

Bilingual Learners Perspectives on School and Society in Scotland

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Abstract

What happens when a monolingual school in an economically deprived area of an inner city becomes a multilingual, multiracial school as a result of government policy (The Immigration and Asylum Act)?

How do children from asylum seeking families, many of whom have never had formal education prior to arriving in Scotland and all of whom are new to the English language, make meaning of the school community?

This paper will report on how a bilingual unit has become an integral part of the mainstream school due to creative pedagogy and how the school has accessed what the pupils already know in order to help them make sense of learning in a new language.

The paper is based on ethnographic research in the bilingual unit of Lady Jane Grey Primary school¹. The bulk of my time was spent with the curriculum team leader as she taught in the unit and in the mainstream Primary 6 and Primary 7 classes² and with two teachers of the younger children in the unit and with other mainstream teachers in the school. The collaborative ethos developed between base and

¹ The names of the school, teachers and pupils recorded in this abstract and subsequent papers are pseudonyms agreed by the individuals concerned.

² The children in the unit and in these two classes were aged 10 – 12 years old.

mainstream teachers influenced the ways in which the children were enabled to make decisions about their learning and this in turn influenced the pedagogy of the whole school.

The research was ethnographic collecting extensive field notes of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions and teacher strategies for developing creative learning as well as recorded conversations with all the relevant participants including three arts workers from two different community organisations and an Iranian volunteer attached to the local church.

Photographs of the children engaged in creative learning situations were used to assist conversations with the pupils and they have also been considered as raw data to be analysed. Further, the children themselves took photos to show me their perspectives on learning and the school environment.

The paper will discuss how this highly mobile pupil population has enabled the school to take more cognisance of learner perspectives and has allowed a creative pedagogy to emerge in the school.

Introduction

The research reported in this paper was part of the European CLASP³ project. The site chosen for the research by the Scottish partner was a newly established bilingual unit in a mainstream primary school in Glasgow.

The dispersal of around 1200 children from asylum seeking families to Glasgow schools, resulted in the setting up of the Glasgow Asylum Seekers Support Project (GASSP) funded by National Asylum Seekers' Support (NASS). The educational wing of this project established bilingual units in schools across Glasgow, in which specialist teachers would support the English language development of the newly arrived pupils while enabling their integration into the mainstream classes by team teaching.

This new initiative has a management structure that exists in parallel to Glasgow City Education Authority. The project provides clear support guidelines for teachers in the bilingual bases, which, while not in contradiction to the curricular frameworks of national documentation⁴, do prioritise teaching and learning strategies over curriculum content. Thus the rationale for educational provision for children from asylum seeking families⁵ urges schools and teachers to *take into account breaks in education (experienced by the children) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs, based on existing best practice*. The GASSP rationale for the curriculum makes no mention of national curricular frameworks but rather says it must be guided by principles of good practice in bilingual education and cites references to the research that identifies good practice. Children and teachers are at the heart of this rationale rather than a curriculum, societal needs or performativity policies. It seemed to me that such an approach may help to liberate teachers, and thus children, from the constraints of curriculum driven approaches to education and may enable me to identify ways in which teachers helped to make learning relevant for children, a key feature identified by Woods (1990) in providing creative teaching.

³ CLASP: Creative Learning and Student Perspectives

⁴ SEED (2000) (revised version) *The Structure and Balance of the Curriculum: 5 to 14 National Guidelines*, Edinburgh

⁵ GASSP Education Handbook, 2001

Context

The Glasgow CLASP research was conducted in one primary school, Lady Jane Grey⁶. Lady Jane Grey primary school is a three-storey red sandstone Victorian school building in the centre of a housing scheme in the city of Glasgow. The school is surrounded by high-rise flats built in the late 1960's and now due for demolition. There is large-scale deprivation in the area marked by high rates of crime, illegal drug use and suicide. This housing scheme is now one in which Glasgow City Council have chosen to house dispersed asylum seeker families as they await the Home Office decision as to their status. Consequently, the school which until recently had very few non-white, non-monolingual English speaking pupils, now has almost 100 pupils from Somalia, the Congo, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, the Lebanon, Zimbabwe, Russia and Lithuania. These children, by dint of having to use English for the purposes of education in the classroom and using at least one other language at home to communicate with their families, can be deemed bilingual.⁷ There are a total of 200 pupils in the school, aged 5 – 12 years old.

The school has a bilingual base which employs 4 teachers in addition to the seven mainstream classes. All newly arrived children from asylum seeking families (and other bilingual children) are registered with an age appropriate mainstream class. They all go to their register class at the start of the day and attend this class for art, drama, music, physical education, religious education, science, technology, health education and social subjects. They are taught in the bilingual base for maths and language until the base teachers and mainstream teachers together assess that they have enough English to be able to work within the mainstream classroom. The children with very little English also have an hour a day in the base for 'reception time' to improve their English. The teachers from the base team teach in the mainstream classrooms for part of the time. All teachers in the school participate in running after school clubs for the children, e.g. computer, art, netball, football etc. In these ways, the teachers from the bilingual base are not viewed by the pupils as only being there to support the bilingual pupils.

⁶ All names are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

⁷ A bilingual pupil is one who uses one or more languages in their everyday life. (Wiles, 1984)

The aims of the CLASP project

The project, conducted in ten European countries set out

- To identify teachers' and students' strategies for developing creative learning in educational contexts.
- To examine the effectiveness of incorporating student perspectives into the teaching and learning process.
- To highlight the advantages to be gained for the quality of teaching and learning by examining cross European creative pedagogic practices.

Creative Learning and Bilingual Pupils

As earlier stated, the children in the Glasgow CLASP study were all bilingual and I wished to investigate the ways in which they dealt with an unfamiliar curriculum delivered in an unfamiliar language. The underlying hypothesis concerning creative thinking and bilingualism is that the ownership of two or more languages may increase fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in thinking. This is derived from an understanding that bilinguals will have two or more words for a single object or idea and this will allow a person more freedom and richness of thought.

