Parents as the agents of 'Imported Bilingualism': Arguing for the new concept needed to further develop typology of bilingual families

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Abstract

In this paper I will argue for the need to introduce two new concepts: Imported Bilingualism and academic monolingualism. I have supported my argument by my previous research (Mehmedbegovic 2009, 2011, 2014, 2017, 2022) and relevant insights gained through my professional role as a consultant on bilingual education practices. Imported Bilingualism as a new concept added to the typology of bilingualism places the emphasis on foreign language learning and consequent bilingualism as an asset, resource and type of capital, which is of significant importance in terms of raising awareness that every language and every type of bilingualism is a type of capital and therefore of value. If affluent families are prepared to import it via private education in bilingual programmes or through different types of foreign language learning, then migrant parents and communities should look to pass on their home languages to their children and support them in acquiring academic literacy in those languages. Academic monolingualism is the second term I suggest needs introducing, as a term that has surfaced while exploring the consequences of families opting out of the bilingual programme and in order to understand that 'speaking a language at home', which is often used by bilingual immigrant families, is not enough. The aim of this paper is twofold: firstly, by arguing that the positioning of language as capital it can facilitate a shift of low value attitudes towards the types of bilingualism that stem from the necessity of migration, linked with poverty and under privileged communities. Secondly, positioning of language as an importable type of capital provides direct links with Bourdieu's theories (1991), process of misrecognition and symbolic violence, which illuminate reasons for low value attitudes towards own languages in minority communities.

Key words: Bilingualism, parents, language as capital, bilingual education, minority/heritage languages

Introduction

In a recent tutorial with a doctoral student, who has been working on developing her thesis proposal, a need for a new concept presented itself while discussing her focus: parents who do not live bilingual lives themselves, but have an interest in languages and want their children to grow up as bilinguals. In her proposal she was using the term 'non-native bilingual families'. In my own work I always look to actively avoid using negative definitions, meaning: defining something by not being something else. In addition to being a negative definition, 'non-native bilingual', also imposes the discourse of deficiency, which again is something that should be avoided in education. Therefore, the title of her proposal which included the term 'non-native bilingual families' challenged me instantly to offer a 'positive definition' of her intended focus.

In my search of literature for available and relevant concepts, I have identified that Garcia (1984) offered a relevant classification in the analysis of the USA context and policy. In this analysis Garcia (ibid) uses the concepts of 'natural' and 'learned' bilingualism to distinguish between bilingualism which occurs in contexts where languages come into contact and are learned 'naturally' and when a second language is learned in a formal situation, as in schools. Garcia (ibid) concludes that the 'natural' bilingualism in the US is linked to immigrant groups and therefore it is seen as controversial, linked to feelings of being foreign and disloyal in some way to the US, whereas learned bilingualism is seen as 'individual enrichment'.

Although I agree with Garcia in terms of identifying migration and immigrant groups as key factors which lead to certain types of bilingualism being controversial and devalued by the mainstream societies and consequently also by minority groups themselves, as theorised by Bourdieu (1991), I would like to argue that 'natural' and 'learned' bilingualism are problematic as concepts for several reasons. Having worked with many community groups living in diaspora (Mehmedbegovic, 2009) I have witnessed and recorded that parents in such situations have to work very hard in order for their children to maintain and further develop their home language. If children from such families do not have access to a complementary or mother tongue school they are not very likely to develop literacy in their home language. On my recent visit to University of California, Los Angeles (2023) I was invited to attend a lecture for students of Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian languages – out of six students taking these languages five were from families who immigrated into the US during the conflict in former Yugoslavia in the 90- ties. These young people are learning ab initio languages which are in fact their home languages, since, where Garcia suggests that 'natural bilingualism' will be occurring, it has failed to happen in their cases. In my consultations with these young people they shared that as university students they feel at a loss for not having developed skills in their home languages, which they are now learning with a lot of effort as foreign languages. Therefore, although immigrant groups do live with languages in contact, as Garcia (ibid) outlines, it is often hard to enthuse children to learn and use their home language when all their schooling and much of their free time happen in English (or another language of a host country). On the other hand for adults, who immigrate in their advanced age, natural bilingualism can also fail, since it can be extremely hard to learn another language at that stage in their lives. Again, this is something that I have encountered through my work with minority groups and have met adults, who despite wanting and trying by attending language courses, were not able to develop suitable competencies in the language of their host country. Drawing on my experience, I can only see 'natural bilingualism' happening to immigrants within a certain age bracket: young adults and adults of working age, who have acquired compulsory education or higher levels of education in their home language, whose home language is well developed and secure, and they are then in the situation to live in another country where they want to study and work, and therefore will look to acquire their second language as efficiently as possible. Again with efforts and often by going to language courses, such as ESOL courses for new arrivals in the UK. Therefore 'natural bilingualism' as a concept gets more problematic, closer one looks at the real-life examples, especially in immigrant communities.

