Multilingual Britain

Overview

- The UK's multilingualism is an asset and a resource, but is not fully valued
- More data is needed to understand fully the nature and extent of multilingualism in the UK
- Businesses and public service providers would benefit if community languages were harnessed in a systematic and constructive way
- Multilingualism has direct implications for social cohesion
- Accreditation plays a central role in the value attributed to languages by society
- Education policy is central to the future direction of multilingualism in the UK
- New media forms and internationalisation offer opportunities for language learning

Background

The majority of the world's population is multilingual. Two thirds of children globally are brought up in bilingual environments.[1] It is sometimes assumed that 'English is enough', but in global terms only 6% of the population are native English speakers and 75% speak no English at all. Monitoring of internet traffic demonstrates a decline in the relative influence of English online, from 51% of traffic in 2000 to 26.8% in 2011.[2]

The UK needs a multilingual population in order to succeed in a globalised world, for global citizenship, for diplomacy, security and international relations and for developing a taskforce to operate efficiently in trade and investment. At home, there are implications for national citizenship, for the practical operation of public services and for community cohesion, as well as individual wellbeing.

The Language Landscape

Despite the various interest groups affected by multilingualism, and the development of new ways to measure the linguistic landscape in the UK,[3] comprehensive data on UK multilingualism has only recently emerged. This partially arises from conflicting definitions of language competence and situational usage, with non-standardised measures used to describe these. A distinction can be made between those who are bilingual because they have a 'community' or 'heritage' home language plus English, and those with English as a first language who acquire a second modern foreign language.[4] Proficiency is not always measurable in literacy and often depends on the situation in which the user has acquired the language.

An EU study (2012) claims 39% of UK citizens can take part in a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue, compared to an EU average of 54%.[5] The 2011 Census asked respondents 'what is your main language?', reporting that 8% of the population in England and Wales had a main language other than English. There were more than 600 different answers to this question, which were grouped into over 100 language categories. 49 main languages had at least 15,000 speakers. In 91% of households everyone spoke English, in 1% of households no adults but at least one child spoke English and in 4% of households no one spoke English as the main language.[6] Criticisms have been levelled against the phrasing of the question 'what is your main language', however, since it may lead people to under-report their home languages.[7]

England and Wales Census data 2011

After English, the most commonly-spoken languages were:

1. Welsh	6. Gujarati
2. Polish	7. Arabic
3. Punjabi	8. French
4. Urdu	9. Chinese
5. Bengali (incl. Sylheti and Chatgaya)	10. Portuguese

Lesser spoken languages:

- Swedish was the smallest of the main languages with just over 19,000 speakers
- The smallest group with 33 speakers was Manx Gaelic; 58 spoke Scottish Gaelic and 629 spoke Romany

[1] Crystal (1997)
[2] Cited in The Scottish Government (2012)
[3] See for example recent mapping of languages used on Twitter in the London area: http://spatialanalysis.co.uk/2012/10/londons-twitter-languages/
[4] Terms such as 'immigrant', 'heritage' or 'community' languages are used but contested; warnings about ghettoization and lack of recognition must be heeded. The term 'community language' is used here to describe all languages other than the dominant or national language.

[5] Eurobarometer (2012)
[6] ONS (2012)
[7] See for example Matras (2013)

The majority of fine-level data for UK multilingualism only exists for the school population. A 2008 survey of English school children showed that London was the most linguistically diverse area. It had the highest number of pupils who recorded a language other than English as the language spoken at home with nearly 45% of the primary school population and over 35% in secondary education. The average in England was 15% in primary education and 11% in secondary.[8] Over 40 languages were spoken by more than 1000 pupils in London schools.[9]

The proportion and relative commonness of languages have changed and will continue to change in response to increasing 'superdiversity' and migration patterns. Data from London schools showed significant changes in the relative positions of the most commonly spoken languages between 1999 and 2008. This included a relative decrease in English-based Creoles, Cantonese and Greek and an increase in Tamil, Polish and Albanian/Shqip, with a particularly large increase in the number of Somali-speakers.[10] Nevertheless, languages should not be equated simply with nationality or ethnicity. Data from London demonstrates that language diversity is not strictly correlated with ethnic categories.[11]

It is necessary to have a broad and flexible conception of what a language is. Even among similar communities the means by which languages are accessed and propagated are shifting. In terms of community languages, the increasing use of social media is changing the way that second and third generations use their family languages. These are no longer only spoken with grandparents and parents, but with their peers and in written – sometimes informal - form, which in many cases has led to a domain expansion of these languages. The home language may be used to communicate online, often using the Latin alphabet and intermingled with other languages.