International and cross cultural research has compared bilinguals and monolinguals on a variety of measures of divergent thinking (Ricciardelli, 1992)⁸ and found bilinguals to be largely superior to monolinguals, although this has been mostly in additive bilingual contexts (Lauren, 1991)⁹. Cummins (1977: 10)¹⁰ proposed that

there may be a threshold level of linguistic competence which a bilingual child must attain both in order to avoid cognitive deficits and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to influence his cognitive growth.

⁸ RICCIARDELLI, L.A. (1992) 'Creativity and bilingualism' in *Journal of Creative Behaviour*, 26 (4), pp 242-254

⁹ LAUREN, U. (1991) 'A creativity index for studying the free written production for bilinguals' in *International journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(2) pp 198 - 208

¹⁰ CUMMINS, J. (1977) 'Cognitive Factors associated with the attainment of intermediate levels of bilingual skills' in *Modern Language journal*, 61, pp 3 - 12

Studies reported by Ricciardelli (1992) that did not support bilingual superiority in divergent thinking sampled less proficient bilinguals, a result consistent with Cummins' Threshold Theory.

The bilingual pupils in my study were not balanced bilinguals, as they were not equally fluent in both their languages across contexts. Nor were they in an additive bilingual situation (Lambert, 1980)¹¹ as they were acquiring an additional language in a situation where their first language was expected to be replaced. Did this mean then that their bilingualism would not enhance their creativity? Woods et al(1999)¹² had considered the creativity of young bilingual children although their pupils had been 4 to 5 years old and born in the United Kingdom. I wondered whether the 6 – 12 year old children from asylum seeking families recently arrived in Scotland and with very little English would demonstrate any of the features of creative learning as identified by Woods¹³, i.e. innovation, ownership of knowledge, control of the learning processes and relevance of the curriculum, and whether I would be able to characterise the features of the teaching in the school which enabled this creative learning to take place.

Education of Bilingual Pupils in Scotland

There is currently no national policy for the education of bilingual pupils and this can lead to confusion amongst teachers as to what is the best practice to adopt. The development of a policy through the GASSP project has enabled mainstream teachers to see good practice in action and has had an impact on their understandings and practices as will be highlighted in this paper.

*English for Immigrants*¹⁴ was the first major government intervention into the teaching of children whose first language was not English. The language needs of the newly arrived immigrant population of schools were addressed in relation to the perceived

¹¹ LAMBERT, W.E. (1980) 'The social Psychology of Language' in GILES et al (eds) *Language: Social Psychological Perspectives*: Oxford: Pergamon

¹² WOODS, P., BOYLE, M. and HUBBARD, N. (1999) *Multicultural Children in the Early Years*

¹³ WOODS, P. (1990) *Teacher Skills and Strategies* London: Falmer

¹⁴ Department of Education and Science (DES) (1963) *English for Immigrants*, London, DES

need for education for the white monolingual majority pupils not to be disrupted by their presence. The cultural needs of the immigrant population were not addressed in official policy and this legacy remains today.

Educational responses to the existence of children whose first language was not English have varied (Mills & Mills, 1993¹⁵) with initial responses to the education of bilingual children in Britain being focused on assimilation as quickly as possible into the so-called “host community”, ignoring children’s specific language needs. As concern grew about the underachievement of ethnic minority pupils in British schools (DES, 1985¹⁶) responses developed into practices ranging from teaching bilingual pupils in separate language centres to withdrawing such children from their mainstream classes for the purposes of specialist English language tuition (Bourne, 1990¹⁷; Herriman & Burnaby, 1996¹⁸). This tuition often bore little or no relation to the child’s curriculum in class. All these educational responses ignored the existence of the children’s first language. (Mills & Mills, opus cit.)

Since the 1980s the preferred approach has been to teach English language to children for whom it is an additional language in the context of other learning within the mainstream classroom (Wiles, 1985¹⁹; SCCC 1994²⁰). This puts demands on the classroom teacher to carefully consider the language needs of the bilingual child in relation to the content of classroom teaching.

¹⁵ Mills, R.W and Mills, J. (1993) *Bilingualism in the Primary School* London, Routledge

¹⁶ Department of Education and Science (DES) (1985) *Education for All: The Swann Report*, London, HMSO

¹⁷ Bourne, J. (1990) ‘Local Authority Provision for bilingual pupils’ *Educational Research* 32 (1) pp 3-13

¹⁸ Herriman, M. & Burnaby, B. (1996) *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters

¹⁹ Wiles, S. (1985) ‘Language and Learning in Multi-Ethnic Classrooms: Strategies for Supporting Bilingual Students’ in Wells, G. and Nicholls, J. *Language and Learning: an Interactional Perspective*

²⁰ Scottish Consultative Council On The Curriculum (SCCC) (1994) *Languages for Life*, Dundee SCCC

Stubbs (1994:207²¹) argues that ‘schools have always been the most powerful mechanism in assimilating minority children into mainstream cultures’. His analysis of the work of the committees which have produced statements on language in the education system for England and Wales concludes that this burgeoning of ad-hoc language planning has created a ‘sophisticated control which recognises ethnic diversity but confines it to the home, which pays lip-service to multilingualism but is empty liberal rhetoric’(pp. 207-8).

Thompson, Fleming and Byram²² (1996:101) similarly suggest that UK government language policy may be discerned and analysed by considering the recommendations of official committees of enquiry into the education of speakers of languages other than English, or into the teaching of English in schools. Bourne (1990, opus cit.) provides a detailed historical overview of the changes in language policy as expressed in the Bullock report (DES, 1975²³), the Swann report (DES, 1985²⁴), the Harris report (DES, 1990²⁵) and the Cox report (DES, 1989²⁶) the latter resulting in the National Curriculum for English. These responses are particular to England and Wales, although all the named reports have had an influence on the situation in Scotland.

