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Mother Tongue Other Tongue: Nine Years of Creative Multilingualism in Practice

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Abstract

This article assesses the impact over nine years of the *Mother Tongue Other Tongue* multilingual schools' poetry competition led by Carol Ann Duffy from Manchester Metropolitan University, in which over 35,000 pupils from 77 schools have participated to date. It reviews evidence from a 2019 evaluation of the project and from a project anthology compiling several years of winning entries. The evidence suggests that the project is achieving its expected outcomes in increasing the self-confidence of bilingual and multilingual pupils, enhancing inclusivity and cultural exchange in the classroom and fostering dialogue and co-creation between children and their families. This article sets these outcomes within the context of research on urban multilingualism in Manchester, poetry in the UK National Curriculum, and creative multilingualism in English education, and seeks to extend the case made by previous articles in this journal for the educational value of multilingual creative writing.

Key words

Bilingual, Multilingual, translanguaging, poetry, creative writing, national curriculum

Poetry and the National Curriculum

The corpus of poetry recommended in government statutory orders for English and selected by the awarding bodies for GCSE study is a reflection of generations of professional and political debate on issues of value, heritage and relevance (Blake 2020, 1-36). The growing presence of contemporary poets within this corpus, and in particular of contemporary poets generally agreed to be stylistically and thematically accessible, is in part an attempt to address a longstanding perception of poetry as a 'problem' in English education: alienating in its linguistic forms and in the themes of older work, difficult to teach, and lacking relevance for many children studying within a comprehensive education system (Blake 2020; Andrews 1991; Blake & Shortis 2010; Myhill & Wilson 2013).

Carol Ann Duffy was UK Poet Laureate from 2009 to 2019 and has been Creative Director of the Manchester Metropolitan University (hereafter Manchester Met) Writing School since 2006. Duffy was named in the fifth statutory order for Key Stage 4 (pupils aged 14-16) (KS4) of the National Curriculum, covering the period 2012-16 (Blake 2020, 152). This official recognition reflects a value already recognised by the awarding bodies, in whose specifications and anthologies Duffy had been a mainstay since 1998. The impact of Duffy's work on pupils and teachers of English in UK secondary education over the past two decades is evident. The official sanctioning of this work as part of relatively narrow poetry corpus has given it a key role in influencing perceptions of the nature and value of poetry and its capacity to express human experience in a manner relevant to contemporary young people. Moreover, as UK Poet Laureate, leading extra-curricular education projects

with a social justice and inclusive educational agenda, Duffy has also responded to deficits in poetry teaching under the national curriculum.

Mother Tongue Other Tongue

Duffy established the Manchester Children's Book Festival in 2010. Since then, conventional annual festival activities giving children and families access to children's authors have been embedded within a year-round programme engaging directly with teachers, schools and communities. This has been organised around a portfolio of key projects, amongst which one of the most significant is the multilingual poetry competition *Mother Tongue Other Tongue* (MTOT). Like other projects initiated by Duffy during her Laureateship, MTOT is a creative writing project. Brian Cox, chair of the working group that established English as a national curriculum subject, recognised the value of creative writing, and believed that children should have opportunities to write poetry, but did not believe that creative writing should or could be assessed (Cox 1991, 147; Blake 2020, 28-29). Since the establishment of the national curriculum in 1989, this exclusion of poetry writing from assessment and attainment targets has persisted, resulting in its devaluation within increasingly examination and target-driven classrooms (Dymoke 2001). Poetry education at GCSE level has come to mean almost exclusively the critical study of poetry, and the national curriculum programme of study for English published in 2014 during Michael Gove's tenure as Education Minister removed all mention of poetry as a possible form of writing, and as Andrew McCallum notes 'does not make a single mention of creativity' (DfE 2014, 6; McCallum, 2016, 75).

