English<br/>GCSE (D+)</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Less than 10 years in GB | 9                        | 13  |
| More than 10 years in GB | 29                       | 19  |
| no = 70                  |                          |   |

English was the area where differences between newer and later arrivals might be most likely if common beliefs had any validity. The raw scores appear to show that those with most time in Britain were most likely to achieve a "D" grade or above at GCSE; 60% of those with most time who took the examination obtained a "D" or above compared to 40% of those with least time. However, testing for dependency with Chi square produced no significance and so, for this sample, the null hypothesis could not be rejected and a relationship detected.

**TABLE 5:15 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND ENGLISH  
LITERATURE RESULTS**

|                          | <u>Eng Lit GCSE (D+)</u> | <u>Failed to obtain English Lit.<br/>(D+)</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Less than 10 years in GB | 2                        | 2   |
| More than 10 years in GB | 15                       | 6   |
| no = 25                  |                          |   |

English literature could be considered a subject choice which suggests an understanding of aspects of mainstream British culture and success in an English literature examination might signal acculturation as well as English ability. Whether cultural distance is affected by length of residence could not be seen from the results; in the event 50% of those with least time in Britain who took the examination achieved a "D" or above compared to 28.6% of those with most time.



However, the total numbers were too small to test for a relationship and allow generalisations to be made.

**TABLE 5:16 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND MATHEMATICS**

**RESULTS**

|                          | <u>Maths GCSE (D+)</u> | <u>Failed to obtain Maths GCSE (D+)</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Less than 10 years in GB | 5                      | 4                                       |
| More than 10 years in GB | 6                      | 33                                      |
| no = 48                  |                        |   |

Testing the relationship of years in Britain to the mathematics results did, however, produce indications of a relationship between the variables, with pupils with least time in Britain achieving a greater success rate than the other group. The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.95}$  for one degree of freedom is 3.84 and for  $\chi^2_{.975}$  is 5.02. The  $\chi^2$  for table 5:16 was 5 and therefore there seemed to be some connection. Obviously residence in Britain is unlikely to have deleterious effect on mathematical ability and this could be ruled out. However, whether such a relationship is indicative of a slightly higher level of ability amongst those with less time in Britain is difficult to ascertain. If it were, this would indicate that English language problems were masking ability. It would also bring into question the distribution of ability throughout the school population.

**5.4. Correlation between length of residence and indicators of failure**  
**5.4.1. Withdrawal from an examination or failure to attend for an examination**

The college sample was monitored for failure to attend for examination in order to see whether there was any correlation with length of time within the British education system. It is a common educational belief that bilinguals need time within

the British education system to acquire English language skills and appropriate study skills for the British style of education, if they are to succeed within the British examination system. If this has any relation to what actually happens then a correlation might well be observed. It was assumed that laziness leading to lack of preparation and withdrawal, or nervousness or illness leading to withdrawal would not correlate with length of time and would be in natural distribution throughout the sample.

The college questionnaire was administered in April 1989. By that time the students had already been entered for examinations in the June session and their expected examination programme was discussed along with the questionnaire. The statistics do not show all 279 subjects since some students in the sample were on two year courses and were not entered at this session and since none of the Access students were entered for public examinations unless their L1 was available. Those who failed to present themselves on the day of the examination or who had withdrawn in the weeks between the questionnaire and the examination period were catalogued. The subjects monitored were English, Mathematics, History and other Humanities, Biology, Business Studies, Computer Studies, Physics, Law and Chemistry at all the levels available in the college. To make comparisons between groups, those failing to attend for examination were divided into those born in Britain and those born abroad to see if this correlated with a difference in performance and then these figures were compared to the number failing to attend in the college population taken as a whole. The numbers who actually sat the examinations are included for comparison.



**TABLE 5:17 STUDENTS FAILING TO PRESENT FOR AN EXAMINATION**

|            | (Number<br>who sat) | Born in GB<br>(167 studs) | Born outside GB<br>(112 studs) | College<br>(702 studs) |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| English    | (253)               | 8                         | 6                              | 21                     |
| Maths      | (250)               | 1                         | 5                              | 20                     |
| Law        | (37)                | 3                         | 1                              | 12                     |
| Physics    | (58)                | 2                         | 0                              | 7                      |
| Biology    | (65)                | 5                         | 1                              | 6                      |
| Bus Studs  | (78)                | 4                         | 0                              | 4                      |
| Comp Studs | (58)                | 1                         | 1                              | 4                      |
| Chemistry  | (57)                | 0                         | 1                              | 6                      |
| His/Geo    | (38)                | 3                         | 3                              | 8                      |
|            |                     | 27                        | 18                             | 88                     |
|            |                     | (16.2% of<br>group)       | (16.1% of<br>group)            | (12.5% of<br>group)    |

This comparison shows a higher percentage of the bilingual students failing to attend for examination than in the general college population, but no difference between British born bilinguals and those born abroad. The scores for individual subjects were mostly too small for Chi-square tests to be carried out on them.

#### **5.4.1.1. Failure to present for English**

There were 253 English Language examination entries at all levels from beginners to advanced within the college in 1989 Summer examination session. It can be assumed from the policy of the college that all those students without a matriculation in English would be entered for an examination in English at the appropriate level.

**TABLE 5:18 ENGLISH EXAMINATION ENTRY**

|                  | Total<br><u>entry</u> | Failure<br><u>to present</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Whole college    | 253                   | 28                           | 11.1%             |
| Bilingual sample | 114                   | 14                           | 12.3%             |
| Non-sample       | 139                   | 14                           | 9.9%              |

As English had the absolute largest number of failures to present in the bilingual group, it had seemed at first as if it presented a particular problem for the group.

However, when compared with the rest of the college population it is clear that the group which had defined itself as bilingual performed in a very similar manner to the group which had not. This was born out by Chi square tests which showed no relationship. It was noteworthy that the percentage failing to present for English within both the bilingual sample (12.3%) and in the college as a whole (11.1%) was far greater than the percentage failing to present reported for the total entry for English GCSE by the Midlands Examination Group (2.2%).

**TABLE 5:19 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND FAILURE TO PRESENT FOR ENGLISH**

| <u>Residence in Britain</u> | <u>Number in group</u> | <u>Missed English</u> | <u>Percentage of group</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Less than 5 years           | 21                     | 1                     | 4.8%                       |
| Between 5 and 10 years      | 23                     | 1                     | 4.3%                       |
| Between 10 and 15 years     | 32                     | 0                     | 0 %                        |
| Between 15 and 20 years     | 36                     | 4                     | 11.1%                      |
| Born GB but been abroad     | 65                     | 4                     | 6.2%                       |
| Born GB and GB only         | 102                    | 4                     | 3.9%                       |

The increase in failure to present for English amongst the group which had come to Britain as very young children (11.1%) gave another indication that there might be problems in this particular group.

#### **5.4.1.2 Failure to present for mathematics**

Popular educational opinion believes that numerical subjects present fewer problems to bilinguals newly arrived in Britain than literacy based subjects. A non-literary subject, mathematics, was examined for evidence for this belief.

**TABLE 5:20 MATHEMATICS EXAMINATION ENTRY**

|                  | <u>Total entry</u> | <u>Failure to present</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Whole college    | 218                | 20                        | 9.2%              |
| Bilingual sample | 116                | 6                         | 5.1%              |
| Non-sample       | 102                | 14                        | 13.7%             |



The group which defined itself as English speaking was more likely to fail to present for examination than the group defining itself as bilingual and the observed frequencies for monolingualism/bilingualism and failure to present for mathematics were found to be related at the .05 level of significance. This is a small indication that a higher proportion of the bilingual group felt confident of their ability to perform adequately in the examination. Once again results suggest that the bilingual population may show its potential more clearly in this subject area.

#### **5.4.1.3. Comparisons between Mathematics and English**

When the behaviour of the bilingual group is more closely examined a very interesting point arises. From the comparisons made between the bilinguals and monolinguals, it seemed reasonable to assume that the longer subjects had been in the British education system the more likely they were to approach the monolingual norms and the more likely to miss mathematics and not English and vice versa. This, however, proves not to be the case.

**TABLE 5:21 COMPARISONS BETWEEN FAILURE TO ATTEND  
MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH**

| Residence in Britain    | Number<br>in group | Missed<br>English | Missed<br>Mathematics |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Less than 5 years       | 21                 | 1                 | 1                     |
| Between 5 and 10 years  | 23                 | 1                 | 0                     |
| Between 10 and 15 years | 32                 | 0                 | 3                     |
| Between 15 and 20 years | 36                 | 4                 | 1                     |
| Born GB but been abroad | 65                 | 4                 | 0                     |
| Born GB and GB only     | 102                | 4                 | 1                     |
| Whole college           | 702                | 28                | 20                    |

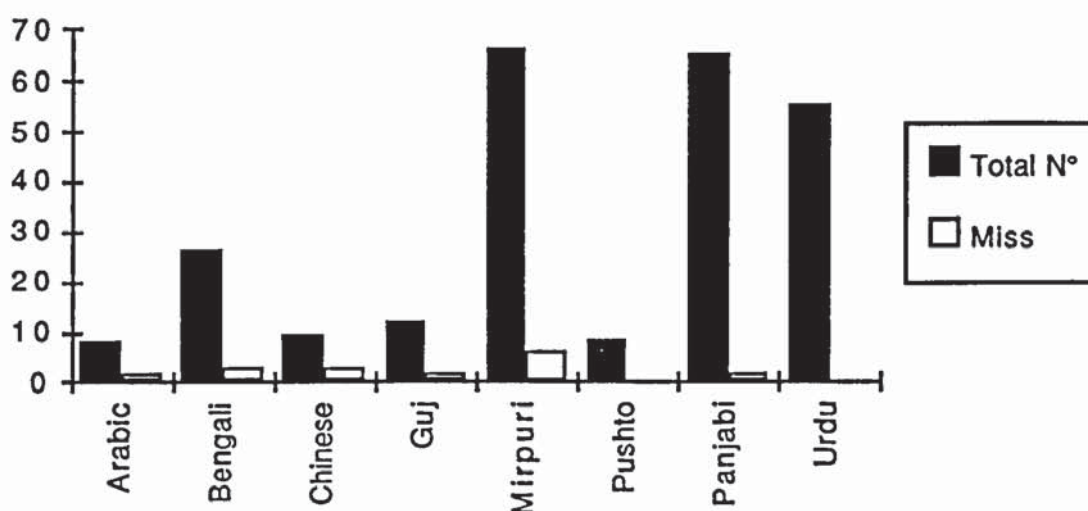
The numbers are once again too small for meaningful tests to be applied but there is no observable trend for subjects with more time in the country to behave consistently in a different way from those who have arrived more recently,

suggesting again that time in the system is not a highly significant factor in these students' behaviour faced with an examination in the British education system.

#### **5.4.2. Correlations between failure to attend for examination and linguistic group membership.**

The sample was also divided according to linguistic group to see if any particular language background could be seen to be linked with failure to present for examination. The eight groups who had the largest numbers of subjects are shown in the following table:

**TABLE 5:22 ABSENCE FROM EXAMINATION BY LANGUAGE GROUP**



The Chinese record was particularly poor in percentage terms and interviews were arranged with two of the subjects who had missed the examinations. The interviews were inconclusive in that the subjects themselves did not perceive English language skills to have been a contributory problem to their failure to take the exam and gave, as the principal reason, the fact that they had not felt prepared. They were not prepared to comment further. The underlying reasons may be cognitive, linguistic



or a matter of application. The subjects did not continue in education after the set of examinations monitored. Again it is not possible to ascertain whether there were cognitive or linguistic problems. The subjects' college profile recorded that both students had difficulties in English. The researcher's personal assessment of their spoken English was that it was adequate for basic spoken communication but that the numerous errors of tense, the simple nature of all the structures used and the narrow lexical range gave indications that their written English might be ambiguous and obscure.

It did not seem justifiable to surmise from the available evidence that failure to present for examination was linked with linguistic background; class teachers felt that individual learning and character problems were more likely to be the principal causes.

However, it is interesting to note that from the group who claimed Urdu as an L1 there were no failures to present whereas for Mirpuri there were several.

#### **5.4.3. Failure to complete the course**

The college questionnaire was administered in April 1989, at a point when students would have completed twenty-six weeks of a thirty-two week one year course or twenty-six weeks or sixty-two weeks of a sixty-eight week two year course. The majority of students had in fact completed the major part of their course at the time of the questionnaire. The statistics, therefore, mostly deal with those who having completed most of their course dropped out when faced with the demands of coursework deadlines or examinations. This group of "drop-outs" possibly differ in motivation from "drop-outs" earlier in the year who had found further education not to their liking and may well include students who abandon their studies because they know that their productive English language skills are not equal to the demands of course work and examinations although they might have managed a more passive role in a large classroom.

Failure to present for any examinations or failure to reenrol in September was plotted against length of residence in Britain.

**TABLE 5:23 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND FAILURE TO COMPLETE THE COURSE**

| <u>Residence in Britain</u> | <u>Number in group</u> | <u>Failed to complete</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Less than 5 years           | 21                     | 1                         |
| Between 5 and 10 years      | 23                     | 0                         |
| Between 10 and 15 years     | 32                     | 5                         |
| Between 15 and 20 years     | 36                     | 8                         |
| Born GB but been abroad     | 65                     | 5                         |
| Born GB and GB only         | 102                    | 4                         |

In view of earlier findings, it seemed pertinent to look at the performance of those who had joined the British education system as very small children and compare it with the performance both of those born here and of those who had arrived later in their school careers. A Chi square test was applied.

|                           | <u>Born in GB</u> | <u>Came to GB in primary</u> | <u>Came to GB in secondary</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Failed to complete course | 9                 | 13                           | 1                              |
| Completed course          | 158               | 55                           | 43                             |
| no = 279                  |                   |                              |                                |

The critical value of  $\chi^2_{.995}$  for two degrees of freedom is 10.6 and since the  $\chi^2$  value for Table 5:23 is 14.49, it was concluded that there was probably a relationship, with subjects who had experienced the early move to Britain once again failing to perform as well as other groups in the educational context.

Follow up interviews were attempted with the drop-outs but understandably most were impossible to trace or were reluctant to talk to the chief researcher, who, as



explained above, was a member of staff at the college. Eventually two of the group were tracked down and agreed to interviews.

Mohammed (dropped out of GCSEs) "It (the course) was boring. I couldn't get on with it. The teachers were crap" Enrolled at another further education establishment in September 1989 and dropped out in May 1990.

Meena (dropped out of ALs) "I couldn't keep up. I couldn't do the reading. There's a lot to do at home and I couldn't do it." Has not reentered further education.

These students show that motivations are always complex in such a situation and that personality and personal circumstances are the prime factors. Of the three reasons advanced by Mohammed, only the second really informs the research, although all three may well be true. When questioned on what he meant by the statement "I couldn't get on with it", he refused to be pressed and leading questions such as "Did you find the language of text books difficult?" were shrugged off. Tracking replies in the questionnaire it appeared that given this privacy he was prepared to admit to English language difficulties.

**TABLE 5:24 MOHAMMED'S REPLIES TO QUESTIONS ON ENGLISH**

|                          |                 |           |                  |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|
| Finds the language of    |                 |           |                  |
| Text books               | <u>easy</u> ... | moderate  | difficult        |
| Teachers                 | <u>easy</u>     | moderate  | difficult        |
| Project work             | easy            | moderate  | <u>difficult</u> |
| Examinations             | easy            | moderate  | <u>difficult</u> |
| Would like               |                 |           |                  |
| More help in English     | <u>yes</u>      | no        |                  |
| Some lessons in L1       | yes             | <u>no</u> |                  |
| Dual language text books | yes             | <u>no</u> |                  |
| Bilingual teachers       | yes             | <u>no</u> |                  |

Mohammed came to Britain at the age of six.