Equally the concept 'learned bilingualism' is problematic in other ways. It has a misleading element to it, since it is in fact merely learning a foreign language, rather than learning how to be bilingual. Bilingualism is a consequence of using two languages, rather than something that can be learned in its own right. Although Garcia (ibid) states that 'learned' refers to learning another language in a formal situation, that does not help one understand: how this proposed new way of conceptualising foreign language learning further develops our insights into hierarchies and complexities amongst different types of bilingualism and bilingual families. Why do we need another term such as 'learned bilingualism'? How does it add to our understanding of bilingualism and its typology?

More recently a concept of 'intentional bilingualism' has been proposed by a Slovakian researcher, Anna Hurayova (2020), who published a study: Raising a Bilingual Child in a Monolingual Culture – A Family Case Study on Intentional Bilingualism as a Communication Strategy, her research was conducted in Slovakia. Although Hurayova's concept of 'intentional bilingualism' addresses the phenomenon of bilingualism as a parental choice, I would like to argue that it is not specific enough since 'intentional bilingualism' can also be something an individual chooses for oneself, as in the example above, young people in the USA, who are making such choices to make up for lost opportunities of acquiring languages of their parents in their home environment.

I therefore wish to return to my initial starting point that there is a need for a new concept to be added to the typology of bilingualism and bilingual families. I would like to proceed by suggesting the use of a new term: 'Imported Bilingualism', for the following reasons: Theorising this under researched phenomenon, where parents choose to bring up their children bilingually without any pressure or need to do with migration or context - as 'Imported Bilingualism' rather than 'non-native bilingual families' or 'learned bilingualism' or 'intentional bilingualism' can actually more accurately define the phenomenon in focus with the link to language as a type of capital and resource, as explored later in this paper. In the continuation of this paper, my aim is to argue that the positioning of language as capital can then facilitate a shift of low value attitudes towards the types of bilingualism that stem from the necessity of migration, linked with poverty and under privileged communities.

What can this new term do for the wider field of researching and theorising bilingual families?

Throughout my career in London (since 1992), as a teacher, ethnic minority consultant for City of Westminster Local Authority and researcher, I have been working with recent and settled immigrant and ethnic minority individuals and communities. Learners from these contexts are identified by mainstream schools as speakers of English as an additional language (EAL). In the UK we position English as the additional language in these cases in order to emphasise that these children have another language/s at home and therefore English is additional to their existing linguistic repertoire. This is considered important by educators championing the importance of seeing these learners not only through the lens of what they cannot do in English, but also by being aware of what they can do in their home language/s. One important principle of good practice with EAL learners is to facilitate assessments in their home language/s in order to understand the development and knowledge of the curriculum these learners have in language/s other than English (Cable, 2009).

I would also like to emphasise that I am using the term: 'home language' in the place of 'mother tongue' since 'mother tongue' is gender biased and it singles out the role of the mother in children's language development, whereas 'home language' is inclusive of both parents, grandparents, siblings, wider family and care givers, since all these family members have a role to play in supporting a child to develop their language and, in the case of migration, maintain the language from the country of origin (Mehmedbegovic, 2017). I consider it important that we use an inclusive term which rightly acknowledges the role of all family members in supporting a child in developing and maintaining, what in the USA context is referred to as a 'heritage language' (Beaudrie & Fairclough, 2012). Also, in transnational families parents come from different linguistic background. For example where there is a Croatian father and UK mother: in that case it will depend on the father and his side of the family to facilitate the use of Croatian in order for a child/children in such a family to grow up bilingual in English and Croatian and to use 'mother tongue' for such cases of bilingualism presents itself as simply inaccurate.