Over the same period creative writing has become firmly established as a university discipline with its own Quality Assurance Agency subject benchmark and clearly defined criteria for assessment (QAA 2019). Research on the educational value of creative writing has also expanded and diversified, asserting its value as a mode of inquiry into other disciplines (Cahnmann 2006, Januchowski-Harley et al 2019), a valuable exercise in the development of English language skills (Cremin and Myhill, 2012; McCallum 2012), a useful tool in foreign language learning (Hanauer 2011); and a medium through which pupils can explore complex ethical issues (Misson and Morgan 2006). Research has also suggested the value for inclusive education in 'superdiverse' urban settings of supporting bilingual and multilingual children to write creatively, using their languages as well as their cultural knowledge as a creative resource (Kenner et al 2008; Murphy 2013; Holmes 2015; Gilmour 2017; Cahnman-Taylor & Preston 2018; Barber & Lickorish Quinn 2020; Hirsch & Macleroy 2020).

Like other schools projects initiated by Duffy during her Laureateship and coordinated by colleagues at Manchester Met, MTOT is a practice-led project born of the collaborative interaction between writers who teach and English teachers with a desire to keep creativity alive in the classroom. The Manchester Writing School at Manchester Met has been delivering Continuing Professional Development for teachers in teaching creative writing since 2003, when it was introduced to support engagement with the Arts Council-funded 'All Write' schools creative writing competition. In the same year the Writing School launched the Association of Creative Writers in Education (ACWE) and in 2011 established and began coordinating the Manchester Creative Learning Network, linking teachers with

creative educators in the University and the city's cultural institutions. MTOT was designed to address a need articulated by the teachers in this network for support in delivering creative, inclusive education. Its work has developed through their input, building on the pioneering work of the Arvon Foundation's M(Other) Tongues programme, first piloted in 2009. M(Other) Tongues supports young people to write creatively in their mother language; MTOT adds within its Mother Tongue strand the alternative of writing a commentary on a poem written in that language. It also adds the Other Tongue strand, where pupils write creatively in a language they are learning.

MTOT was run as a pilot in the Northwest in 2012 and rolled out nationally as a Laureate Education Project in the following year through the HEFCE-funded Routes into Languages network. Since this funding lapsed in 2016 independent regional versions of the competition have continued, with Manchester Met running MTOT for over 40 schools located principally in the Northwest.ⁱ Since 2012, over the nine annual iterations of the competition led by Manchester Met, approximately 35,600 pupils between the ages of 9 and 17, across 77 participating schools, have responded to the competition's prompt to write poetry either in a language they are learning at school (Other Tongue) or in a language which they speak at home (Mother Tongue). A centrepiece of Manchester's successful 2017 bid to become a UNESCO City of Literature, the MTOT approach has informed three iterations to date of the City's celebration of International Mother Language Day, with poets leading thousands of schoolchildren each year in multilingual poetry writing and performance. In 2019, MTOT was one of only two Arts and Humanities initiatives to receive one of 18 Queen's Anniversary Awards for Higher Education, recognising

research which ‘delivers real benefit to the wider world and public’ (Royal Anniversary Trust 2020). In 2020 Manchester Met will open the UK’s fourth public poetry library, with an emphasis on poetry in the community languages of the region’s residents (<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/poetrylibrary/>).

A Practice-Led Project in Multilingual Manchester

Notwithstanding the value of the competition in supporting language learning, the focus of this article is its value in using poetry writing to support creativity and inclusivity in those multilingual classrooms typical of the Northwest’s urban communities. Over the duration of our project, a growing body of data on multilingualism in Manchester has been published by the Multilingual Manchester research project at University of Manchester. Multilingual Manchester data suggests that over 150 languages are spoken by permanent residents of the city, and that almost 50 per cent of the adult population and 40 per cent of the youth population are bilingual or plurilingual (Gopal, Matras, Percival, Robertson & Wright, 2013). The seven most widely spoken community languages in the city are Urdu, Arabic, Chinese, Bengali, Polish, Panjabi and Somali, and the languages most strongly represented in borrowing from the City’s libraries are Urdu, Chinese, Bengali, Polish, Persian and Arabic, with Urdu outstripping the others by a considerable margin (Gopal et al 2013, 1, 7). Like London, which has been the subject of much recent research into creative multilingualism, Manchester is, to use Steven Vertovec’s term, a ‘superdiverse’ city, with all of the challenges and opportunities that this diversity implies (Holmes 2017, 15-16). At the same time, schools in Manchester are subject to the same constraints as elsewhere and deliver an English curriculum which in its

