NALDIC/Collaborative Learning Project Conference, Nottingham, 29 June 2006

New Arrivals and the Equalities Agenda

Robin Richardson

Introduction: a London bus

In his book *Only Half of Me: being a Muslim in Britain*, journalist Rageh Omaar recalls a brief episode he happened to witness on a London bus. It was a cold and dark afternoon, he mentions, 'the kind of winter's day when it seems the sun has struggled to rise at all'. He was sitting on the lower deck and suddenly became aware of eight teenage schoolgirls tumbling down from the top deck, shouting and laughing. They were from a range of backgrounds and included some who were Somali. Omaar writes:

> The Somali girls switched back and forth, in and out, from a thick London accent to Somali. One of them turned to her white friend and screeched; 'Those bacon crisps are disgusting! Just keep that minging smell away from me girl, I tell ya!' and then fell about laughing. They discussed each other's clothes and another girl in their class, then one of the Somali girls shouted, 'Bisinka! Did you really say that?' In one breath she went from a Somali Muslim word, 'Bisinka, which means 'By God's Mercy' or 'With God's help', and which Somalis say when something shocking happens, to English. None of her friends, black, white or Muslim, batted an eyelid.

Other kinds of thing involving people of Muslim heritage have happened on London buses, and on the London transport system more generally. Omaar is well aware of this. Indeed, references to 7 and 21 July 2005 run through his book with grim frequency. He is not starry-eyed. But he takes pains also to accentuate facets of London life that are ordinary, normal, positive and hopeful, as in the vignette quoted above. Amid vivid reminders of linguistic, religious, cultural and ethnic differences and interactions, none of the school students in his vignette batted an eyelid. 'New arrivals', and the diversity and multiculturalism they bring with them, can be threatening and can cause deep anxiety – for Muslims, Omaar stresses, as well as for everyone else. But that is not the whole story.

Reasonable accommodation: a metaphor

In national and European legislation, the equalities agenda has six strands, to do respectively with age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. This lecture is about the ethnicity strand and about part of the religion strand. In all six strands, though in some more than others, a key concept is 'reasonable accommodation' or 'reasonable adjustment'. One must do what one reasonably can, the point is, to accommodate, or to adjust to people different from oneself.

It's relevant to consider the case of ramps at the entrances of public buildings. When these were first required by law, there was a lot of muttering about political correctness. How ridiculous, people said (or thought) to spend so much money on something that will benefit such a small numerical minority, those who use wheel-chairs. But actually, of course, ramps are of enormous value to lots of other people as well – parents and grandparents with infants in buggies, for example, and anyone with a heavy suitcase on wheels, and anyone temporarily disabled with a sprained ankle. We also all of us benefit from ramps in a rather enviable or philosophical way. For ramps subliminally remind people, every time they see one, regardless of whether they actually use it, that our society recognises and accommodates difference. We are all of us a bit odd, or even very odd, in the eyes of some of our fellow-citizens. We all of

us therefore benefit from living in a society where oddness is accepted and welcomed. (Ramps are inherently welcoming – their abiding message is 'Come on in!')

In an analogous way, the things we do in schools for new arrivals are of great use to all learners, not just to a numerical minority. I wish to consider in this lecture three ways in which this is so: (a) EAL theory and practice, which like a ramp provides access for a wide range of pupils, not just those for whom they were developed; (b) measures to counter racist bullying in playgrounds and corridors, which promote mutually respectful behaviour from which similarly all benefit; and (c) the concept of big ideas across the curriculum, which help all pupils in their academic, personal and social development.

EAL theory and practice

In the early 1990s the government requested all LEAs to state how they were going to assess and define pupils' competence in English as an additional language. A satirical response from one quarter included the following statement:

> Stage One of second language development will be deemed to have occurred when pupils can understand their class teacher. Stage Two of second language development will be deemed to have occurred when pupils can understand their headteacher. With regard to Stage Three of second language development, we have decided to abolish it.

The emphasis on mere comprehension was a comment on the mechanistic, simplistic and apolitical view of language implicit at that time in official discourse. The reference to abolishing so-called stage three was a comment on the fact that most people in education did not know how to engage in practice with the tasks required. Those who did know had no power. The ignorance and indifference of those with power were compounded by the fact that no financial resources were available.