In my career I have encountered a range of different profiles of EAL learners, for example: children who are highly proficient in their home language in terms of oracy and literacy such as recent immigrants from Ukraine and who are new to English; children who are highly proficient in terms of oracy in their home language and English, but have no literacy in their home language, their literacy is entirely in English, such as Sylheti speakers born in the UK in families who originate from Bangladesh; or a learner from Brazil who is relearning Portuguese at the age of 16, because her parents decided to speak in English only to her when they emigrated to the UK, she was five at the time, her wish to refresh and further learn Portuguese comes from her own awareness that without Portuguese she is at a loss in terms of connecting with her wider family and culture and also in terms of cognitive advantages of bilingualism (Mehmedbegovic & Hanoman, 2005).

The common feature to all these different EAL profiles is that bilingualism was a necessity. For families fleeing the war in Ukraine and being given sanctuary in the UK learning English and becoming bilingual, was not a planned or chosen family language policy, but it presented itself as an unexpected and immediate necessity, a life line in the period of extreme hardship and parental fear for the present and future existence of their children. For the Sylheti speakers born in London and the Portuguese speaker relocating at the young age from Brazil, bilingualism was perhaps not so forcefully thrown at them by the historical circumstances, but never the less it was a necessity for fitting into the UK environment and being educated in the UK schools. In the case of the Brazilian learner, it was reported that the parental anxiety in terms of worrying how their child would learn and achieve in the language of the host country, English, led to the decisions of abandoning the home language, Portuguese, and making it the family policy to use English only at home (Mehmedbegovic & Hanoman, 2005). Although these decisions are made based on the best parental intentions, but without being informed by relevant research and good practice, they lead to language loss and subtractive types of bilingualism. In my research studies I have encountered adults who reflect on these same processes in their families (Mehmedbegovic, 2011). As well settled adults and successful professionals in the UK, they report feelings of being robbed of their culture and heritage by switching to English only when they arrived in the UK (ibid).

I would like to argue that parents who make the decision to switch to English only policy in their home environment, when they arrive in the UK or USA, are influenced by the deficit models of bilingualism, lack of guidance from education and health professionals on the importance of building on and developing further their home language and anxiety regarding education success they want their children to achieve in English. I would also like to argue that being aware of 'Imported Bilingualism' choice some parents make, especially English-speaking parents, for the multiple benefits their children will have, as already listed above, would support migrant families/ethnic minority families in seeing the value of having a bilingual family policy and continuing to use their language of origin in their private sphere.

The long-term dominance of the deficit model of bilingualism in the UK

EAL specialists in the UK education have been battling the misperceptions of bilingualism as a special need, as a problem in classroom and hindrance for academic success and inclusion (Mehmedbegovic, 2007). In the public political discourse David Blunkett, Minister of Education in 2002, made a landmark comment in the national press by advising parents to speak English at home in order to 'overcome the schizophrenia that bedevils generational relationships' caused by the use of different languages in the home environment (as quoted in Mehmedbegovic, 2011). Contemplating the impact on parents and communities on hearing a Minister of Education advise use of English only on the national TV, caused a big outcry from academics and researchers in the field looking to provide the research evidence on the benefits of bilingualism and expose the outstanding inadequacy of linking bilingualism with psychiatric terminology and extreme religious discourse. The debate in the papers, to which I also contributed with my colleagues (Mehmedbegovic, ibid), continued at the time over several months, but we could not even begin to hope that our activism in the public domain had 'cured' the deficit model of bilingualism magnified by David Blunkett's comments.

In fact, my study with lead professionals and politicians in England and Wales (Mehmedbegovic, 2011) provided further evidence and confirmations that the types of bilingualism and home languages used by under privileged groups are seen as of no use or interest to the wider community. The following anonymised quote from an interviewed conservative MP, who was at the time and

currently still is high up in the political hierarchy, captures with accuracy the painful reality many bilingual parents and young people will repeatedly experience:

'*Bengali has no value. It does not matter to this country, if people speak Bengali or not, in terms of our culture. Bengali could matter, if the Indian economy grows and it can be used for business purposes*. *Welsh and Gaelic are home languages. There is more political imperative and more political clout behind preserving those languages as a part of our own cultural identity.'*
(Conservative MP, Interview data, Mehmedbegovic, 2011, p 105).

There is a dichotomy of 'our culture' and 'our business discourse' in his quote – for business purposes every language can become an asset, if market forces provide opportunities for its use. Mandarin is a very good example of the upward mobility for a language linked to the economic boom of the relevant country. Also, showing political support for Welsh and Gaelic is a very recent strategy influenced by the greater political autonomy of Welsh and the revival of the Welsh language supported by the Welsh Assembly, formed in 1998 (Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament).