most recent iterations has increasingly positioned the acquisition of skills in Standard English and the 'cultural capital' of English literary heritage as a normative response to migration and multiculturalism (Yandell & Brady 2016, 44; Holmes 2017, 298; Barber & Lickorish Quinn 2020, 7-8; Gilmour 2020, 1)

The theory of change for the project is rooted in the creative practice of Duffy and other Manchester Met poets writing in the lyric tradition and using poetry to explore experience and identity through language and poetic voice. This creative practice treats the personal and cultural aspects of language, identity and experience as the raw materials of a poetic craft that can be taught and mastered. Accordingly, MTOT seeks to supplement a national curriculum which devalues creativity and positions standard English and the English literary heritage as a privileged norm by embracing multilingualism, and the cultural resources which lie behind it, as valuable creative assets, and thereby increasing the confidence of bilingual and plurilingual pupils. Through this valuing of multilingual creativity and diverse cultural resources, the project seeks to enhance inclusivity and the exchange of cultural knowledge in the classroom. And as an activity which often necessitates support from families fluent in languages not taught at school and with access to cultural assets not available in standard curriculum resources or school libraries, it aims to foster dialogue and co-creation between children and their families and carers, enhancing family involvement in education. Whilst surveys of the competition's participating teachers and pupils have been conducted since its inception and used to develop the project's approach, evidence here is drawn from an intensive evaluation co-designed and co-delivered in 2019 by researchers from Manchester Met's English Department and its Centre for Youth Studies.

Introducing the Evaluation: MTOT 2019

The MTOT competition is launched annually in January. Schools are supported to engage via CPD for teachers and resources on the project website produced by Duffy and other Manchester Met poets. The level and nature of support for pupil engagement with the project within schools ranges from limited and extra-curricular to a series of lessons integrated with the English and/or languages curriculum. Some primary and secondary schools are chosen each year for poets to visit and deliver workshops to help pupils engage with the competition. The criteria for selection vary from year to year and in 2019 schools with high numbers of English as an Additional Language pupils were prioritised for poet visits. Each school chooses four poems to enter into the competition. Winning pupils perform at a celebration event in June hosted by Duffy and a celebrity guest. These guests have included boxer Amir Khan, poet Imtiaz Dharker and Nobel prize laureate Malala Yousafzai. Winning and highly commended entries are collated in an anthology edited by MTOT Project Manager Yasmin Hussain, published on the project website and distributed to participating schools (Hussain 2020). Since 2014 the anthology has been accretive, adding each year's winning entries to those from previous years. The 2020 iteration features 41 Mother Tongue poems and reflective commentaries from 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, representing 22 different community languages. Alongside evaluation data, this anthology is itself a rich source of evidence of the experiences and cultural resources of competition participants and will be used as such here.

In 2019, the year of our evaluation, 2029 pupils from 43 schools in the Northwest participated in MTOT. 189 entries were received from these schools, of which 53 per cent (n=100) were for the Mother Tongue strand and 47 per cent (n=89) for Other Tongue. Manchester Met poets Malika Booker and Anjum Malik, along with poets Thaliya Darr and Basir Kazmi, delivered workshops in 11 schools to more than 410 pupils in year groups 4-12. The 2019 evaluation draws on 336 pupil survey responses (274 pre-engagement; 62 post-engagement), 35 teacher reflective diaries filled in before and after participation in the project, 6 family member survey responses, and interviews with 5 teachers and 17 pupils from 5 case study schools. Our case study schools -two primary and three secondary- are all in Manchester, and all have high proportions of English as an Additional Language pupils. In addition 341 pupils returned feedback forms on their experiences of workshops with our poets.