Meena's motivations also appeared complex and from the interview she made it clear that there had been pressure for her to help extensively in the house and with the younger children, although her family had not pressurized her directly to give up the course. However, she was also quite categorical that she found the reading very difficult. She uses Panjabi in all daily situations including speaking with friends at college. However, she has not studied Panjabi formally and she has no qualification in it and no desire to study for one. She was born in Britain and has lived only in Britain.

**TABLE 5:25 MEENA'S REPLIES ON L1 LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

|                                      |                  |            |                 |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|
| How well can you understand Panjabi? | <u>very well</u> | quite well | not well        |
| How well can you speak Panjabi?      | <u>very well</u> | quite well | not well        |
| How well can you read Panjabi?       | very well        | quite well | <u>not well</u> |
| How well can you write Panjabi?      | very well        | quite well | <u>not well</u> |

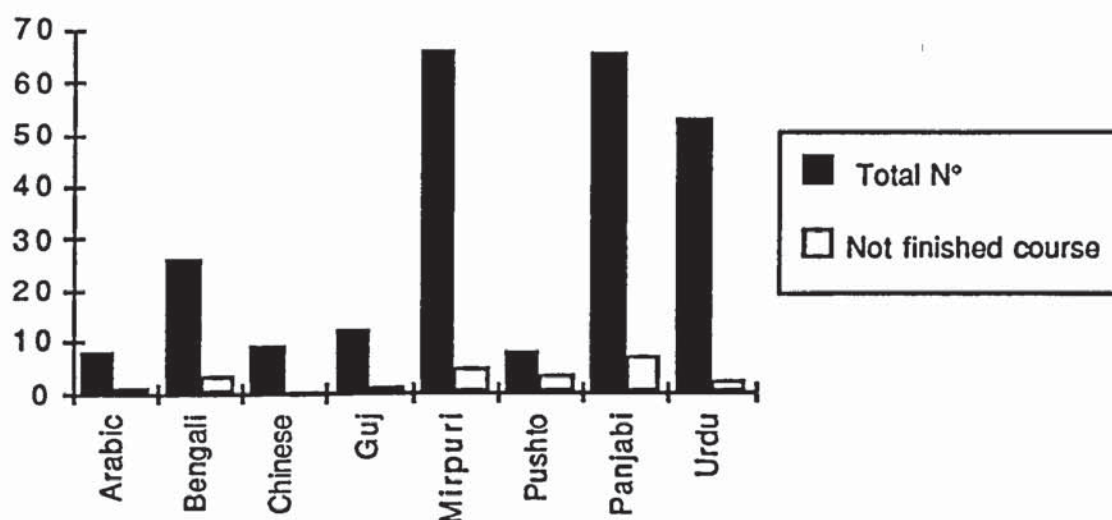
In these two case studies it was possible to surmise that language difficulties had been one of several factors which had caused complex educational problems and ultimate failure.

#### **5.4.4 Correlations between failure to complete the course and linguistic group membership**

Examining the record of each linguistic minority group in the sample showed that over 10% of the Arabic, Bengali, Pushto and Panjabi groups failed to complete their course.



**TABLE 5:26 FAILURE TO COMPLETE THE COURSE BY  
LANGUAGE GROUP**



The Pushto figure was particularly high at 37.5%. As we have seen above the reasons for leaving a course are very varied and may be multiple. Tracking enough of the students to gain an insight into this finding was not possible and there is no indication that the students' language difficulties were a principal reason for the decision to leave education. However, a number of this group signalled in Questionnaire 2 that they were having English language difficulties.

### **5.5. Conclusions**

If language skills are not improving with length of time within the British education system, this phenomenon may be attributed to various causes, each of which may be occurring in isolation or which may be interacting with another. Amongst all the possible reasons, two appear to be probable: the failure of the educational service to carry out the recommendations of the Bullock and Swann reports and provide adequate English support and the demography of linguistic minority settlement which permits minority linguistic enclaves.

The Bullock report [1974] had noted in its recommendations:

"Generally speaking, the teaching of English as a second language begins too late after the child's arrival and ends too soon.....

The teaching of English as a second language should not be discontinued when the pupils have gained a superficial knowledge of it but should be sustained until they have achieved fluency in speaking, reading and writing.....

In the secondary school, pupils who are past the initial stages of learning English need help in coping with the linguistic demands made on them by the various specialist areas of the curriculum. To this end there should be close co-operation between subject teachers and language specialist"  
[Bullock 1974:544].

The Swann report [1985] reinforced the need to provide the linguistic minority child with access to the English language:

"We believe that essential to the equality of opportunity, to academic success, and more broadly to participation on equal terms as a full member of society, is a good command of English and that first priority in language learning by all pupils must therefore be given to the learning of English.....

*All* teachers in schools with substantial numbers of pupils for whom English is not their first language have a responsibility to cater for linguistic needs of these pupils and should be given appropriate support and training to discharge it" [Swann 1985:771].

It seems from the educational experience of members of the sample that the full English language support they need to integrate into the system, recognised in both these reports, is still not available. Separate English as a second language classes



are now considered divisive and to be avoided [Swann 1985, Birmingham inspectorate 1990, East Birmingham College principal 1991] and team teaching and English language support within the mainstream classroom have proved very difficult to implement effectively [NATCLE conference 1990]. Funding is still limited and provision for the category of intermediate and advanced learners still neglected. Thus both methodology and funding may be regarded as problematic.

Members of the sample recognised the need to focus on improving their L2 skills and 52.7% of the subjects responding to Questionnaire 2 said that they would like to have more help in English.

Interviewees described the English language support they had received as second language learners variously as

"patchy - available in some years and classes only",

"not available at all, as far as I remember",

"not available after I left the separate ESL unit",

"once a week and with this 'divvy'."

The interviews also revealed that some of the brightest bilingual students experienced insecurity where English was concerned and felt that it held them back from maximizing their full educational potential.

"I still feel - after all this time - that I can't say all the things I want to say - and know!"

Thus the first possible reason for the lack of correlation between academic progression and length of residence may be the inadequate nature of specialist English language support.

The second possible explanation may reside in the demography of Birmingham where the significant numbers of linguistic minority speakers permit a subject to interact with members of his speech community for a wide variety of normal everyday activities (discussed below). Only education need take place in the

medium of English. This makes his linguistic experience very similar to that of someone living in a non-English speaking community abroad but receiving English medium education and therefore the difference of experience between members of the sample educated within the English medium British system and living in a non-English speaking enclave in Birmingham and members of the sample educated partially in an English medium education system abroad and living in a non-English speaking environment abroad may not be great. English language skills of British based students may be improving but perhaps at a rate comparable to those of groups being educated through English in non-English speaking environments.

Therefore, in conclusion one can say that, although the reasons were not totally clear and seemed to stem from a number of practices, both within the family and within the education system, this section of the research made it clear that mere presence in the British education system was not on its own adequate to ensure the fulfilment of potential in the linguistic minority student. The third hypothesis of the research seemed to have some substance.

## **NOTES**

1. It was noted that, although the Access course had been set up to provide a bridging course for the new entrant to English medium education, it was found, in practice, to contain some students who had been in Britain for a number of years. Some of these students were interviewed to ascertain why they should be on this course. Both staff and students gave opinions and it was noted that the common profile for a student who remained in the Access group for a long time was, firstly, a student who had a track record as a slow learner both in language and in other academic areas and, secondly, a student, usually female, who had spent the early years of the period of residence in Britain within the family and the linguistic community and who then came late to education. Both staff and students reported that the group experienced difficulties in finding occasion for active English



language use with mother tongue English speakers; students in the Access group are often from the same linguistic community which can result in use of the L1 in the college environment. They reported strenuous efforts, not always successful, to avoid L1 use in order to progress in English.

## **6. PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS (3)**

### **ATTITUDES TOWARDS BILINGUALISM, L1 MAINTENANCE AND L2 ACQUISITION**

This final section of findings focusses on attitudes towards bilingualism in general and on the commitment of young bilinguals towards the maintenance of their mother tongue in particular. This commitment is influenced by a complex network of interacting attitudes, reflecting the individual's relationship to, perception of and identification with his own ethnic group and his integrative and instrumental motivations towards the majority speech community. Language is a social phenomenon and a constituent part of one's social identity [Gardner 1985], and whether bilingualism is a transitory or stable feature of Birmingham life depends to a large extent on social factors and the individual decisions made by these young bilinguals in the face of pressures from both the host community and the linguistic minority communities.

#### **6.1. Attitudes towards languages and cultures within the sample**

##### **6.1.1 Motivational orientation: attitudes towards the English language**

Gardner and Lambert [1972] made a distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation in L2 acquisition. At one extreme of the continuum an integrative orientation shows the learner's desire to resemble the speakers of the target language group; at the other end, an instrumental orientation shows that the learner has only pragmatic and practical reasons for acquiring the L2. Gardner has clarified and elaborated this thesis in a number of subsequent studies [1.2.1.3.], making it clear that integrative motivation is not a single entity but the sum of a variety of positive attitudes towards the speakers and the culture of the target language. Statements 66, 67 and 68 were included to investigate the attitudes of respondents towards the majority speech community and to ascertain their prime motivations in acquiring English. It was felt that integrative and instrumental motivation need not be mutually exclusive and that subjects who were very ambitious to succeed within the parameters of the British educational system and in a



career in mainstream British society might exhibit an integrative as well as an instrumental motivation.

The statement "My parents prefer me to speak English so that I can feel part of British society" was framed in this way since students who had helped with the pilot suggested that integrative motivation was often a position adopted by a whole family. Replies from the sample showed that this was not the case here with a Mean of 3.441 showing a strongly negative response overall. Ethnicity was not a strong predictor of responses and the Mean was consistently negative for all language groups.

The statement "I can't see the point of learning any language but English, since this is all I will need" and "I try to use English a lot so that I can succeed in a career in Britain" were designed to test two aspects of instrumental motivation; the first was to show that the subject was aiming to succeed through English and saw the need to acquire English as paramount; the second that the subject aimed to succeed through English without that ambition necessarily precluding other language use. The sample produced Means of 3.699 and 2.45 to these two statements showing that the subjects were positive if rather lukewarm to the idea of English as a tool for educational and career advancement, but on the whole rejected the idea that English should replace their L1.

Comparing the Mean for the statements "My parents prefer me to speak English so that I can feel part of British society" and "I can't see the point of learning any language but English, since this is all I will need" gives a comparison between the position on the integrative continuum for both the subject and his family as a whole, according to language minority group.

**TABLE 6:1 INTEGRATIONAL MOTIVATION (PARENTS AND SUBJECTS)**

|                   | <u>N</u> | <u>Family<br/>integrative<br/>(mean)</u> | <u>Subject<br/>integrative<br/>(mean)</u> |
|-------------------|----------|--|---|
| Arabic speakers   | 8        | 3.71                                     | 3.25                                      |
| Bengali speakers  | 26       | 3.615                                    | 4.115                                     |
| Chinese speakers  | 9        | 3.111                                    | 3.777                                     |
| Gujarati speakers | 18       | 3.055                                    | 3.944                                     |
| Hindi speakers    | 12       | 3.333                                    | 3.916                                     |
| Mirpuri speakers  | 66       | 3.348                                    | 3.515                                     |
| Pushto speakers   | 8        | 3.375                                    | 2.625                                     |
| Panjabi speakers  | 65       | 3.384                                    | 3.907                                     |
| Urdu speakers     | 55       | 3.4                                      | 3.49                                      |

(Mean from 1 - 5 Likert scale : 1 = strongly pro-integration to 5 = strongly anti-integration)

The respondents showed quite clearly that neither they nor, in their opinion, their parents would be happy to assimilate linguistically with the majority community.

#### **6.1.2. Attitude towards the L1**

To investigate whether this expressed wish to maintain the L1 is supported by positive action, the interviewees were asked the following questions:

"What steps are you taking to maintain your language?"

"What steps are your parents taking to maintain your language?"

Several interviewees cited visits to, visitors from and contacts with countries where the L1 is widely used as a major factor in their own language maintenance. As was seen in 5.1. a large number of British born members of the sample (23.7% of the whole sample) had spent a period of time in the country of origin of their family. Other interviewees gave learning to read and write the L1 as a means of maintenance.



**TABLE 6:2 LITERACY ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUP**

|                   | <u>N</u> | <u>Literacy in</u><br><u>L1 - good</u> | <u>Literacy in</u><br><u>L1 - medium</u> |
|-------------------|----------|--|--|
| Arabic speakers   | 8        | 50%                                    | 12.5%                                    |
| Bengali speakers  | 26       | 38.5%                                  | 34.6%                                    |
| Chinese speakers  | 9        | 0%                                     | 66.7%                                    |
| Gujarati speakers | 18       | 5.6%                                   | 22.2%                                    |
| Hindi speakers    | 12       | 16.7%                                  | 25%                                      |
| Mirpuri speakers  | 66       | 30.3%                                  | 30.3% *                                  |
| Pushto speakers   | 8        | 0%                                     | 0%                                       |
| Panjabi speakers  | 65       | 15.4%                                  | 29.2%                                    |
| Urdu speakers     | 55       | 10.9%                                  | 34.5%                                    |

(\* probably Urdu)

The large percentage of subjects claiming literacy in Arabic, Bengali and Urdu reflect the situation that has been observed in both the college itself and the adjacent area of Birmingham: enrolment in language classes is high; interest and attendance is sustained. Panjabi, Gujarati and Hindi recruit less well. Chinese classes are popular but have a high drop out rate, which is perhaps also reflected in the subjects' assessment of their skills.

One of the interviewees gave evidence of how subjects whose language skills are declining sometimes take last minute action to halt this. Jabeen, a Gujarati speaker studying A levels, was born in Kenya into a family, who use English, Swahili, Hindi and Gujarati. She was interviewed in February 1990 and went to university in September 1990.

"I can speak English the best. My mother is good at English and all the men in the family speak it well. It is only with my grandmother that I need Gujarati or Swahili and if I speak to her she nags me about something, so I must say I don't really have much prompting to get myself better at those languages, do I? Still it is part of me and I don't

want it - I mean I don't want to lose it. As soon as I have some time I will take some classes. I want to be able to write and read Gujarati better so we can keep it in the family. It is important to me though I didn't think it was."

Jabeen reported on a visit to the college in February 1991 that she had started Gujarati classes.

The interviews also provided information on informal strategies to stem L1 loss:

Mumtaz - Pushto speaker studying A levels, interviewed June 1990, went to university September 1990.

"I feel very strong on Pushto.... My father is helping to start "Pakhtoon Anjuman" (1) and he gets me in it too....Friends come to my house and switch every word English then Pushto.....If they start speaking to me in English I go back in Pushto."

### **6.1.3. Attitudes towards bilingualism**

A very large majority of the college sample reported positive feelings towards their bilingualism, seeing it both as something to be proud of and as an asset.

**TABLE 6:3 SUBJECTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR BILINGUALISM**

|  | <u>Strongly agree</u> | <u>Agree</u> | <u>Mean</u> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Proud of speaking two languages                  | 73.1%                 | 17.6%        | 1.416       |
| Sees bilingualism as an asset                    | 65.6%                 | 23.3%        | 1.523       |
| Feels two languages help problem solving         | 36.9%                 | 29%          | 2.23        |
| Feels two languages gives access to two cultures | 65.9%                 | 22.2%        | 1.522       |

N=279



(Mean from 1 - 5 Likert scale : 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree)

The college sample thus exhibited positive feelings towards their bilingualism. Many of the interviewees reported the pleasure they have in "playing" with two languages with other bilingual friends. It is quite usual to hear a variety of languages in the college common rooms and corridors and within this institution it appears to be status enhancing to introduce items of vocabulary, particularly from Urdu, into one's conversation [Bilingual teacher in conversation July 1990]. According to bilingual teaching staff this enjoyment of code-switching and playing with language is a marked change from their own experiences ten and twenty years before.