One does not have to look hard for the evidence that not much has changed in the political arena. In October 2023 Suella Braverman, serving then as the Home Secretary and on the official visit to the USA, gave a speech in which she stated 'multiculturalism has failed in Europe, it is a misguided dogma that had allowed people to live parallel lives' (Braverman: Multiculturalism has 'failed' and threatens security | The Independent). Can Braverman be referring to the mothers of Sylheti speaking children whom I got to know through my research? Women who never had the opportunity to go to school in their country of origin, who are housewives and mothers in large families in East London with no opportunities to learn English or literacy in their own language.

As an example from my experience I would like to highlight Berger Primary School in Hackney, in East London, where I worked as the local authority adviser (2014 - 2018). This school organised Maths lessons in Turkish for children of Turkish origin in order to improve their results in Maths. Soon the headteacher at the time, Dr Karen Coulthard, was approached by the mothers and grandmothers of these children, who were asking to have lessons in Turkish and English too. Once the lessons were organised, I was able to interview women attending these classes (Mehmedbegovic& Coulthard, 2014). Five mothers and two grandmothers reported that this was the first time they had an opportunity to go to school, to learn how to read and write, in their home language and then in English too. They were tearful when expressing appreciation for the headteacher and the school for making that happen. I was very moved to witness such a key moment in their lives. I have to ask – have these bilingual women really failed the UK or Europe in any way? Have they chosen 'parallel lives', because they were not interested in integrating in their host country or because they were lacking opportunities? Lastly, I also have to ask – who has failed them, since they are illiterate in the 21st century?

The fact that bilingualism in mainstream education in the UK has been linked to disadvantaged communities, such as outlined above, often communities living on the poverty line and in need of welfare support, has resulted in categorising 'bilingualism as a problem', to use Ruiz's (1984) categorisation of bilingualism. In my experiences as a local authority consultant working with schools on improving achievement of ethnic minority students, this was manifested by EAL children often being placed on the Special Needs (SEN) register and in low ability groups. This is an issue which has been highlighted also in a landmark publication which was a joint effort of UK EAL specialists: Bilingual pedagogy for UK Schools edited by, Cable, C. 2009.

I would like to argue, based on my research, that all these elements have contributed to a powerful and dominant deficit model of bilingualism in the UK. In my cycle of studies with bilingual parents, headteachers of schools with large percentages of bilingual children, lead professionals and politicians in England and Wales (Mehmedbegovic, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2022, Mehmedbegovic at al, 2018) there is a prominent language hierarchy, reflected in the collected data by the low values attached to bilingualism of immigrant communities and their languages such as: Bengali, Sylheti, Bosnian, Portuguese. On the other hand, bilingualism in languages which are linked to affluent communities and which are taught as high-status languages in schools such as French, German, Spanish, Italian and since the economic boom of China, Mandarin too, are seen as a resource (Language Trends, 2023).

Since 2017 London has the first and still the only bilingual English-Mandarin school in Europe: Kensington Wade School, which uses English and Mandarin at a 50 – 50 % ratio and accepts pupils whose families are not Mandarin users (Kensington Wade School | English Chinese Prep School | Bilingual School London) According to Kensington Wade's leadership team, who shared with me their insight during a school visit in 2023, parents who do not have direct family link with Mandarin, choose to send their children to this school in order to give them the opportunity to learn a language that will be useful for their future lives and careers. My suggestion is that it will be useful to categorise such cases as 'Imported Bilingualism', to identify that there are parents willing to pay for private education in order for their children to become bilingual in a language of their informed and considered choice. By making a conscious decision to 'import' another language into their family dynamics, they recognise this other language and consequent bilingualism as assets that they want their children to acquire. In this case bilingualism is positioned as a mark of privilege, affluence and choice, not as a problem, burden and necessity caused by migration.

An example to illustrate Imported Bilingualism versus Deficit Model of Bilingualism

A specific example that I will now outline comes from an international school in the USA. I will therefore start this section by providing a brief overview of the key statistics and factors shaping the attitudes to bilingualism in the USA, which will be followed by the insights I gained in this school.