Pre-engagement: pupil views of mother language confidence and pride

96 of the pupils who completed the pre-engagement pupil survey were participating in the Mother Tongue element of MTOT. 69 per cent (n=63) of these respondents indicated that the language they had chosen to write in for the competition was extremely or very important to them for 'everyday communication'; 85 percent (n=81) that it was extremely or very important for their 'connection to wider family and community'; and 73 percent (n=69) that it was extremely or very important for their 'cultural identity and sense of belonging.' Respondents indicated that this importance could be more strongly reflected in the prominence given to community languages at school, with only 59 per cent of Mother Tongue participants

(n=55) indicating that they were given opportunities for sharing their own culture and language.

This impression of perceived need and value is confirmed by teachers' entries in their pre-engagement reflective diaries. A number of these teachers had participated in the project before. A secondary teacher who planned to run 9 sessions to support participation in the competition wrote in her diary of her long-term experience of the project:

We have been taking part in MTOT for the past 7 years and have thoroughly enjoyed the process every year. We believe it fosters an appreciation for our own, and others' cultures, and encourages students to explore their heritage in a creative way.

Outcomes: mother language competence and pride

Our post-engagement survey suggested some success in increasing mother language competence, 75 per cent of pupils indicating that participation in MTOT had improved their understanding of their mother tongue. Still more marked was the impact on confidence and pride in mother-language speaking. 84 per cent of the pupils who filled in our post-engagement pupil survey said that it had made them feel more connected to their cultural background and 77 per cent that writing poetry in their mother tongue made them feel that their identity and culture were valued in school. These outcomes confirm the implications of creative multilingual schools projects surveyed by Sam Holmes. These suggest the 'disempowerment' bilingual and multilingual learners can experience in formal learning contexts where their

specific literacies are not valued, and the ‘empowerment’ they can experience through allowing them to connect creatively with their ‘full linguistic repertoire’ (Holmes 2015, 4).

Outcomes: intercultural exchange

One of the five principles of successful creative multilingual projects distilled from Sam Holmes’s survey is ‘collaborative endeavour over individualisation’ (Holmes 2015, 11). Holmes draws on Paul Gilroy’s characterisation of the ‘conviviality’ of metropolitan youth culture to emphasise the hybridity of identities in UK school cultures and the value of exercises which encourage a sharing and pooling of cultural and linguistic resources. The MTOT evaluation suggested that, while developing confidence and pride in mother language speaking, pupils participating in the competition appreciated the opportunity for cultural exchange. 86 per cent of respondents to the post-engagement survey said that MTOT had given them the opportunity to share their own language and culture, and 70 per cent that it had given them an opportunity to learn about other languages and cultures. The extent to which participants had this opportunity for exchange will have depended to some degree on the way in which the project was integrated into school teaching. The workshops run by our poets in schools emphasised this sharing of cultural and linguistic resources, and feedback on these workshops is strikingly positive about this aspect of them. Feedback on one of Anjum Malik’s poetry workshops at a primary school included the following comments:

I have enjoyed sharing everyone's languages because there were some languages that I didn't know my friends could speak.

I enjoyed listening to people songs and knowing how their names means and the story behind them. This help me be a little more confident about speaking about my home language

Today I really enjoyed listening to people's songs in their own language it really touched mine and other people's hearts

A secondary teacher at one of our case study schools went beyond 'celebration' of community languages and culture in her assessment of the benefits of this kind of exchange, seeing it as fostering as more collaborative and 'bonded' learning community:

...there's lots of students who don't have other languages and they have actually been quite shocked at the students that they're surrounded by. They can be in a class with 29 other students and say, "Oh yeah, I know you speak Arabic, I know you speak French," whatever. But then when they actually see them writing the poems and things like that it gets them involved and they're like, "Oh, I didn't know you could do that." Or, "Tell me about that, what do you mean that happened? Oh, did your grandad used to read that to you?" And I think it helps them bond that little bit more.