#### **6.1.4. Attitudes towards mainstream British culture**

Various studies (Gardner 1985, Hamers and Blanc 1989) have examined social and psychological distance as a factor in L2 acquisition, finding that low acculturation hinders the learning process in the target language. Gardner suggests that the ability to see the world from another point of view is essential for success in acquiring an L2. Whether or not the extreme of integration is envisaged, emotional adjustments which are socially based are inevitable [Gardner 1985]. To evaluate this dimension of the study, the interviews included a discussion on the subject of identification with and loyalty to both the minority and the majority cultures. The findings from the interviews were consistent with the impression given by the college student body in general. These are urban youth and the great majority participate in the generalized urban youth culture to be found in Birmingham as well as in the culture of their ethnic group.

Darvinder - Panjabi speaker, studying AL Art and Design, member of Bhangra band, born in Britain, lived only in Britain. Interviewed 1988.

"I try to use both Indian and English influences to produce something new. Look at bhangra - that's not Indian, that's British Indian. It's so influenced. My painting couldn't be done in India because although it looks Indian to you it looks Western to an Indian Indian.....I like

being one foot in one place and one in the other. I think whites - girls - find me interesting.... My cousins think I'm dangerous."

Darvinder exhibited clear enjoyment of his perceived "exoticism" and used it to effect with whichever group he was trying to impress. However, he maintained that he did not identify with either English or Panjabi speaking groups but was part of a new mixed culture, which does not fully match his assertion that he uses his "foreignness" to attract. Nevertheless, to an observer he appears totally at ease with his position on the interface of two cultures and capitalizing on it.

Other interviewees gave support to the idea of a new mixed culture.

Imtiaz, Urdu speaker

"I like what I like. I don't think is this English culture, is this Pakistani culture. ...I like male talk with cousins, uncles, family and food served by the women - I know you think I'm very male chauvinist - and that's Pakistani. But then I like to have the same conversation in the canteen with girls too and I'll go and get the coffee, and that's not very Pakistani."

Rakesh, Gujarati speaker

"I don't think you can say Gujarati or English culture for me because I'm not Gujarati like in Gujarat and I'm not English like you. I've got to be a mixture and I think it's good. I'm not worried by it. I think you can take the good things that you want."

The researcher felt that some of the interviewees betrayed slight irritation with the question, but was unable to ascertain whether this irritation stemmed from their perception of culture clash as a false problem or because they are sensitive to the dichotomy of their position, which is perhaps not as easily managed as they allow.



For some of the sample, particularly the girls, participation in the generalized youth culture is limited to day time activities and has to be undertaken with due regard to parents' sensibilities.

Dipti - Bengali speaker, studying office practice, interviewed 1988

"Belonging to two groups is quite difficult. For instance clothes. I told my mum I was going to wear skirts to college and she said O.K. - but not too short. But we argue all the time she wants them really baggy and I want to fit. And now when I'm wearing a sari and I meet friends (ethnic English) - say in Safeways - I get embarrassed. They always say something and notice. I feel alright with my family but like sort of dressed up with my friends."

Dipti's expression of embarrassment about displaying ethnic markers in front of majority group friends arose as an issue with other female interviewees but not at all in the interviews with males. In the questionnaire Dipti had agreed that she felt ashamed if her mother spoke to her in Bengali in front of her friends. This was a minority view amongst the female sample (24.4%) but might well be a relatively common position amongst the bilingual female students who declined to take part in the research.

On the question of taking part in mainstream social activities Dipti gave the following information:

"My dad is quite strict but he's very kind. I trust him to know what is right for me. I have been once or twice to places I know he wouldn't like and I've lied about it and I feel very bad - so it's not worth it really for me.... I get cross though when the boys are allowed out without having to say where they are going.....I was friends with X (ethnic

English) at school but she doesn't come round now much. We do different things now."

These three themes occurred regularly in the interviews with the female interviewees and generally in informal conversation with female college students. The young women have ambivalent feelings about the strict code to which they are made to adhere. On the one hand it seems to reassure them that they are loved, prized and cherished, and they make a positive distinction between their own privileged position and the perceived parental neglect suffered by some girls from other ethnic groups who are allowed a licence which may put them in moral and physical danger. On the other hand they are frustrated by rules perceived as petty and restrictions betraying lack of trust, which often force them to relinquish friendships with girls not bound by their code. The dual standards for behaviour demanded of males and females recurred constantly as a source of irritation.

Thus in the interviews some of the young women seemed to be experiencing a conflict of culture, whereas young males reported greater acceptance of and satisfaction with their bicultural position. However, in the questionnaire which emphasized bilingual rather than bicultural positions it was not possible to conclude that there were significant differences of attitude on biculturalism, bilingualism and language loyalty between males and females.

***TABLE 6:4 GENDER AND LANGUAGE LOYALTY***

|   | <u>Male</u><br>(N=197) | <u>Female</u><br>N=82) |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| Ashamed if mother uses MT in front of friends | 27.4%                  | 24.3%                  |
| Finds 2 languages an advantage                | 88.3%                  | 90.2%                  |
| Finds 2 languages give access to 2 cultures   | 86.3%                  | 92.6%                  |
| Will only need English                        | 20.8%                  | 18.2%                  |
| Will teach children MT                        | 69.5%                  | 69.5%                  |



## **6.2. Perceptions of linguistic prestige**

Giles, Bourhis and Taylor [1977] developed the construct of ethnolinguistic vitality to explain the factors that make a speech community maintain its position as a distinct group. The objective factors were demography, status and institutional support, and the effect of these factors on Birmingham minority speech communities has been discussed in 2.2. The subjective factors of ethnolinguistic vitality include perceptions of linguistic prestige and sociostructural position and these perceptions were elicited from responses to statements 58, 60, 62, 74 and from the interviews.

### **6.2.1. L1 prestige and the host community**

Perceptions of linguistic prestige tend to be culture bound and a high prestige language for one group may be low prestige for another. Spanish and Arabic are both examples of languages which are associated with low economic status in one set of situations and which are high prestige international languages in another set. In Britain, South Asian languages, which have high status on the sub-continent and within British based Asian language speech communities, sometimes have low status in the opinion of monoglot Britons:

"The social and linguistic skills of many members of linguistic minorities - especially those singled out as black or brown by members of the dominant culture, be they West Indian or South Asian origin - are generally perceived to have little economic, political or social value for the society at large" [Khan et al 1985:5].

There appears to have been some gain in status in the 1980s as South Asian languages entered the curriculum of many ethnically mixed schools as alternative modern language GCSEs with the same format and status as European modern languages (SEC Working Conference May 1988) and as universities and polytechnics began accepting A level passes in Asian languages as fully equal to passes in any other subject [e.g.

Birmingham University, Department of Chemistry 1987]. However, despite their place in the mainstream curriculum the majority of students studying a South Asian language still come from that speech community. Where this is not the case, motivation has been noted to be either the desire to learn the language of a (boy/girl)friend or preparation for travel or work in a country where the language is spoken.

Interviewees and respondents were asked if they would like monoglot English speakers to learn South Asian languages in preference to French and German as part of the curriculum.

**TABLE 6:5 MINORITY LANGUAGES IN THE CURRICULUM**

|                                    | <u>Strongly agree</u> | <u>Agree</u> | <u>Mean</u> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Would like English to learn his MT | 26.5%                 | 22.9%        | 2.475       |

**N = 279**

(Mean from 1 - 5 Likert scale: 1=strongly agree - 5=strongly disagree)

A slight majority agreed that community languages should become school subjects for ethnic English but very few interviewees thought this would happen, mentioning poor language acquisition skills in the monoglot community, English racism (covert and overt) towards immigrant groups and the linguistic demands from the EC as reasons.

David, interviewed February 1990

"I don't think that they (monoglot English speakers) would be very interested. They wouldn't see why they had to (should?) do it."

Jabeen, interviewed February 1990

"I can't see a headmaster getting away with introducing say Urdu for a whole year group. Can you imagine letters to the "Daily News"!..... Especially now with Rushdie, there's a lot of racism."



Zubbair, interviewed February 1990

"I think the emphasis is going to be on EC languages for the next few years."

This recognition that the wider community does not value their L1 does not appear to have affected the respondents adversely and in general they report great satisfaction with their bilingualism.

The statement "I feel ashamed if my mother speaks to me in our language in front of friends who only speak English" was suggested by students who discussed the battery of questions at the pilot stage. They felt such a feeling was sometimes to be noted. The subject also arose in an anecdote recounted by Ashraf Awan, the adviser for bilingualism for Birmingham local education authority, at a meeting with bilingual assistants in June 1989.

**TABLE 6:6 PERCEPTION OF PRESTIGE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE**

|   | <u>Strongly disagree</u> | <u>Disagree</u> | <u>Mean</u> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Feels ashamed if MT used in front of English speakers | 38.7%                    | 12.2%           | 3.613       |

**N=279**

(Mean from 1 - 5 Likert scale: 1 strongly agree - 5 strongly disagree)

The majority rejected the idea but 26.5% did report a feeling of shame if their mother spoke in the mother tongue in front of English speaking friends. Those agreeing with the statement exhibit a very strong sense of the inferiority of their L1, and six respondents were tracked and their answers discussed to query this. Five gave the variety of explanations for their position shown below and one would not discuss his answer.

1. "It shows my mother is not educated and cannot speak English."
2. "It might seem as if we are talking about them" (2)

3. "I don't think English speakers like us to speak our language in front of them. They think we're rude."

4. "I don't know - I just don't like her to do it."

Responses 2 and 3 show an awareness of a commonly held monoglot dislike of being excluded and thus showed social skills rather than a feeling of inferiority. Responses 1 and 4 show that the respondents feel use of the L1 stigmatizes their parent in some way. The boy who refused to discuss further showed, perhaps, that the question bites deeply.

These answers do explain, however, what had been felt to be an inconsistency; a small number of respondents felt it was logical to report a feeling of pride in their bilingualism and also a feeling of embarrassment at use of the L1 in certain circumstances. This is reconcilable if the respondents see L1 use as rude rather than in any way shameful.

To complete the survey of perceived majority attitudes towards the minority L1s two further statements (59 and 76) were included to gauge whether bilingual students experience a refusal to accept bilinguality within the educational environment. This is a contentious subject (Ashraf Awan, Birmingham adviser for bilingualism, in conversation 1988) since some monoglot English speaking teachers see it as a threat to their classroom control and yet for the non-proficient L2 speaker it is essential to be able to clarify concepts in the L1. There is no doubt, and evidence has come from the interviews, that the L1 can be used as a "secret code" to exclude and pass comment on non-speakers in general and authority figures in particular.

For 31.2% of the sample the question had never arisen, presumably since they had accepted English as the medium of the classroom and were proficient in it. 22.2% reported that they were allowed to use the L1 in the classroom and 45.5% reported its ban. The replies were similar when the statement was phrased to pertain to the school



as a whole rather than the classroom. 27.4% did not see it as an issue, 25% reported tolerance and 46.9% reported a ban. That nearly half of these young bilinguals are unable to clarify and confirm a meaning with fellow L1 speakers indicates a linguistic oppression from the host society represented by its teachers. That it is an unnecessary oppression is illustrated by the reports in the interviews that some teachers use L1 clarification as a strategy and ask proficient bilinguals to check comprehension with those less proficient. Where there is a ban on the L1 it may take an aggressive and offensive form as the following reports from interviews illustrate:

Zubbair

"X often says "Don't use that language. You're in Britain now."

David

"If you speak your own language with friend they say what you doing you're in England."

Mosabbir

"She often says "Stop that nonsense."

### **6.2.2. Prestige and minority speech communities.**

Languages such as Urdu, Arabic and Panjabi derive prestige from three sources: for the original group they are the national languages of the homeland; for the British born mother tongue speaker they are the ancestral languages which link the group to their ethnic identity and literacy in them gives access to ancestral culture and history; lastly, they are languages of education which may be studied within the British secondary school system and which contribute to success within that system.

These sources of prestige do not exist for first languages which are dialects, languages without a written form or the low form in a diglossic situation, both in their country of origin and with the speech community in Birmingham. Speakers of such languages face a double lack of regard for their language both from the host community and from other South Asian speakers, who use recognised national or state languages such as Bengali,

Urdu, Panjabi, Gujarati and Hindi. Speakers of Mirpuri and Sylheti and other non-standard varieties may be perceived by speakers of standard Panjabi and Bengali as less well educated and likely to be of lower social and economic class. Mirpuri and Sylheti speakers perceive standard Panjabi, Urdu or Bengali as the languages of government, religion or education.

This lack of regard may lead speakers of less prestigious languages to claim the languages perceived as more prestigious as mother tongues. In Questionnaire 2 some respondents claimed Urdu or Bengali as their first language and Mirpuri or Sylheti as their second. The dynamics of this appear to be that families are simplifying a trilingual situation by dropping the language considered to have least prestige and utility, with the result that the younger members of the family are receptive bilinguals, who have only passive and imperfect knowledge of that language. Thus such perceptions of prestige may lead to the loss of the L1.

Zubbair interviewed February 1988

"I don't know any (Asian) family who doesn't teach their children their language. But my sister, she is teaching her kids Urdu because she says it is more useful for them than Panjabi (Mirpuri). I think lots of them are doing it now.....But my niece and nephew don't talk too well with mum (their grandmother). They don't understand when she speaks, but they may get used to her in the end. Still she can understand English if she wants to although she doesn't like to speak it."

This phenomenon has also been noted amongst Italian speakers in Belgium who have chosen to teach their children standard Italian rather than their particular dialect for the same reasons [Byram 1989].

Where classes are offered in the mother tongue, only prestige languages with a written form will be offered. Thus community language classes may contain both mother



tongue speakers and students of an allied vernacular who choose to study the language because of its prestige as defined above. This results in Cantonese and Mandarin classes which include Hakka speakers, Bengali classes with Sylheti speakers, Urdu classes with Mirpuri and other Panjabi dialect speakers, Arabic classes with Urdu, Bengali and Panjabi speakers. Achieving literacy in the prestige form of the mother tongue becomes another factor in the loss of the vernacular form.

Interviewees, with Mirpuri as an L1, explained why they were attending or had attended Urdu classes and it was made quite clear that the Urdu classes were not attended in the spirit of second choice, since no Mirpuri was available. They perceived their mother tongue as "the slang language from the village", "not a polite high class language", "a rubbish language".

Urdu on the other hand was held in high regard because of its status as the national language of Pakistan and because of perceptions which parallel very closely some English speakers' perception of R.P. (2):

"We think of Urdu in a higher class. It sounds more polite."

In the course of the interviews one group of students attempted to demonstrate to the researcher the high status of Urdu compared with Mirpuri by reciting a chunk of each language to show how much "posher" Urdu sounded.

### **6.3 Language and other markers of ethnicity**

Hamers and Blanc [1989:116] state that

"Language is a component of culture along with other entities like, for example, values, beliefs and norms; language is a product of culture, transmitted from one generation to the next in the socialization process; it also moulds culture, that is to say, our cultural representations are shaped by language. But, unlike other components of culture, language interacts with it in specific ways: for language is a transmitter of culture;

furthermore, it is the main tool for the internalization of culture by the individual."

To assess the relative importance of language as an ethnic marker to the sample and to investigate how far different ethnic groups might construe their cultural identity in different ways, the relative importance of a variety of factors such as language, religion and cultural patrimony were discussed both with the interviewees and with the sample for Questionnaire 2.