Context

Number of bilingual people in the USA is on a significant and steady increase. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report (2019): 'the number of people in the United States who spoke a language other than English at home nearly tripled from 23.1 million (about 1 in 10) in 1980 to 67.8 million (almost 1 in 5) in 2019. At the same time, the number of people who spoke only English also increased, growing by approximately one-fourth from 187.2 million in 1980 to 241 million in 2019'. Spanish speakers are the largest linguistic minority group with around 42 million speakers, although the Hispanic population is much bigger, estimated at 62.6 million or 18.9% of the total population.

Based on the difference in the number of Spanish speakers and those of Hispanic origin which stands at over 20 million, an informed guess can be made that for over 20 million Hispanic people the 'natural bilingualism' after Garcia (1984) failed to happen. These 20 million plus Hispanic origin people living in the USA probably never learned Spanish or they lost their home language by prioritising English or switching to 'English only' family language policies. Also, it is important to highlight that not everybody who identifies as a Spanish speaker is also literate in Spanish, which is important in terms of receiving the Seal of biliteracy education award (The Seal of Biliteracy) and for career opportunities that require biliteracy.

According to the same Census (2019) a third (33%) of Spanish speakers did not graduate from high school, the largest share, if compared with the speakers of the other four largest language groups in the USA other than English: Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Arabic. It needs to be taken into considerations that this type of statistics available in the public domain can influence expectations of academic achievements for the individuals from relevant groups in education contexts and also later in terms of their profiling on the labour market, as the studies referenced in the continuation have shown.

Considering the positioning of bilingualism in education policy and practice in the USA, one has to acknowledge that there is a high level of complexity caused by the fact that each of 50 US states can shape their own language policies. Such a complex system has resulted in what US academics have identified as a 'highly polarised' education landscape:

'Current approaches to bilingual education at the state level appear highly polarized. Depending upon state and local policies, schools have a range of program choices for serving emergent bilingual children from transitional bilingual programs, in which the goal is to transition students to English as quickly as possible, to dual language programs in which the goal is bilingualism, biculturalism and biliteracy in two languages' (Bybee et al, 2014).

California, as one of the states with the highest proportion of Spanish speakers, 40% of its population use Spanish, has introduced The Seal of Biliteracy award (ibid), which is presented to students who can demonstrate full proficiency in two or more languages (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) upon high school graduation. This award was introduced in 2011 and so far 45 US states provide opportunities for this award to be gained. According to the evaluations conducted, the criteria used vary in different states and the lack of federal funding is not helping its status and implementation (Davin et al, 2022).

Currently, to obtain the State Seal of Biliteracy in California: 'a student must show proficiency in both English and another language. In a language other than English a student must: gain a score of 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement exam or a score of 4 or more on the International Baccalaureate (IB) exam; by taking four years of classes in the language with a Garde Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher and demonstrating oral proficiency in the language by passing a district test with a score of proficient or higher; or by passing the SAT II world language exam with a score of 600 or higher. In English: they must complete all English language arts classes required for graduation with a GPA of 2.0 or better, and they must meet or exceed the English language arts portion of California's standardized test in 11th grade. In addition to these requirements, English learners must also show overall English proficiency on the English Language Proficiency Assessment of California' The High School State Seal of Biliteracy | The Seal of Biliteracy

In 2022, almost 50,000 students were able to earn this recognition in California. The organisation Californians Together who initiated the Seal of Biliteracy and who lobby on behalf of language minority students state on their website that currently in compulsory education in California there are 1.3 million English learners/bilingual learners, which is 25 % of its school population (The Seal of Biliteracy).

Subtirelu et all (2019) have published an analysis of the way the Seal of Biliteracy is being implemented. Their analysis highlights the following issues: English native speakers studying foreign languages are at an advantage to gain this recognition and schools with higher percentage of ethnic minority students and low-income families are less likely to participate in this scheme.

The learners identified here as being at an advantage to gain the Seal of Biliteracy are the learners and families, who fit the category which I argue is useful to conceptualise as: Imported Bilingualism, as previously outlined and exemplified in the following section.

Insights from a private international school

This private international school was founded in the 80-ties in one of the US communities with a high proportion of Spanish speakers. The school was the vision of local families and leaders who wanted a school focusing on language learning as a skill and also as a key to cultural understanding, where difference and diversity are welcomed and celebrated.

In 2016 I was invited by the leadership of this school to spend a week on their campus, gaining insights into their practice and advising the leadership team on the next steps regarding their English-Spanish bilingual programme. I was also tasked with providing professional development sessions for teachers and advisory sessions for parents and governors in regards to their English – Spanish bilingual programme, the school was developing. In agreement with the leadership team opportunities were organised for me to engage with the students directly in focus discussion groups and to interview several governors and parents, as a way of consulting key stakeholders in order to inform my recommendations.