Two particular features of language use which challenge traditional linguistic categorisation are 'code-switching' (switching between two or more languages, or language varieties) and 'crossing'. Crossing is a particular kind of code-switching whereby people – often young people – from various ethnic backgrounds borrow terminology and patterns from various languages, not considered to 'belong' to them, in order to socialise. Crossing is a key feature of multi-ethnic societies, and is not restricted to young people alone, but has also been identified as a working-class phenomenon.[12] An example of this is 'Multicultural London English' (MLE).

Why multilingualism matters

Cognitive and health benefits

General cognitive benefits ascribed to bi- and plurilingualism include increased short term memory and thinking power, improved attention and cognitive control, better metalinguistic reasoning, and enhanced emotional intelligence via the ability to separate knowledge from how it is encoded. There is also evidence that bilinguals have increased cognitive reserve helping them cope better with ageing, and making them more resistant to Alzheimer's Disease.[13]

Traditional fears that learning more than one language leads to competition between languages, and results in semi-lingualism, have been largely allayed by recent research. In fact, aptitude in more than one language may increase aptitude in other skills and subjects, including further language skills.[14] In England, 'First Language Other' students outperformed 'First Language English' students in terms of value added scores for EBacc Languages in 2011.[15] American evidence suggests that studying any language improves your academic scores on other subjects, especially in maths.[16] There is less research available for the UK but statistics from Lambeth show fully bilingual students consistently outperforming their monolingual counterparts academically, sometimes by over 10%.[17]

Social communication

Multilingualism is crucial for intercultural relations. Language skills facilitate working, studying and travelling internationally. They offer a path to understanding other ways of living and encourage tolerance and positive social relations. At a local level there have been fears that developing community languages keeps a community closed and societies divided. Yet programmes that involve sharing language skills and cultural resources can help with integration and build social cohesion.[18]

Business

Multilingualism provides an opportunity for commerce.[19] The UK needs to ensure it has the language skills to do business with the rest of the world, and employment opportunities in the global market will increasingly require language aptitude – although not necessarily fluency.

Global and globalising sectors including financial services, pharmaceutical, chemical, automotive, IT and other industries rely heavily on language skills to operate and business leaders recognise the importance of language and communication for business. Economic success in exports is closely related to multilingualism strategies.[20] A recent survey of business leaders showed that 72% valued language skills in their employees, particularly for relationship- and trust-building with clients, customers and suppliers. Weakness in foreign language proficiency is considered a potential for lost business by 21% of UK firms, over half of whom are looking to recruit language-proficient staff. The report warns that "limited language abilities and cultural awareness are acting in effect as a tax on UK trade".[21]

The availability of machine translation systems seems not to have dented the overall translation industry or employers' desires for language skills in employees, because building trust relies on more than simple word-exchange. Complete fluency is not always necessary; a conversational level is often enough to facilitate positive social relations. Business leaders do not simply value language skills alone, but also the cultural understanding that accompanies those skills. Foreign language aptitude represented the greatest concern for firms amongst all the employability skills of graduates (54% not satisfied), with 41% also not satisfied with graduates' international cultural awareness.[22]

8 Department for Education and Skills (2009)
9 Von Ahn, et al (2010)
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Rampton (2011)
13 See for example Craik et al (2010); Bialystok, Craik, et al (2009); Bialystok et al (2004); Beardsmore (2008); European Union (2009)

14 Ricciardelli (1992); Cenoz & Valencia (1994); Kenner (2004) Bialystok, Craik, et al (2009);
15 First Language English students scored 999.1; First Language Other scored 1005.2: RAISEonline (2012) Table 5.8.2, p.26.
16 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2012).
17 Lambeth Council (2012)
18 Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum (2011).
19 CILT/InterAct International (2007)
20 Bel Habib (2011)
21 CBI/Pearson Education (2012)
22 Ibid.