Over the last ten years the situation has been slowly improving. Five points are worth emphasising:

1. 'Stage three' is not primarily to do with writing as distinct from speaking but to do with academic language (more accurately, 'curriculum language') as distinct from everyday language. Some of the principal differences between the two types of language are tabulated in Handout 1. (See end of text.)

2. Learners need to be able to speak academic language before they can write it. Handout 2 (see end of text) is based on Cummins' famous chart and illustrates the argument that the route to curriculum language goes *via*, so to speak, reflective discussion and collaborative group work.

3. The teaching of English as an additional language is an academic specialism, not something anyone can do with a minimum of common sense. Amongst other things, the specialism involves being able to design and supervise collaborative group work such that learners do not merely remain within their cognitive and linguistic comfort zones.

4. Mainstream teachers need training in how to tap into the academic knowledge, and its practical implementation, of specialist EAL teachers.

5. There is substantial theoretical and practical knowledge in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) field. All too often, EAL teachers have looked down their noses at TEFL teachers. But there is great expertise there, and a wealth of effective and imaginative ideas about what to do in practice.

Countering racist bullying

'Anybody who was ever called unkind names at school must be gasping with astonishment this weekend,' said an editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* in April this year, 'at the news that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has thought fit to bring criminal charges against a 10-year-old who is said to have called an 11-year-old schoolmate a 'Paki' and 'Bin Laden' in the playground.' It continued***:***

> Every word uttered by Jonathan Finestein, the District Court Judge who is hearing the case at Salford Youth Court, rang with common sense. The decision to prosecute, he said, was 'crazy'. It was 'political correctness gone mad' (there are times when only a cliché will do to describe the sheer crassness of modern British bureaucracy).
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> 'I was repeatedly called fat at school,' said the judge. 'Does this amount to a criminal offence?... Nobody is more against racist abuse than me, but these are boys in a playground, this is nonsense... There must be other ways of dealing with this apart from criminal prosecution. In the old days, the headmaster would have got them both and given them a good clouting.' The judge had other home truths to tell, which ought to give the Greater Manchester Police and the CPS pause for thought. 'This is how stupid the whole system is getting,' he said. 'There are major crimes out there and the police don't bother to prosecute. If you get your car stolen, it doesn't matter, but you get two kids falling out ... this is nonsense.'

'Two kids falling out' – that was how the case was presented in the media. It was a mere 'playground spat', they said. What actually happened was that three white boys repeatedly harassed and persecuted a boy of mixed heritage over a period of six months or more, calling him Paki, Bin Laden and Nigger. His parents complained to the school but the abuse continued. Eventually, when the verbal abuse was accompanied by a physical attack, and the boy was injured, they went to the police. The police for their part successfully used restorative justice approaches with two of the alleged culprits, who apologised and accepted formal reprimands. The parents of the third, however, refused to let him apologise and the CPS reluctantly took the case to court.

During the four weeks immediately before the court hearing at which Mr Finestein made the remarks quoted above the DfES had organised 18 conferences around the country – two in each of England's nine regions – to introduce and disseminate web-based guidance it had prepared on dealing with racist bullying in schools. I strongly recommend you to visit the site at www.teachernet.gov.uk/racistbullying.

One the sections that Mr Finestein would have found particularly enlightening (one hopes) is the guidance on supporting learners in schools who are targeted by racisms, and guidance on challenging those who are responsible. The latter is based on a typology developed by Home Office researchers in the 1990s. You can (a) ignore (b) rebuke (c) ratiocinate against or (d) adopt a holistic approach to, incidents of racist bullying. The dangers of ignoring are obvious.

Those of rebuking are that they may cause bitterness and a resolve, next time, not to be found out. Those of logical arguments are that, though they may hone the debating skills of teachers, they may feed the feelings of being ignored, abandoned and forgotten to which the BNP, for example, appeals on its website.

A holistic approach involves seeing and dealing with racist bullying within a social context that involves bystanders and reinforcers as well as ringleaders, and – of course – putting one's primary energy into being proactive and preventative. It's much easier to respond effectively when something happens if one has first thought through how to prevent it.

Big ideas across the curriculum

I wish to suggest six big ideas that should be present in all we teach, whether at school or at home – things which can be taught to children from a very early age and right through to university and college. First I'll just name them so you can have a feel for where the talk is going. Then I will consider them one by one. They are Shared Humanity, Belonging and Identity, Local and Global, Achievement Everywhere, Conflict and Justice, and Race and Racisms.