Some of the most striking pupil experiences shared in the evaluation were those of young people whose identities and resources had been formed not only by growing up in diasporic UK communities but also by the experience of migration itself. We interviewed two Y10 pupils from a case study school, one of Bangladeshi and one of Nigerian origin, both of whom had spent some of their early years in Italy. These pupils had valued the opportunity the competition gave them to encounter the

range of linguistic resources possessed by their classmates. The pupil of Nigerian origin commented:

...some languages that I didn't even know existed that I heard for the first time. They were quite cool to listen to because sometimes you always think about how big the world is, how broad it is and how many different languages there are.

But having chosen to write in Italian, rather than either their 'mother language' or a language taught at school, these pupils also discovered that they shared experiences, linguistic resources and a common aspect of their identity with others in the school who had spent time in Italy as part of a migration journey. The interviewee of Nigerian origin spoke of their experience of participating in the competition in the previous year, and the way it:

...led to my culture a bit more, because sometimes it just feels like, I forget that I'm Italian. Because I'm always speaking English, English, constantly I'm speaking English. ... Like, it reminds me of having a phone call with a friend I used to know from Italy that, we drifted apart because we're in different countries. But when I did the programme it kind of brought me a bit closer to Italy again.

The pupil spoke of hiding their Italian accent in the UK, surprising their classmates with their Italian poem, and making a new friendship with another Italian speaker which had lasted. Their friend from Bangladesh reflected on this discovery from their own perspective:

...it was nice to know about the people's backgrounds and languages, and why certain poems were important to them. And I found out that some of their thoughts matched with mine and it means you're not alone. ... We don't really

get the chance to express our backgrounds a lot in school and it's more like you need to settle with what you've got.

Outcomes: family involvement

The three outcomes which the MTOT project aims at - increased cultural confidence and pride; intercultural exchange; family involvement – depend in various degrees on the way in which the project is implemented by schools. While those who have designed and developed the project hope that writing mother tongue poetry in itself will have some value in achieving the first outcome, opportunities for exchange for more than the pupils who win and attend the celebration event will depend on the way the project is integrated with teaching. Even more beyond our influence is the involvement of families, but the exercise is designed to encourage this involvement. The exercise of writing poetry in a mother tongue is likely to lie in what Sam Holmes identifies as Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' - a category of task which stretches learners sufficiently beyond their current competence that they need help, but not so far that they are defeated by it (Holmes 2015, 3). Pupils with oral fluency in a community language spoken at home may need their family's help to write it. This kind of exercise also encourages family engagement in the exchange of cultural resources such as poems, songs and lullabies. Studies have indicated the impact on family educational involvement of exercises encouraging children to draw on first language resources (see Martin-Jones, M. and Saxena, M., 2003 and Jessel, J., Gregory, E., Arju, T., Kenner, C. and Ruby, M., 2004). And our evaluation suggests some impact of this kind. 21 per cent (n=20) of our Mother Tongue pre-engagement survey respondents indicated that their family were regularly involved with their

homework; 65 per cent (n=28) of the Mother Tongue post-engagement survey respondents agreed that their family had been involved in their contribution to the competition; and 49 per cent (n=21) that this project had allowed their family to become more involved in their education. A secondary teacher that we interviewed from one case study school stated:

The students who do enter, I do ask them, you know, especially when they're doing a mother tongue one, "What inspired you? Did anyone help you or did you speak to anyone?" And it's lovely to hear, "Yeah, I was talking to my parents about it last night and they were so proud of me that I'm writing in our language, or, I'm bringing up something from our past." So I think some parents are really happy with it.

Why Poetry?

Self-evidently, a project which seeks to foster pride and confidence in mother language speaking does not need to do so through poetry. So what are the implications of this choice? One benefit is likely to be a development of participants' interest not just in poetry per se - a compulsory element of the English curriculum - but in poetry as an aspect of mother language culture. In some cases this may have a prominent role, building a cultural bridge between school and home. A study of a bilingual poetry project in two Tower Hamlets primary schools suggests the value of using a mother tongue poem - in this case a Bengali lullaby - as the basis for an exploration of cultural ideas and values both with family and in the classroom (Kenner et al 2008). Here pupils developed an understanding of these ideas and

values as encoded in poetic metaphor, developing questions in class about things they didn't understand to take home to their families.