²¹ Stubbs, M (1994) ‘Educational Language Planning in England and Wales: Multicultural Rhetoric and Assimilationist Assumptions’ in Maybin, J: *Language and Literacy in Social Practice*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters

²² Thompson, L., Fleming, M., and Byram, M. (1996) ‘Languages and Language Policy in Britain’ in Herriman, M. and Burnaby, B. *Language Policies in English-Dominant Countries*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters

²³ Department of Education and Science (DES) (1975) *A Language for Life: The Bullock Report*, London, HMSO

²⁴ Department of Education and Science (DES) (1985) *Education for All: The Swann Report*, London, HMSO

²⁵ Department of Education and Science (DES) 1990 *Modern Foreign Languages for Ages 11 - 16: The Harris Report*, London, HMSO

²⁶ Department of Education and Science (DES) 1989 *English for Ages 5 - 16: The Cox Report*, London, HMSO

Bourne (1997:85)²⁷ stresses that in the changing context of British education, the support of bilingual children in the mainstream requires a radical rethinking of policy. She is referring specifically to the effects in England and Wales of the 1988 Education Act, the National Curriculum and league tables but her arguments apply equally to the evolution in Scotland of the 5-14 Curriculum Guidelines, National Testing, Best Value assessment and Target Setting.

There is no language policy in the United Kingdom which explicitly states that home languages other than English should be eradicated but nor is there an official policy document relating to the promotion of home languages.

Language planning in Britain has been conducted by separate isolated committees with split consultation procedures (Stubbs, opus cit.), different working groups having been responsible for developing guidelines for different areas of the curriculum.

In this complex situation of limited national policy and conflicting government reports, teachers may have to resort to their common sense beliefs, or folk theories about how best to teach bilingual pupils. Within the context of my research (Smyth, 2001²⁸) mainstream teachers' folk theories about the place of bilingualism in education were found to be similar across the sample. However, practices in my study were found to relate not only to the teachers' beliefs but also to what support systems for bilingual pupils were available in the different authorities. The absence of policy and the differentiated provision in the authorities was found to be a major factor in the adoption of disparate opinions and practices and, in some cases, lowered expectations of the bilingual pupils.

²⁷ Bourne, J. (1997) 'The Continuing Revolution: Teaching as Learning in the Mainstream Multilingual Classroom' in Leung, C. and Cable, C. (eds.) *English as an Additional language: Changing Perspectives*, Watford, NALDIC

²⁸ Smyth, G. (2001) *'I feel this challenge --- but I don't have the background': Teachers' responses to their bilingual pupils in 6 Scottish primary schools: an ethnographic study* Open University, unpublished thesis

Creative Teaching and Bilingual pupils

How then can teachers adopt creative teaching practices with pupils whom they are unsure how to teach?

Woods (1990)²⁹ suggests that one of the empirical features of creative teaching is the relevance of the curriculum and teaching practices that operate within a broad range of accepted social values while being attuned to students' identities and cultures.

Woods et al (1999:10)³⁰ propose that the relevance of values and context is especially significant in the teaching of bilingual children as a critical factor in creative teaching. They suggest that this relevance is manifested particularly in the encouragement of children's free play, in activities that start from the child ; in the development of home-school links; in the teaching that occurs 'in the margins' of programmed activity and through spontaneous reaction to children's interests.

Cummins (1996:73)³¹ writes that *human relationships are central to effective instruction --- particularly in the case of second language learners who may be trying to find their way in the borderlands between cultures.* While not explicitly mentioning relevance here, Cummins goes on to write that *For students to invest their sense of self, their identity, in acquiring their new language and participating actively in their new culture, they must experience positive and affirming interactions with members of that culture.*

Bentley, (2001: 136-137)³² proposes a number of ways in which schools need to be restructured into learning communities and to develop abilities and forms of creativity which resonate with the 21st century, including *the ability to transfer what one learns*

²⁹ WOODS, P. (1990) *Teacher Skills and Strategies* London: Falmer

³⁰ WOODS, P. and JEFFREY,R. (1996) *Teachable Moments: The Art of Teaching in Primary School*, Buckingham, Open University Press

³¹ CUMMINS, J. (1996) *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*, Ontario: California Association for Bilingual Education

³² BENTLEY, T. (2001) 'The Creative Society: Reuniting Schools and Lifelong Learning' in Fielding, M. (ed.) *Taking Education really Seriously: Four Years' Hard Labour*, London: Routledge Falmer

across different contexts and real world outcomes so that creativity and motivation are reinforced by the experience of making an impact and giving benefit to others.

What makes teaching relevant?

If the knowledge conveyed to children by teachers is relevant to their concerns and reflects their societal and cultural knowledge, then it will be more easily internalised by the child and turned into personal knowledge (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996, opus cit:116). However the societal and cultural knowledge of bilingual pupils is not prominent in the curricular guidelines for teaching in Scotland. So relevant teaching occurs where teachers strive, often against the prescribed curriculum, to construct knowledge that is meaningful within the child's frame of reference. Teachers use strategies to share and create knowledge through imagination and children's prior knowledge. Woodhead (1995)³³ has criticised the belief that the curriculum should be relevant to the immediate needs and interests of pupils and argues, rather, that the curriculum should provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to function effectively in adult working life. Surely, however, a relevance to the immediate needs and interests of pupils, especially pupil cultures, is an essential aid to achieving that effective adult state. This need for relevance was recognised by the teachers at Lady Jane Grey:

I think every single day and every single lesson I try to make it relevant for the children. I mean, I just ignore the curriculum at times, and I just cater completely to the children's needs, which I never did as a mainstream teacher; it's a completely different style of teaching. I mean from the moment they step in the door I am thinking about how I can expand their vocabulary, how I can help them to (understand) just every part of school life, moving around the school, getting used to living in Scotland, you know.