Academia

In response to concerns that UK-born and -educated researchers lack essential foreign language skills the British Academy first produced the report Language Matters (2009), which analysed the effect of the fall in modern language learning on research fields, especially in humanities and social sciences disciplines. The recent follow-up report Language Matters More and More (2011) found that the lack of language skills limited researchers in their ability to engage internationally in or with their research, and in their career opportunities. It warned of the potential damage this could cause to the international reputation of UK scholarship. More generally, it cautioned that "the lack of language skills at secondary, tertiary and research levels will affect the UK's ability to compete effectively in a global market and to promote UK interests in a global context."[23]

Public services

Ensuring that public services are linguistically accessible to all leads to social gains.[24] The importance of responding effectively to language needs for the efficiency, economy and quality of service provision should not be underestimated. An example from emerging unpublished research suggests that speakers of languages other than English sometimes opt to use A&E rather than GP services because the former guarantees an interpreter, leading to inefficiencies and unnecessary costs for the NHS. There are also difficulties in delivering effective speech and language therapy, since there are few therapists who speak other languages than English, instead relying on interpreters who are not trained in therapy. In policing, community relations are vital and, for crime-fighting, estimates suggest that over half of criminal gangs operate in a language other than English.

In some situations, language barriers may challenge the provision of basic human rights, particularly in court procedures in civil and asylum cases. Anecdotal evidence highlights these concerns: a Lingala speaker from the DRC may choose to use French in court because she perceives it to be a higher status language, with the result she uses a language she is less fluent in. Some translation errors – such as the misuse of a tense – may lead to discrepancies in court testimonial evidence and possible miscarriages of justice. Giving a good account of oneself in court relies on accurate understanding and interpretation, and a lack of linguistic skills or access to effective interpreters or translators can restrict access to justice.

Translation and interpretation

The language services sector offers promising opportunities for businesses and employment. The industry is large and ever-growing, and has been resilient in the face of recession. The global market for outsourced language services was estimated to be worth US$33.5 billion in 2012 with an annual growth of 12.7%. Europe, and particularly Western Europe, has a large market share in this sector.[25] Large translating companies are increasingly using existing language resources in UK communities and graduate populations.

Professionalization

Professional interpreters, such as those on the National Register of Public Service Interpreters, are qualified and accountable and bring cultural understanding and specialised vocabulary. In many cases interpretation in public services is ad hoc, relying on family members or others from the local community. In some cases their involvement may restrict the openness with which their subject can speak. Professional standards are necessary both from the perspective of confidentiality and impartiality, and because amateur interpreters may lack specialist vocabulary or knowledge specific to the situation. The damaging effects of privatizing the court interpreting system were widely publicized in early 2012, following protests by accredited interpreters who argued that the result had been a de-professionalization of the service.

Language Policy

The involvement of the state with matters of multilingualism operates at various levels. The UK has no overall official policy on multilingualism, although the EU promotes trilingualism: the home language, plus another EU language and a world language.

Public discourses around multilingualism in the UK change frequently, although there is some consistency in encouraging certain types of bilingualism, particularly through formal learning. There is prejudice in the perceived statuses of different languages. Bilingualism seems to be considered an asset if it is learned rather than acquired (i.e. natively), and/or if it involves a language of (relative) prestige. Conversely, bilingualism is perceived as a deficit if acquired in an immigrant/minority home, if it is a non-standard language, if it has limited or no 'market' value, if it will interfere with the learning of the majority language and by those who believe that it will lead to semi-lingualism. The former is more often associated with majority language speakers learning another language; the latter is linked primarily to community language speakers.

There are debates over if and how the state should support community languages. In addition to the personal, social and economic benefits outlined above, a movement advocating linguistic human rights has existed especially in the academic sphere since the early 1990s. Others have argued that language maintenance is a community responsibility, and indeed communities have been increasingly likely to empower themselves in the area of language maintenance and development, particularly through the use of new media forms.