The school runs a bilingual English – Spanish programme from early years provision to Grade 12, open to everybody interested regardless of any previous exposure to Spanish. The school also supports other home languages through their: Heritage Language Program available in the primary school for speakers of: Arabic, Dutch, Korean and Portuguese. Teachers on the heritage programme are native speakers, who teach an inquiry-based curriculum, with a strong emphasis on developing speaking skills. For speakers of other home languages support is available for online self-study courses and assessments.

In terms of my experience of working with international schools in a variety of contexts: the UK, Switzerland, Brazil, China, Dubai and Singapore – this school has invested extra efforts and resources, in comparison to what I have encountered in these other contexts listed, to support all their learners to become bilingual and to further develop languages they use at home with their parents and wider families.

The intake of this private international school has consistently been a balanced mixture of international students and students from local families, English and Spanish speaking local families.

The insights I gained through my engagement with the range of stakeholders: senior and middle leaders, teachers, governors, parents and students led me to identify that something unique was happening in the context of this international school. This phenomenon I now classify as an example of: Imported Bilingualism versus Deficit Model of Bilingualism. This clear dichotomy of contrasting attitudes and values attached to bilingualism which involved the same combination of languages, in this case English and Spanish, first presented itself in my interviews with parents governors. In the interviews conducted with four parents-governors the participants reported that many parents, who were native Spanish speakers and used Spanish at home with their children, decided not to enrol their children in to the English-Spanish bilingual programme. The parents who were opting for the English – Spanish bilingual programme were in fact monolingual American English speaking parents. In my experience of working with bilingual families and learners in the UK and European countries this was the first time that I came across a context in which the same combination of languages was

valued differently. At the same point in time, in the same school community, Spanish as a language offered by the school as additional to English, was valued by monolingual English-speaking parents as desirable for their children to learn and adopt as a part of their bilingual development, while the bilingual Spanish-English speaking parents were opting for monolingual English programme and therefore denying their children who used conversational everyday Spanish to develop academic proficiency in Spanish (after Cummins, 2003).

In my interviews with the parents, who had their children attending the bilingual English-Spanish programme, they shared with me their anxiety in regards to not being able to help their children with the homework or any other activities in Spanish and that this was of concern to them. They also talked about strategies they used at home to show enthusiasm and their support for learning Spanish, for example watching together TV programmes in Spanish with subtitles in English, reading bilingual English – Spanish books, making effort to learn some Spanish too (Mehmedbegovic, 2016). These examples clearly show how a language gets imported into the family dynamics and that for parents who opt for the bilingual programme, bilingual learning is not something that only happens for their children in school, but an important element of it is also happening at home regardless of parental monolingualism in English. In fact, it is evident from these examples that the interviewed parents are willing to learn some Spanish too. The interviewed parents also shared with me how much they appreciated my session on cognitive advantages of bilingualism and they reported feeling reassured to have chosen the bilingual programme for their children by being aware of the wider benefits of bilingualism such as: better focus on task, enhanced academic achievement across the curriculum, physical and functional brain enhancement that bilingualism brings (Bak & Mehmedbegovic, 2017). All of the consulted parents reported that there were many challenges for having their children in the bilingual programme when they come from a monolingual family environment, like not being able to engage with the work children were doing in Spanish, but that they chose it since they believed that their children as bilinguals in English and Spanish would have significant gains in terms of education, their individual development and employability in the future. Being aware of the specific research evidence regarding cognitive benefits of bilingualism gave them additional enthusiasm for the choice they made. Sharing cognitive benefits of bilingualism with all the stakeholders in education: learners, parents, teachers, school leaders, inspectors and policy makers is one of the key principles of my Healthy Linguistic Diet approach, Home - Healthy Linguistic Diet.

It was in fact a Spanish speaking school governor who brought to my attention in her interview that many Spanish speaking parents in this school community, who were recent immigrants to the USA, did not want their children to attend the English – Spanish bilingual pathway that the school was offering. Contrary to the expectations that every bilingual parent would welcome the opportunity for their child to use their home language and develop academic proficiency in it by using it for academic purposes, here the parents were actively choosing not to give that opportunity to their Spanish speaking children. The interviewed governor offered her insights that recent immigrant parents viewed Spanish as an integral part of being profiled as belonging to Latino communities, which is something they wanted to avoid for their children. They wanted their children to focus on learning English and achieving well in English. One mother, when asked why she did not choose English-Spanish bilingual pathway for her child, replied: 'We speak Spanish at home, that is enough, my child will pick up Spanish that way. In school she needs to focus on English' **(**Mehmedbegovic, 2016, Bak & Mehmedbegovic-Smith, 2021).

This parental choice of educating children in English only is actually selecting what I argue should be classified as: 'academic monolingualism in English', meaning that despite the fact that these learners

will retain some use of Spanish throughout their lives, they will never have the opportunity to gain academic languages proficiency in English (after Cummins 2003). They will most likely not gain even basic literacy in Spanish and lack of academic literacy in their own language will disqualify them not only from gaining the Seal of Biliteracy, the criteria as outlined previously, but also from being able to apply for any professional jobs which require bilingual skills.

Discussion

In a study exploring the value assigned to Spanish-English bilingualism on the USA labour market the researchers have identified that Spanish-English bilingualism is required for less lucrative employment opportunities. The authors argue that the results of their study show 'a penalty associated with Spanish-English bilingualism in which positions listing such language requirements advertise lower wages than observationally similar positions' resulting in US Latino workforce being assigned less value on the labour market (Subtirelu, 2017). This study echoes findings of a study done a decade earlier by Columbia University researchers (Cortina et al 2007) in which they identify a negative correlation between bilingualism and income for all occupation categories in public services, where the expectation was that being able to use both English and Spanish would be useful and valued. The authors see these findings as concerning for several reasons and suggest that these differences in earnings result from discriminating against Latino profiles in labour markets.

In the light of these studies, it seems that Spanish speaking parents are selecting monolingualism in English over bilingualism in Spanish and English for the reasons of protecting their children from the disadvantage that Latino profiling may bring for them. Although, it cannot be claimed that the parents in this community are familiar with these studies supporting their choice of academic monolingualism in English, their choice must be informed by some knowledge in the community which is driving this trend amongst Spanish speaking parents.

In order to make sense of this phenomenon, it needs to be theorised based on Bourdieu's (1991) theory of misrecognition which is about understanding that minority groups internalise indicators in the contexts of wider society that their cultural and linguistic capital are of lesser value and therefore it is natural to replace them with the language and culture that have more value. Minority groups, in this case parents who opt out of the bilingual programme, are in fact supporting themselves this process of misrecognition, which eventually leads, if not to a complete language loss, in this case Spanish, then to academic monolingualism in English, as explained previously, or to use Bourdieu's (ibid) concept: symbolic violence.

The debate arguing for the need to introduce a new term is best situated within the field of Family Language Policies (FLP). In literature King & Fogle (2013) provide a historical overview of FLP as a relatively new field, defined as: 'language choice and language use at home, between family members' (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008). They position FLP as an interdisciplinary field with roots in sociolinguistics, anthropology and psychology. They emphasise LFP as a function of 'parental ideologies' and provide the following list as factors that will influence family language policy: the languages parents use, migration, language of schooling and language of the wider community/country/nation. This list covers factors which are given by the context or circumstances, such as migration. My argument is that it should be also added to this list that there are families where bilingualism is 'imported', not as a contextual demand, not as a consequence of migration, but as parental choice. Based on my involvement with bilingual families as an educator and researcher I can identify examples of such choices made: out of appreciation for another language and culture, a wish to enrich the developmental elements in the home environment and intention to provide conditions for children to benefit from growing up bilingually. Luo et al (2012) highlight that:

'there is a critical need to examine how parents' beliefs and knowledge regarding dual language development relate to DLLs' dual language experiences at home and their developmental outcomes', since bilingual development is becoming a prominent phenomenon. Therefore I propose that parents who make a decision to provide conditions for their children to enjoy the benefits of bilingual development in the family environment, which can be classified as a choice, rather than a contextual demand or an expectation, are in fact agents of Imported Bilingualism. Future research would benefit from exploring the factors that drive parents to become agents of Imported Bilingualism and factors that support them in achieving bilingual goals they set for the home environment.

What can educators do to reverse this trend?