Dawn, Primary 1 Bilingual Base Teacher; my words in brackets

Establishing Relevance through Play: Teachers' Actions: Putting Their Own Wee Stamp On It

So how did Dawn and the other teachers in Lady Jane Grey *make it relevant for the children?* Much has been written about the benefits of play in learning for enabling children to develop knowledge through practical experience. Writing about play,

³³ WOODHEAD, C. (1995) *Chief Inspector's Annual report*, London: OFSTED

however, tends to focus on young children's learning strategies (e.g. Bruce, 1991³⁴; Meek, 1985³⁵; Moyles, 1989³⁶). Teachers in Lady Jane Grey however are convinced of the need for play throughout the school although Jane, the Bilingual Base Team Leader, recognises that play itself can sometimes constrain creativity if it is too structured. I had asked Jane what specific kinds of activities she thought helped the children to be creative:

I think activities where, I was going to say games there but they do and they don't. The games are probably so structured there isn't much room there for creative thought. --- that game we were playing earlier with the Six Blind Men and the Elephant was purely a reading game. I want them to be able to read the text --- So I wouldn't say there's much creative thought goes into being able to do that so it would tend to be more activities that are open---

Jackie, the Primary 6 (10 – 11 year olds) class teacher, recognised the need for active involvement and acknowledged that this is what the children wanted in order to make the learning relevant to them:

--- It's really hard to let go as an adult and turn around and say, "Right, you're in charge, what do you want to learn, what do you want to do?". But once you find out what kids want to learn it turns out it's pretty much what you want them to learn, it's just we're going to go around it a different way, they don't want chalk and talk at the blackboard, sitting still listening to me, they want to stand up and (do) things.

Jane used making games as a strategy for the children to demonstrate knowledge about the local environment and discovered that the children had considerably more cultural capital than she did when it came to knowledge of games. They wanted to go much further than she had anticipated:

³⁴ BRUCE, T. (1991) *Time to Play in Early Childhood Education*, Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton

³⁵ MEEK, M. (1985) *Play and paradoxes: Some considerations of Imagination and Language in Wells*, G. and Nicholls, J. *Language and Learning: an Interactional Perspective*, London: Falmer Press

³⁶ MOYLES, J. (1989) *Just Playing? The role and status of play in early childhood education*: Buckingham, Open University Press

When (we) were making the games about Palace Park³⁷, things like that are open enough to give them scope --- putting their own wee stamp on it ---my introduction was completely basic. You know here's a wee Snakes and Ladders game and here's a Matching Pairs game. What would you come up with and they came up with fantastic Harry Potter adventures and I was like Oh, that's good. Much better creative thinkers than me cos I couldn't do this --- and there I think as well a lot of the bilingual kids got involved.

For bilingual learners of all ages, play optimises their use of their first language, enables them to bring their own cultural knowledge and understanding to bear and enables collaboration with others. The children in this study however were not passive recipients of instructions to play, but initiated play as a way to make sense of a new language and a new curriculum. The teachers had provided them with a stimulus that they then took control of and developed in ways in which the teachers could not have predicted.

Establishing Relevance through Play: Pupils' Actions: Less A Bug Hunt, More A Day In The Park

On a visit to Palace Park with the Primary 2/3 (5-7 year olds) bilingual base, the children were keen to make the unfamiliar environment³⁸ relevant to their existing knowledge. The purpose of the walk was a bug hunt, related to their environmental studies project on mini-beasts.

As we walked from the path beside the allotments to the park proper, a boy said 'It's the jungle.' This resulted in many of the children making jungle noises and moving stealthily rather than walking along behind the teacher. The initial purpose of the walk seemed to have been forgotten by the children

³⁷ Palace Park is a pseudonym for a large estate close to the school where the children had made several visits during school time.

³⁸ Although the park is very close to the school, the pupils were all recently arrived and the families had not visited the park.

As we emerged into the more open space of the park, the children were fascinated by the wild flowers, making buttercups shine under each other's chins and making daisy chains and comparing the lengths.

When we sat down at the river one of the children picked up little stones and started playing Fives. A girl said about this game, 'I play every day in Turkey.' The children used French, Somali and Turkish to communicate about the different rules there could be for this game.

The morning becomes less of a bug hunt and more of a day in the park: playing, exploring the environment, enjoying each others' company and the open air.

Lady Jane Grey fieldnotes, 2nd June, 2003

Teachers may be reluctant to describe classroom activities as play, due to the over-emphasis on play as a medium for learning for younger children. Play can also be seen as exploratory interactions between children and adults, perhaps fostered by the adults, but developed into meaningful activity.

The school Art Club went for a series of workshops to the Lighthouse³⁹ in order to make a short film about architecture in Glasgow. An art worker showed the children round the Lighthouse and encouraged them to explore the materials used to construct the building, the design features and to contrast the old parts of the building with the new. The children appeared very comfortable in this unfamiliar space and asked lots of questions. Back in the workshop space the children had to write a script, with eg the first clip being L is for Lighthouse and the second clip being a description of the Lighthouse. Nyrena and Asima, two Iranian girls, worked together in Farsi, their first language, and produced a description which they then explained in English to the art worker: 'The Lighthouse has a tall tower. From the outside it looks like a lighthouse by the sea.'

Lady Jane Grey fieldnotes, 6th May, 2003

A young Iranian woman, Nilofar, comes to Lady Jane Grey Primary once a week and talks to the Farsi speaking children in their first language, but interacts with all the

³⁹ The Lighthouse is a Centre of Design and Architecture in Glasgow.

children. *The Primary 6/7 children in the bilingual base were writing a piece entitled My Life for the Save the Children website: One of the Iranian pupils had written: I am an 11 year old girl and I come from Iran. I miss the sun and the wonderful cake shops which my dad got me (cakes from) every night.*

Nilofar read what had been written and agreed with child that she really misses Iranian cakes. A long conversation ensued in Farsi between Nilofar and the Farsi speaking pupils in the class about their favourite cakes and the shapes and colour of these.

Lady Jane Grey fieldnotes, 6th May, 2003

This first language interaction acted as a powerful force for the bilingual children's cognitive, social and cultural development and gave validation to what had been written. Further, it encouraged other children to write about food they missed from their country of origin. The non-teaching adults who worked with the children offered them an audience for their ideas: an audience which admired and valued their multilingualism. The involvement of non-teaching adults with specific talents of their own provided an important additional layer in the children's educational experience, helping to ensure that education was not just about becoming enmeshed in school practices but had a role in the development of the children as bilingual learners, translators and multilingual beings.