### **6.3.1. Commitment to linguistic continuity**

**TABLE 6:7 WILL TEACH OWN CHILDREN MOTHER TONGUE**

|                   | <u>N</u> | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Don't know</u> |
|-------------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Arabic speakers   | 8        | 62.5%      | 25%       | 12.5%             |
| Bengali speakers  | 26       | 76.9%      | 11.5%     | 11.5%             |
| Chinese speakers  | 9        | 11.1%      | 11.1%     | 77.8%             |
| Gujarati speakers | 18       | 88.8%      | 11.2%     | 0                 |
| Hindi speakers    | 12       | 73.4%      | 16.7%     | 0                 |
| Mirpuri speakers  | 66       | 75.8%      | 10.6%     | 13.6%             |
| Pushto speakers   | 8        | 62.5%      | 12.5%     | 25%               |
| Panjabi speakers  | 65       | 72%        | 9.3%      | 18.5%             |
| Urdu speakers     | 55       | 65.4%      | 18.2%     | 16.4%             |

The professed commitment to teach children the mother tongue was very weak in the Chinese group, but the other groups were broadly similar and when the Mean was calculated for each of the groups it approached the 2 level for all languages except Chinese (3) and Arabic (2.5)

These replies are most interesting in that they do not fully reflect the situation as it is perceived in the Birmingham education service. Two language communities who



appear to see language as a core value of their cultural group are the Arabic speakers and the Chinese speakers. Each of these groups has lobbied for the inclusion of their language in the mainstream educational curriculum as a language option and the communities themselves expend enormous resources and energy providing language classes for the younger members in mosques, community schools and evening classes (2.4.4.). However, from the statistics there is an indication that these are linguistic minority groups where the commitment to pass the language to the next generation is slightly less strong.

The reasons for this may be based on realism. Respondents who have attended classes know the rigour and commitment necessary to acquire the written form of the language and are not sure they have the energy, commitment and ability to pass on the skills. The Arabic community, for example, has made an enormous effort to provide parallel education for its younger members through the medium of Arabic. There are a number of Arabic schools which meet each evening for two or more hours and cater for a large number of children and young people. To take part in this scheme demands a great deal of time and commitment which sometimes breeds resentment amongst the participants because they see it as an incursion into the time available for leisure and the private study demanded by their English medium education. The Chinese community provide a Saturday school which includes language classes. Members of the sample who attended it reported that it functioned partially as a meeting place and youth club and partially as a class. A high drop-out rate is reported (class teacher in conversation with researcher 1990).

Interviews were conducted with Arabic and Chinese speaking students who had attended L1 classes and their views illustrate the commitment in terms of time and energy these classes represent. All three interviewees were still determined to maintain their languages even if they were not going to study them formally and Ali is in favour of his younger siblings attending until they have achieved some literacy.

Ahmed, interviewed January 1990

Studying A levels, an ex-member of the Yemeni school.

"I found that I couldn't keep up with work here and go to the school...it means you can't go out with your friends....you're always in trouble - not doing homework."

Ali, interviewed November 1989

Studying CPVE, an ex-member of the Yemeni school.

"It was boring.....all day at school and all evening at school. I was always sleeping."

Lim, interviewed January 1990

Studying GCSE and one A level, an ex-member of the Chinese school

"The writing takes too much work. I can't manage it and it is too much time from other things I do."

However, it should be noted that the majority of the interviewees at present attending L1 classes maintained that they intended to continue to attend them for the foreseeable future. They indicated that they would cease attending either when they had attained the goal set by the class or when pressures from mainstream school work forced them to do so.

Both the Gujarati and Hindi groups claimed stronger linguistic loyalty in the questionnaire than might have been expected. The behaviour that has been observed in the Birmingham educational environment would lead to the conclusion that these languages are not perceived as core values. Students from both linguistic minority communities are unlikely to study their L1 although it is sometimes offered as a modern languages option within some schools and colleges in the Birmingham local education authority. Neither language has the large exam entries now common for Bengali, Panjabi and Urdu. For example, the number of entries in the area served by the



Midlands Examining Group in Summer 1989 was 73 for Gujarati and 965 for Urdu. While the Urdu speaking community is larger than the Gujarati speaking community in the Midlands, this ratio is much lower than the ratio for the examination entries suggests.

It was also noted that some of the groups who portray themselves as very committed to passing on the language are the communities who are at present exhibiting signs of language transition and loss, resulting from language contact with larger and more prestigious speech communities. The Mirpuri speakers had one of the most positive means on the question of language maintenance with 75.8% (n 66) claiming they would teach their children their language. However, it is not at all clear which language they intend to pass on to the next generation. As we have seen from earlier extracts from the interviews, the position of Mirpuri as a less prestigious, informal vernacular has caused parents to choose Urdu as the family language.

The Pushto group were also largely committed to L1 maintenance with 62.5% of the Pushto speakers claiming that they will transmit their language to the younger generation, but this language community is already well advanced into a position of language loss because of demographic pressures (6.5).

In the questionnaire a sizeable number of respondents who had not had the opportunity to study their L1 indicated that they would have liked to have done so (28.4% of full sample). Whether this will translate itself into action with their own offspring remains to be seen, but it is a usual occurrence that opportunities perceived to have been missed or unavailable in one's own childhood are habitually provided for and valued with the next generation. In this context the sample's views on L1 medium education may be significant.

**TABLE 6:8 ATTITUDES TOWARDS L1 MEDIUM EDUCATION**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Would like the opportunity to have some classes in L1 | 43%   |
| Would like some text books in both L1 and English     | 28.7% |
| Would like there to be more bilingual teachers        | 47%   |

**6.3.2. Commitment to cultural and religious continuity**

Other markers of ethnicity apart from language have been found to be easier to maintain as Fishman states:

"The experience of language continuity and the experience of ethnic continuity are both highly attitudinal; however, the latter is a much more robust attitude than the former ... Ethnolinguistic and ethnocultural continuity in the U.S.A. are both far greater at an attitudinal level than at an overt behavioral one, whether reviewed experientially (from within) or evaluationally (from without). In addition the latter (ethnocultural continuity) is greater than the former (ethnolinguistic continuity)"  
[Fishman 1985:507].

If this is also true for the Birmingham situation respondents ought to show a greater commitment to passing on the history, culture and religion of their ethnic group than they showed to passing on the language. Such was found to be the case for history with all language groups except Gujarati and Hindi. All the linguistic groups exhibited a greater commitment to religion than language as a core value to be transmitted to the next generation.

Replies on the five point Likert scale were then plotted to give profile comparisons of Mean responses to the statements on intentions concerning the transmission of language, culture and religion.



**TABLE 6:9 WILL TEACH OWN CHILDREN THE HISTORY OF THEIR ANCESTORS**

|                   | <u>N</u> | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Don't know</u> |
|-------------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Arabic speakers   | 8        | 87.5%      | 0         | 12.5%             |
| Bengali speakers  | 26       | 67%        | 3.8%      | 19.2%             |
| Chinese speakers  | 9        | 55.6%      | 11.1%     | 33.3%             |
| Gujarati speakers | 18       | 66.7%      | 11.1%     | 22.2%             |
| Hindi speakers    | 12       | 66.75%     | 6.7%      | 16.7%             |
| Mirpuri speakers  | 66       | 83.3%      | 0         | 16.7%             |
| Pushto speakers   | 8        | 75%        | 0         | 25%               |
| Panjabi speakers  | 65       | 86.2%      | 4.6%      | 9.2%              |
| Urdu speakers     | 55       | 72.8%      | 14.5%     | 12.7%             |

**TABLE 6:10 WILL TEACH OWN CHILDREN RELIGION**

|                   | <u>N</u> | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Don't know</u> |
|-------------------|----------|------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Arabic speakers   | 8        | 62.5%      | 0         | 37.5%             |
| Bengali speakers  | 26       | 88.5%      | 3.8%      | 7.7%              |
| Chinese speakers  | 9        | 22.2%      | 44.4%     | 33.3%             |
| Gujarati speakers | 18       | 88.9%      | 0         | 11.1%             |
| Hindi speakers    | 12       | 83.3%      | 0         | 16.7%             |
| Mirpuri speakers  | 66       | 97%        | 0         | 3%                |
| Pushto speakers   | 8        | 100%       | 0         | 0                 |
| Panjabi speakers  | 65       | 98.5%      | 1.5%      | 0                 |
| Urdu speakers     | 55       | 87.3%      | 10.9%     | 1.8%              |

**TABLE 6:11 COMPARISON OF INTENTIONS**

|          | <u>N</u> | <u>History</u> | <u>Language</u> | <u>Religion</u> |
|----------|----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Arabic   | (8)      | 1.9            | 2.5             | 2               |
| Bengali  | (26)     | 1.75           | 1.9             | 1.4             |
| Chinese  | (9)      | 2.6            | 2.9             | 2.4             |
| Gujarati | (18)     | 1.95           | 1.85            | 1.5             |
| Hindi    | (12)     | 2.15           | 1.85            | 1.4             |
| Mirpuri  | (66)     | 1.55           | 1.9             | 1.2             |
| Panjabi  | (65)     | 1.55           | 1.9             | 1.3             |
| Pushto   | (8)      | 2              | 2.1             | 1               |
| Urdu     | (55)     | 1.65           | 2.6             | 1.7             |

(Mean from 1 - 5 Likert scale. 1=strongly agree that I will pass on this core value to my children; 5=strongly disagree with passing on this core value to my children).

The Means are consistent with what is observed pragmatically: that religion, particularly Islam, plays a very strong role in community identification and that group cultural norms, expressed through preservation of historical identity, are strong and will be conserved. The languages, although remaining potent markers for contemporary group members, are slightly less likely to be retained as a component of group culture.

### **6.3.3 Linguistic commitment to the family group**

The statement, "It would be disrespectful to my parents not to learn their language" was included to ascertain whether the motivation for language maintenance was intrinsic or extrinsic. In the interviews it had sometimes seemed as if it were the older generation who were enthusiastic about language maintenance and that the younger generation were sometimes being bullied into formal classes.

The responses to the statement showed that for the following percentages, respect for the family was one of the factors in L1 maintenance:

**TABLE 6:12 DUTY AS A FACTOR IN L1 MAINTENANCE**

|          | <u>Agree</u><br>Male (n 197) | <u>Agree</u><br>Female (n 82) | <u>Likert</u><br><u>Mean</u> (all) |
|----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Arabic   | 14.2% (7)                    | 0% (1)                        | 3.5                                |
| Bengali  | 41.1% (17)                   | 77.7% (9)                     | 2.32                               |
| Chinese  | 33.3% (6)                    | 0% (3)                        | 3.33                               |
| Gujarati | 100% (5)                     | 46% (13)                      | 2.27                               |
| Hindi    | 100% (8)                     | 50% (4)                       | 1.66                               |
| Mirpuri  | 76% (50)                     | 62.5% (16)                    | 2                                  |
| Panjabi  | 78.4% (51)                   | 85.7% (14)                    | 1.7                                |
| Pushto   | 100% (6)                     | 100% (2)                      | 1.5                                |
| Urdu     | 64.2% (42)                   | 69.2% (13)                    | 2.32                               |

(Mean from 1 - 5 Likert scale. 1=strongly agree that language maintenance is a sign of respect; 5=strongly disagree that it would show disrespect not to maintain the ancestral language.)

Speakers of languages from the Indian sub-continent recorded stronger feelings of duty towards language maintenance than Arabic and Chinese speakers. The speakers of languages that have been noted as undergoing attrition were amongst those who reported a strong feeling of duty towards their parents' language. The interviewees made the following comments, which show family loyalty expressed in terms of language behaviour:



Dipti - Bengali speaker

"I feel I must keep speaking Bengali because of my gran and her sister. They would not like not to speak to me and my sister.....They would be kind of hurt."

Lim - Chinese speaker

"They lost a lot my mum and dad when we left Vietnam and I don't think that they should lose their language as well. If we talk English they don't follow so well."

Zubbair - Urdu speaker

"My dad - when he came to England - he didn't speak any English. I said to him "Dad, how did you get on with no English?" He still don't speak it too good. He needs me to speak to people for him when its not Urdu and I owe him to do that."

Ali - Arabic speaker

"I wouldn't be part of them (my family) if I couldn't talk properly in my language."

No interviewee reported conflict over learning and speaking the ancestral language within the family circle, except upon the matter of attendance at formal classes. It may be surmised that the students from the sample were those for whom language maintenance was not an issue of contention within the family group and who willingly continued the linguistic tradition as part of their family membership. However, students who were studying in the college but who had not volunteered to be part of the research sample did report conflict in the home over language matters and one comment to me from a young female Urdu speaker who happened to also be my tutee showed that

conflict over questions of language use were part of a general conflict over group allegiance and behaviour appropriate to group expectations.

Najma, studying Als, English speaker with Urdu family background, interviewed 1989.

"I am just arguing with them all the time - about who I've got as a friend, what I'm wearing, how I don't want to speak Urdu, what I want to do next year. I've had a big row this week about going to UMIST open day. They want me to study in Birmingham, if they let me study at all."

#### **6.4. Further agents in L1 maintenance and attrition**

##### **6.4.1. Visits and links with the country of origin as motivating factors in language maintenance**

In all groups a distinction was made between returns to the country of origin for cultural tourism and family visits and return to the country of origin to work. All groups exhibited a greater enthusiasm for the former.

In the interviews, discussion of work in the country of origin revealed the following four positions: a feeling of belonging to Britain; a regret that work was not possible in the country of origin for political or economic reasons; a regret that career progression and monetary reward would not be as great in the country of origin; a desire to work, usually for a limited period, in the country of origin.

A total of 18 of those interviewed spoke of their identification with Britain as a homeland. This line of enquiry was not instigated by the interviewer in any case and thus the interviewees were proactive rather than reactive on the topic.

Mosabbir, a Bengali speaker, gave his point of view as



"I'm addicted to this country - well you know, used to it."

In this case such enthusiasm could perhaps have been meant as a compliment to what was perceived as the researcher's group membership. The comment might possibly contain a lexical error. Alternatively the interviewee might very well have meant what he said.

Three interviewees expressed regret that they could not return to their country of origin because of the political situation [Chinese speaker - Vietnam, Farsi speaker - Iran, Panjabi speaker - Pakistan].

A total of fourteen interviewees mentioned the fact that the prospects for their careers were better in Britain than in the country of origin. Six regretted this. Six expressed the idea that this had been the main reason for their family's immigration to Britain and that it continued to be a powerful reason for residence. Seven interviewees expressed an ambition to work for at least a limited period in the country of origin of their family. There appeared to be an element of idealism in some replies and four interviewees mentioned using skills to help build services and structures in the countries of origin of their families where they themselves had perceived a skill shortage.

**TABLE 6:13 TRAVEL AS A MOTIVATING FACTOR IN LI  
MAINTENANCE**

|          | <u>N</u> | <u>Visit</u> | <u>Work</u> |
|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| Arabic   | (8)      | 1.85         | 2.5         |
| Bengali  | (26)     | 1.35         | 2.35        |
| Chinese  | (9)      | 2.1          | 2.4         |
| Gujarati | (18)     | 1.35         | 2.75        |
| Hindi    | (12)     | 1.95         | 2.65        |
| Mirpuri  | (66)     | 1.45         | 2.75        |
| Panjabi  | (65)     | 1.5          | 2.35        |
| Pushto   | (8)      | 1.5          | 2.6         |
| Urdu     | (42)     | 1.85         | 2.6         |

The Mean for cultural tourism and family visits consistently falls to one side of the Mean for work in the country of origin for all groups. Therefore, although the Mean

was positive in all language groups, it could not be concluded from the mildness of the enthusiasm for such an idea, that a desire to return and work in the country of origin of the family was general throughout the sample nor a particularly strong factor in language loyalty and maintenance.