Shared Humanity

But, as everyone here knows, there is only one race, the human race. 'The time will come,' wrote Anne Frank in her diary in 1944, 'when we'll be people again and not just Jews.' She longed to be recognised and treated as a full human being. It is because all human beings share the same basic humanity that all should be treated equally. In all cultures and at all times in history human beings have certain basic things in common – physiological needs for food, shelter and good health, most obviously, but also social and psychological needs to belong to a community, to love and be loved, to have a sense of personal significance, and to feel safe and secure.

It was to these latter kinds of need that Anne Frank was referring. So was Shakespeare's Shylock when, in the most famous antiracist lines in English literature, he used metaphors from shared bodily experience to affirm that he and his community were paid-up members of the human race, with the same psychology and the same rights to justice as everyone else: 'If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die?'

Another aspect of shared humanity is well introduced in a recent story by Shyama Perera entitled *One Small Step*. It's 21 July 1969, late evening, and is told from the point of view of Mala, who is of mixed Pakistani and English heritage and almost 12 years old. She's at a party for adult members of her family and this evening they have put the household's TV in the small garden at the back of the house.

> Around midnight, tired and bored, I wandered outside again and saw those magical words on the screen. Man has landed on the moon. I read them again and again. Man has landed on the moon. Man has landed on the moon. MAN HAS LANDED ON THE MOON.
>
> For that millisecond, as the enormity of it sank in, and before I ran inside screeching with excitement, my heart stopped. The memory brings a lump to my throat even now. Because science was so fresh to me, and everything from the clothes we wore to the music we played to the cars

> we drove was about pushing ideas to their limits. Each new achievement moved me. I was wild with the joy of it! And the adults were too. They streamed out into the yard and we all just stared at the screen, filled with wonder.

It's important that we should teach children, both at home and at school, about the human species to which they belong, and the Planet Earth which they share with all others.

Identity and belonging

All human beings have certain perceptions and values in common – yes. But shared humanity is not, so to speak, the whole story. Anne Frank shows in her diary that she was much more than 'just a Jew' – she was also a daughter, a teenager, a Dutch citizen, a budding writer, a sexual being, a friend. Yet Jewishness was a fundamental feature of her identity, not something incidental or peripheral. In the same way, every human being belongs to a mixture of homes, traditions, cultures, stories, relationships. In consequence, being different from most other people in terms of where one belongs is a fundamental and inescapable part of being human.

To be human is to be different and is to be in constant interaction with strangers – people whose perceptions, experiences, narratives and agendas are different from one's own. We're all of us mixtures. The stand-up comedian Ken Dodd observes sadly sometimes in his act that what he likes about the British is that they are not foreigners. But differences of nationality and language, as also differences of age, gender, ethnicity and social class, are inescapable.

Two or three weeks ago, I was with a group of nursery teachers. One of them described how a white mother of a mixed heritage child had come to the school – it's in a small village in South Dorset – because the child was very unhappy at school and had been a nuisance and a troublemaker in the class. In the course of the conversation the teacher said to the mother: 'The other day your son said "my mother's white and my father's black", and the mother burst into tears and clung to the teacher, sobbing uncontrollably. She described how when the child was born, the white grandmother had refused, so to speak, to see his colour. She had continually put talcum powder all over him and put cream on him so that he would have a lighter skin. His grandmother had not recognised his identity, but he'd sussed it out with the help and support of his nursery school and felt proud of his dual heritage. The school had also helped his mother recognise him, who he really was. That was why she cried so much, she was crying with gratitude.

One of my favourite poems was written in the London borough of Southall. The author was a young Somali woman aged fifteen. The poem is called Home and it goes like this:

> The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland –
> That's a very long name for home,
> Somalia's easier.
> Southall's easy, too.

The poem is about five separate but intertwining areas, five separate but intertwining places where the teenager acts and interacts, where she has and shapes her identity, where she is at home. She names three of the identities, three of the homes, directly but to the other two by implication. The homes she mentions directly are the state where she lives, the cultural community she belongs to and the neighbourhood where she walks and hangs around in. All the children and young people represented at this conference through their parents and teachers similarly have these three homes – the UK, a cultural community, and a specific neighbourhood. All three of these homes are changing, not static, and one of the reasons they are changing is that young people move and navigate amongst them. The other two homes in

the poem are the school where the poem was written, and the world, the globalised world in which the UK and Somalia are just two of the interacting places.