Relevance through starting with the child: We Want to be Tourists

Many of the teachers in Lady Jane Grey, like Dawn quoted above, believed firmly in making learning meaningful by taking up issues and enquiries initially introduced by the children.

You have to be interested in and excited in what they're excited about. That is being creative. I've got to be adaptable. I've got to get in there and pitch it at their level. and try and run with their interests. And I think you have to --- know the interest of the class. And I think being creative is being able to pick up on these links regardless of whether it's of my interest.

Annette, Primary 7 class teacher

Starting with the child's knowledge and interests often led to the children going beyond the original enquiries and surprising the teachers. The Primary 6 mainstream class were doing an Environmental Studies topic about Scotland. One of the pre-planned tasks was to write a tourist brochure about Scotland. Many of the children in the class were recently arrived in Scotland and expressed their concern to the teacher that they had never been tourists in Scotland so didn't know what to write. As a result, the children planned a day trip to Loch Lomond, raising the money themselves and making all the arrangements themselves.

I can't even put down what we got out of it though, it was so much --- and the kids went through loads of different stages, there was excitement, there was getting out of school, there was a journey, there was singing the Loch Lomond song all the way from Glasgow to Loch Lomond ---, then there was their wee faces when they got there and when they were on top of the tower looking across Loch Lomond, Loch Lomond made sense and they really started to pick up on my ranting about conservation now, they understand why it's important to keep it beautiful and I think they just have to see and touch.

Jackie, Primary 6 class teacher

Yet again, the teacher has provided the initial stimulus, but it is the children who decided how and what they would learn from this. The teacher has been caught up in the children's learning and liberated from the constraints of the curriculum by the children's ability to create their own learning situations.

Children Establishing Relevance through Home-School Links: 'I'll write it khorishtsabsee.'

The children in this research, perhaps more than in other contexts, needed to make connections between what was happening in school and what was happening at home. Without discussing the traumatic experiences which had led to the children from asylum seeking families being pupils at Lady Jane Grey Primary, suffice it to say that for the majority of children the educational experience here was significantly different to what they or their parents had known before. There were frequent occasions when the children demonstrated an ability to recreate skills and knowledge learned in school into the home context, thus increasing the relevance for them of their learning and

giving them increased ownership of the learning. They talked about how they had showed their parents what they had been doing in school and tried out new art techniques, science experiments and forms of writing at home, bringing in the results of their labours into the classroom. This in turn gave the children public acknowledgement of the effort they were putting into making learning relevant to them.

There were also many incidences of the children helping the teachers to make connections with their existing knowledge.

Jane shared the story Lima's Red Hot Chilli with the children. After the story the children discussed some of the foodstuffs in the story, including coconut. A Somali girl told the class that the inside of the coconut is 'hoomba'. A boy from Zimbabwe said 'In my country there are small coconuts.' A girl told a story of an accident trying to open a coconut. A boy talked about the holes on top of the coconut and a girl compared this to a bowling ball. A boy whose first language is French talked to me about something 'créé' from coconut and you mix it with something and put it in your hair like gel.

A girl commented that spaghetti looks like string or worms and a boy demonstrated how you eat spaghetti: 'You go like that: shloop.' An Iranian girl said that spaghetti in her country is called macaroni which prompted other children to talk about the names they have for pasta.

In a follow on language development activity, the children had to write sentences in a similar structure to that used in the text. A boy asked 'Can you say food of your own country?' A girl wrote 'The horishzabsi was too green and a boy said 'It must be s not z. We don't say zabsi but sabsi'. Jen talks about how spelling may change when you try to transliterate from different languages, in this case Farsi. The boy says it's meant to be a ch sound at the beginning so 'I'll write it khorishtsabsee.'

Lady Jane Grey fieldnotes, 3rd June, 2003

During this activity the bilingual children were working out how to write their own language in English phonetics. The creative learning was enabled by an ethos which

encouraged experimentation and home-school links. Jane commented to me after the lesson that she had thought of bringing in a coconut to help the children understand the story but it was obvious they didn't need that but may have needed a can of spaghetti. The children were again being enabled to be multilingual participants in their own learning.

Establishing Relevance through teaching in the Margins

Woods et al (1999: 80-81)⁴⁰ discuss how 'Teaching in the Margins' enables Creative Learning to take place. The naming of this concept of taking every opportunity to develop learning excited the teachers at Lady Jane Grey, who felt it validated much of what they did which could otherwise be viewed as 'just chatting.'

After lunch, the Primary 7 class are going on a visit to the local community library. While she is waiting for everyone to return from lunch, the teacher, Annette, discusses the children's favourite books. A number of children mention Jacqueline Wilson. Annette then refers to TV and film adaptations and asks if the children know if Jacqueline Wilson writes her own adaptations and which they prefer: book or screenplay. The children respond in relation to Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings that they prefer the book as lots is missed out in the film. Annette asked if they were disappointed in the film and a girl restates that lots is missed out in the film. Another girl says she had imagined characters and places and then the film was different. A boy says he was disappointed in the Lord of the Rings film because the book leaves you hanging and wanting to read the next book, which the film didn't. He suggested that The Hobbit should have been made first as a film to help people understand the story.

Lady Jane Grey fieldnotes, 12th June, 2003

Annette could have used this time for administration but chose instead to discuss books and films, giving value to the children's experiences. Natasha referred to this constant teaching when she discussed her enjoyment of the job in the bilingual base.

⁴⁰ WOODS, P., BOYLE, M. and HUBBARD, N. (1999) *Multicultural Children in the Early Years*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon

I think more people should have experience of this (teaching bilingual children). It really makes you aware of what you're doing; why you're doing it. You have to really question yourself all the time: Why am I doing this? What are they getting from it? I enjoy it. I get a real thrill from it. I think it's really challenging and I love the push that it gives me. I love the fact that I do have to work really hard. I know that sounds really pathetic but I do. --- I'm not just following textbooks or prescribed texts. I like the fact that I have to think about it all.