#### **6.4.2 Demography: endogamy and exogamy as factors of language maintenance and attrition**

In some of the demographically smaller language groups one of the major threats to L1 maintenance is exogamy, particularly if marriage brings the language of the smaller group into contact with a language which not only serves a large linguistic minority but which is also observed as having prestige. This has been observed to be the case with Pushto which appears to be suffering attrition from proximity to the prestige of Urdu. It is difficult from available statistics to be exact but from this research alone it is possible to say with some certainty that there are a number (perhaps 100 -150) of Pushto speaking families living mainly in north-east Birmingham in the Alum Rock area of the city. This is not a large enough number of people to provide marriage partners always within the group and marriages take place across linguistic boundaries, usually with the Muslim Urdu/Mirpuri speaking community. The likelihood that knowledge of Pushto can continue to be a core value in such mixed marriages is unlikely. A member of the college sample gives an indication of what is likely to happen linguistically to the children of a mixed Urdu/Pushto marriage, although it should be noted that it was the mother who was the Pushto speaker:

Imtiaz, interviewed June 1990, had classified himself as an Urdu speaker, but in the course of the interview he explained that his mother was a Pushto speaker and that he understood a little of the language, but that his father was an Urdu speaker and that this was the language that was mainly used at home.



The majority of Pushto speakers in the college sample showed a strong commitment to language maintenance (6.3) and this is illustrated by an interview with one of them, Mumtaz, interviewed June 1989:

"Pushto was my first language, but I also spoke English to my two brothers before I went to school.....At school none of my friends could speak Pushto. We spoke in English. My wife (he is to be married soon) does not speak Pushto, but I will teach my children Pushto because of my roots and my mother - she only speaks Pushto.....I can't read or write in Pushto."

Despite the professed commitment, the indications are that Mumtaz is unlikely to be successful: the younger generation in the family are using English (although there may be code-switching); he has no network of Pushto speaking friends from school; he has no literacy to underpin his competence; Pushto is not regarded in the wider community as a language of prestige and utility. On the positive side there is his enthusiasm and a strong feeling of group membership amongst some Pushto speakers (1).

### **6.5. Conclusions**

The overwhelming impression from both the interviews and the discussions at the time of the questionnaires was of a bilingual group happy in their bilingualism. Despite difficulties engendered by a monolingual educational experience this group in its majority was not contemplating jettisoning their linguistic heritage.

### **NOTES**

1. Pukhtoon Anjuman is an international organisation with primarily political goals. However, in the U.K. one of its objectives is the dissemination of information on Pushtoon history, civilisation and culture and the publication of a dual language (Pushto/English) magazine.

2. While recognising that RP is an accent and not a separate language or dialect, it is possible to draw a parallel between the attitudes of some British towards RP and some Pakistanis towards Urdu. There is a belief that both RP and Urdu confer a degree of prestige on the speaker in comparison with other varieties of English and with other dialects and languages spoken in Pakistan.



## **7. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The aims of this research had been to establish the patterns of L1 and L2 use amongst young bilinguals in Birmingham; to investigate the educational effects associated with such usage; to examine the practices favouring L1 attrition or maintenance and L2 acquisition; to ascertain the attitudes of young bilinguals towards their own bilingualism and biculturalism and to establish their intentions for future practice. In the event the qualitative and quantitative data provided evidence of trends in each of these areas.

One of the most important findings of this research was the complexity of interacting factors which affect both the linguistic and educational profiles of this group. In the attempts to understand the effect of language use on educational achievement it became evident that there were a large number of variables which had to be taken into account in order to understand the processes that are taking place. Bearing this complexity in mind it appears that the evidence assembled in the findings allows the following key conclusions to be drawn. Firstly that the majority of the sample exhibit an ethnolinguistic vitality which suggests that language shift within their respective linguistic minorities will take place more slowly than had been imagined and may in fact be halted by the positive action taken by the sample. Secondly, that personal bilingualism may be a positive educational asset if it includes an element of formal study and formal language training.

It was clear that the context of the study, the complex bilingual linguistic situation in Birmingham, was influencing both positively and negatively the educational experience of the bilingual child. Clearly there are a number of situations evolving and the subjects studied are part of one or more of these scenarios. From the questionnaires, diaries and interviews, it appears possible to summarize the current linguistic situation of bilingual communities and the factors contributing to L1 maintenance and L1 loss in the ways described below:

## **7.1. Factors of L1 maintenance**

These were seen to be close family networks, the demographic patterns of settlement in Birmingham, cultural vitality, the maintenance of strong links with the countries of origin, endogamy, commitment to religion and a perception of prestige accruing from L1 use.

### **7.1.1. L1 use within the family**

Firstly, for all linguistic minority groups there is ample opportunity to use the L1 within the family. The questionnaire showed that the L1 is the predominant language in communication with the older generation and that conversation with a member of the older generation tended to imply L1 use. The attitudinal survey found that educated younger members of L1 medium families tended to express loyalty to the family partially in terms of language loyalty and that formal L1 learning was sometimes an expression of a wish to maintain a close relationship with older family members. Acceptance of close family ties and feelings of loyalty towards older group members were factors which encouraged group cohesion and L1 maintenance. Closeness of association is thus an important variable in the assessment of the likelihood of L1 maintenance. Conversely when family relationships were strained or had broken down, the subjects used rejection of the language as one way of expressing their revolt.

With siblings and younger family members exclusive L1 use was not widespread and language choice tended to be dictated by the topic of the communication. This resulted in L1 use when the conversation concerned the family, food and drink, the linguistic minority culture and religion and in L2 use in matters to do with education, mainstream British culture, British politics and British based sport. Thus, it would seem appropriate to describe language use amongst the sample in diglossic terms as well as in generational. However, the domains of L1 and L2 use



are not split cleanly between public and private use as is the case in the classic description of diglossia; certain public matters, including most importantly education, will be discussed in the L2; other public matters, particularly those relating to religion and L1 cultural issues, will be discussed in the L1. For personal and family matters, it is again the subject matter which decides the language chosen for a conversation amongst those who habitually use both languages.

From the interviews it became clear that the yes/no nature of the statistics masked a complex pattern of language use in sibling interaction. Amongst the younger generation there was evidence of intersentential, intrasentential codeswitching and tag switching. Subjects reported that they codeswitched if they could not find the appropriate vocabulary item in the language being used. It was noted that this may actually be status enhancing in the youth peer group. These practices appear to be resulting in new language forms arising on the interface of English and Panjabi, of English and Urdu, and of English and Bengali.

A certain amount of language shift is apparent amongst the school sample who report that in conversation with the older generation there is a slight tendency to reply in English to interaction instigated in the L1 and thus a slight move towards passive bilingualism. This is, however, not a widespread practice.

Clearly language shift is taking place throughout the sample, with almost exclusive L1 use reported in communication with the older generation and relatively little exclusive use reported in communication between siblings and younger family members. However, the situation is very complex and it is not possible to say at what rate language shift is progressing or whether stable diglossic patterns are emerging, but it is apparent that L1 use is still an important part of the language profile of these second and third generation ethnic minority group members.

### 7.1.2. L1 use within the community

In certain parts of the city it is possible to find a full range of shops and services where Urdu, Chinese, Bengali, Mirpuri or Panjabi speakers may use their L1. Thus it is possible to shop, consult doctors, dentists and other health services, engage solicitors and architects, employ plumbers and builders without recourse to English. In a more limited way this is also possible for Gujarati, Pushto and Arabic speakers. Adult members of the linguistic minority communities may therefore have little need to use English in the ordinary course of their lives. This was not the case for the college sample whose attendance at college brings them into a multilingual environment and whose friendship groups may cause them to have a social life which transcends linguistic groupings. By choosing to study past the age of obligatory schooling this group is signalling its desire to move, at least professionally, outside the linguistic enclaves. They reported that they do use their L1 in their neighbourhood but that they do not consider this an important use of the L1 since their horizons are not bound by their linguistic enclave and they use the whole city. In the interviews subjects exhibited a wish to extend their horizons and not be limited by narrow group membership.

At the same time, however, they report pleasure in using areas of the city where they experience a kind of group solidarity and, where linguistic minority groups are living in large communities and maintaining close and positive family and neighbourhood links, the language is thriving. This was observed to be the case amongst a number of the linguistic groups in the sample originating from the Asian sub-continent. Where speakers are dispersed and where family ties and family life appear to be less strong, such as amongst the Chinese in the sample, attitudes towards language maintenance were noted as less enthusiastic. However, it would be dangerous to see in this finding more than a description of the situation amongst this sample, since the numbers for Chinese were low.



Part of the pattern of social interaction in the L1 was observed to be family visiting where extended family and family friends would meet to celebrate the main religious festivals, to fete visitors from the country of origin and, significantly for this group, to allow meetings between members of the younger generation so that marriages could be arranged or facilitated. In such gatherings the medium of communication is reported as being L1 with a certain feeling that English would be inappropriate since it would exclude some group members.

### **7.1.3. Cultural activities**

Members of the college sample are sophisticated urban youth who take part in mainstream culture and who have been observed to be part of multilingual friendship groups. They may be regarded as the sections of their communities most likely to spearhead cultural and linguistic shift since they allow themselves to be open to both cultural and linguistic influence from the host community. However, it is evident that this participation in mainstream cultural activity does not in fact preclude a wide range of leisure activity undertaken in the L1.

Such activities are made possible by the easy availability of newspapers, books, videos, cassettes, records, radio and television programmes in the L1s with large numbers of British based speakers. Supplementing the material produced in Britain, books, films, and records are imported from the countries of origin which provides cultural as well as linguistic reinforcement. The provision in newspapers, television and radio is sometimes seen by this generation of bilinguals as catering for the older generation. However, videos and music in the L1 are youth oriented and appear to be a widespread leisure activity amongst the young. Overall there was both statistical and anecdotal evidence of the existence of linguistically vital minority groups within the city and of a rich cultural life in the city which could be undertaken in languages other than English.

#### **7.1.4. Visits to the country of origin**

The interviews and questionnaires revealed the very strong links that exist between some of the linguistic minority communities in Birmingham and their countries of origin and the common practice in some linguistic minority groups of sending the children for extended visits to the country of origin. In the college sample, out of 168 subjects born in Britain, 66 (39.2%) had spent a period of time in the country of origin of their family and for 20 of them this visit had lasted more than three years.

The interviews showed that this practice arises both from parents' need of help with child care and from parents' desire that their child should experience their culture, their language and their religion in the country of origin. Some subjects from this group had been born in Britain, had gone abroad at a very early age, had been brought up by grandparents in the country of origin and had returned to Britain in their mid-teens, similar in linguistic and cultural background to new immigrants but appearing to the British authorities and in statistical information as British born and thus presumed English speakers.

The sample indicate that they intend that this pattern continue into the next generation and list visits to the country of origin as one of the motivations for studying the L1. However, in comparison to the enthusiasm for cultural tourism and family visits, those questioned exhibited milder enthusiasm for the idea that they personally would return to live and work long term in the country of origin, underlining the fact that for the majority of this group, emigration was for economic rather than political reasons.

#### **7.1.5. Language and religion**

Religious affiliation was high throughout the sample and religion appeared to constitute an important marker of group identities as well as providing a system of



faith and belief. The college sample expressed a greater commitment to transmitting their religions to the next generation than to transmitting either history or language, but in fact religious cohesion and continued group membership may well be a significant factor in language maintenance.

This can be observed in the context of the communities originating from Pakistan and Bangla Desh. The vigour of Urdu and Bengali within the British context may be attributed in part to the role of Islam in these communities. Religion plays a dominant role in the lives of these sections of the population and gives a framework for regular meetings of linguistic minority members at the mosque and ensures marriage remains between followers of the religion; both practices enhance the chances of language maintenance. This observation is also valid for Panjabi speaking Sikhs, originating from the Indian Panjab, who use their gurdwaras as meeting places as well as for religious observance, and who prefer their children to marry within their religious group.

Other religions can be observed to be less influential in language maintenance since membership may not entail regular meetings within one's speech community and may include a more tolerant attitude to marriage outside the group boundaries. Hinduism, for example, has been observed to be less of a cohesive force than Islam, although the Hindu fundamentalism which has swept India in the last years may yet have some effect on British based Hindu communities. The Birmingham Buddhist community possesses a flourishing ashram in the city which serves as a focus for some of the Chinese speakers but is not exclusive and includes other linguistic groups; the incidence of cross language and cross religious marriages is higher here. The Vietnamese Catholics have a Vietnamese priest and a church in the Handsworth area of the city, which promotes their group identity, but they do of course have contact with the greater Catholic community.

## **7.2. Factors of L1 attrition**

The factors that inhibited language maintenance were noted as being economic pressures, educational and career aspirations in an L2 medium system, integrative motivation, achieving literacy through an L2 and perceptions of lack of prestige. The main factors which became apparent in the course of the research came under two headings: firstly, there is obviously economic pressure to become proficient in English in order to find work in the greater community, to succeed in English medium education; secondly, there is integrative motivation which may prompt the subject to forsake his L1 for the L2 in order to identify more closely with the L2 community. In the first case L1 use may happily exist alongside L2 proficiency and as is discussed below, a high level of competence in one language may facilitate a high level of competence in the other language. In the second case L1 proficiency may suffer since the subject may not value the L1 and may allow L1 use and thus proficiency to decline.

### **7.2.1. Economic pressures as a cause of language shift**

The members of the college sample are studying past the age of obligatory schooling and thus show that they have ambition and career aspirations within mainstream British society. Considering all members of their generation, they are likely to be those most motivated to perfect their English, since educational success will depend to a great extent on the degree to which they have been able to master the medium of British schooling. In contrast, some subjects from the school samples who left school at 16+ did so to work within their linguistic enclaves, usually in family businesses, taking employment as seamstress, car mechanic, shop assistant, metal worker, etc. This group may tend to be less motivated to achieve full competence in spoken and written English. However, there was no clear difference in patterns of spoken L1 use between the fifth year sample which included a number of the second category and the college sample which did not.



Thus it could not be said that those with ambition within mainstream British society exhibited a more integrative stance in this respect than the rest.

### **7.2.2. Integration and prestige as a cause of language shift**

Pressure for linguistic integration comes not only from the host community; within the linguistic communities there is pressure on the less prestigious language/dialect speakers to move to more prestigious varieties. The hierarchy of languages is defined in a number of ways but broadly one can expect that languages which are national languages or closely identified with a world religion will have more prestige than languages which are not linked to national territory and which have no written form. The situation is dynamic at the moment and several languages are in competition. One of the findings of this research is that subjects are often under pressure to move to more prestigious but linguistically related minority languages and, therefore, that some L1 attrition is taking place in Birmingham because of the pressures exerted in the struggle between minority languages, rather than through the competition between English and the minority languages.

The subjects in the schools were not very aware of linguistic prestige, and this lack of concern revealed itself in a number of ways, including their inability to name their L1. The sample at the college were much more conscious of the prestige value of their L1s and this led to very few claimers for Sylheti although most Bengali speakers were from this group and were fully aware that the researcher understood the relationship between Bengali and Sylheti. Because they had learnt standard Bengali in the college they claimed the prestigious variety instead. Language censuses in India have often encountered this difficulty; speakers of languages or dialects considered less prestigious claim the high variety [Fasold 1984]. This study has also ascertained that a number of Muslim families whose L1 is properly one of the Panjabi dialects have made the decision to adopt Urdu as the family language for reasons of prestige and utility, as well as to simplify a trilingual situation.

Interviewees report that in linguistically mixed marriages, family use of the less prestigious language is unlikely, particularly if it is the language of the wife. The net result of intermarriage within religious groups but between linguistic groups may well be the strengthening and survival of the more prestigious languages, for which the numbers of speakers will grow and the demise of the less prestigious languages, who will lose speakers. This was indicated in the course of some interviews in the study.