Education and Training

Language education strategy

In Scotland language learning is currently compulsory from P6 (equivalent to the English Year 6) and is recommended although not mandatory for S1–S3 (equivalent to English Years 8–10). The Scottish Government is committed by its 2011 manifesto to the mother tongue + 2 additional languages model recommended by the European Union. Proposals for a framework to deliver this were set out in 2012 in the form of 35 recommendations. These include making first additional language training available to children in P1 and a second additional language before P5, and confirming the entitlement (although not compulsion) to language learning from S1 to S3.[26]

The Welsh national strategy for modern foreign languages, Languages Count, was published in April 2002 and reinforced in 2010. A modern foreign language is compulsory for all 11–14 year olds and there is a commitment to offer foreign languages at various levels to 14-19 year olds, although it is not mandatory to study a language as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate.[27] As regards the country's native bilingualism, the Welsh Government's Review of Qualifications 14-19 (2012) also confirmed that the most relevant and valued vocational qualifications will be available in Welsh by 2017.[28]

[23] British Academy (2011); British Academy (2009)
[24] Corsellis (2001)
[25] Common Sense Advisory (May 2012); European Commission (2009)
[26] Scottish Government (2012)
[27] Welsh Assembly Government (2010)
[28] Welsh Assembly Government (2012)

In England the current government is not committed to a national language education strategy.[29] Decisions relating to language education are made in the context of wider educational reforms. Presently language teaching is not compulsory at Key Stages 1 and 2 (Primary) but is at Key Stage 3, although since 2008 there has been no statutory requirement that this include one of the official languages of the European Union. The National Curriculum Review and other educational reforms are likely to change requirements for language provision further.

Provision and demand - schools

In Scotland a 2011 survey showed that a declining number of respondent schools had modern languages as a compulsory subject until S4 – 49% as compared to 61% in 2007 - and 39% made languages compulsory only up to S2.[30] The percentage of students entered for any modern language qualification at S4 fell from 89% to 69% between 2003 and 2009. French declined by 16%, German by 41% whilst Spanish rose by 46%.[31] Since 2009 there has been a Scottish Languages Baccalaureate option for post-16s. In 2011 only 20% of Baccalaureate students chose the Languages option rather than Science, although this was an increase from 14% in 2010. In Scottish Further Education, changes to the design of the Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs) have meant the decline is even more pronounced. Languages now make up less than 1% of all FE teaching. Since 2001/2 all of the major European languages have seen drastic declines, including Spanish, with an average of -42% for National Certificates and -77% for Higher National Certificates between 2001/2 and 2008/9.[32]

Since the removal of compulsory language qualifications at Key Stage 4 in England, there has been a steady decline in numbers of students taking a GCSE in a language; the Language Trends Survey (2011) recorded a decline from 78% take up in 2001 to 40% in 2011. The greatest decline is in the two most commonly taught languages, French (-56%) and German (-55%) in that period, although – as in Scotland - Spanish increased (+29%). However, there were signs of improvement in take-up following the introduction of the English Baccalaureate system, which included a language component.[33]

Alternative accreditation for languages is also in decline, dropping from 45% to 33% in 2011.[34] Asset Languages have provided qualification structures for many languages not served elsewhere. They are not funded by the government and no longer count towards school performance points for use in league tables, meaning that schools have been less likely to offer these accreditations. As a result of declining numbers OCR, the exam body responsible for Asset qualifications, announced in January 2013 that it will cease to offer accreditation in all but five of the current twenty-five Asset languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian and Mandarin) at the end of 2013. The result is a squeeze on the range of languages that count towards the accreditation systems valued by higher education institutions and employers - Cantonese, Somali, Swedish and Yoruba, for example, will no longer be available.

[29] The National Language Strategy set out in 2002 is no longer a key policy driver: Department for Education and Skills (2002); King, L. (2011).
[30] SCILT (2011)
[31] SCILT (2010)
[32] Scottish Qualifications Authority statistics cited in Doughty (2011)
[33] CfBT (2012)
[34] Ibid.
[35] Worton (2009)
[36] McPake, et al. (2008)
[37] University Council of Modern Languages (2011)
[38] CfBT (2012)

Provision and demand - HE

The declining numbers of school pupils studying languages have inevitably reduced the numbers studying languages at university. As a result, many university language departments have closed and language degree provision is now particularly concentrated in the Russell Group universities.[35] Research in 2008 showed that 81 languages were being taught at universities, although most were aimed at those learning them as a foreign language. In fact, community language learners – who may have had some experience of speaking or learning those languages – were actively discouraged or barred. There were no degree courses in four of the most common community languages across England at that time: Urdu, Cantonese, Punjabi and Bengali.[36] Some universities have responded to this lack of provision, including SOAS, which introduced pathways in selected South Asian languages from 2012. Nevertheless, with declining government funding and the rise of for-profit institutions in the Higher Education sector, decisions about language provision in universities will be made increasingly on an economic basis, which is likely to restrict further the number of courses on offer and the institutions in which they will be available.