Natasha, Primary 2/3 Bilingual base teacher

The teachers at Lady Jane Grey Primary identified constant teaching and flexibility as central to their practice. These factors helped them to spontaneously respond to learners' interests, another feature which Woods et al (1999, opus cit.) consider enables creative teaching.

Teaching Strategies

Further consideration of an identification of teacher strategies and perspectives for developing creative learning in Lady Jane Grey Primary indicates a number of issues concerning school and classroom organisation can be seen to have led to the ability for pupils to learn creatively.

Space is used imaginatively by the teachers. Although the school is a traditional Victorian building with separate classroom spaces, furnished with tables and chairs, the teachers carefully consider the best use of space for the teaching that is planned. The existence of some empty spaces in the school due to falling roles has enhanced the ability for a creative use of the space. On arriving in any particular classroom area it is not always predictable what it will look like, so all furniture may have been moved to the sides of the room to create a large open floor space for role play; a spare room may have clothes racks, trunks of clothes and curtained areas to provide a backstage changing room for a performance; the furniture and instruments may have been removed from the music room to create space for the children to experiment with the boxes of 'junk' (paper, tins, tubes, dried beans, wire ---) to make their own instruments or the head teacher's office may have been kitted out with video recording equipment to enable the children to conduct interviews with members of

staff. Or indeed, the activities for the session may not be within the confines of the school walls but, rather, in the local playground, park, library, supermarket or recycling centre.⁴¹

A significant feature of the teaching developed by Jane, the team leader of the bilingual base is collaborative teaching. Jane focuses on collaboration between pupils as essential for the achievement of the bilingual learners, but also on collaboration between teachers as being essential for this achievement. So collaboration is a teaching and learning strategy that is worked towards for the mutual benefit of children, parents, staff and wider community. .

So there might be children who are creatively thinking but it might be in their own language and without putting them in situations where you want them to work together collaboratively and use either their own language or English or a mixture of both then you don't get that creative thinking or collaborative working

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader⁴²

She strives to achieve collaboration between teachers by working hard for the whole school as well as for the base.

I was going into folk's classes and going I'll take your class now you just go and do what you want; I'll just take your class and I wanted to do that as well; I think it was partly --- to prove to people that you know I'm not just up here taking four children, you know skiving --- cos you know some people were kind of saying to me things like Oh were you a teacher before, you know, as if I'm not a teacher now. ---

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader

She acknowledges that this collaborative teaching is a difficult ethos to establish in a situation where people have been used to teaching their own class:

⁴¹ All examples offered here and in subsequent sections are from CLASP Glasgow fieldnotes

⁴² All quotes are from CLASP Glasgow fieldnotes and interviews.

Yeah, there's a lot of judgements and I felt as if I had to come in and prove myself so the first few months were doing a lot of well you know I'll take your class and I'll do it and I'll lead the lesson. So now I'm trying to get more of you know well I'll lead the lesson but I do want you involved as well so that's the kind of stage I'm at just now which I think we're kind of getting there more with but there's still a lot of --- strange attitudes sometimes

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader

Jane recognises that the organisation and indeed existence of the base could mitigate against collaboration between mainstream and asylum seeking children and for this reason believes the extra-curricular clubs provide an essential space for co-participation:

It's good that there's a mixture of kids there as well. I like the fact, I like the kids all being together and mixing because even the mixture of ages cos it's P4-P7 is good. I think it's also good for the bilingual kids who are with me a lot of the time because I'm aware how often they're with me cos it's maths and language in the morning and reception in the afternoon so they're really only in class for an hour a day--- so it's not a lot of time in the (mainstream) class and I think that also contributes to the fact that they don't say much (in the mainstream) cos they're not in enough to make the bonds with the other kids ---

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader, my words in brackets

She considers that sometimes the practice of the mainstream class however may not promote collaboration:

and they are all working separately --- and it is a shame that we don't have more EAL⁴³ staff where we could go into the class but then that would just cause other problems cos you're working silently and you cannae really play your language game in big loud voices or ----- or sit on the floor.

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader

⁴³ EAL: English as an Additional Language

While clearly being in favour of independent thinking and creative learning, Jane considers that as a teacher you maybe operate in a way which does not in fact promote creativity, and that it can be beneficial for children to work with other adults who will not try to take control of their ideas:

I think as teachers you do get very bogged down in this I am the font of all knowledge so they'll not be able to do that unless I show them or tell them how to do it and I think sometimes as a teacher you don't give them freedom ---

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader

Referring to the Art Club visits to The Lighthouse⁴⁴, Jane acknowledges some scepticism initially as to the children's ability to come up with the goods:

--- I mean even when they (the children) were doing their own ideas I was still going round

sticking my oar in --- Is that the one you're choosing? Oh that's not a very good one really, is it? --- and before you know it I've told them what to do instead of they had chosen something completely different. It's trying to step back but other adults, I think adults who are not teachers do do that(step back) more and just give them the freedom. So it's really good that they're getting the chance to --mix with adult adults, as opposed to teacher adults, real adults.

Jane, Primary 6/7 bilingual base teacher and team leader, my words in brackets

Collaborating with other adults and professionals is one of the benchmarks which is used to indicate if student teachers in Scotland are ready to graduate as probationer teachers. Student teachers are given targeted opportunities to undertake collaborative activities but are also expected to develop the skills of collaboration as they study, record the collaborative ventures they have been engaged in and reflect on the outcomes of these. However, the nature of many primary schools in Scotland means that the opportunities for real collaboration are limited when actually teaching, with teachers mainly having individual responsibility and a certain degree of autonomy for their own class. Jane, and indeed the other three GASSP teachers under her

⁴⁴ The Lighthouse is a Centre for Art and Design in Glasgow. Jane and I accompanied the school Art Club for three workshop sessions making a film to celebrate International year of Architecture under the tutelage of two arts workers.

leadership, are striving to achieve collaboration in the school and raised some of the difficulties they encountered. However the collaboration in this school was frequently characterised by relationships outside the classroom.