Another outcome which was also noted, albeit less frequently in this sample, was the adoption of English as a lingua franca and the main family language, although the college sample appeared to have largely instrumental attitudes towards English; very few amongst this group gave evidence of any integrative motivation.

Questionnaire 2 showed an acceptance of bilingual and bicultural positions and a desire to maintain this duality. Many interviewees dismissed the idea of culture clash or claimed the problem was minimal, and outweighed, for them by the advantages of their bicultural position. Those who did report problems tended to be female.

The prestige or lack of it accorded by the host community to the minority languages and the antagonistic attitudes of some teaching staff to L1 use did not seem to be an issue of great importance to the sample. This lack of concern is in line with Ghuman [1991] who found linguistic minority students to be very realistic about racist attitudes in the host community and relatively unperturbed.

Therefore, a key variable in the survival of a plurilingual situation appears to be the outcome of the struggle amongst and between minority languages. The decision to renounce the true mother tongue for a language with more prestige may result in one of two scenarios: since the older speakers are no longer using their true L1,



they may lose feelings of identification and loyalty and the advantage which accrues from the opportunity of expressing oneself in one's mother tongue. They may feel that, if there is to be language shift, it should be to the language most useful in the present geographical situation, ie English. The second possibility is that feelings of group identity fostered by religious and cultural cohesion will allow the survival of the most prestigious languages within the group and with the simplification of the linguistic situation and the rise in the number of speakers, the survival of the language becomes viable. For the young learners it becomes possible to underpin knowledge of the spoken language with literacy since the difficulties of providing language education for minority groups, discussed in 2.3.4., are lessened.

### **7.3 Fishman's model of language shift in three generations and its applicability to the Birmingham situation**

As noted in 7.1. language shift is taking place amongst the sample, a fact which is not surprising since 60.2% of the subjects from the college sample had been born in Britain. What is surprising is that it is taking place so slowly. Following Fishman's model of language shift in three generations, one might term this group the "Janus" generation, the bilingual second generation who bridge the gap between the first generation, who are mostly monolingual/dominant in the language of the country of origin and the third generation who are mostly monolingual/dominant in the language of the host country. However, the situation proved on closer examination to be more complex than Fishman's model allows and the time process to be considerably longer. It may be justified to suggest that the American situation described by Fishman is slightly different from that in Britain in three significant ways: the United States, the focus of nineteenth century immigration, was committed until relatively recently to the "melting pot" ideal, and linked language use and citizenship. Britain, which has only accepted immigrants in large numbers in the post war period and in a political and sociological climate which has begun to

question assimilation (2.1), has adopted a laissez-faire approach to language use. Although governmental attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic are very possibly quite similar on the minority language question, it may be that the U.S. was traditionally more explicit in its linking of language use and citizenship. It could be argued that the groups which Fishman studied may have been in a climate where it was psychologically harder to continue L1 use than the groups in this study are experiencing or will experience and that this may affect decisions on language maintenance. Secondly, Fishman's focus has mostly been linguistic minority groups originating from Europe and thus sharing a broadly common cultural heritage and religion if not a common language with the dominant community . This is not the case for the linguistic minorities of Birmingham and the cohesion of religious groups, such as the Muslims, permit us to suggest that the closeness of association and endogamy necessary for linguistic survival are present in Birmingham. Thirdly, the ease and relatively low cost of travel in the post war period allows economic if not political refugees to keep in touch with their country of origin and the network of family and friends who remain there continue to exercise an influence on linguistic practices and provide a motivation for learning or maintaining family languages.

The interviews disclosed that of the 60.2% born in Britain (college sample), a sizeable minority was in fact third generation immigrant, ie the second generation born in Britain. Setting this finding against patterns of L1 use shows that for these subjects the Fishman model would have predicted a faster shift than is the case in this instance. The questionnaire gave some support to Fishman's thesis that other markers of ethnic continuity are likely to be more robust than linguistic continuity (6.3.2.) with a slightly larger number of the respondents claiming that they will teach their children about their group history than claiming that they will teach their children their group language. The difference is minimal, however, and in discussion it was clear that access to much cultural activity necessitated L1 use.



Yet more evidence that language attrition was, in the context of this study, a very slow process came from the self reporting of L1 language skills. Approximately half the bilingual subjects who had been born in Britain and spent most time in Britain rated their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing in the L1 as very good. Whether this self reporting is in fact linguistically accurate or not, it does show a positive attitude to the L1 and is a further indication of a degree of use amongst this generation which does not exactly fit the Fishman model.

In later work, Fishman [1991] gives guidelines for the restabilisation and revitalisation of languages that are under threat. He divides action into two phases: the first to achieve stable diglossia; the second to insert the language into areas of public life. This study has shown that a number of the younger members of the linguistic minority communities in Birmingham already employ many of his strategies for socio-cultural self-sufficiency which are intended to stabilize the linguistic situation and these are largely the situations and practices described in 7.1.. Thus, for some linguistic minority communities in Birmingham, it is possible to claim that stage 1 of his process has already been achieved. The diglossia that he counsels gives the L1 a clear role in the local community and makes it viable, by protecting it from direct competition with the dominant language, in this instance English, since each language has a clearly defined space. According to Fishman, one of the key variables for stable diglossia and the vitality of the L1 is the existence of young families of childbearing age for whom the the L1 is a normal medium or co-medium of communication alongside the language of the host community [Fishman 1991:91]. This study suggests that certainly for the next generation of young parents the various L1s will continue to be at the very least a co-medium of communication, along with English, and therefore that a stable diglossic situation may continue for the immediate future.

In the instances where language shift was already proceeding, several subjects who were less proficient L1 users reported that they were taking steps to reverse their waning L1 skills. Subjects reported a number of actions including insistence on using the language in L1 speaking groups, classes, visits and contacts with L1 speaking communities, commitment to teach their children their L1, and had thus unknowingly adopted the strategies proposed by Fishman for reversing language shift. Amongst several reasons for struggling to stem L1 loss he argues that the destruction of a language is the destruction of a rooted identity and of a societal resource. Interviewees clearly concurred with these beliefs and were in fact following his counsel to strengthen "ethnocultural boundaries in connection with friendship, family and community" [1991:5]. Whether they will succeed in reversing language shift remains to be seen; certainly the attitudinal survey shows that in this group there is little desire to replace the L1 by English in all domains, despite various problems that this might solve. Overall there was an expressed wish to keep their particularity in language, cultural and religious terms.

Thus, evidence of current practice suggests that hypothesis 1 - that the expected language shift to English in Birmingham has not yet taken place or is taking place very slowly - is tenable. This study has found that a language shift appears to be in progress but is occurring so slowly that it may have halted and that there is some indication that for linguistic minority communities with strong religious traditions and closeness of association, a form of stable diglossia may arise. Moreover, the research has noted that language attrition is not only due to contact with English; there is also a shift from less prestigious minority languages or dialects to more prestigious minority languages.

#### **7.4. Bilingualism and educational achievement**

In broad terms the findings of this section of the research may be categorized under two headings: firstly, that students from the linguistic minority communities who



use their L1s extensively appear not to be as successful educationally as those whose L1 use is less extensive; secondly, that the slightly negative educational effects apparently associated with extensive L1 use are attenuated when the L1 is studied formally to public examination level.

The threshold hypothesis [1.4.3.] proposed by Cummins states that the linguistic, cognitive and academic consequences of bilingual education are dependent on the levels of proficiency in both languages. For positive consequences and benefits, threshold levels of proficiency must be attained in both languages. When this is achieved the bilingualism will be additive and educationally advantageous to the individual bilingual. When the thresholds are not achieved, the bilingualism will be subtractive and the effect on the individual deleterious.

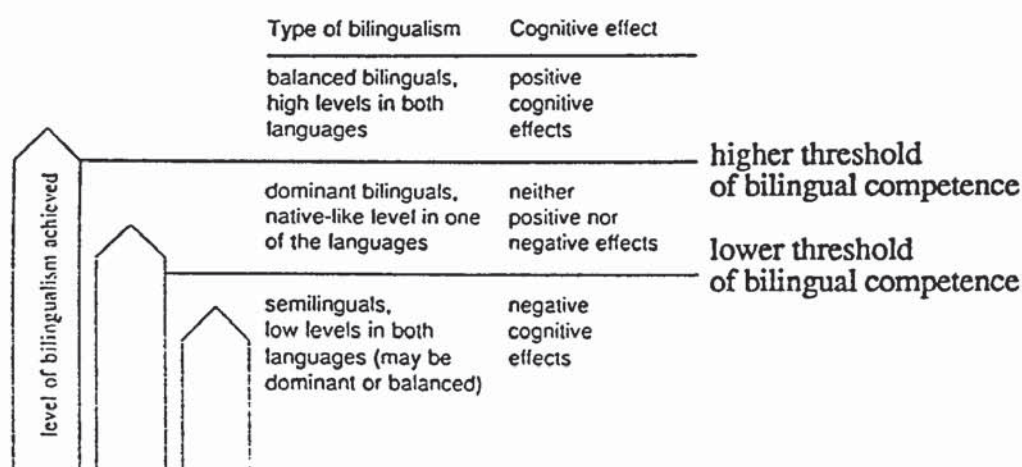


Figure 7.1 Diagrammatic representation of the Threshold Hypothesis, showing cognitive effects of different types of bilingualism.

This study appears to have marshalled some evidence to support this theory ; at the same time the findings show that the model is not universally applicable without refinement. The research shows that subjects can be described in the following way:

- The members of the college sample are by definition more or less proficient users of the L2, since they are following courses at further education level in the L2.

- Extensive use of the L1 in the home was a predictor of slightly lower course level and slightly lower examination results.
- The association of negative effects and extensive use of the L1 appeared to be attenuated when the L1 was studied formally and underpinned by literacy.
- If students progressed with this formal study to public examination level which indicates both a high level of literacy and the ability to compare and contrast the L1 and L2, such activity appeared to be accompanied by a positive educational effect overall with benefits discernible in slightly higher course levels and slightly better examination results in subjects other than the L1.

Thus simply to equate proficiency in the L1 and the L2 with positive educational effects is too simplistic. The factor of central importance would seem to be the type of language activity undertaken. L1 use which includes formal study, the formal process of language learning, the honing of high order language skills correlates with evidence of greater achievement through the medium of the L2, giving some credence to the claim that high level skills in both languages result in additive bilingualism and the accruing of intellectual and educational advantage. However, L1 use which may be both fluent and proficient but which does not include the formal process of language study or literacy does not appear, for these bilingual subjects, to be associated with any positive educational benefits.

If we examine more closely those who report heavy use of the L1, those who report attending classes in the L1 and those who have taken examinations in the L1 we note the following points.

#### **7.4.1 Educational achievement and extensive L1 use**

The findings in 4.2. indicate that extensive use of the L1 in the home, in the neighbourhood, amongst friends and for leisure may be one of the factors that militates against full mastery of the L2 and thus achievement within the English



medium, British education system. This is exactly the finding that many teachers and educational administrators would have predicted and is responsible for the commonly held belief that language minority students need maximum exposure to English to boost their English language skills [Baker 1988]. It appears logical to many in the educational establishment that if the student is deficient in the L2 then L2 use must be increased and L1 use decreased, and they would find Cummins' hypothesis counterintuitive.

The evidence from the study appears at this point to validate the argument of the educational establishment. When judged merely on quantitative criteria, greater L1 use is associated with negative educational effects.

#### **7.4.2. Educational achievement and attendance at L1 classes**

It seemed, therefore, that for Cummins' theory to apply, proficient L1 use might have to be defined as encompassing literacy and formal study. Subjects who reported attendance at L1 classes seemed at first to be a group who might be expected to display L1 proficiency in all modalities: reading and writing as well as listening and speaking. However, when attendance at mother tongue classes without external assessment (4.3) did not correlate with either enhanced educational achievement in the L2 or negative educational effects it seemed as if this study was contributing to a refutation of the Cummins' model. But before extrapolating from this finding, the statistical evidence should be further assessed together with evidence from the interviews, since the qualitative research revealed the complexity of the issue. Interviewees showed that there were a number of variables at work which enhanced or decreased the likelihood of them acquiring high order language skills at L1 classes.

Clearly, if the class only provided the opportunity for further oral use of the L1 it could not be considered to be underpinning the L1 with literacy. This had tended to

be the case for those studying Chinese, very few of whom had tackled the writing system. Equally, if the student was attending a class in a language other than his L1 for the purposes discussed in 4.3.2., such study could not be classed as enhancing skills in the L1.

Arguably any language study, both of a language unrelated to the L1 and to a language related to the L1 might contribute to heightened language awareness and transferable skills. In the European tradition, study of Latin and Greek has often been taught with a dual purpose: to provide access to authors and works from the Classical period and, in addition, training in the mechanics of language, with expected spin-offs for style and mastery in the L1. However, the experience of subjects in the study showed that language classes in Urdu, Bengali, Panjabi, Chinese and Gujarati lacked rigour when provided by community groups and religious associations, whose objectives were less rigorous language training than provision of a forum for young community members and the opportunity for predominantly oral language use and cultural reinforcement.

This was not the case for Arabic, study of which, for members of this sample, was mainly for religious purposes. The young Muslims who pursued Arabic study were in certain respects undergoing an experience similar to those studying Classical Greek, Latin or Hebrew; their language courses allowed them access to a work of cultural and religious significance. The parallels cannot, however, be drawn further: The method of teaching Arabic for Koranic study relies heavily on rote learning; the underlying language structures are not discussed. Furthermore, learning to write Arabic in such a class may well lead to enhanced artistic ability rather than to the understanding of language structure. Koranic classes for writing skills tend to concentrate on the copying of sacred texts and the improvement of calligraphic skills; students would be most unlikely to produce original text or use language creatively.



The hypothesis that language skills learnt in one language are transferable to another is, therefore, neither proven nor disproven by the findings from this section. The social and group skills learnt in the community schools and the rote learning and calligraphic skills learnt in Koranic classes may well have been transferred to academic situations in the L2, although, this was not tested for. There may have been educational benefits accruing from such classes but these were not benefits detectable by assessment procedures in mainstream British education.

#### **7.4.3 Educational achievement and L1 examination success**

To provide a group of subjects who had incontrovertibly achieved a high level of spoken and written L1 proficiency it was necessary to track all those who had attended formal examination classes within the British education system and who had followed defined and comparable syllabi and been assessed externally by national examination at 16+ and 18+. Any student who had achieved a high GCSE grade or an A level in their L1 or an allied language would by definition have some mastery of the written form of the language and could be said to have achieved a degree of literacy in the L1. Their experience of language learning within the traditions of the British education system would usually, covertly or overtly, have included some treatment of language as system and structure. They might also have been made aware of contrasts and comparisons between the L1 and the L2. For this group L1 proficiency had entailed a formal language learning process as well as a natural language learning experience.

In the event subjects from the sample who could show high levels of achievement in L1 literacy, as measured by national examinations (4.4), did tend to achieve examination results in other subjects which were higher than the norm for the sample and so provided validation of Cummins' threshold hypothesis that subjects exhibiting high levels of language skill in both L1 and L2 could expect that their

bilingualism would be of positive benefit cognitively, that it would be bilingualism of the additive kind and that it would be allied to a successful educational experience.

