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# London Digest

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LONDON EDUCATION  
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## Multilingual Learners in London



### Contributions on:

#### Biliteracy

Use of home languages in  
mainstream classrooms

#### Art and Literacy

#### Community schools

Negotiating cultural differences  
in further education

#### Identity and language

#### Attitudes to bilingualism

#### Role of parents and grandparents

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## TATE Britain: Ideas Factory Action Research Project

SOPHIA DIAMANTOPOULOU IOE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

This project aimed to explore the impact that art has on children's literacy development, placing a particular focus on EAL children. It ran from September 2005 – June 2006 in collaboration with two Newham and Greenwich primary schools. The project involved Year 3 and 4 pupils and a wide range of practitioners: artists, writers, poets, gallery educators, classroom teachers and a researcher. This project is a part of Ideas Factory arts project.

### Research question:

- How can working in collaboration with artists and writers in schools and the gallery support children's literacy development?

### Key findings:

The research problematised the notion of 'EAL children's literacy development'. It looked at the process of children's meaning making, rather than assessing a piece of writing.

It identified that:

- The integrated teaching of art and literacy impacts on children's work by enabling them to experience literacy beyond the narrowly circumscribed realms of a school subject.
- EAL children's experiences and aspects of their cultural identity emerged as an additional resource and represented a

significant interest that drove meaning making. This was particularly the case when they were integrated into an expanded notion of literacy that the gallery allowed for.

- The 'integrated approach' has a potential to transform literacy teaching.
- The different contexts of school and gallery along with their distinct definitions of literacy allow for different patterns of children's meaning making and literacy development to emerge.

The research identified many other areas in which the programme had a significant impact on all children, including the EAL pupils and highlighted the most positive ones as:

- Opportunities to learn outside school
- The richness of the resources that the gallery environment provides.
- Working with experts

### Further Information:

[www.tate.org.uk/britain/ideasfactory/](http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/ideasfactory/)  
Additional information on a follow up project extended to include Westminster: VerbalEyes: Finding a Voice through Art will be available soon on the same website. Teachers training day based on this project will be held at Tate Britain on 6th July 2007. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/teachers>

### Sponsored by:

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## Negotiating Confucian Tradition and Group Discussion: A Study in Cultural Discords Faced by Korean Students

INYOUNG YOO IOE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

This ongoing PhD study has been conducted with the Korean postgraduate engineering students currently studying at Imperial College in London and their lecturers. Questionnaires and interviews were used as research tools.

### Research questions:

- What are the perceptions of the Korean students and their lecturers in terms of: importance of English, essential study skills and required socio-cultural behaviours?

### Key initial findings:

- A cultural discord between students and lecturers has been identified on many levels.
- Korean students in their home context have mostly studied in passive ways based on teacher-centred Confucian tradition. Therefore they are unfamiliar with social and education practices based on informality and the solidarity of group discussion in British institutions. In accommodating conflicts some students develop flexibility and a strategy of intercultural competence, others fail to consider cultural problems seriously.
- Lecturers show their great discontentment and discomfort at some of the behaviours of Korean students such as a reluctance to question or engage in discussion. Their view is that Korean students tend to maintain their home culture, rather than adapt to the UK cultural norms. They are concerned if students will progress to become internationally qualified engineers. Lecturers suggest that Korean students should adopt a more outgoing attitude and actively participate in academic practices rather than only being respectful and polite to lecturers.

### Further information:

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## The Raja's Big Ears: the Journey of a Story across Cultures

RAYMONDE SNEEDON AND KANTA PATEL UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

The story of The Raja's Big Ears, as we encountered it, has been on a long journey. In the course of a study of the language use and literacy practices of Gujarati-speaking Muslim children in North London, children aged eleven were recorded retelling the tale both in English (in school) and in Gujarati (at home). The children had been given copies of the Gujarati/English version of the text to read at home. Building on Kanta Patel's experience of the story as a child, the study explores how the story travelled: from Gujarat, in India, where it is a well-known folk tale, via a skilled story-teller, to London, where it was transformed through contact with

the multicultural world of London schoolchildren.

### Research questions:

- What are the challenges faced by third generation speakers of Gujarati in retelling stories when they have had little contact with the formal language of books?
- How do they use their linguistic resources to meet the challenge?
- What insights can be gained from this example in terms of language shift, social networks and the Cummins' concept of the Common Underlying Proficiency?

### Key findings:

- These children, third generation Londoners and speakers of a dialect of Gujarati, used the process of retelling the tale to come to terms with the very formal and unfamiliar standard Gujarati of the story and to find creative ways of expressing themselves and make the language their own.

### Further information:

The text is available at [www.multilingual-matters.net/le/017/0371/le0170371.pdf](http://www.multilingual-matters.net/le/017/0371/le0170371.pdf); **Language and Education**, Vol.17:5. pp371–384.