At the time of the aforementioned visit to The Lighthouse, Jane would have normally had teaching responsibility for the Primary 6 and 7 reception group.

The children from the reception group who are not in the art club will be in their mainstream classes this afternoon and Jen tells them what work they can do if they are not involved in the class work.

Lady Jane Grey field notes

This arrangement is indicative of good cooperation between staff. Although the class teachers did not expect to have the reception children in their class this afternoon there was no expression of resentment. The children did not show concern at a change to their routine, indicative of their feeling of security within the school. They were happy to be in the bilingual base for reception or to be in the mainstream class. None of the children who were not going on the trip to the Lighthouse express envy towards the children who were going. The children all have their own choice of after school activity and this often involves participation in out of school events.

I spent every interval and lunchtime in the staff room and made field notes after the breaks. In my notes I described a very together feeling in the staff room, characterised by the ways in which the teachers interacted and listened to and cared about each other. There were no apparent cliques and everyone seems interested in everyone else. Many topics of conversation were covered in the break times but, although there were usually about 12 staff in the room, when one person spoke, everyone listened. There was a general air that what anyone said was important and interesting. Many of the teachers share out of school pursuits. They talk to the children about these as well as to the other teachers. The refugee children are not seen as the concern of the base but of the whole school and genuine sympathy was expressed for the racism experienced by children who have already faced many traumas prior to arriving in Glasgow. Shared experiences among some members of staff become vicarious experiences for the whole staff. The teachers also shared

their out of school experiences, via photos and stories, with the children they teach who could see at first hand that the teachers had a life outside school and were friendly with each other.

This respect for and interest in others' feelings and opinions is carried into the classrooms and marks the relationships between teachers and pupils and, thus, that fostered between the pupils by the teachers.

The teachers themselves place a high value on their own learning, engaging in numerous in-service activities and reporting on these to colleagues and discussing how they will take what they have learned into the classroom.

Although there is considerable team teaching in the school, largely as a result of the bilingual base teachers working alongside their mainstream colleagues to facilitate the mainstreaming of the bilingual children, this team teaching is not always characterised by collaboration. In the Primary 7 class there are two job-sharing teachers. There is genuine collaboration when Jane and Annette team – teach, marked, for example, by them finishing off each others' sentences and looking to each other for what to do next. This collaboration is something which Jane is striving to develop and the other class teacher is not yet ready for total collaboration, although by sitting watching and listening and responding to pupil needs, she indicates she is on the way to collaboration. Annette did in fact comment in an interview on the team teaching and its benefits for the bilingual pupils:

So we're having to integrate an awful lot more so they (the bilingual pupils) don't see Jane being their teacher cos we do things together.

Annette, Primary 7 mainstream teacher

The bilingual base teachers and some of the mainstream teachers frequently choose, when discussing their teaching, to use a discourse which, according to Woods' features of relevance, control, ownership, innovation, can be characterised as creativity based. Thus, Dawn, the Primary 1 quoted earlier in this paper, used relevance as a key term in discussing how her teaching now differs from when she was a mainstream class teacher:

I asked Dawn if her experience teaching the children from asylum seeking families would have an impact on her teaching in the mainstream.⁴⁵

Oh, definitely, --- every lesson, I would definitely change because it's just amazing the difference you get out the children. I mean the rewards you get and the work you get back if you put the input in, but you've got to have the props, you've got to cart everything in from home, you know, and, and make it real for them, so definitely, I would definitely change my ways.

Diane, Primary 1 Bilingual Base Teacher

The base and the children have also affected the mainstream teachers' approach to teaching and some of these teachers are also using the discourse of creative teaching. Here, Annette talks passionately about the need to make the teaching relevant to the children even if the content is not something that she is interested in. She wants the children to take control of their learning by contributing their ideas and interests and believes that her role is to be flexible and responsive so that the children will have ownership of the knowledge:

The kids are bringing in ideas but I love the kids bringing books to me. I hate Lord of the Rings; I hate it with a passion; I can't abide it. But I now know all the characters and I go back and I have to slog my way through these things cos it's the interest of the children --- you've got to be adaptable. I've got to get in there and pitch it at their level. and try and run with their interests. And --- each year I don't come to it thinking I can do the same as I did before. I can't, you just can't; you don't know the dynamics of the class; you don't know the interest of the class. And I think being creative is being able to pick up on these links and regardless of whether it's of my interest;--- But I think you always have to be prepared to go with something --- you have to be able to draw the links. I think you have to be really ready to adapt. And I have to watch Big Brother. I have to be aware of what's going on. You have to know the lingo. You have to or you're e becoming passive. You're not pitching it at the level for them. --- I have to be down at that level and

⁴⁵ The GASSP project is temporarily funded and the majority of the GASSP teachers will return to mainstream class teaching when the project ends.

know what's fun and keep up with David Beckham or whatever. That is being creative. You have to be interested in and excited in what they're excited about.

Annette, Primary 7 mainstream teacher

Jackie, the Primary 6 mainstream teacher, is excited about the way in which the bilingual children in her class have made her re-evaluate her teaching style:

I think it's really positive,--- although it can be hard work, and sometimes it's a bit--- daunting when you realise, that child's really not understanding what I'm saying at the moment, how am I going to communicate this in a different way, and that's when I realise I'm the queen of hand movements, and that on some occasions I just look like a windmill, and (I'm) constantly moving my hands, but the other day the kids, we were talking about the ground and I said "mossy" and they all made this movement before I did and they've started picking it up. Mossy was scooting⁴⁶ little fingers together, I just thought that was fab, that sums up how the teaching in the room's going now, we're all doing it.