Assessment, accreditation and social capital

Accreditation is an inevitable and vital part of the education system. Assessment has value both in terms of a contribution to learning, and in terms of the status and social recognition that associated qualifications bring.

Social inequality is a key concern for the future of language teaching in England. Only 7% of the school population in England attends the independent sector, but this sector accounts for 40% of all A Level students taking modern foreign languages. Nearly a quarter of acceptances for language degree courses are from independent school students, compared to 9% across all subjects.[37] Pupils in independent schools have more opportunities to learn a wider range of languages, including Latin and Ancient Greek. Mandarin is offered in 36% of independent schools and only 14% of maintained schools.[38] Modern foreign languages are becoming a class issue in the way in which Latin and Greek have been traditionally.

As for community languages, communities perceive the availability (or not) of accreditations in their own language as a matter of status. Yet uptake is not always sufficient to satisfy the economic criteria which exam boards must take into account when designing their offerings.[39] Recognising the potential effects of the loss of accreditation for heritage language communities, OCR's Chief Executive Mark Dawe offered to set up an Asset exam for any community that could raise £100,000 and show evidence that 3,000 people had pledged to take the exam over a three-year period.[40] Due to inequalities in the economic resources of different communities, the financial prerequisite may simply redraw the lines between the haves and have-nots.

The uptake of Asset qualifications may be in decline because of poor recognition, both within the education system (they do not contribute to schools' performance in league tables) and because of wider attitudes towards their value. Even when qualifications do exist, there is a disparity in the relative status assigned to different languages, both between various types of qualifications and even within qualifications of the same level. Asset accreditations may be considered inferior to GCSEs, for example, and many languages (including widely-spoken Hindi) are not available as a GCSE.

[39] Following its recent review of Asset Languages OCR reported that the overall Asset market in 2012 had contracted by 31% compared with 2011, with 18 Asset subjects taken up by less than 500 candidates and 9 by less than 100 candidates: Dawe (2013)
[40] Ward (2012)

Pedagogy

Recent research challenges the preconception that in language-learning, 'older is faster, but younger is better'.[41] Instead, it is never too early, or too late.[42] Adult learners can become fully fluent and native-like,[43] even in pronunciation.[44] Nevertheless, there are variations in language learning and acquisition at different ages which should be taken into account in pedagogical strategies. Younger learners are better at mastering pronunciation, are less anxious and self-conscious about using language, use a predominantly intuitive approach and are more likely to employ formulaic language (or 'lexical chunks') which help create natural or idiomatic speech. Older learners, on the other hand, are better at conversation, have more existing world knowledge to build on, and have access to more learning strategies, but often acquire language in small units which need to be reconstructed according to grammatical rules, sometimes leading to unnatural speech.[45]

Immersion strategies are sometimes advocated since they go some way towards replicating a child's learning environment for older learners, but this is not a viable full-time solution for mainstream education. A successor to immersion teaching, 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL) is gaining credence in mainstream schooling. Bilingual learning is already popular in many other educational systems worldwide. By integrating language learning with other key subjects in the curriculum, learners acquire language familiarity and relevant vocabulary in natural situations. The Association for Language Learning believes it will 'transform the quality of language learning in schools' and has recently launched an initiative, FLAME (Future for Language as a Medium of Education), to "support the many ways that teachers are combining languages with other subjects, whether bringing subject topics into language lessons, teaching subject modules or teaching one or more whole subjects through a language other than English."[46] Bilingual learning has shown positive results for speaking and reading skills, increased confidence and motivation for language use and greater enthusiasm for language learning.[47] One of the keys to its success is the application of language to real situations, which enhances learners' intrinsic motivation.