The overall conclusion to be reached from the findings of this section may be summarised thus: high levels of proficiency in both the L1 and the L2 do not necessarily correlate with educational benefits. The intervening variable appears to be the formal language learning process and literacy. In the same way that oral fluency in a monolingual does not necessarily correlate with educational success, oral fluency in two languages is not necessarily associated with enhanced educational achievement. However, the process of formal language learning and the acquisition of literacy in two languages appear to be factors in educational progress. This validates both the theories prevalent within the British educational establishment and Cummins threshold theory:- that within a rigidly monolingual education system, such as the British system, bilingual students who use a language other than English in most situations will tend to experience difficulties. The discipline and rigour of achieving literacy and high order language skill in the L1 may, however, attenuate to a small degree the educational disadvantage they experience through having a mother tongue different from that of the linguistic majority and the education system.

Thus, the second hypothesis of this study - that the opportunity to study their L1 formally and to achieve literacy in it may be a necessary condition for bilingual students to draw benefit from their bilingualism in educational terms - appears to be supported by the findings of this section of the research.

#### **7.4.4. Theoretical considerations**

This was the empirical observation; the causes may perhaps be attributable to one or more of the following theories:



- Conceptual development in the L1 may have had beneficial influence on the student's learning in and through the L2. Formal study of the L1 appeared to be associated, perhaps even to be a contributory factor to success in academic studies pursued in and through the L2 and suggests that skills and concepts learnt through the medium of one language are transferable and aid learning in a second language. Such a belief was central to British educational provision in the past, which used the study of a classical foreign language to foster skills of analysis, comparison and synthesis (Report of the Schools Enquiry Commission of 1868) but which does not appear to have been evoked in the debate over the provision of community languages. If this is the correct interpretation, this study lends support to Cummins' [1986] interdependence hypothesis, which states that academic proficiency may be developed in either the L1 or the L2 and the skills and abilities ensuing are transferable between the languages.

- The intellectual rigour that formal language learning demands may be relevant in this context. As soon as the L1 is treated as "langue", a system to be understood, manipulated and compared with other systems, as opposed to "parole", a set of speech acts which are executed but not reflected upon, then there may be some mental training which benefits the educational development of the individual as a whole.

- Enhanced educational achievement may be related to the individual's perception of his own worth. Recognition of linguistic minorities' languages and their inclusion within the normal school curriculum may foster educational confidence for linguistic minority children. A bilingual student within the British education system whose experience has only been of failure to measure up to monolingual norms in the L2 will have had a very different and far less encouraging educational experience than a bilingual student whose school or college has given him the opportunity to study his L1 and to gain qualifications which make some attempt to

reflect the total of his language abilities in both the L1 and the L2. The global linguistic ability of the former student is not recognised, whereas in the second situation some small effort has been made by the system to reflect and credit the true linguistic picture. Moreover, a student in a situation which shows some recognition and appreciation of bilingualism is less likely to feel that his problems in the L2 are classed as "remedial" and is perhaps psychologically more prepared to seek help in the L2 when necessary, which will also contribute to his overall educational success within the British education system.

- The individual's perception of his group's status in the wider community may be an important intervening variable. The linguistic majority's attitudes as expressed in the national education programmes may influence the way a member of a linguistic minority experiences and manages his bilingualism. When the language and culture of linguistic minorities are excluded from the curriculum and when there is no recognition of and no status for the languages of the minorities, it has been suggested that there may be negative academic consequences for pupils and students from these groups [Cummins 1986]. When space and status are found for these languages within the mainstream curriculum then the academic consequences may be positive and allied with a secure cultural identity and enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem.

These theories are borne out by conclusions reached pragmatically by teaching staff working with the college sample, and expressed both in informal conversation and formal meetings to the researcher. Firstly, that achievement in L1 examinations is often the experience of success which allows bilingual students to achieve their maximum potential in other areas of the curriculum. There are several case studies within the sample, which show students whose academic progress seemed to have been primed by the experience of success in the L1 examination. Secondly, that success in L1 examinations made it easier for students to accept their bilingual



status and enter for ESL examinations rather than English examinations designed for the monolingual linguistic majority. Again success tended to be greater in these examinations and so helped develop self-confidence further. Recent developments have, however curtailed the number and questioned the currency of ESL examinations [2.2.4]. Thirdly, that a significant number of bilingual AL and BTEC National students who progress to higher education, actually entered the college on CPVE, BTEC First or resit GCSE courses, which suggests that these were bright students who did not reach their potential until given the formal support in the L2 and in a number of L1s that this particular college offers, as well as the experience of appropriate and adequately stepped formal study. Such progression would be most unlikely in a monolingual college. Once again it seems that rigorous formal study of both the L1 and the L2 in an academic setting, together with an acceptance of the necessity for slower progression, allowed ultimately for high levels of academic achievement.

A survey by Birmingham LEA in 1989 showed that students from Asian language backgrounds often took three years to achieve ALs. However, as we shall discuss below, mere length of time within the system does not appear on its own to be enough to allow students to overcome the difficulties posed by language and cultural difference. It seems permissible to suggest in the light of the previous discussion that the efforts made by the city to foster awareness of linguistic issues and the need for language support were beginning to be heard and acted upon by other Birmingham schools and colleges and not only the institution featured in the research.

#### **7.4.5. Further research**

This research has focussed on those who stayed within the British education system and thus by definition were succeeding. The college sample was composed of students who were more able and better motivated for success within the L2 system

than their contemporaries who had decided not to continue in education. One may assume that students being educated through the medium of their L2 at this level will in the majority of cases have sufficient mastery of that language for the development of academic skills. Thus it is important to situate the finding within its context. What can be said from this study is that, given the level of L2 competence necessary to continue into further education, the extensive use of the L1 in family and leisure situations is not a major factor in lack of progression in the L2 medium education system, although it has a minor effect.

On the other hand, it was noted in the course of the research that certain members of the school samples who displayed weak L2 skills at the time of the school questionnaires did not remain within the British education system. Because they did not progress to other educational establishments or find work through formal channels, it was not possible to trace all their destinations and some of them have been lost from the study. However, most of those that could be catalogued are known to be working in situations where L2 skills are not important and where further formal training within the British system will be minimal or non-existent, (15), and several are known to be married and homebased, either in Great Britain or in the country of origin of the family (8). Further investigation of such a group might disclose different findings and show a critical point at which extensive L1 use begins to seriously hamper academic progression through the L2 medium education system and in fact results in early termination of studies. This hypothesis, if proved to be so, would provide further support for Cummins' threshold theory.

#### **7.5. The correlation between length of time spent within the British education system and indicators of educational success and failure.**

Success has been defined here in a very traditional and narrow way, looking only at academic achievement through formal educational channels and the public examination system. However, this appears to be a valid approach since the college



sample gave evidence of high parental expectations, high regard for educational qualifications and personal ambition for success within the system. In this they maintained the trend amongst pupils of Asian origin first reported by Townsend and Brittan [1972] and subsequently confirmed by Taylor and Hegarty [1985].

#### **7.5.1. The effect of prolonged visits to country of origin on academic progression**

For all those who had spent some time out of the British education system, even if this period was not extensive, there appears to be a linguistic and academic consequence. It was noted amongst the British born sample that the longer the absence from the British education system, the greater the negative effect on academic progress, as measured by the level of course achieved at 16+. A note of caution is necessary here, since the two phenomena noted could either have a causal relationship or both be related to a common set of values or practices. However, those subjects interviewed who had been part of this practice mentioned the difficulties they had experienced in changing schools, both on arrival in the country of origin and on return to Britain. Furthermore, they appeared ambitious to succeed within the British education system, although it could be argued that their parents' actions in sending them out of the system did not make it appear that this was a high family priority.

The differences in course level and examination results between those who had remained within the British education system and those who had returned for periods to the country of origin were not as pronounced as might be expected. These findings suggest that the linguistic experience of a student who remains throughout his schooling within a British based linguistic minority and a student who spends some time in the country of origin of his parents is not vastly different, if both spend the majority of their private lives in their L1 and if both continue their education in an English medium school. For the subjects who were not able to

continue their education in English while in the country of origin, there appears to be a heavier price to pay in terms of educational achievement and they may be similar in linguistic terms to many of the first generation immigrants.

#### **7.5.2. The effect of age of entry to British educational system on academic progression**

For the group who had been born abroad and who had come to Britain during their scolarity, no relationship could be established between the length of time spent within the British educational system and the level of course achieved. Logically, one might have expected to find a positive correlation in this situation, on the assumption that English language skills are strengthened by time within the system. This finding, which establishes no link between length of time within the system and course level, appears to contradict the previous finding, which found that less time within the system did relate to course level.

#### **7.5.3. The correlation between length of residence and examination performance**

The finding, that there is no correlation between length of time in the country (in the L2 environment) and examination success (in the L2 medium system), is contrary to what might logically be assumed and to the assumptions that are made within the education service [Smith and Tomlinson 1989] and which have been encountered by the researcher in the course of both this research and other work. The performance of all the samples, both college and schools, failed to show any relationship between length of residence in Britain and a clear improvement in English language skills, revealed through higher examination results. The only relationship to be established between residence and examination success showed that those who had entered the English medium system during the infant and primary school period tended to be less successful.



#### **7.5.4 The correlation between length of residence and failure to present for examination**

This set of findings show that bilingual examinees were more likely to miss an examination than monolingual students, but that bilingual students who had been educated within the British education system were no less likely to miss an examination than those who had arrived in Britain more recently. There was a difference between behaviour in English examinations and Mathematics examinations, with students from the sample having a better record of attendance at Mathematics examinations but a worse record at English examinations than the non-sample entrants. The whole bilingual group behaved in the same way and there was no evidence to suggest that lengthy residence in Britain changed behaviour. Teachers from the college had reported that bilingual students appeared more confident when facing examinations, such as Mathematics, where English skills are least needed, but had felt that the rule only applied to recent entrants to the country. The pattern of behaviour here suggests that it may apply to the whole spectrum of bilingual pupils.

#### **7.5.5. The correlation between length of residence and withdrawal from courses and failure to reenrol**

Once again there appeared to be no relationship between length of residence in Britain and indicators of educational success, in this case successful completion of the course, and a comparatively high percentage of bilingual subjects who had been born in Britain withdrew from courses. Case studies showed that, although a number of factors were responsible for decisions to leave education, linguistic problems seemed to play a role, either as a major or a contributory factor.

#### **7.5.6. Theoretical considerations**

Clearly there are several variables which can explain the individual's lack of educational success, but one could fairly assume that these would be in normal

distribution throughout the sample. Bearing this in mind, three distinct phenomena appear to be happening along the residence continuum: those who leave the country for significant periods of time appear to perform less well than those who remain within the system; those who enter the British education system early in their scolarity appear to achieve less than might be imagined; those who enter the system late in their education seem to be more successful than might be expected.

#### **7.5.6.1. English language support as a variable**

To isolate the variable which could explain the apparent contradictions one might examine the likely educational experiences of the different bands of students with particular emphasis on the English language support they will have received:

- the group born in Britain and leaving the country will tend to receive no English language support on return, except in extreme cases. They will be reinserted into large mainstream classes and their special needs both in terms of English language tuition and missed content must be covered by a class teacher, who must also deal with the main group. There is no special funding for such a student;
- the group who have come relatively recently to Britain will be targetted for English language support. They will work either in a small group (withdrawal) or in a mainstream classroom, staffed by a class teacher and an English language support teacher, whose function is to give them particular attention and help in acquiring English language skills. The provision will be underwritten from Section 11 funding;
- the group, born abroad and who have spent a significant period of time within the British system will now receive no special English language support, although they may have done so in the past. This group may comprise two sets of students: those who have mastered English to the necessary level to fulfil their educational



potential; those who exhibit a surface fluency in English and who can cope on an interactive level (BICS) but who have not had the continued instruction and learning experience necessary to operate at the level of academic discourse (CALP), and are thus similar to the students described by Cummins (1.3.5.). It was noted by the researcher that interviewees were often on a lower level of course than might have been surmised from interview performance where a fluent level of English and well-reasoned and well-argued content were often exhibited; these students could be fairly said to fit the BICS/CALP description.

In the first and third groups there is no English language support and it is in these groups that academic progression is noted as a problem. The first group is not targetted, perhaps because the phenomenon has not been fully recognised at local education authority level and the problem is only tackled by the individual class teacher who experiences isolated examples of the situation. The group appears, however, to need some reinsertion programme on return from a non-English linguistic environment. The third group is seen as having achieved the level of English skills necessary to cope within the British education system and no particular help is targetted at this group. It is imagined that those who have been in the system some time can cope and no support is provided, but their achievement in terms of course level appears to be less than might be expected if indeed their English language skills are improving. It seems that once again literacy is appearing as a key variable, this time in the L2; where students' needs for the mastery of the written language and the acquisition of literacy skills have not been fully met, there appear to be signs of underachievement in formal educational terms.

#### **7.5.6.2. Effects of "submersion"**

Examining the data leads us to pinpoint the subjects who arrived in Britain during nursery and primary education (those from group 3 above) as those most likely to include a higher proportion of low achievers. They were over represented in lower

level courses, achieved lower GCSE points and were more likely to miss an examination or fail to complete the course. These findings lend support to Skutnabb-Kangas' claim that children who are constrained to move language before their L1 is securely in place and underpinned by literacy tend to suffer linguistic disadvantage and hence educational disadvantage. She terms the process "submersion" [1.3.6.] where there is little formal help for the child who is forced to accommodate to the new language and the educational system at one and the same time. This describes the experience of those interviewed who were part of this group. These subjects had changed language on entry to primary school and experienced "submersion" in the way that Skutnabb-Kangas defines it, ie had spent the time between birth and 5 in a non-English speaking environment and had subsequently entered English medium education between 5 and 10, with little or no formal support. These are then the students who are assumed by college staff to be linguistically integrated having received all their education in English. This study indicates, however, that there may be an educational problem arising from that early experience which is not overcome in all cases. "Submersion" may be the sole reason for their underperformance or it may be working in tandem with other possible reasons for underperformance: extensive use of the L1 with the associated negative effects noted in 7.4, or withdrawal of English language support before competence in language use for academic purposes has been achieved as discussed in 7.5.6..

This seems to be one of the key findings of the research and would certainly merit further investigation. If the findings were to be replicated in other education authorities, the need to focus on, perhaps to rethink, infant school provision for the children of linguistic minority groups becomes clear. At the very least such groups would need to be monitored.



### **7.5.6.3.The relevance of second language acquisition theories:**

#### **CALP/BICS**

The teachers from the schools in the sample showed that they made the assumption that length of residence in Britain will affect performance in the way they assigned pupils to courses and assessed their suitability for examination entry. Those who had spent less time in Britain were more likely to be entered for a set of GCSE examinations which included a higher proportion of vocational subjects and fewer academic subjects. However, when results of those students who had entered Britain before the age of 10 were compared with those who had arrived since that birthday, the number of "C" grades achieved in academic subjects were comparable, despite the fact that the latter group had on the whole been entered for fewer examinations which could be categorized as academic. The teachers' predictions were not, therefore, justified by the results of the examinations which showed little difference between those who had been in the system for a longer time and those who had been in the system for a shorter time. Thus length of time within the system could not be said to be a factor in these pupils' examination success, although it seemed to be a factor in positive teacher appraisal.

The group with longer residence evidently possessed a superficial fluency which allowed them to convince teaching staff in face to face interaction that they were competent L2 speakers; the second group did not have the same surface fluency and were therefore not assessed as highly. When faced with the linguistic demands of a written examination, both groups performed similarly, achieving disappointing results. This suggests that neither group had fully developed the cognitive linguistic competence allied to the mastery of sophisticated academic language skills necessary for public examination success. The description given here is consistent with Cummins' CALP and BICS theory [1.3.5.].

On examining the individual subject areas of English and Mathematics the difference in performance between the two groups is worthy of comment. In the event, the group with shorter residence appeared to be slightly more able, in that they scored higher in the Mathematics examination, the examination which is least dependent on English literacy skills. That their teachers had been unconvinced of their relative ability points once again to their lack of surface fluency.