Jackie, Primary 6 mainstream teacher, my words in brackets

Jackie has acknowledged that the children are important in the teaching process as well as herself as the teacher. She has been teaching for six years but contrasts her teaching now with how she used to teach when she first graduated and recalls fondly the creative teaching that she received as a child:

When I first started teaching, even when I was at college and they were talking about 5 to 14, and I was a great believer at college, 5 to 14 offers us structure, and progression and yes, you need structure, you can't just go willy-nilly and go and teach something and have no structure, you must have it planned. I guess that's when you're a new teacher and you need structure and you need to follow steps, and I used to listen to some of the older teachers, my mother and aunts included, and go "No, you need to have something to, to follow, you need a guideline, you need a book" and now I've been teaching for six years and I want to go back to the way my mum and aunt talk about teaching, and about teaching that I remember getting at school, and that would be primary five, Mr Mc, we started an art project on animals, it then

⁴⁶ This is a made up word to indicate moving fingers rapidly, scrunched together, to show what mossy feels like.

became a topic, as a class we made a ten foot papier-mâché shark, which I believe still hangs in the foyer of my old primary school, and it was that kind of enthusiasm. I remember giving up lunchtimes to be making the papier-mâché shark, and on reflection he must have been straight out of college, very enthusiastic and curse that shark for six months of his life because he was there doing it every lunch time, but I just think that it's now too focussed on academics, and I also think with my own son, who's in primary three, I listen to him talk and it's too academic, there's no spontaneity, there is no "Right, we were talking about biscuits, let's make biscuits this afternoon", we can't, we're doing something else, and it's working out how we can justify on paper what teachers my mothers age have been saying for fifteen years, and now I'm starting to realise that, yeah, they were right in their eyes, and listen to them.

Jackie, Primary 6 mainstream teacher

Throughout this interview Jackie uses the discourse of creative teaching and learning. She seems to consider creative teaching to be a more mature form of teaching than the restrictive curriculum centred teaching which currently dominates Scottish education.

In addition to teaching strategies such as use of space and team teaching and to the use of a creative teaching discourse in the school, the teachers, both in the bilingual base and in the mainstream classrooms make use of learner inclusive/co-participative pedagogies which enhance the children's ability to take ownership and control of their learning.

Although the classes are initially organised on an age-related basis there were frequent opportunities for cross-age co-participation. Older children read their stories to younger children; younger children shared their findings with older children; mixed age groups went together on excursions into the community to investigate features such as recycling, play facilities and urban wildlife.

Children were encouraged to use all their linguistic resources to enable learning to take place. Inter and intra-language collaboration enhanced the understanding as children helped newcomers to participate by repeating the task requirements in another language.

Teachers were responsive to learner suggestions for development as with the Primary 6 teacher, mentioned earlier in this paper, who while undertaking an Environmental Studies topic on Scotland realised that the children had little experience of Scotland beyond the high rise flats. At the children's suggestion the class raised money and organised a trip to Loch Lomond, a famous beauty spot not far from Glasgow. The teacher talked expansively about the value of this experience for learning across the curriculum, despite being outwith the original plans:

I had to ditch my official timetable, but we did writing, because we talked about making the biscuits, we did measuring because we measured the ingredients, we did everything that we needed to cover in the curriculum, but it's very hard to prove, I find ticking boxes, you can't tick boxes, --- and we were restless and we were tired and it'd been a long winter and we needed fresh air -- when you're surrounded by high rises all day long, sometimes you need to go and look at a green mountain, and really the basis of the trip was to run around the wilderness and that's kind of it

Jackie, Primary 6 mainstream teacher

In addition to these pedagogies the school, largely since the arrival of the bilingual base, involved adults other than teachers in the children's education. Parents made costumes for school performances and made a mosaic to display in the school showing the languages of the school. The janitor and classroom assistants showed the children games they used to play in the playground. Volunteers from the community used their first language in the classrooms to communicate with children new to English. The involvement of outside experts such as art workers, the use of the local environment and the importance of after school 'clubs' have already been highlighted as further examples of inclusive and co-participative pedagogies employed by the school.

The change in pedagogy which has resulted from the arrival of the bilingual pupils has enabled the mainstream teachers to be liberated from the constraints of the curriculum and performativity demands. This could not have happened without the support of local, i.e. school level management, and this has indeed been a feature of the developing creative pedagogy in the school. The co-participation of children, bilingual base teachers, mainstream teachers, management, non-teaching staff and other adults in the school and wider community has led to a situation where newly

arrived bilingual children are using all their linguistic and cultural resources to take control of their learning. A highly effective creative learning environment has evolved which has impacted positively not only on the children and their perception of education in Scotland, but has also led the teachers to re-evaluate their role in the learning process.

Lady Jane Grey Primary as a Multilingual Conference

To date, I have reflected on how the features of creative teaching identified by Woods et al manifested themselves in Lady Jane Grey Primary. What Woods et al did not discuss however was collaboration as a characteristic of creative teaching and learning.

In this research site, collaboration between the children was essential, particularly due to the limited English of fifty percent of the pupils. The teachers used pedagogies such as cross-age co-participation and inter and intra-language collaboration to assist the children to be creative learners and also to enable integration of the children from asylum-seeking families. In addition to this, the teachers worked and played together, modelling team work and co-operation in their daily routines, although they do not suggest that this was easy.

My analysis of the field notes taken during the research leads me to tentatively suggest that in this school, there is at work a multilingual conference where the pupils work as both participants, presenters and simultaneous translators. I have suggested that the teachers in the school provide the stimulus for the children's development of their own learning, acting in this multilingual conference as highly effective keynote speakers. Other adults in the school and wider community are the audience essential to the children's belief in themselves as participants and presenters. A complication⁴⁷ to this metaphor, which enhances the role played by the children in the conference, is that the children themselves frequently take over the microphone from the keynote speakers, deciding on what is relevant and how it will be developed.

⁴⁷ This complication was pointed out to me in conversations with Bob Jeffrey, co-ordinator of the CLASP project.

I have elaborated on the roles played by the other participants in the conference elsewhere. (Smyth, 2004). I now wish to investigate the data further and explore if this multilingual conference operates effectively at all times and if it truly enables creative learning or merely acts as a pleasant cover for conformity.