



iBilingualism DOES Matter!

- Language and culture are central to identity (Edwards, 2009; Cummins, 2001; Chow & Cummins, 2003)
- The right of every child to maintain these elements of 'self' (Lundy, 2012; Hernandez, 2014; Lundy 2014).
- Rapid learning of English and 'new arrivals' homogenising with British culture and values is at odds with current Scottish educational policy aiming to foster children's home language (Cameron 2012).
- GIRFEC
- UN Convention on Rights of the Child

Key messages...

- It is a child's legal right to be able to maintain their **own language and culture** in order to be able to **express themselves freely** and so that **their voice is heard**.
- If we truly want to get it right for every child then nurturing their **linguistic and cultural heritage** is vital.
- All language **learning and literacy are intrinsically linked**.
- Use of MT language(s) to **bridge the gap**.

The MTOT Project

- 2 categories: Mother Tongue/ Other Tongue
- 14/15 pilot
- 15/16 400 entries
- 4 workshops for 50+ teachers
- Pupils aged 5 – 17
- 36 different languages
- Celebration event and prize-giving

The Project



Celebration Event @SECC



- Performances

Celebration Event @ SECC



It was breath-taking to see and hear everyone's poems and how they are all so different (Pupil)

The proudest moment of my teaching career (Teacher)

A wonderful event! Great to showcase the talented youngsters. Love languages! (Parent)

What a great day! I really enjoyed taking part and meeting lots of nice people (Pupil)

An opportunity for children to let their souls fly! (Teacher)

Every language is a window to a new world (Audience member)

Pupil interviews

- Mother Tongue Other Tongue has been first of all a great and **unique opportunity** to use the language.
- By using the language more than usual and in a school setting, children felt they could **improve their language skills**.
- Many children reported their writing skills in the mother tongue to be low. If parents were unable to assist their children in this process, the pupils still managed to produce a piece of poetry using **creative literacy skills** by transcribing the sounds of their mother tongue based on English phonics.
- A lot of children have expressed their fear of losing their mother tongue as English becomes dominant in their everyday life. MTOT has been a real relief for them as it was seen as a way to **prevent language attrition**.
- Despite having a real impact on each child's individual perceptions, Mother Tongue Other Tongue has also been felt as a genuine collaborative experience. Children enjoyed **sharing languages, being part of a group and learning about others' languages too**.
- Children were able to talk about aspects of their mother tongue, as they perceive it, whether they are formal or social aspects of the language; They **developed thoughts on the mother tongue / metalinguistic skills**.
- For many, finding or creating a poem in the mother tongue meant recalling memories from their early years. Children were happy to **share these memories, whether they were stories, songs, life experiences or parts of their cultural heritage**.
- As a follow-up project to MTOT, some children have expressed the idea of then teaching their mother tongue to the rest of the school and **sharing their knowledge of languages**. Along with the language itself, some children feel it is important to pass on both their linguistic and cultural heritage to make other pupils aware of language diversity.
- Children's first reaction when the competition project was put forward was not always a positive one; reluctance to participate was sometimes due to a lack of confidence using their mother tongue in the school setting. The project **boosted their confidence**.
- Overall, participating in Mother Tongue Other Tongue was seriously seen as an important task of **representing one's own language and culture**.
- k) Writing the commentary in English has also been appreciated. Children got to express their feelings and feedback on the experience. Children appreciated using both languages and felt it was important to **keep bilingualism balanced**.

Testimonials

- “Being part of the Mother Tongue Other Tongue project has been a privilege. I have heard the ‘other voices’ of my bilingual pupils, witnessed them carefully craft their poems, laugh about the differences in language and, above all, feel valued and respected for their ability to speak with another voice. This event has opened my eyes to the importance of supporting children to continue to learn in their mother tongue and of engaging with my pupils’ voices, in whatever language that may be.”

Ruth Cunningham, Teacher, Renfrewshire Council

- “Congratulations to these hardworking and creative pupils. They have demonstrated excellent language skills against a very competitive field. Knowing other languages is such a great skill for life and this project shines a light on some excellent work throughout the country.”

Councillor Maureen Henry, East Dunbartonshire Council

- “Don't stop using your mother tongue! It helps us remember who we are!”

Kirsten Barrett, Teacher, Glasgow City Council via Twitter

Next Steps.....

- Sign up to Bilingualism Matters
- Sign up to weekly SCILT e-bulletin
- Register your school for MTOT project
- On-line evaluation to be sent out

References

- Cameron, D. (2012) *Verbal Hygiene*. London: Routledge.
- Chow, P., & Cummins, J. (2003). Valuing multilingual and multicultural approaches to learning. In S. R. Schecter & J. Cummins (Eds.), *Multilingual education in practice: Using diversity as a resource* (pp. 32–61). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and Identity: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hernandez, D.J. (2014). Child Well-Being and Ethnic Diversity in Affluent Societies. In Ben-Arieh, A., Casas, F., Frones, I., & Korbin, J. E. (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Well-Being* (pp. 3159–3192). Dordrecht: Springer
- Lundy, L. (2012) Children's rights and educational policy in Europe, *Oxford Review of Education*, 38, (pp. 393–411).
- Lundy, L. (2014) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Child Well-Being. In Ben-Arieh, A., Casas, F., Frones, I., & Korbin, J. E. (Eds.), *Handbook of Child Well-Being* (pp. 2439–2462). Dordrecht: Springer
- Scottish Government (2011) *The vital importance of getting it right for every child and young person* (leaflet) Scotland: Crown Copyright
- United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Available at: http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publication-pdfs/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf