

The Achievement of Pupils with English as an Additional Language:

An Empirical Study



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ABSTRACT

Policy makers and mainstream teachers have long been concerned with the best way to help pupils with EAL to learn English, yet little is known about the performance of pupils with EAL who speak different languages in British schools. Drawing on detailed School Census data for pupils who completed General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Key Stage 2 (KS2), this research examines pupil performance differences in British schools, among the main ethnic groups, by language spoken at home and EAL background. Three main conclusions emerged from this study. Firstly, the empirical data suggests it takes approximately five to seven years, on average, for pupils with EAL to acquire academic English fluency. Secondly, the study of EAL and attainment suggests that there is a strong correlation between stage of fluency in English and educational attainment. The results suggest that the percentage of pupils attaining level 4 or above at KS2 and 5+A*-C at GCSE increased, as stage of proficiency in English increased. Pupils in the early stages of fluency performed at low levels, while the results of pupils with EAL who were fully fluent in English far outstripped those of pupils for whom English was their only language. Secondly, the language, ethnicity and attainment data reflect substantial differences in performance between different ethnic groups at the end of key stage 4. Of all the three main ethnic groups, Black African, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils did better in performance compared to the national average. Black Caribbean, Black Other and Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils are the main underachieving ethnic groups. However, the study argues that none of these ethnic categories are homogenous. A further analysis of the data by language spoken, highlighted the potential of language data to help disaggregate census ethnic categories and give greater insight into the performance of different groups in schools. The study suggests that analysing ethnic group's performance by language spoken at home and level of fluency in English adds to our understanding of the associations between EAL, language, ethnic background and attainment.

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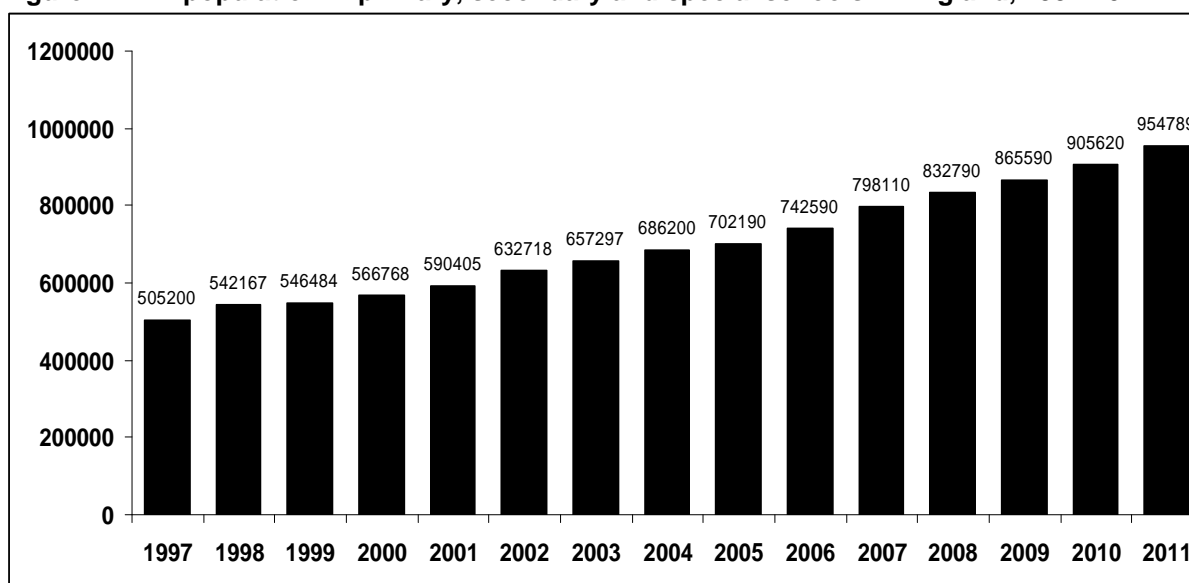
Section 1: English as an Additional Language and Attainment

Introduction

Policymakers concerns

Language barriers remain the key factor affecting the performance of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in British schools, but there are relatively few studies that have examined the English proficiency of pupils with EAL and the relationship between stages of English fluency and attainment. For students to fully and effectively access the curriculum, it is clear they need to be fluent in English. Policymakers and mainstream teachers have long been concerned with the best way to help pupils with EAL learn English, yet very little empirical work has examined exactly how long it takes these students to become proficient in English, or how the time for proficiency varies, for different students, speaking different languages. This issue is increasingly important given the growth in the EAL population in England over the last decade (see Figure 1). In 2011 just over 954,700 of the school population in England and Wales spoke English as an additional language. This was approximately 14.4 percent of all pupils of compulsory school age and above (DfE 2011). Yet EAL is unevenly distributed in England. Across the country the range is from 2% in the South West to 50% in inner London. Over half of all pupils with EAL are located in only twenty of the 150 England Local Authorities and nearly three-quarters of schools have less than 5% EAL, and a small number of schools have 7% and over 40% (DfE 2011). Most of these children belong to well-established ethnic minority communities, and have been born and educated in the UK.

Figure 1: EAL population in primary, secondary and special schools in England, 1997-2011



Source: DfE (2011) <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001012/index.shtml>
DfE (1997). <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000050/index.shtml>

What does previous research tell us?

A number of individual research studies have explored the relationship between English fluency and pupils' attainment and progress. For example, Strand (1999) and Mujitaba and Sammon's (1999) analyses of large samples of baseline and KS1 data in two London local authorities, suggest that pupils who spoke English as an additional language scored significantly lower than those who spoke English as their first language. Similar findings have been also reported by Demie (2001 and 2011) and Sammons et al (1997) again confirming that pupils who were not fully fluent in English generally perform less well than those who spoke English only, at all key stages. The results of these studies have also revealed that

lack of fluency in English is a statistically significant predictor of performance in each of the subject areas of English, mathematics and science.

Recent studies have also examined the effect of English fluency on attainment in Key Stage 2 tests (KS2) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). For example, the analyses of the national KS2 test results and GCSE examination results for pupils in an inner London Local Authority, by levels of English language acquisition, show that pupils with EAL, at the early stages of developing fluency, had significantly lower KS2 test scores in all subjects than their monolingual peers (see Hayes et al 2001; Demie et al 2003; Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006). However, pupils with EAL who were fully fluent in English, achieved significantly higher scores in all KS2 tests and GCSE than their monolingual peers. The negative association with attainment for the early stages of fluency remained significant, after controls for a range of other pupil characteristics, including age, gender, free school meal entitlement, stage of special educational need and ethnic group, although these factors effectively explained the higher attainment of the 'fully fluent' group. The two studies conclude that there is a strong relationship between stage of fluency in English and educational attainment, with the performance of bilingual pupils increasing as measured stage of fluency in English increases. Pupils in the early stages of fluency perform at very low levels, while bilingual pupils who are fully fluent in English perform better, on average, than English-only speakers (see Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006).

There is also a wealth of research on how long it takes to acquire English fluency for pupils with English as an additional language. For example, Research in North America (Cummins 1981, 1992; Cummins and Nakajima 1987) into how long it takes to acquire a second language and bilingualism shows that it takes up to two years to acquire fluency in 'superficial' spoken English and up to seven years to acquire academic English or full fluency. This is further supported by Cummins' findings (2001) that confirm immigrant students who have had two to three years of first language schooling in their home country before they came to the US, take at least five to seven years to reach typical native speaker performance. Both Cummins' and Collier's research findings were strikingly similar, suggesting that it takes overall five to seven years in education, for bilingual pupils to become fully competent in a second language and to catch up with their native peers.

Recent studies by Demie (2011) into how long it takes to acquire English language proficiency, using small scale matched longitudinal data of one hundred and twenty four Year 10 pupils, in an inner London Local Authority, suggest that it takes six to eight years to become fully fluent in English. These figures should be interpreted with caution, however, as the sample size is comparatively small. Furthermore, the pattern of English fluency and the time it takes to acquire English fluency varies between individual language speakers. For example, many speakers of the main African languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Ga, Krio and Twi- Fante have proportionally more pupils fully fluent in English than some of the main European languages such as Spanish, Portuguese and Polish and Asian languages such as Urdu, Panjabi and Bengali. African language speakers are also swifter in becoming fully fluent in English compared to European and Asian language speakers, suggesting that they have been more exposed to the English language because of Commonwealth or other historical links, rooted to past British presence in Africa (Demie et al 2010; Demie 2011). The study also argued that local authorities and schools have an obligation to provide long term English language support for pupils with EAL, for up to seven years on average, to enable them to become fully fluent in English.

Overall, a review of the literature suggests that there are relatively few studies that have examined EAL and attainment (see Demie 2011; Strand and Demie 2005; Demie and Strand 2006). There is a need for more research into EAL and attainment to improve our knowledge about pupils with EAL and how they might best be supported in the classroom.

The aims and methods of research

Aims of the research

This paper aims to analyse English language proficiency of pupils with EAL and examine its relationship with attainment. A further aim is to improve our knowledge about pupils with EAL, and suggest ways in which they could be effectively supported in the classroom.

Methods

The Data

This study considers empirical evidence from an inner London local authority (LA). Current statistics in the study local authority indicate that almost 48% of pupils in primary schools and 43% in secondary schools are classed as pupils with EAL. (For details of languages spoken see Demie et al 2010). The main empirical basis for this research was the data collected annually in January on stage of fluency in English and language spoken by 15,638 pupils with EAL in schools. The sample for performance analysis consisted of 2,409 pupils who had completed KS2 and 1,563 students who completed GCSE. Additionally, a range of background information including details of pupils' ethnic backgrounds was also collected for all nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units. Each pupil in the sample had a unique pupil number, and this was used to match socio-economic information with KS2 and GCSE results.

Schools were free to organise the completion of the survey in any way they wished. In most cases language data and levels of fluency in English forms were completed by EAL teachers, supported by information from parents. Surveys were also carried out, occasionally by classroom teachers with guidance provided by EAL teachers employed on the English Language Support project and Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA). There is an issue regarding whether or not a classroom teacher should be assessing a pupil's fluency in English. Hayes et al (2001) argued that the use of classroom teachers for assessment could introduce an element of 'statistical noise' into the data. Nevertheless, it was not considered to be an issue in the case study schools, as assessments were mainly administered by qualified EAL teachers. Within the LA, careful moderation of the whole assessment process, takes place across its schools, using EAL and EMA specialist teachers, thus ensuring consistency and accuracy of the levels of assessment. It was previously argued in earlier studies in the local authority that EAL stages were sufficiently moderated across the LA backed by good training of EAL specialists and classroom teachers (Demie and Strand 2006) and '*found to be wholly accurate in all secondary schools*' (Gay, 2011,p3). As a result of good moderation it was possible to minimise the margin of error and improve the quality of assessment data and the way the stages of levels of fluency may be used to assess bilingual pupils in schools.

Measures for assessing stages of English fluency for pupils with EAL

The EAL learning needs of pupils vary greatly from beginners to advanced learners (see Demie et al 2010). Stages of English have been widely used to describe the different stages of English through which pupils commonly progress; for an example widely used throughout the 1990s and 2000s, (see Hester 1993; Demie et al 2010).

There are many local variations in the way pupils with EAL are assessed in the UK. While some local authorities (LAs) use a four stage system with local descriptors based on Hilary Hester's scale (1993), others use a five stage and the NASSEA system' (South, 2003:34;NASSEA 2001; Milton Keynes Council 2001) or the National Curriculum English descriptors set out by the Qualification Curriculum Authority (QCA 2000) in '*A Language in Common*.' Ofsted (2001) also pointed out that different Local Authorities use different competency measures to describe the achievement of pupils with EAL, ranging from four

point scales to 13. It is now recognised that *'While each...may be effective in its own right, the many different systems in use around the country make it hard to monitor the progress of pupils nationally'*(QCA, 2000:7).

The measure of stage of fluency used in the case study LA, is a four point scale and is largely derived from the work of Hilary Hester and inner London colleagues at the Centre for Language in Primary Education (CLPE) in the 1980s (Hester et al, 1988). These four stages range from beginner to fluent and are described below:

- Stage 1** ***New to English*** - Bilingual English learners who might be able to engage in classroom learning activities using their own mother tongue, but need support to operate in English.
- Stage 2** ***Becoming familiar with English*** - Bilingual English learners who can engage in all learning activities but whose spoken and/or written English clearly shows that English is not their first language. Their oral English is well developed but their literacy development in English is such that they need considerable support to operate successfully in written activities in the classroom.
- Stage 3** ***Becoming confident as user of English*** - Bilingual pupils whose oral and written English is progressing well and who can engage successfully in both oral and written activities, but need further support for a variety of possible reasons, for example pupils who are achieving considerable success in subjects such as mathematics and science but much less in others such as English or in Humanities, which are more dependent upon a greater command of English.
- Stage 4** ***Fully fluent in English*** - Bilingual pupils whose use of English and engagement with the curriculum are considered successful and who do not require additional language support. (See for details Demie et al 2010)

These four stages are also widely used in LAs across London and in other urban areas *'as a diagnostic tool to analyse needs for future teaching focus and...to provide baseline information for statistical purposes'* (Hall, 1996:31). In general, it is a very popular assessment with local schools and has been used in the LA since 1988.

How long does it take to acquire English fluency?

One of the most commonly asked questions about the education of pupils with EAL by mainstream teachers and policymakers, concerns how long it takes to acquire English and how long pupils will need special language services, such as English as an additional language support? For pupils to have full access to the curriculum, they need to be fluent in English (Demie 2012;TES 2011). The purpose of this section is therefore to bring together some analyses and present new data that directly address the length of time it takes for English learners to attain proficiency in English.

Table 1 shows the number of years needed to complete each stage of level of fluency in English. The data was used to analyse various forms of English language proficiency as a function of length of exposure to English. Using our matched data of 940 pupils with EAL in Years 6 to 11 who were fully fluent in English, we looked backwards year by year on how long it took them to reach this stage of fluency from the time they started school in the LA and were first assessed as a Stage 1 beginner. The clear conclusion emerging from the data is that even in this LA, (which is considered to be very successful in teaching English to pupils with EAL); it takes pupils on average, about six years to become fully fluent in English and to catch up with their peers. However, there is a variation in how long it takes at each stage of fluency. Table 1 data shows that it takes about one and a half years to complete beginner Stage 1 level of fluency, about two years to complete Stage 2 in becoming familiar with English and another two and half years to complete Stage 3-becoming a confident user of English. There is no significant difference between the year groups in acquisition of

English fluency, except in Year 6 at the end of primary where they tend to reach full fluency in around five years.

Table 1: English language acquisition of pupils with EAL and the number of years at each stage of English fluency for Year 6-11 pupils

Languages spoken by Year 6-11 students with EAL in 2011	Number of years at each stages of fluency in English				Number of speakers
	Stage 1- Beginners and New to English	Stage 2 - <i>Becoming familiar with English</i>	Stage 3- <i>Becoming confident as user of English</i>	Total Years in Stage 1 – 3*	
Year 6	1.3	1.7	2.2	5.3	162
Year 7	1.5	2.1	2.8	6.3	137
Year 8	1.5	2.2	2.2	6.0	136
Year 9	1.6	2.4	2.7	6.8	134
Year 10	1.5	2.3	2.9	6.7	209
Year 11	1.5	2.0	2.7	6.2	162
Year 6 – 11 average	1.5	2.1	2.6	6.2	940

* Figures may not add up to total due to rounding. The number of years at each stage of English fluency was calculated based on the number of pupils at each stage.

There is also a significant difference between pupils based on language spoken. Table 2 shows that of the largest groups in the LA, Turkish, Lingala, Spanish, Bengali and Portuguese speakers take a longer time (between six and eight years) compared to French, Yoruba, Somali, Akan and Polish speakers who may acquire a level of fluency in English between five and six years. There is a strong suggestion that pupils with EAL, from a Commonwealth country background, particularly African Commonwealth countries, achieve full fluency earlier than those from many other countries. Speakers of Amharic, Twi-Fante, Somali, Yoruba, Shona, Luganda and Swahili achieved full fluency up to a year earlier than the average for the whole sample group. Overall the data suggests that five to seven years is needed to be fully fluent in English in order to access the National Curriculum, in the LA schools

As noted by Collier (1989) the amount of time it takes pupils with EAL to learn English, varies from person to person and depends on such factors as the individual's age, educational background, level of literacy in the native language, and opportunities to interact with native English speakers. However, it is generally accepted that in North America it takes from five to seven years to go from not knowing any English at all to being able to accomplish most communication tasks, including academic tasks (Collier 1989; Cummins 1992). Our findings are similar to those of North America, and show that it makes more sense to set aside the five to seven years of primary and secondary schooling as a reasonable time frame for students to gain English proficiency. Overall this study suggests to policymakers and school leaders that they need a long-term view, and a long-term set of expectations about learning and support for pupils with EAL.

Table 2: English language acquisition of pupils with EAL, and the number of years at each stage of English fluency for Year 6-11 pupils by languages spoken

Languages spoken by Year 6-11 students with EAL in 2011	Number of years at each stage of fluency in English				Number of speakers
	Stage 1- <i>Beginners and New to English</i>	Stage 2 - <i>Becoming familiar with English</i>	Stage 3- <i>Becoming confident as user of English</i>	Total Years in Stage 1 – 3**	
Turkish	1.8	3.0	2.8	7.6	25
Lingala	1.9	2.9	2.8	7.5	14
Caribbean Creole French	1.0	3.0	3.5	7.5	2
Panjabi	1.5	2.5	3.3	7.3	4
Tagalog	1.5	4.0	1.5	7.0	2
Spanish	1.5	2.6	2.7	6.8	91
Persian/Farsi	1.5	4.0	1.3	6.8	4
Bengali	1.6	2.3	2.8	6.7	65
Vietnamese	2.0	1.6	3.0	6.6	7
Manding/Malinke	1.0	4.0	1.5	6.5	2
Ga	1.0	2.2	3.2	6.4	5
Portuguese	1.6	2.2	2.6	6.4	265
Chinese	1.4	2.2	2.8	6.4	36
Tigre	1.7	2.3	2.3	6.3	3
Krio	1.0	3.0	2.3	6.3	3
Tigrinya	1.5	2.0	2.8	6.3	27
Urdu	1.6	1.9	2.7	6.2	16
Gujarati	1.7	1.8	2.7	6.2	6
Albanian	1.5	2.4	2.3	6.1	22
Italian	1.4	2.1	2.5	6.0	10
Kurdish	1.4	2.0	2.6	6.0	5
Akan/Twi-Fante	1.4	1.5	3.0	5.9	42
Arabic	1.2	2.1	2.6	5.9	36
Igbo	1.3	1.6	3.0	5.9	7
French	1.5	1.5	2.8	5.8	52
Shona	1.0	2.3	2.3	5.7	3
Yoruba	1.5	1.8	2.3	5.6	38
Somali	1.5	1.9	2.1	5.6	93
Luganda	1.1	2.1	2.3	5.5	7
Lithuanian	1.7	1.3	2.3	5.3	3
Other*	1.2	1.8	2.1	5.1	13
Pashto	1.3	2.0	1.7	5.0	3
Swahili	1.0	1.5	2.5	5.0	2
Polish	1.4	1.4	1.8	4.6	22
Amharic	1.4	1.6	1.4	4.4	5
Average	1.5	2.1	2.6	6.2	940

* Languages with just one speaker: Ewe, Fula / Fulfulde-Pulaar, Greek, Japanese, Kirundi, Malay / Indonesian, Mongolian, Nepali, Romanian, Russian, Serbian/ Croatian/Bosnian, Tamil and Thai

** Figures may not add up to total due to rounding. The number of years at each stage of English fluency was calculated based on the number of pupils at each stage.

English as an Additional Language and Attainment

An important factor in pupil achievement is English fluency. For pupils with EAL to have full access to the curriculum, they need to be fluent in English as it is clear that they need to be fluent in the language of instruction. The LA latest figure shows that there were 15,638 pupils with EAL in all its schools and 29% were not fluent in English. Of the total school population, 6% were beginners, 10% were at Stage 2 of fluency in English requiring considerable language support, 13% were Stage 3 fluency in English, requiring some support and 19% were fully fluent in English requiring no support (see Table 3). Patterns of English fluency also varied between individual ethnic groups. Previous studies have shown Somali, Bangladeshi, Polish, and Portuguese pupils who achieved poor results, were more likely to be relatively new to English compared with more fluent high performing African pupils such as Ibo, Yoruba, Ga, Twi-Fanti and Indian students (Demie 2003). Many speakers of the main African languages have proportionately more pupils at the fully fluent in English stage than some of the main European languages.

Table 3 gives the average performance of pupils with EAL at the end of primary and secondary education. The results of the KS2 analysis show that the percentage of pupils attaining level 4 and above, in each subject at the end of primary education, increased as the stage of proficiency in English increased. Overall, bilingual pupils who were fully fluent in English were much more likely to get level 4 or above at the end of KS2 when compared with English-only speakers. Analysis of GCSE results at the end of secondary education also shows that fluency in English continues to have a strong influence on the performance of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

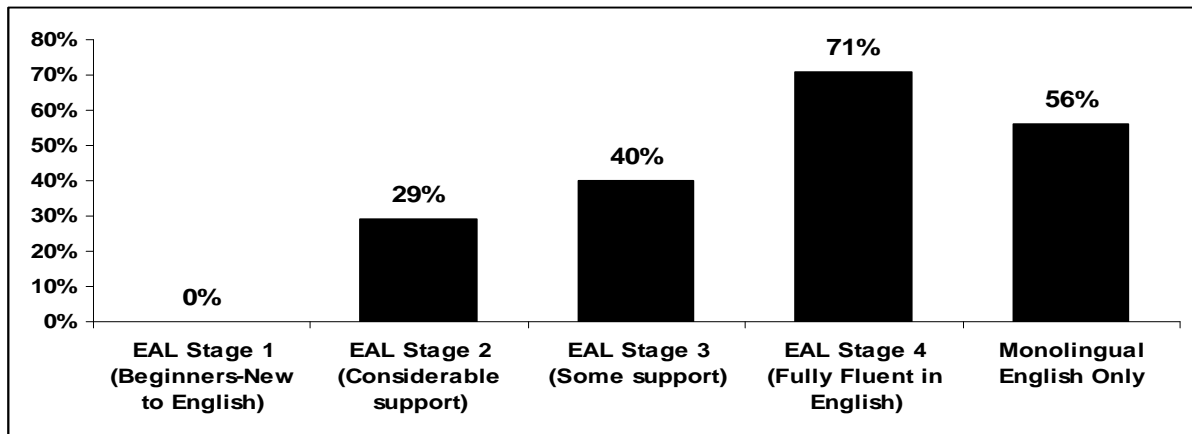
Table 3 – Average Key Stage 2 and GCSE results by Stages of English Acquisition 2011

Stages of English Acquisition	% of school population	KS2 Level 4+*	GCSE 5+A*-C**
EAL Stage 1 (<i>Beginners-New to English</i>)	6%	27%	0%
EAL Stage 2 (<i>Becoming familiar with English</i>)	10%	49%	29%
EAL Stage 3 (<i>Becoming confident as user of English</i>)	13%	79%	40%
EAL Stage 4 (<i>Fully Fluent in English</i>)	19%	97%	71%
Monolingual English Only	54%	84%	56%
EAL Stage 1-3 (Non Fluent)	29%	71%	38%
EAL Stage 1-4 (All Bilingual)	48%	84%	61%
All Pupils in the LA (No)	31526	2505	1598

* **KS2 English and Maths average**
 ** **GCSE including English and Maths**

Table 3 and Figure also shows GCSE performance according to levels of fluency in English. Overall the results suggests that the percentage of pupils attaining 5+A*-C at GCSE (including English and Maths) increased as stage of proficiency in English increased. The findings also confirm that the achievement of pupils with EAL, who were fully fluent in English, far outstripped that of pupils for whom English was their only language.

Figure 2 –GCSE results by Stages of English Acquisition 2011



Conclusions and Policy Implications

Conclusions

There is consensus from the literature reviews that EAL learners need to gain English proficiency quickly in order to do well in school. There is also solid evidence that most EAL learners who are in the English schools system eventually become proficient in English (see Demie and Strand 2006; Strand and Demie 2005; Demie 2011). Two main conclusions emerged from these studies. First, the empirical data suggests it takes about five to seven years on average for pupils with EAL to acquire academic English fluency. However, the speed of English language acquisition varies between the stages of levels of English. On average, pupils are classified at stage 1 (beginner) for about a year and a half, before moving to becoming familiar with English (Stage 2) where they typically remain for about two years. It takes about another two and a half years at Stage 3 (becoming confident in English) before they can then be classified as fully fluent. The empirical data also suggest there is a significant difference between pupils based on language spoken. The largest group in the local authority such as Turkish, Lingala, Spanish, Bengali and Portuguese speakers take a longer time, between six and eight years, compared to French, Yoruba, Somali, Akan and Polish speakers who may acquire fluency in English between five to seven years. This data further confirms that pupils with EAL, particularly from African Commonwealth countries, achieve full fluency in English earlier than those from many other countries. This is not surprising as many of the pupils' families particularly from West and East Africa, were exposed to English as the language of government administration and education, since the days of the British Empire.

Secondly, the main findings of the report confirm that there is a strong relationship between level of fluency in English and educational attainment. The results suggest that the percentage of pupils attaining level 4 or above at KS2 and 5+A*-C at GCSE increases as stage of proficiency in English increases. Pupils in the early stages of fluency perform at low levels, while the results of pupils with EAL, who are fully fluent in English far outstrip those of pupils for whom English is their only language. This finding offers much encouragement for policymakers and school improvement practitioners. They demonstrate that once the disadvantage of language is overcome, it is possible to attain high levels of achievement. The evidence can be used with schools to convince them that the more effective their English language teaching is, (particularly targeting support to those most in need) the more positive impact it will have on the results of individual pupils with EAL, and therefore on the results of the school as a whole.

Section 2: Language, Ethnicity and Attainment

Introduction

Language diversity attracts much interest among policymakers and educationalists and yet little is known about the performance of pupils who speak different languages, in British schools. There is, however, a wealth of research that has been undertaken into ethnic background and the achievement of pupils in British schools. The most comprehensive and influential policy studies and inquiries into the education of children of ethnic minorities were undertaken by the Rampton Committee (1981); the Swann Committee (1985) and Parekh Commission (2000). Each of these studies appeared to show considerable under-achievement by Caribbean and Other Black pupils, when compared with the average level of achievement of White and Asian pupils. Some of the findings in these reports are supported by studies in the last two decades and show that pupils from the major ethnic groups tend to have a level of attainment below the average for that of their white peers (Mortimore et al 1988, Nuttall et al 1989, Drew and Gray 1990, Demie 2001, Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Ofsted, 2002a, b; Tomlinson, 2003; Cabinet Office, 2007; DCSF, 2008b). These documents reflect widespread concerns within the government academia and schools that a disproportionate number of Black pupils tend to underperform in public examinations in comparison to their White peers.

In addition to the studies reviewed above, the three most recent significant overviews of research on ethnic differences in levels of achievement have been published by Ofsted (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Gillborn & Mirza, 2000), DfE (2009), Strand (2013, 2010 and 2012). These research reports also reviewed the educational achievements of ethnic minority pupils and confirmed previous research findings which suggest considerable under-achievement of Caribbean and Other Black pupils, on average, compared with White and Asian pupils. This concern has increased in the wake of recent KS1, KS2, KS3 and GCSE results which show the under-achievement of African and Caribbean pupils in both primary and secondary schools (DfE 2006; Demie 2001; Strand 2012). This is further supported by recent studies by Dustmann et al (2010) that also argued that at the start of school, pupils from most ethnic groups substantially lag behind White British pupils and the gaps decline for all groups throughout compulsory schooling.

The Department for Education (DfE) Annual School Census also suggests that amongst those ending their compulsory education in UK, Black Caribbean and Pakistani pupils were least successful academically with only 44% of Black Caribbean, 50% of Pakistani 54% Bangladeshi and 53% Black African pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade A* to C including English and Maths (DfE 2012). However we need to be cautious in interpreting this data, as ethnicity categorisation has not always been helpful in studying the performance of all pupils in English schools. Research shows that the worryingly low achievement levels of many pupils in British schools are being masked by Government statistics that fail to distinguish between specific European, African and Asian ethnic groups (Hollingworth and Mansaray 2012; Demie 2011; Demie and Lewis 2010, 2011).

Previous research has noted that the recording of ethnicity in England usually refers, confusingly, to a combination of national boundaries (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) but also colour (Black, White) and more general geographical distinctions, that supersede national boundaries (Black Caribbean, Black African) (see Hollingworth and Mansaray 2012; Von Ahn et al 2010; Mitton 2011; Demie 2011). Research shows collapsing ethnic groups into 'White Other' makes comparison problematic as this group contains a diverse range of European ethnic groups such as Polish, Czech, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish, Albanian, Russian etc. Similarly, the conflation of the Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups are not helpful and tell us little about the role of language. There is therefore a need to unpick how national ethnic categorisations may be used to improve our understanding of the performance of pupils who speak different languages in schools.

In the few studies where ethnic differences and educational achievement are considered, the importance of language spoken at home and English language fluency in achievement between ethnic groups, is rarely reported. Thus, it is not possible to tell from most studies, how bilingual pupils from different ethnic groups who are fully fluent in English, compare to those who are not fluent in English. Furthermore, previous studies lacked data on differences in performance between the different ethnic groups based on Language spoken. The few recent studies examining attainment and language spoken show a significant difference within the main DfE ethnic categories. For example, KS2 and GCSE data analysis of Black African achievement by language spoken (Demie and McLean 2007) showed that Ibo, Yoruba and Twi and Fante speaking Black African pupils achieved better than many other ethnic groups including Indian and White British at national level. In contrast, Somali and Lingala speakers tend to have very low attainment (below other groups). This is supported by Von Ahn et al (2010:7) analysis of KS2 results that indicate *“the Black African group has some of the highest and some of the lowest achieving groups. For example, the three lowest achieving groups – Lingala, French and Somali speakers tend to have low attainment well below that of the lowest attaining ethnic group overall (Black Caribbean), whilst Igbo, Yoruba and English speaking Black Africans achieve as well as the White British group.”* These research findings also suggest that *“some of the ethnic grouping may be too broad to be useful, and that language data can provide more insight into which pupils may be in need of particular support.”*

We would argue that wide attainment gaps in English schools are revealed, when data is analysed further by language spoken in addition to ethnic background. Consequently, there is clearly a need for further research in this regard, to evaluate the achievement of newly-arrived ethnic communities from Eastern Europe whose educational needs tend to be obscured by the White or White Other ethnic categories, but who speak different languages. Indian ethnic groups who mainly tend to speak Gujarati, Punjabi and Hindi; Pakistani ethnic groups who tend to speak Urdu and Punjabi; and Black African ethnic classification which masks the performance of pupils who speak many different languages including English, Yoruba, Somali, Twi-Fante, French, Igbo, Krio, Tigrinya, Lingala, Arabic, Ga, Swahili, Luganda, Amharic, Portuguese, Shona, German, Fang, Manding, Runyakata, Temne and Zulu etc.

The Aims and Methods of the Research

Aims

This research paper considers evidence from an inner London Local Authority and examines pupil performance differences among the main ethnic groups, by language spoken at home. Four overarching research questions guided this research:

- What does the data tell us about the ethnic background, language diversity and attainment of pupils?
- How can language spoken at home help in unravelling the issue of ethnic categorisation?
- How can language spoken at home help in unmasking differences in performance by ethnic background?
- What are the policy and research implications?

Methods

The Local Authority Context

The case study Local Authority (LA) is one of the most ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse boroughs in Britain. It is also ranked as the 14th most deprived borough in England. The number of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is 34% and well above the national average, suggesting high levels of disadvantaged families in the areas served by

schools. About 84% of pupils are from Black and ethnic minority groups. There has been a change in the overall composition of the Black and ethnic minority population in the Local Authority schools. The 1991 census showed that overall 66% of pupils in the LA's schools belonged to Black and other ethnic minority communities compared to the figure of 84% in 2011.

The social and cultural diversity noted in the ethnic composition of the schools is also reflected in the languages spoken. Around 152 languages are spoken in the LA's schools. 47% of pupils come from families which speak a language other than English as their main language, the most common being Yoruba, Portuguese, Spanish, Twi, French, Ibo, Ga, Krio, Tagalog and Luganda. The Local Authority therefore has a large proportion of bilingual pupils that need support in English as an additional language.

The Data

The sample consisted of pupils from an inner London LA, who completed National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of KS2 and KS4 (GCSE). The data was collected across a four year period from pupils who completed their key stage tests in 2011. In addition, all the LA's schools were asked to provide details of their pupils' backgrounds such as name, date of birth, sex, ethnic background, free school meal eligibility, language spoken at home and level of fluency in English, (for contextual analysis). Where available, evidence was also drawn from national data published by the Department for Education (DfE).

Measures of pupil background

Language Spoken at Home: Until 2007 there was no nationally collected data on language spoken at home in England. However, from January 2007, where a pupil's first language is not English, schools were asked by the government to record this language. It was not compulsory for schools to provide this level of detail and not all schools have chosen to use the extended language codes at national level. As a result it is very difficult to get complete language information for all pupils at a national level. However, the case study LA has a history of collecting and monitoring the language and ethnic background of the school population since 1990 for research purposes. Language and ethnic background data were received for almost 100 per cent of pupils whose first language was other than English, making this a useful dataset for research purposes.

Ethnic Group: Each pupil's ethnic origin was recorded in one of fourteen ethnic groups. The 2011 School Census in the LA showed that Black African pupils formed the largest ethnic group 24%, followed by Black Caribbean at 18% and White British at 15%, White Other 12%, Mixed Race 10%, Black Other 5%, Pakistani 1%, Chinese 1%, White Irish 1% and Any Other Group 8%. Details of the ethnic group categories in the LA were separately discussed in Demie 2001 and 2011.

Measures of Performance: It is important to note that in the English education system, pupils aged 5 to 16 years are taught the National Curriculum, which is a set of subjects and standards used by primary and secondary schools so pupils learn the same things. It covers what subjects are taught and the standards pupils should reach in each subject. The National Curriculum is organised into four blocks of years called 'key stages' (KS). At the end of each key stage, pupils are assessed on their performance in English, mathematics and science. These tests are intended to show whether pupils have attained the national average standard, which range from Level 2+ at age seven years, (at the end of KS1), or for a typical eleven year old at the end of KS2, level 4+. Pupils progress through the levels to an average level 5/6+ at the end of KS3. At the end of KS4, most 15 and 16 year-olds also take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, or other national qualifications. These are the major qualifications taken by pupils at the end of compulsory schooling. Therefore the measure of performance used in the analysis is level 4 or above for

performance at KS2 and five or more A*-C for GCSE including English and mathematics. An overall indicator of pupil attainment in KS2 was also derived by taking the average of the two tests – English and mathematics.

Results and Discussion

Diversity of Languages Spoken

English schools have been educating immigrant children for decades and the UK is no longer a homogeneous nation where English is the only language spoken at home. A detailed indication of the diversified nature of the communities is provided by the language data in Annex 1 which has been collected by the LA since 1990. Overall, more than 150 different languages were spoken in the LA's schools, in addition to English, reflecting the different cultures, experiences and identities of the people in the community. The data also show that 15,638 pupils spoke or understood a language other than English at home in 2011.

The language profile of the LA school population has changed considerably since 1992. The main findings showed some African languages increasing significantly since 1992. The number of Yoruba speakers (spoken widely in Nigeria) in the LA's schools increased from 800 to 1285 the sixth highest increase since 1992. The number of Twi Fante speakers (spoken in Ghana) also increased to 869 speakers and with the number of Somali speakers increasing considerably from only 32 in 1992 to 1416 in 2011. In terms of other European languages, Portuguese, Spanish and French have seen consistent increases in numbers since 1992, with 1973 more Portuguese speakers, 1130 more Spanish speakers, and 861 more French speakers. On closer examination, 50% of the Spanish speakers were classified as 'Any Other Ethnic Group', 31% as 'Any other White background' and 9% in the 'Any Other Mixed Background' category. The 'Any Other Ethnic Group' category includes pupils from Central and South America, in particular a sizeable Colombian community. Of the French cohort, 62% in 2011 had an ethnic background of 'Black African', inferring their country of origin as being French speaking African states (such as Zaire and Senegal), with 8% classified as 'Any Other Black background and 7% classified as 'Any Other White background'. Polish has seen a continued increase in numbers from 34 speakers in 1992 to 585 in 2011. In contrast, a number of languages have experienced a decrease since 1992. English has shown the greatest decrease, when compared to the 1992 survey results, with 1727 fewer speakers. Chinese, Vietnamese, Panjabi, Gujarati, Urdu and Bengali, all Asian languages, have also seen decline in the number of speakers since 1992 in the LA's schools.

Ethnic Background and Attainment

Recent data collected from schools allow us to analyse Key Stage results by ethnic background. The LA's schools contain a high proportion of Black African, Black Caribbean, White British, White Other and Mixed Race pupils with a number of smaller ethnic minority groups. The main findings of the data confirm that there are substantial differences in performance between different ethnic groups at both Key Stage 2 and GCSE (see Table 2). Of the largest ethnic groups sitting GCSE, Black African pupils performed the best, surpassing both the LA and national averages for pupils achieving five or more GCSE A*-C including English and mathematics. Pupils of Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani descent were also amongst the highest achievers overall. In contrast, a number of groups achieved below both the LA and national averages, including White British, White Other and Black Caribbean pupils. This is corroborated by analysing the ethnic background of pupils and their Key Stage 2 results, with similar findings, except that White British pupils, despite underachieving at GCSE, were one of the highest achieving groups at Key Stage 2. The achievement of Black Caribbean pupils is a particular cause for concern. People of Caribbean origin make up the largest ethnic minority in the LA and have been a focus of attention amongst policy makers. Findings from Key Stage and GCSE results have shown that Black Caribbean pupils have consistently performed below the average for the LA and

that of the other main ethnic groups (Demie 2001; Demie et al 2012) and analysis of the 2011 National Curriculum results at Key Stage 2 (78%) and GCSE (49%) show that they were the lowest achieving group, significantly below the LA's averages (Table 2).

Table 2: Key Stage 2 and GCSE Performance by Ethnic Background

Ethnic Background	Key Stage 2 Level 4+ English and Maths		GCSE 5+ A*-C inc English and Maths	
	Local Authority	National	Local Authority	National
Indian	90%	82%	86%	74%
Bangladeshi	86%	74%	83%	59%
White Irish	95%	81%	82%	65%
Black African	84%	70%	71%	57%
Pakistani	96%	68%	71%	52%
Asian Other	83%	78%	70%	62%
Mixed White/Asian	100%	81%	70%	58%
White Other	81%	68%	58%	54%
Chinese	100%	86%	63%	78%
Any Other Group	79%	68%	62%	53%
Mixed Other	86%	77%	61%	62%
Mixed White/Black Caribbean	84%	70%	58%	49%
White British	89%	75%	57%	58%
Black Other	82%	67%	51%	52%
Black Caribbean	78%	67%	49%	48%
All Pupils	84%	81%	61%	59%

Previous studies on achievement at national level, concentrate mainly on the above main ethnic groups. Indian, Chinese and Pakistani pupils are relatively small ethnic groups in the LA, and so it is more difficult to draw firm conclusions from the data. However, this data replicates findings from other studies that Indian, Chinese, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils tend to be amongst the highest performing ethnic groups.

Various possible explanations were considered for the differences in performance between different ethnic groups. A number of previous researchers have attributed differences in the attainment of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, to factors such as gender and social class. Gender is a significant indicator of attainment among school pupils. Examining attainment data by gender suggests that girls outperform boys in major examinations such as Key Stage 2 and GCSEs (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007). Other studies also provide an alternative explanation for ethnic differences in attainment, particularly for the under-achievement of Black Caribbean pupils, including 'unintentional' racism (Rampton, 1981 and Swann, 1985); differences in socio-economic conditions (Swann, 1985; Ofsted, 1996); prejudice on the part of some teachers; inappropriate curricula and teaching materials; lack of adequate support to schools and teachers from some Caribbean and other black parents; and inadequacy of the understanding of Caribbean and other black pupils by schools and teachers (Rampton, 1981).

Recent research work has brought the link between deprivation and low performance at school back up the agenda and has confirmed the relative low attainment of pupils who are entitled to free school meals (Cabinet Office 2007; Gillborn and Youdell 2002; Demie 2002). There are some striking and interesting differences between the main ethnic groups when the attainment data is further analysed by the effect of eligibility for free school meals. The empirical data shows that at GCSE, 35% of White British pupils eligible for free school meals achieved 5+ A*-C, compared with 67% of pupils who were ineligible, a gap of 32 percentage points. This compares to a 15% gap for Indian and Black African, 14% gap for Black Caribbean, 11% gap for Pakistani, whilst the gap for Bangladeshi's and Chinese pupils was smaller still at 5 percentage points (DCSF 2008). These findings suggest that the eligibility

for free school meals, an indicator of social deprivation, is strongly associated with low achievement, but significantly more so for White British pupils than for any ethnic group (Strand 2013; Demie et al 2012).

Language and Attainment

The above analysis on performance by ethnic group is valuable in improving our knowledge related to ethnic background and achievement. However, even in the few studies where ethnic differences and educational achievement are considered, the importance of language diversity in achievement between ethnic groups is rarely reported. As argued earlier the ethnic categories used above are often imprecise for a number of ethnic categories, constrained by categorisation of the official data available at national level. In particular the Black African and White Other ethnic categories gloss over enormous cultural, geographical and linguistic diversity. As such, it is useful to be cautious when using the national School Census ethnic categories. Ethnicity is clearly an important category which is connected to language, though obviously does not map straightforwardly onto it. As Von Ahn et al note *'while many languages "attach" to particular ethnic groups ... knowing a person's language does not tell us about their country of origin or ethnic heritage'* (2010 p.6). The empirical evidence for this research shows that the Black African category is one of the most linguistically diverse with 21% speaking English as their language at home, followed by Somali (17%), Yoruba (15%), Twi-Fante (10%), French (9%), Tigrinya (4%), Arabic, Igbo, Lingala, Amharic each 3%; Luganda, Krio, Ga, Swahili each 1%. Other languages spoken include Shona, Portuguese, German, Fang, Manding, Runyakata, Temne, Zulu and Oromo. Similarly, the White Other ethnic category is also highly linguistically diverse with Polish the most commonly spoken (45%), Spanish (21%), English (18%), French, Turkish and Albanian each 3%. In addition a number of pupils speak languages such as Lithuanian, Greek, Turkish, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serb-Croatian, Bosnian, Slovak, Norwegian, Maltese, Latvian, Kurdish, Hungarian, Swedish and Danish (Demie 2012).

However, it is possible now from locally collected data to unpick ethnic background by using language data. In terms of educational attainment, there are significant differences within ethnic categories, when the data is disaggregated by language spoken. For example, our data analysis of Key Stage 2 and GCSE results indicate that the Black African ethnic group, contains some of the highest achieving language groups, but also some of the lowest. A further analysis of the data by language (see Table 3 and 4) reveals that the lowest achieving pupils are Lingala speakers, whose attainment at both Key Stage 2 (72%) and GCSE (45%) is well below that of the LA and national averages. In contrast, Black African pupils speaking Igbo, Yoruba, Luganda and Ga, all achieved better than English-only speaking White British pupils. The data indicates that Spanish and Portuguese speaking-pupils in the LA, also fall below expected levels at both Key Stage 2 and GCSE, with Portuguese pupils in particular underperforming at GCSE with only 49% achieving 5 or more GCSE A*-C including English and mathematics. Other languages associated with White Other ethnic backgrounds, such as Greek, French and Polish generally perform in line with or above the LA averages. Key findings from the data show that: Ga, Yoruba, Igbo, Twi-Fante, Luganda, Krio, Igbo, Chinese, Polish speaking pupils do better than White British and the national average. Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili speaking pupils achieve less well than the national average.

Overall the analysis by language category illuminates the spread of attainment within broad ethnic categories and suggests that some of the commonly used ethnic groupings may be too broad to be useful, and that language data can provide greater insight into which pupils may be in need of particular support. In addition the data confirm language speakers such as Tagalog, Italian, Luganda and Amharic are too small to make meaningful statistical inference, although at individual levels the pupils achieve well above the national average (see Demie 2012).

Table 3: Difference in KS2 Performance by Language Spoken

Main Languages Spoken*	Ethnic background	KS2			
		English Level 4+	KS2 Maths Level 4+	Average Level 4+	Cohort
Italian	White Other	100%	100%	100%	23
Chinese	Chinese	100%	100%	100%	18
German	White Other	100%	100%	100%	10
Igbo	Black African	95%	95%	95%	19
Vietnamese	Other ethnic group	100%	90%	95%	10
Gujarati	Indian	100%	89%	94%	10
Urdu	Pakistani	93%	93%	93%	29
Krio	Black African	86%	100%	93%	11
Ga	Black African	92%	92%	92%	12
Polish	White Other	90%	90%	90%	49
Amharic	Black African	85%	95%	90%	20
Turkish	White Other	92%	85%	88%	13
Bengali	Bangladeshi	88%	85%	86%	33
English	White British, Black Caribbean, Irish, Others	84%	84%	84%	1254
Somali	Black African	82%	86%	84%	111
Twi-Fante	Black African	79%	78%	84%	59
Yoruba	Black African	84%	81%	83%	107
French	White Other	85%	79%	82%	82
Arabic	Other ethnic group	79%	83%	81%	53
Luganda	Black African	85%	77%	81%	13
Albanian	White Other	76%	81%	79%	21
Spanish	White Other	79%	77%	78%	103
Portuguese	White Other	77%	77%	77%	214
Lingala	Black African	72%	72%	72%	18
Tigrinya	Black African	65%	77%	71%	26
LA		84%	84%	84%	
National		82%	80%	81%	

Note:

* Other languages spoken by students who took KS2 examinations includes: Panjabi, Tagalog/, Classification Pending, Edo/Bini, Tamil, Persian/Farsi, Caribbean Creole French, Pashto/Pakhto, Russian, Dutch/Flemish, Japanese, Slovak, Ewe, Romanian, Kurdish, Hindi, Tagalog, Lithuanian, Thai, Bulgarian, Danish, Bemba, Maltese, Temne, Hausa, Information not obtained, Other than English, Swahili, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Greek, Katchi, Luo, Shona, Acholi, Hungarian, Czech, Latvian, Mongolian (Khalkha), Ogoni, Tibetan, Ukrainian, Zulu, Bamileke, Welsh, Efik-Ibibio, Believed to be English, Igala, Ijo, Malayalam and Oromo. These language results have not been reported here because there are only between 1 to 9 speakers and a very small number from which to make meaningful statistical interpretation compared with languages where there are a significant number of speakers. Care needs to be taken in the interpretation of the KS2 Trend data of languages, that have small numbers of speakers.

Table 4: Difference in GCSE Performance by Language Spoken

Main Languages spoken*	Ethnic background	Cohort	5+ A* - C incl. English and Maths
Arabic	Other ethnic group	24	88%
Bengali	Bangladeshi	33	85%
Luganda	Black African	10	83%
Krio	Black African	18	78%
French	White Other	33	76%
Igbo	Black African	17	76%
Yoruba	Black African	100	75%
Ga	Black African	18	75%
Tigrinya	Black African	15	67%
Twi-Fante	Black African	44	66%
Polish	White Other	19	63%
Somali	Black African	56	61%
Chinese	Chinese	22	59%
English	White British, Black Caribbean, Others	907	56%
Spanish	White Other	44	55%
Portuguese	White Other	103	49%
Lingala	Black African	11	45%
LA		1600	61%
National			59%

Note:

* Other languages spoken by students who took GCSE examinations includes Amharic, Tigrinya, Krio, Oromo, Arabic, Xhosa, Zulu, Hausa, Luo, Kikuyu, Manding, Runyakata, Temne, Urdu, Albanian, Pashto, Greek, Turkish, Swahilli, Italian, Gujarati, and Bengali. These language results have not been reported here because it has between 1 to 9 speakers which are very small to make meaningful statistical interpretation with languages with significant number of speakers. Care needs to be taken in the interpretation of the GCSE trend data of languages that have small number of speakers.

English Fluency and Attainment

Ethnic Background and first language are inextricably linked and research on the relationship between fluency in English and attainment confirms that language barriers remain one of the key factors affecting the performance of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in British schools (Demie 2011 and 2012).

Table 5: % of pupils with EAL at each English Fluency Stage* by Ethnic Backgrounds at KS2 and GCSE

Ethnicity	Key Stage 2 Pupils with EAL						GCSE Pupils with EAL					
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Fully Fluent (4)	Non-Fluent (1-3)	Cohort	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Fully Fluent (4)	Non-Fluent (1-3)	Cohort
Black African	2%	11%	36%	47%	49%	551	2%	2%	13%	84%	17%	341
White Other	4%	16%	38%	40%	58%	317	2%	3%	18%	76%	24%	169
Black Other	0%	4%	39%	29%**	43%	49	0%	0%	29%	71%	29%	31
Bangladeshi	0%	6%	38%	56%	44%	32	0%	0%	17%	83%	17%	30
Pakistani	0%	0%	45%	52%	45%	29	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	4
Chinese	0%	5%	20%	75%	25%	20	5%	0%	15%	80%	20%	20
Indian	0%	6%	38%	56%	44%	16	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	9

* A pupil's fluency in English is measured by one of the four stages developed by the LA including:

Stage 1: indicate New to English

Stage 2: indicate that pupils are becoming familiar with English

Stage 3: indicate that pupils are becoming confident as a user of English

Stage 4: indicate that pupils are fully fluent user of English

English Only: indicate that pupils are Monolingual and speaks English only

Table 6 shows the % pupils at each stage of fluency in English by ethnic background. The data shows that at Key Stage 2, pupils from Chinese (75%), Indian (56%), Bangladeshi (56%) and Pakistani (52%) backgrounds were more likely to be fully fluent in English than Black African (47%) or White Other (40%) pupils. Indeed, White Other, pupils with EAL at Key Stage 2, had a much higher proportion of non-fluent speakers (58%) than the other main ethnic bands. However different patterns of levels of fluency in English are observed at GCSE. The data again shows that about 17% of Black African and Bangladeshi, 24% of White Other and 20% Chinese are not fluent in English (see table 5).

Previous research has examined the results at KS2 and GCSE taking into account factors such as levels of fluency in English. The results indicated that pupils with EAL in the early stages of fluency performed at lower levels of attainment at both Key Stage 2 and GCSE than those who spoke English as a first language, while interestingly, bilingual pupils who were fully fluent in English far outstripped pupils for whom English was their only language (see Strand 1999; Demie 2011; Demie and Strand 2006 and Strand and Demie 2005). This study also suggests that there is a marked difference within each ethnic category when KS2 and GCSE data is further analysed by levels of fluency in English. For example Black African, White other, Bangladeshi and Indian pupils with EAL's performance at GCSE increases as the stage of proficiency in English increases. Ethnic minority pupils assessed as fully fluent in English perform much higher than the national average at all stages.

One of the main reasons particularly for Black African pupil's successful achievement at GCSE is that almost all pupils are fully fluent in the English language. About 89% of the Black African pupils in the LA's schools are fully fluent in English, about 10% require some additional support in English and only 1% are beginners to English with considerable need for English language support (Demie and Tong 2012; Demie et al 2011).

Table 6: Attainment of Pupils with EAL from Different Ethnic Backgrounds at KS2 and GCSE

Ethnicity	KS2 Level 4+ English and Maths Ave						GCSE 5+ A*-C inc English and Maths					
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Fully Fluent (4)	Non-Fluent (1-3)	Cohort	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Fully Fluent (4)	Non-Fluent (1-3)	Cohort
Black African	11%	34%	71%	91%	63%	612	0%	0%	46%	75%	42%	411
White Other	25%	55%	70%	98%	61%	332		0%	58%	66%	39%	181
Black Other	-	0%	68%	100%	65%	100	-	-	25%	59%	25%	93
Bangladeshi	-	50%	75%	89%	71%	33	-	-	20%	96%	20%	30
Pakistani	-	-	85%	100%	85%	29	-	-	-	75%	-	7
Chinese	-	100%	100%	100%	100%	20	-	-	33%	69%	33%	19
Indian	-	0%	50%	100%	40%	17	-	-	-	78%	-	14

Conclusions

Building on past research, which suggested links between ethnic background and academic achievement, this study extends the current literature by exploring the potential roles of language data to analyse school performance. The findings of this study suggest that analysing ethnic groups' performance by language adds to our understanding of the

association between language and ethnic background and confirms that pupils from different ethnic groups show differences in educational attainment. Indian, Chinese and Black African pupils achieve higher results, on average, than Black Caribbean and White British pupils. Black Caribbean, White British, Black Other and Mixed White/Black Caribbean pupils are the main underachieving ethnic groups.

However, we would argue that none of these ethnic categories are homogenous. A further analysis of the data by language spoken highlighted the potential of language data to help disaggregate census ethnic categories and give greater insight into the performance of different groups in schools. In particular the White Other and the Black Africans had the greatest linguistic diversity and attainment patterns. Of the Black African language groups the lowest achieving groups are Lingala speakers, spoken in the Congo. This group tend to have low attainment well below that of the lowest attaining ethnic group Black Caribbean, while the Ibo, Yoruba, Luganda, Somali, Krio, Twi-Fante, Amharic, Tigrinya and English speaking Black African achieve better than White British and national average. Within White Other Groups two groups have low attainment including Portuguese and Spanish speakers. By contrast, Polish language speakers achieve better than national average.

The study suggests that analysing ethnic groups' performance by language adds to our understanding of the associations between language and ethnic background. Furthermore this research illustrates the diverse nature of current ethnic group categories and calls for a rethink of the categories that we use to understand educational achievement in British schools.

Policy and Research Implications

This research illustrates the diversity within ethnic group categories currently used to classify pupils and calls for a rethink of the categories that we use to more fully understand educational achievement of ethnic minority pupils in British schools. The issue of research into the achievement of different ethnic groups in British schools is complicated by problems of categorisation under a group which is broadly defined nationally as Black African, White Other, Black Other, Indian, Pakistani, Other Ethnic Group etc. As a result of lack of detailed ethnically based data, there were various limitations in the past research into different ethnic groups. The absence of national data which identifies patterns of achievement of ethnic minority pupils of African, Asian and European heritage in British schools, places serious constraints on effective targeting policies and developments at national and local level. As Von Ahn et al (2011) and Demie et al (2011) have so eloquently articulated, this study suggests that language spoken provides a better means to understand the relationship between ethnicity and educational achievement. There is, therefore, clearly a need for further research into language groups whose needs tend to be obscured by classification into White Other and Black African ethnic groups, in order to gain a fuller picture of their educational performance and achievement.

There are also some limitations to this study that should be noted. The data comes from one Local Authority with a long history of collecting language data year-on-year, but has not included a study at national level due to the lack of data.

It must also be taken into consideration that the numbers in some of these language groups such as Greek, Turkish, Amharic, Urdu, Italian, and Luganda are relatively small in the GCSE cohort and any conclusions or interpretations should be made with care, since the performance of a few pupils can significantly weight the overall performance of a group. This issue of small numbers for some language groups which is raised in this research could be addressed if London-wide or national data is used. Nevertheless the broad findings of our research are in line with other studies (see Von Ahn et al 2011 and Demie et al 2011, Mitton 2011, Demie and McLean 2007) and there is no reason to think that future studies would differ in anything other than with language groups we analysed, which have only a small number of speakers.

2011, Demie and McLean 2007) and there is no reason to think that future studies would differ in anything other than with language groups we analysed, which have only a small number of speakers.

Despite these limitations, results from the present study do offer significant new insight and extend our existing knowledge in the area of ethnicity, language and achievement. The present findings also add to the body of research and wealth of empirical evidence on language spoken at home in British schools that may be used as baseline information from which subsequent studies may be traced.

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Annex 1: Main Languages Spoken in LA Schools 1992 – 2011

Main Languages	1992		2009		2010		2011		Change 1992-2011	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
English	18937	76.2	16726	54.3	17199	54.4	17210	52.2	17270	-9
Portuguese	377	1.5	2203	7.1	2225	7	2350	7.1	1973	+523
Somali	32	0.1	1203	3.9	1279	4	1416	4.3	1384	+4325
Spanish	233	0.9	1230	4	1264	4	1363	4.1	1130	+485
Yoruba	800	3.2	1316	4.3	1184	3.7	1285	3.9	485	+61
French	245	1	1035	3.4	1017	3.2	1106	3.4	861	+351
Twi-Fante	366	1.5	962	3.1	849	2.7	869	2.6	503	+137
Arabic	295	1.2	623	2	649	2.1	715	2.2	420	+142
Polish	34	0.1	471	1.5	509	1.6	585	1.8	551	+1621
Bengali	479	1.9	509	1.7	515	1.6	527	1.6	48	+10
Tigrinya	66	0.3	287	0.9	308	1	341	1	275	+417
Urdu	322	1.3	318	1	319	1	335	1	13	+4
Chinese	489	2	317	1	312	1	293	0.9	-196	-40
Italian	291	1.2	248	0.8	213	0.7	226	0.7	-65	-22
Igbo	153	0.6	200	0.6	188	0.6	222	0.7	69	+45
Lingala	12	0	207	0.7	188	0.6	213	0.6	201	+1675
Amharic			184	0.6	195	0.6	207	0.6	23	+13
Albanian	0	0	190	0.6	194	0.6	195	0.6	5	+3
Turkish	243	1	159	0.5	153	0.5	155	0.5	-88	-36
Luganda	21	0.1	130	0.4	113	0.4	127	0.4	106	+505
Krio	9	0	119	0.4	103	0.3	110	0.3	101	+1122
Tagalog	42	0.2	88	0.3	97	0.3	101	0.3	59	+140
German	176	0.7	106	0.3	90	0.3	98	0.3	-78	-44
Greek	38	0.2	70	0.2	92	0.3	96	0.3	58	+153
Ga	133	0.5	70	0.2	82	0.3	94	0.3	-39	-29
Vietnamese	99	0.4	120	0.4	86	0.3	90	0.3	-9	-9
Panjabi	125	0.5	88	0.3	82	0.3	89	0.3	-36	-29
Swahili	23	0.1	75	0.2	70	0.2	67	0.2	44	+191
Kurdish	17	0.1	66	0.2	66	0.2	66	0.2	49	+288
Gujarati	326	1.3	77	0.2	64	0.2	58	0.2	-268	-82
Russian			41	0.1	46	0.1	54	0.2	13	+32
Others*	479	1.9	1319	4.3	1824	5.8	2124	6.4	1645	+343

*Others have 1 to 50 pupils speakers and includes Acholi, Afar-Saho, Afrikaans, Anyi-Baule, Armenian, Bamileke, Basque/Euskara, Bemba, Berber/Tamazight, Bulgarian, Burmese/Myanma, Caribbean Creole French, Chichewa/Nyanja, Chitrali/Khowar, Classification Pending, Czech, Dagaare, Danish, Dinka/Jieng, Dutch/Flemish, Ebra, Edo/Bini, Efik-Ibibio, Esan/Ishan, Ewe, Fang, Finnish, Fon, Fula, Gaelic/Irish, Georgian, Guarani, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Iban, Icelandic, Igala, Ijo (Any), Ilokano, Information not obtained, Itsekiri, Japanese, Katchi, Kazakh, Kikamba, Kikuy, Kinyakyusa-Ngonde, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Kisi (West Africa), Kisii, Konkani, Korean, Lango, Lao, Latvian, Lithuanian, Lozi/Silozi, Luba, Luo (Kenya/Tanzania), Lusoga, Malay/Indonesian, Malayalam, Maltese, Manding/Malinke, Manx Gaelic, Maya (Any), Mende, Mongolian (Khalkha), Moore/Mossi, Ndebele, Nepali, Norwegian, Ogoni, Oriya, Oromo, Other Language, Pahari, Pashto, Persian/Farsi, Romani, Romanian, Runyakitara, Samoan, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Shona, Sindhi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Sotho/Sesotho, Swedish, Tamil, Telugu, Temne, Teso, Thai, Tibetan, Tigre, Tiv, Tongan, Ukrainian, Urhobo-Isoko, Welsh, West-African Creole Portuguese, Wolof, Xhosa, Zulu.

Glossary- A guide to acronyms

BME	Black and minority ethnic
CATs	Cognitive Abilities Tests
CLC	City Learning Centre
CVA	Contextual Value Added
DCSF	Department for children, schools and families
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as Additional language
EAZ	Educational Action Zone
ECM	Every Child matters
EMA	Ethnic minority achievement
EMAG	Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant
EMAS	Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
ESL	English as a second language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
FFT	Fischer Family Trust
FSM	Free school meals
FSP	Foundation Stage Profile
GCSE	General Certificate for Secondary Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
INSET	In Service Educational Training
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
KS3	Key Stage 3
KS4	Key Stage 4
LA	Local Authority
LiC	Language in Common
LMTA	Lambeth Mother Tongue Assessment
LSE	Lambeth Stages of English
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
MTA	Mother Tongue Assessment
NC	National Curriculum
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PNS	Primary National Strategies
PSHE	Personal, social and health education
QCA	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
SEN	Special education needs
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator
SLT	Senior leadership team
SMT	Senior management team

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