To summarise: we want our children to feel at home and to belong somewhere, but also we want them to find out about other places, other identities, and to move comfortably from one home to another.

Local and global

This is a hugely important topic but I am not going to discuss it in detail. We could also call it interdependence or, increasingly nowadays, globalisation - a notion of the world as a single place. It's important that our children should see themselves, as little Mala did in the extract I read from the story entitled *One Small Step*, as citizens of the world. The world isn't a long way away, it's here, in our immediate locality – Southall or wherever.

Achievement everywhere

The composer Nitin Sawhney enjoyed his schooldays, by and large, and had the good fortune to meet some inspirational teachers. 'But I went through school,' he writes, ' with an uneasy suspicion that I was inferior':

> I remember the excitement with which I greeted the amazing new world of my secondary school – a place to conquer life's mysteries and storm through the broad corridors of adolescence.
>
> Reality was a little different, however. My newfound world was a singularly white, all boys grammar school where the National Front would be happily distributing leaflets at our school gates … What was I taught? History. Yes, I was taught history. How wonderful an experience it would be, I imagined, to learn the origins of my ancestors – to learn of the Aryan journey to the Indus valley and of the Dravidians' historic migration to south India. How inspiring to hear of the great Moghul empire and origins of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the epic *Maharabharata*, I thought. What I did learn however was a lot easier to grasp than any of that. Five words: 'India was a British colony.' I had no problem with what I was taught *per se*…But where was the balance? Where was I in this ambitious picture of world history?
>
> So I went through school with an uneasy suspicion that I was inferior. It may have been a product of the notion that the history of the non-white population of this world is embedded in slavery and colonisation, or perhaps the echoing resonance of the word Paki as it accompanied me through the hostile corridors of the science block.

Examples of high achievement are to be found in a wide range cultures, societies and traditions, not in 'the west' only. And they are to be found in all areas of human endeavour – the arts and sciences, law and ethics, personal and family life, religion and spirituality, moral and physical courage, invention, politics, imagination.

Conflict and justice

In all societies and situations – including families, schools, villages, nations, the world – there are disagreements and conflicts of interest. In consequence there is a never-ending need to construct, and to keep in good repair, rules, laws, customs and systems that all people accept as reasonable and fair. Over the centuries philosophers and political theorists have argued at length and in depth about what the features are of a just community. Also, children from an early age have a keen interest in justice and a robust sense of what is and is not fair. In *Great Expectations* Dickens observed that 'in the little world in which children have their existence,

there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice.' The narrator, Pip, recalls an event when he was about eight years old.

> … I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry – I cannot hit on the right term for the smart – God knows what its name was – that tears started to my eyes.
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> … I looked about me for a place to hide my face in, and got behind one of the gates in the brewery-lane, and leaned my sleeve against the wall there, and leaned my forehead on it, and cried. As I cried, I kicked the wall, and took a hard twist at my hair; so bitter were my feelings, and so sharp was the smart without a name.
>
> …'In the little world in which children have their existence, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter. Within myself I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time I could speak, that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me.

Race and racisms

All human beings belong to the same species – there is a single human race. However, there is a widespread false belief that differences in physical appearance are significant, particularly with regard to skin colour, and that physical appearance is a reliable sign of who belongs in a society and who does not. In the past it was falsely believed by white people, for example, that they were superior to not-white people and this belief was used to justify domination, exploitation and enslavement. Although false, the belief exercised a powerful influence and still persists. Beliefs about belonging and superiority are expressed indirectly through practices, behaviour and systems ('institutional racism') as well directly in words.

The United Nations World Conference Against Racism in 2001 summarised its concerns with the phrase 'racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance'. The equivalent phrase used by the Council of Europe is 'racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance'. Both phrases are cumbersome, but valuably signal that there is a complex cluster of matters to be addressed. The single word 'racism', as customarily used, does not encompass them all. The plural term 'racisms' is sometimes used to evoke this point.