The CALP/BICS theory has been attacked [Hoffmann 1991] since there is, as yet, no reliable way of testing the two continuums of capacity. However, as a description of the lack of correlation between oral fluency and various measures of academic success, which require the ability to handle decontextualized language in unsupported situations, it appears to have some validity and this study provides contributory evidence to support CALP/BICS, in that it appears to be the only possible theoretical explanation of certain anomalies. The teachers of the school samples were surprised at the correlations of the study. They report that, in their view, English proficiency does improve with length of residence. This professional, if pragmatic, assessment can only be reconciled with the findings of the study if language competency is defined along two continua: interactional/context-embedded and academic/context-free. The teachers, even when assessing written English, are usually dealing with supported English use. In contrast, in public examination, the subject has to convince and communicate through the medium of the English language, without guidelines or recourse to props and strategies. Hoffmann fears that CALP/BICS may be wrongly used as a deficit model, in a return to the view of bilingualism as disadvantage. It could be argued that for educators not to be aware of the two continua is equally disadvantageous to bilingual students.

This sample of 374 bilingual Birmingham teenagers has given clear indications that certain educational phenomena are occurring. The evidence points, in each test, to



the fact that once students have the minimum English language competence judged necessary to enter mainstream schooling in the British system, length of time spent in it is not a significant factor in subsequent educational success or progression, lending strong support to the third hypothesis of the study - that the length of time spent within the education system may be a factor of success experienced within that system, but that its effect is relatively weak.

#### **7.5.7.. Comparative research**

This is particularly interesting since recent Dutch research [Jungbluth:1990] has suggested that length of time within the education system is a significant variable in the educational achievement of pupils from linguistic minority communities in the Netherlands. A comparison of the situation in Britain and the Netherlands might give an explanation of these empirically observed differences and further the development of theory. If it can be shown that the practices which seem to explain the British situation (that L2 support, even when it is appropriate and effective, is removed too soon; that linguistic enclaves have arisen in which extensive use of the L1 both in private and in public life is possible; that links with the countries of origin remain strong) do not apply in the Netherlands this would be an explanation of the differing findings and a further confirmation of the theoretical explanation given here. A comparative study of L1 use in the home and community and L2 provision in the schools in Britain and the Netherlands might, therefore, be illuminating.

#### **7.6. Attitudinal factors and the future**

In this final section of the conclusion, the attitudes of this group of young bilinguals towards linguistic and cultural integration with the host community, their perceptions of the prestige accruing to them from their L1 and their bilingualism and their commitment to linguistic and cultural continuity are examined against the background of current social forces in order to evaluate the likelihood of language

maintenance. Whether the linguistic situation described in 7.1. will continue or wither away will depend on attitudinal factors as much as on the external factors contributing to ethnolinguistic vitality discussed in that section.

### **7.6.1. The individual, the group and society**

Perhaps the most significant factor for language maintenance or attrition is the personal feelings of the individual towards his language. If he conceives of it as part of his essence and as a basic need for the full expression of his personality and if he considers it prestigious, a means of access to a prized culture and religion, then the continuation of the language is assured. The members of the sample displayed a remarkable satisfaction with their position as bilinguals. They revealed that L1 use constituted part of their sense of identity at the individual level and played an important psychological role. They valued it as a possession which they did not want to lose.

Commitment to L1 use was also closely bound with group identity and group loyalty and use of the L1 with other L1 members was valued for the sense of cohesion and belonging that it engendered. Where subjects were questioning or rejecting the values of the group in part or as a whole, they were less committed to L1 maintenance. For the majority of the sample, however, the preservation of L1 use within the linguistic minority group was behaviour that they wished to conserve, seeing it as a means of promoting group solidarity, of passing on values and cultural norms, of preserving tradition and heritage. In view of their current practices and their stated intentions, it appears that the fourth hypothesis of the study may well be tenable: for elements of this population a move to a stable diglossic situation is envisageable.

This group of young bilinguals displayed a very optimistic attitude regarding their place in society as a whole. They recognised their own personal need to acquire



English to aid educational and economic chances in the wider community, but on the whole they did not envisage language shift as a personal strategy to further individual mobility and ambition. They see, within their own communities, bilingual middle class professionals who provide role models and an illustration that success in career and economic terms does not necessarily entail the rejection of the linguistic minority group. They were, in the vast majority, content to acquire English in an instrumental way to ensure access to education and employment but rejected total linguistic assimilation. That they expect to be allowed to make this choice without let or hindrance is a tribute to the work of certain sectors within the Birmingham L.E.A. whose policy on linguistic diversity has obviously provided cause for this confidence and a framework for limited pluralism. Despite this, British society as a whole is not yet reconciled to its new pluralism, as the former Conservative government minister's remarks on sports loyalty [The Times April 21st 1990] underline. Few of the interviewees, however, seemed sensible of such attitudes at macro-level.

Their lack of awareness may be naive or conversely they may be exhibiting an extraordinary sensitivity to contemporary events. If we categorize them as naive, we note that they do not appear to have recognised that the European nation state traditionally sees pressures for diversity as a threat, leading ultimately to the marginalisation of all who are not part of or who do not accept the conditions for joining the dominant group, and linguistic complexity as costly, divisive and very difficult to administer. Despite the efforts to value pluralism made at the level of the LEA, and the educational establishment, much of British society retains the commitment to one language, one people, one nation and is still resolutely monolingual and monocultural. It is to be feared that those who insist on the right to be different will most probably continue to suffer exclusion in terms of career opportunity within the greater community and restricted access to power at national level. If, on the other hand, we categorize them as insightful, we might argue that

this is the situation as it has been in the past, and these young bilinguals may be part of a new movement which was barely starting at the time of their interviews and to which they conformed without being totally aware of the new mood. The fragmentation of old empires and federations in Eastern Europe together with the advent of new pan-European groupings and the internationalization of much popular culture may in fact herald a new era in which language diversity and cultural pluralism will be tolerated or accepted through necessity as the points of reference become, not the nation state, but the super state and the region. Resolution may be more easily achieved if group self-definition only has to coexist with supra-national self-definition and not national self-definition. It is difficult whilst in the throes of change to predict outcomes. In 1977 Fishman said that the last ethnic revival had been contraindicated by so much of modern social theory that it had been impossible to predict. In the same way we cannot determine if a second and greater ethnic revival might now be occurring and if these students with their desire to preserve their language, culture and religion are indeed part of it. Whether a Europe of regions permits an ethnic revival and whether immigrant communities fare better with regions than with states remains to be seen. The European Community has called for increased use of and respect for non-territorial minority languages [Fishman 1991]. Nevertheless, the prognosis is not universally good, although it may be so in some of the English provinces.

#### **7.6.2. Language identity and cultural identity**

Finally in this section we consider how far linguistic conservation is a necessary part of ethnic identity for the linguistic minority groups studied. It is pertinent to ask whether those who do not speak the language of an ethnic group can in fact continue to define themselves as belonging fully to that group. Are they not in fact different from those who do speak the language? If either the original group or the new non-L1 speaking group identify language and culture as inextricably linked then this situation is self-fulfilling and by definition the non-speakers cannot fully



belong; they must invent a new "hyphen" category as in Italian-American and renounce membership of the original group. Are such groups by definition monolingual and if so, is a domino principle involved? Once the language is relinquished, then other markers of ethnic group membership, except perhaps religion, are less easily protected and transmitted; integration and even full assimilation might ensue. This study is not able to assess clearly to what extent new patterns of identification in Birmingham which could be termed Anglo-Pakistani, Bengali-British or Sino-British are emerging and how far they may be on the way to assimilation since those who might constitute the new groups are by definition those who declined to take part in the research. It appears an area where further research would complete the work started by Stopes-Roe [1991] and where a clarification of concept and terminology would be useful.

#### **7.6.3. Language loyalty and language maintenance: aspiration and reality**

Spolsky [1988] defined language loyalty as a set of attitudes and language maintenance as a set of acts. This study has found that language loyalty is alive and well, but that there is slippage between resolutions and deeds. The problems which need to be resolved to ensure L1 maintenance in competition with such a dominant L2 are various and may in the British situation include the question of literacy.

For this generation of Birmingham bilinguals, L1 use has been necessary for communication with the older family members. As the older generation dies there will be relatively few people with whom the L1 is the only choice for communication. When this happens and if there is no resumption of immigration to replenish the ranks of the linguistic minority groups, the L1 will only survive if it fulfils other roles in the community apart from that of communicative code in interactive situations. Members of the sample report that for them the L1 does have

more than a purely communicative role in that it is the vehicle for cultural heritage, religious observance and traditional art forms.

The channel for such language use may be oral or written and it is in accord with South Asian custom that music, verse, stories, religious tradition be passed on as oral tradition as an alternative to the written form. This is the pattern of cultural continuity in certain Celtic communities and for certain art forms has been successful. The situation amongst linguistic minority groups in Britain now poses the following questions:

- will the young members of the linguistic minorities, whose educational experiences condition them to value the written word, be content with an oral tradition, and if they do not value it, will they allow it to wither away?
- if the transference of cultural tradition is more secure when there is a written record and if more prestige accrues to a written form, do enough members of the linguistic minority groups have the full literacy in the L1 necessary for its transmission and diffusion?
- can the new technology which has replaced so much written word in English with audio-visual record fulfil the same function for the languages of the linguistic minority communities, so that audio and video tape and film render the written record redundant?

This study, which has only concerned itself with the question of the acquisition of literacy, has come to the conclusion that, although some subjects have achieved full literacy in the L1, others have fallen by the wayside before full achievement of literacy and a sizable group desires literacy but has remained at the level of pious hopes and has not yet progressed to action. Subjects were aware of the role of language in maintenance of cultural and religious tradition and this fuelled much of their enthusiasm for literacy classes. However, at the same time those who had taken part in the classes were aware of the commitment in terms of time and energy



to acquire full literacy in the L1. The study revealed that those who were least likely to be offered a class were likely to be those most enthusiastic about the idea and that those with some experience of classes tended to be more realistic and to question their own tenacity.

If, in the Birmingham situation, professed commitment to literacy and actions tally in the long term, the linguistic minority populations may attain a situation of stable diglossia; if, on the other hand, the L1s are passed intergenerationally purely in the oral form then such groups are perhaps more likely to lose their mother tongues, through a mixture of recognition of educational disadvantage and through the lack of a clearly defined role and function.

## **7.7. Concluding remarks**

### **7.7.1. Linguistic vitality and linguistic minority groups -further research**

The study has assembled some evidence of ethnolinguistic vitality in the Birmingham situation and, as one might expect, detected evidence of some differences in behaviour between linguistic groups. However, the main focus has been on the relationship of the bilingual student body as a whole with the British education system and the particularities of individual groups have not been investigated in depth. Urdu speakers in particular seemed to be a group who were exhibiting the characteristics necessary for continued diglossia and successful personal bilingualism. As the Urdu speaking linguistic minority is composed of those for whom the language is a true L1 and those for whom it could be said to be an L2, this would seem an area for further fruitful research if the variables which appear to contribute to successful linguistic maintenance and growth in this small Urdu sample were shown to have general applicability.

### **7.7.2. Language loyalty and gender - further research**

This research has also noted a suggestion of difference in linguistic behaviour between young males and females, without being able to go further because of the skewed sample. This study worked with a group that was self selected in order to eliminate one of the variables in the study. Further research with a random sample could examine male/female behaviour more thoroughly and ascertain if language loyalty is more commonly a male preserve in the contemporary British situation, as it has been so frequently elsewhere in the past.

### **7.7.3. The central importance of literacy**

Literacy has emerged as a factor of key importance throughout this study: in Chapter 4, L1 literacy and formal language study appeared to be the intervening variables which make bilingualism additive and of educational advantage to the individual; in Chapter 5, the need to educate young bilinguals actively to full L2 literacy and the acquisition of the language of academic discourse, rather than to surface fluency, became apparent as a prerequisite for educational success in the L2 medium education system; in Chapter 6 the individual's commitment to language maintenance and the acquisition of literacy in the L1 was seen to be problematic with a mismatch between intention and action; in this final chapter it has become apparent that literacy may be a key variable in the survival of minority languages.

### **7.7.4. The negative consequences of the mismanagement of plurilingualism: the benefits of successful accommodation**

Recent events at national and local level underscore how the question of linguistic and ethnic diversity is not purely of academic concern and how the issues arising from it require successful resolution for the sake of all communities, both majority and minority. On the macro level, recent events show the cataclysmic consequences when majority and minority communities fail to accommodate. Although the question of linguistic rights and linguistic domains is not, in any way, of the same



order in Britain as it is in the Eastern European countries now engaged in civil war or open conflict to establish separate territories for linguistic groups, it remains, as it has been throughout history, a phenomenon which constitutes a potential for disruption and violence if ignored. The old way to avoid conflict was the melting pot of assimilation. The challenge for the twenty-first century is to see if accommodation can be achieved and linguistic diversity exploited as a resource for all. On the micro level, this appears to be happening sporadically and it is encouraging to note the initiative of a number of universities [Conferences Bradford May 1992, Cambridge July 1992], who are putting in place systems, which recognise difference of linguistic experience and allow bilingual students to compete on an equal footing with their monolingual peers. An optimist might see this as a first glimmer of awareness of the national resource bilingual students may constitute.

#### **7.7.5. Further research and the future.**

This thesis has sought to consider how British bilinguals fare within the education system and how different behaviours within the bilingual communities aid or hinder educational success. Although in some respects this has been accomplished, it is clear that the area is of such complexity and such scope that only the tip of the iceberg has been touched and that there is still much work to be done. In particular three areas seem rich veins for further investigation.

- Firstly and perhaps most importantly, this study showed that literacy is one of the variables which cause bilingualism to be experienced as an advantage and so lends further evidence to belief in the pivotal role of literacy in additive bilingualism. Moreover, this was true across the linguistic spectrum; members from all language groups were seen to be more successful in educational terms when they had acquired L1 literacy. These findings are, however, distorted for the reasons discussed in 7.4.2. and which can be broadly summarized as the problems inherent in working with a

linguistically disparate group. Further research in this area treating each linguistic group separately would avoid these difficulties and might well demonstrate the value of L1 literacy even more indisputably.

- Secondly this research, supporting other authorities, suggests that young members of linguistic communities who enter primary school and change languages never really recover from the disadvantage of this experience. This has implications for educational policy, both in pre-school preparation and in early years schooling. In the contemporary British context it is clearly not enough to hope that mere presence in a British school is enough to guarantee the individual's fulfilment of potential nor indeed fluency in English. A study of the differences between the Dutch and the British experience [7.5.7.] might supply some insight into the processes at work here.

- Thirdly, this work gives some indication that bilingualism is likely to survive within the British context, particularly in the big cities. In the intervening months since the end of this research, new Sky channels have permitted an Asian language television service which transmits all day and Asian language medium radio stations have mushroomed. These continuing manifestations of the vigour of linguistic minority cultures in Britain and the use of the minority languages as the medium support the findings of Chapter Six; the "currency" of the more prestigious minority languages is high and their continued presence in Britain is likely. Further research might well focus not on the struggle between English and minority languages but on the conflict between different minority languages and monitor language contact, language conflict and language death. The demise of less prestigious of the minority languages may be an interim step towards a future return to monolingualism in Britain or it may be the step that allows a stable diglossic situation to evolve and continue for some generations. Whichever scenario proves to be accurate, there is a need for continued research. The education system needs to reflect the true linguistic situation. If minority languages are to be part of the British education system in whatever capacity, if any L1 literacy programme is to



be effective and if L2 support is not to be withdrawn too soon, the education service needs to monitor what is being spoken, where and to whom, to be sure of offering the right languages and the right support to the right people.