Community languages and English as a Foreign Language suffer from underdeveloped pedagogies, as compared to the teaching of modern foreign languages. Research confirms that this is true of the teaching and learning of community languages in higher education, blamed on providers' poor understanding about the motivations of community language learners, as well as logistical restraints in recruiting suitable staff or identifying suitable resources.[48]

For community language learners, there is a need to explore meaningful partnerships between educational institutions and the community. Providers also need to appreciate better the various reasons behind community language learning: some of those at university wanted to improve their career and business prospects, or to work in social services in the UK or abroad, thus 'the kind of language they seek to acquire might differ from that typically offered on foreign language courses'.[49]

Sharing best practice in language teaching

There is little research into the attitudes of young UK language learners, although that which exists from other countries suggests that associative motivations related to interesting classroom activities are more important overall than an instrumentalist perception that having an additional language will be helpful.[50]

Emphasis has been placed on making subject matter within dedicated language teaching relevant and interesting to its audience. Textbooks are proving harder to sustain in this environment because of the limited shelf-life of their cultural content. Instead, online resources are increasingly utilised and the development of shared resources has led to teacher-led curriculum change that responds more effectively to immediate classroom demand. Yet language learning is in a uniquely privileged position, since the aim is to communicate, socialize and share with others. Human and personal interest can therefore be central to language education strategies. This may take the form of personal stories which can be engaging subject matter for bilingual exercises and language sharing. The Translation Nation project encourages children to bring a story in their home language and together with other children come up with a translation, and The Arvon Foundation's (M)Other Tongues project also uses personal narrative as part of its strategy.[51]

Linguistic diversity within a learning community can therefore be used to great advantage, and many schools are beginning to tap into this potential. In superdiverse settings there are many ways to influence and engage students, including through sport, art, drama and other cultural and creative activities, and schools are increasingly using the linguistic capital within the student body to encourage language exchange and development.

Even in environments with fewer languages, there are opportunities to use variation in linguistic patterns, such as the different registers of English, as a teaching tool. Some authorities have expressed concerns around the use of slang in schools, on the basis that it inhibits the use of Standard English and restricts social and employment opportunities. Others view language forms such as MLE as having great potential in pedagogy through, for example, sharing processes of lexical analysis, semantic, componential analysis and the building of glossaries with students. In the future resources like Urban Dictionary are likely to be used increasingly with educators and young people to scrutinize crucial elements of language and its implications, particularly for identity and social mobility.

Literature also provides great opportunities for language learning. For different registers of English, there is a literary genre – with some works specifically aimed at young people – in which ethnic and mixed language and slang features strongly. Studying bilingual or foreign language texts with those of different perspectives and understanding also encourages discussion and reflection on questions of values, belief systems, cultural context, representation and identity. Linguistic and cultural experiences can be shared by creating multilingual or bilingual stories and poems. Creating bilingual literature has shown good results for development in both the home and additional language, and is particularly valuable for students whose home languages are primarily oral.[52]

Literacy sometimes must be defined more broadly than accreditation and current pedagogy allows for. Many community languages, such as Shona, Romani or certain dialects of Kurdish, have no established tradition of literature, textbooks or teachers. Teaching strategies seeking to use this linguistic resource are more experimental and interactive, and capitalise on linguistic activities that students are already involved in, such as text messaging or social media.

[41] Kraschen (1979)
[42] Johnstone (2002)
[43] Marinova−Todd (2003)
[44] Nikolov (2000)
[45] Wray (2008)
[46] www.all−languages.org.uk/community/flame
[47] Bibliography is provided by The Bilingual Immersion Education Network (BIEN) at www.bien.org.uk
[48] McPake, et al. (2008)
[49] Ibid.
[50] Scholarship summarised in Hunt, et. al. (2005)
[51] translation−nation.heroku.com; www.arvonfoundation.org/8467/Mother−Tongues
[52] www.uel.ac.uk/duallanguagebooks

Conclusion – Valuing language diversity

Knowing more

Developing appropriate and effective language strategies by government, businesses, and public service providers need to take account of the complex language landscape. This will require collecting more and better data on the linguistic diversity of this country. Canada was especially commended for its "comprehensive and precise knowledge … likely due to the value Canada places on language diversity" in a recent OECD report, and offers a good model for better understanding the linguistic landscape.[53]

Languages at work

Language is a resource and the UK's multilingualism should be considered in this way. Many employers – both in the private and public sectors – resolve their language needs by recruiting abroad, but it would be preferable to mobilise locally-based resources and educational processes to meet these needs.