My concept and approach to language learning and language maintenance: Healthy Linguistic Diet, originally based on my research exploring attitudes to bilingualism in England and Wales (Mehmedbegovic, 2011), further developed with Thomas Bak (Bak & Mehmedbegovic, 2017) and through my international bilingual education consultancy work, addresses these issues by reaching out to all stakeholders with relevant information on cognitive advantages of bilingualism. I see promoting cognitive advantages of bilingualism, which apply to all combination of languages, as a way to overcome hierarchies of languages and hierarchies of bilingualism.

The revival of English-Welsh bilingualism in Wales offers an excellent example of what can be achieved through preparing parents to make an informed choice regarding selecting bilingual upbringing and education over monolingualism for their children. One interviewee, who participated in my research in Wales, reflected on her experience as a parent making a considered decision as to whether to send her son to a monolingual or bilingual school in Wales by saying:
'If I had my time again I would send him (my son) *to a Welsh medium school. I wasn't a Welsh speaker, my husband wasn't and I envisaged difficulties supporting my son, if he was in Welsh medium education. Now I think the benefit of having bilingual education would outweigh that.'*
(Monolingual English lead professional in Wales, Interview data, Mehmedbegovic, 2011, p 159)

What changed for her as a mother, as revealed in the continuation of the interview, was access to research findings and knowledge in terms of the benefits of bilingualism. This issue that parents as 'policy makers of early years' are actually largely and seriously uninformed on the matters of bilingualism was highlighted by the other interviewees in this study along the lines of this quote:
'They (parents) *don't quite understand why it (bilingualism) is an advantage*.'
(Interview data, English professional, Wales, ibid, p 160)

In Wales the initiative to raise awareness amongst parents started with the focus on parents of new born children and equipping health visitors to provide basic information on benefits of bilingualism, free packs with further information and free relevant toys for children. This initiative termed Twf (Growth) was launched in 2001 (Woodcock, 2011). The key point that I would like to highlight here is that the initial information to parents about bilingualism came from medical professionals and therefore the information shared on developmental and cognitive advantages of bilingualism is delivered as early as possible for a new born child with the authority of a health professional.

Healthy Linguistic Diet Home - Healthy Linguistic Diet also advocates that medical and education professionals should work together and jointly reinforce awareness on cognitive benefits of bilingualism throughout different stages of our lives. Delivering this message jointly by health and education professionals would extend its reach and amplify its impact, as exemplified in the context of English-Welsh bilingualism.

Conclusion

In this paper I have presented my argument for the need to introduce two new concepts: Imported Bilingualism and academic monolingualism. I have supported my argument by my previous research and relevant insights gained through my professional role as an expert on bilingual education practices.

Imported Bilingualism as a new concept, if added to the typology of bilingualism, places the emphasis on foreign language learning and consequent bilingualism as an asset, resource and type of capital, which is of significant importance in terms of raising awareness that every language and every type of bilingualism is a type of capital and therefore of value. If affluent families are prepared to import it via private education in bilingual programmes or through different types of foreign language learning, then migrant communities should look to pass on their home languages to their children and support them in acquiring academic literacy in those languages.

Academic monolingualism is the second term I suggest needs introducing, as a term that has surfaced while exploring the consequences of families opting out of the bilingual programme, in my example above, and in order to understand that 'speaking a language at home' is not enough. As it has been outlined previously, it is not enough to gain the Seal of Biliteracy, but it is also not enough in the long run, in terms of career opportunities and using bilingualism for academic and professional purposes. By opting out of bilingual programmes, where they exist, parents are choosing academic monolingualism for their children and consequently disadvantaging them. This is best illustrated by a quote from a 12-year-old boy in an international school in Dubai who said:

'When I go back to Egypt, I want to help my little brother with Maths, but I can only do Maths in English not in Arabic. Miss, could you ask our headteacher, if we could have one lesson a week of Maths in Arabic, so that I can help my little brother in the future?'

(Mehmedbegovic, 2022, p 534)

This boy who is a confident user of everyday Arabic, has very clearly illustrated what it means to be living a bilingual life, but suffer academic monolingualism. Bilingual children and adults need opportunities to acquire academic proficiency and skills in both languages they use. The view that 'speaking a language at home is enough' needs to be challenged by examples like this one. This quotes speaks volumes, since we can clearly see that a 12- year-old child fully understands the problem he is facing and has identified the only way it can be remedied – being able to be numerate in English and Arabic and do Maths in both of these languages can only happen by studying Maths in English and in Arabic. My ambition is to make that possible through my Healthy Linguistic Diet approach in all schools and contexts I work in.

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