Racism takes different forms, the point is, according to who the victims are and what their characteristics are believed to be. For example, anti-Black racism is different from anti-Asian racism, and both are different from anti-Muslim racism, also known as Islamophobia. Anti-Irish racism must be recognised as a significant factor in the history of the British Isles, as also racism directed against Gypsies and Travellers. Latterly, there has emerged in Britain and Ireland, and indeed throughout western Europe, a set of phenomena known as anti-refugee racism or xeno-racism. And., as everyone here today knows, there is something that could be called anti-newarrival racism.

Conclusion

Rageh Omaar ends his book with these words:

> It is only when the voice of the individual is lifted above the waves of condemnation that all of us can begin to see more clearly and perhaps start to realise that our worlds are not actually in conflict after all.

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Everyday Language and Curriculum Language

Success in the education system depends on being proficient in what may be called 'curriculum English', as distinct from 'ordinary' or 'everyday' English, with each curriculum subject having its own distinctive language. This tabulation summarises the principal differences.

Types of difference	**EVERYDAY LANGUAGE**	**CURRICULUM LANGUAGE**
Mode	Mainly spoken	Mainly written
	To maintain or develop a relationship with a friend or peer	To demonstrate knowledge to a teacher or examiner
Relationships with others	Very or extremely important	Little or no importance
Sense of personal identity and family background	Very or extremely important	Little or no importance
Feelings – pleasure, annoyance, anxiety, etc	Expression of feelings is very common	Expression of personal feelings is not encouraged and is rare
Subject-matter	Immediate and personal interest	Seldom of immediate interest
Location of subject-matter	Often can be seen as the talk takes place	Seldom can be seen as the writing takes place
Whether about shared experience	Often about an experience that the speaker and listener share	Seldom about an experience that the writer and reader share
Possibility and speed of feedback	Immediate feedback is available on how well one is communicating	In the case of written language, feedback is not immediate, and may take hours, days or weeks
Non-verbal signs – facial expression, posture, gesture	Extremely and unavoidably important	Of no importance at all
Jokes	Frequent	Rare
Relationship to thinking	Often one 'thinks aloud' – i.e. discovers one's thoughts in the actual process of talking	One thinks first, then uses language to express thought
Lexical items	Mostly of one or two syllables, derived from Germanic or Anglo-Saxon sources	Many of two or three syllables, derived from Greek, Latin or French sources
Pronouns	Clear from the immediate situation what they refer to	Clarity depends on knowing grammatical rules
Technical terms	Seldom used	Must be used
Register of language	Frequent use of slang and colloquialisms	Formal language essential
Statements	Frequently short phrases	Must be complete sentences
Grammar	Standard English not important and sometimes frowned on	Standard English essential

Source: adapted from *Enriching Literacy* by Brent Language Service, Trentham Books 1999

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Routes to Curriculum Language

A separate paper for today's conference recalls differences between everyday English and curriculum English. Another crucial difference is to do with **cognitive challenge** – i.e. between easy problems and difficult ones. Everyday language can be about difficult problems and curriculum language can be about elementary ones.

If one bears in mind both sets of distinctions, it can be said that there are four main types of language use. They are referred to in the tabulation below with the terms *exercising, networking and nattering, talking to learn* and *making the grade.*

Register of English	Low level of cognitive challenge	High level of cognitive challenge
Curriculum language	**Exercising** Examples include giving rote-learned answers to questions, copying from books or the board, doing various sentence-completion exercises.	**Making the grade** Examples include writing answers in SATs and GCSE exams, and all or most written work in direct preparation for such tests and exams.
Everyday language	**Networking** Examples include text messages and postcards, and 'passing the time of day' – chat about last night's TV, pop stars, sport, gossip.	**Talking to learn** Examples include talk within structured discussion exercises requiring genuine communication, and notes arising from such exercises.

The tabulation provides a way of picturing the idea of **'routes to curriculum English'.** Traditionally, the way to get learners from bottom left to top right has been *via*, so to speak, top left. This has worked well for some learners, and continues to work well. It's often an appropriate route.

But for some learners, or even all learners in some of the subjects they study, the route needs to take in bottom right – they need to engage in structured oral discussion with each other in pairs or small groups. For them, discussion is not a distraction from real work, or an optional extra, but essential.

The table above is drawn from the writings of James Cummins and appears in this form in *Enriching Literacy* by Brent Language Service, Trentham Books 1999.