The value of languages in business and for employment should be more explicitly emphasised to help increase the status of language skills in the minds of all language learners, including community language speakers.

Languages in service

Authorities are aware that they need to take linguistic factors into account when monitoring provision and access to public services, although they often lack sufficient data to make informed decisions about how to communicate with and serve their communities. The Metropolitan Police launched a centralised language-learning programme in 2010 in order to serve London's diverse population better and to reduce crime. The NHS is also responding to the challenges of multilingualism in its care, but there is more to be done in assessing language implications for the provision of healthcare.[54]

The legal system must be particularly sensitive and responsive to linguistic issues. Confidentiality, lack of fluency, and translation or interpretation error can lead in some cases to miscarriages of justice.

Due to a lack of training and accreditation for some languages, it is not always possible for public services to rely exclusively on the services of professional interpreters and translators. In these cases service providers must be sensitive and alert to the potential for exploitation in this role, and seek to mitigate these risks.

In all cases, speakers of a very wide range of minority languages are urgently required. This will help form bridges between communities, and particularly between different language communities and public services. The New York and Chicago Police Departments offer successful models for harnessing community language resources and integrating them into public service professions.

Languages for learning

Education and education policy plays a key role in enhancing and making the most of the UK's multilingualism, and policy in this area requires special attention.

Providers need to consider the range of different motivations for language learning – including community languages – in order to provide appropriately-targeted learning environments.

Cultural learning must be incorporated into language pedagogy and the UK's rich community-based cultural resources shared effectively. Education institutions should utilise the linguistic diversity in their student populations.

In schools, friendships with students from other linguistic communities should be encouraged. This may be within the school itself, or with students from abroad. Social media provides opportunities to sustain relationships and encourage written interaction. The Language Trends Survey found that whilst 4 out of 5 schools make regular use of ICT for language teaching, there is little class use of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook and relatively few schools use electronic links with schools abroad in class time.[55]

For universities, a good opportunity presents itself in the increasing desire to internationalise in various dimensions. By attracting international students to the UK, or by allowing UK students to undertake studies abroad, language resources will be accessible to the university population. Likewise, intercultural awareness – one of employers' main concerns in graduate abilities – will be enhanced.

New media forms should also be embraced in other ways. Building on text messaging or social media already in use by students can help them engage with languages that fall outside traditional modes of 'literacy' and can be an effective tool to encourage self-reflection on improvisation in languages.

Languages and equality

Accreditation is crucial to the perceived status of languages and may help in the better transference of linguistic resources in our community to public services and industry.

The value of languages must be recognised regardless of their perceived status, and assessment and qualification offered at appropriate levels for all languages. This may include an increased role for self-accreditation within communities and/or from universities working with both their student and local populations, perhaps with support from embassies that are keen to support their own languages.

Formalised acceptance of international qualifications could also stimulate a supply-demand response by international universities to offer rigorous qualifications in their home and other languages. A commitment to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), recognized by the 47 member states of the Council of Europe and used as a cornerstone of the language curriculum in many of the member states, would help internationalise a market which is struggling with provision in the UK.

In addition to formal accreditation systems, better recognition for language skills could be achieved by integrating them into all accreditation schemes for extracurricular activity where these exist, such as the 'graduate passport' which details the activities, skills and achievements that university students have accumulated in supplement to their main academic degree. The now-obsolete National Record of Achievement for school children fulfilled a similar function and itself inspired the European Language Portfolio, which could be used more extensively in the UK, as it is across Europe. Non-formal accreditation is also better able to reflect the non-standard nature of many languages.

> Lord Dearing described the UK's multilingualism as a 'national asset', but we are not fully capitalising on it. We must start by valuing our language diversity, and making the most of multilingual Britain.

[53] OECD (2012)
[54] Department for Education and Skills (2001); Aspinall (2007)
[55] CfBT (2011)

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