Participants in the Mother Tongue strand of MTOT are given the choice of writing creatively in their Mother Tongue or reflecting on a poem, song or lullaby in their first language. 52 per cent (n=50) of Mother Tongue respondents in our pre-engagement survey already knew poems in their mother tongue and 79 per cent (n=34) of Mother Tongue respondents in our post-engagement survey said their participation had made them 'more interested in poems in my mother tongue'. Two sisters of Pakistani origin from one case study school, one Y9 and one Y11, reflected in their interview on their parents' pride that they were using poetry in Urdu in their school work, because, in the words of one '*in Pakistan, we did poems every subject sometimes and here, we don't*'. But the most eloquent evidence of the value of using already-written poems, lullabies and songs is in the reflections collated in the project anthology. Re Mehek Chaudri's reflections on an Urdu poem by D. Kaur include analysis of language and technique in the original language. Thi has obvious value for critical poetry analysis per se as well as cultural and language learning (Hussain 2020, 32-3). Several reflections situate their relationship with the poem in family or community context. Raka Chattopadhyay writes of being read the songs and poems of Rabindranath Tagore by his parents as a child (49). Emma Watson relates growing up listening to the Irish national anthem in Gaelic in a family that had been 'involved in many rebellions and fought to free Ireland and the end of repression against its people' (44). Kiana Eskandani tells of going to her Grandparents' house on the longest night of the year – 'Shab-e-Cheleh (Yalda night)' – where the family would read the Persian poets 'Divan-e-Hafez and Faleh Hafez to advise us and to

help us get answers for our problems' (72). Daria Bahraini recalls following her mother as she did household chores while reciting verses from Persian poet 'Saadi Shirazi' and 'copying every word she said' (70), surprising her mother when she was able to recite the verses back, sounding like a 'clunky choir'. Some of these reflections explore the poetry in ways which implicitly or explicitly connect its qualities with these contexts. Chloe and Mia Chung reflect on a Cantonese lullaby recited to them by a grandmother that they don't see much anymore. The lullaby describes a traditional Korean dish, blue crab marinated alive in boiling soy sauce, and the sisters use their reflection to explain both the cultural practice and to explain and reflect on the metaphor of maternal love in the image of a mother crab trying to protect its eggs as it dies (57). Remarkably, several mother language poems in our winners' anthology have a still deeper connection to family through being written by or about close relatives. Jasmine Walker's Patwa poem 'T'ree Fried Plantains' tells the story of her Great-Grandmother, Mary Isaacs (46); Emilija Katelinaite's Lithuanian poem, which calls for peace and national reconciliation after conflict, was written by her Grandmother and read to her before she slept (34). Judit Rojo's Catalan poem about love was written by her mother when she was 12 (47). She marvels to think of her mother at this age 'completely accepting of new people and places as well as ... excited about discovering the world through people, who they are and their reasoning'. These poems and reflections confirm Garcia and Wei's argument that multilingualism is 'a rich source of [both] creativity and criticality', as the encouragement to explore it provokes reflection on the 'tension, conflict, competition, difference and change' entailed in multilingual experiences and contexts (Garcia & Wei 2014, 24).

While writing about a poem from your community culture is a powerful way of exploring and owning the cultural assets that you have access to through that community, our evaluation suggests that those participants who chose instead to write creatively experienced other benefits. Caroline Murphy's conclusion in her evaluation of Arvon's M(Other) Tongue project confirms that creative writing is 'a significant tool in the personal, social and cultural development of multilingual young people' (Murphy 2013, 37). 78 per cent of post-engagement survey respondents said that writing poetry had 'made them feel more free to express their personal experience and identity than other forms of writing'. This freedom of expression tended to be associated both with the aesthetic qualities of poetry -the pleasure of its patterns - and its capacity to express individual views and experiences. A year 6 (age 11) pupil from a case study school who wrote her poem in Urdu reflected in her interview:

Well, I'm not actually ... I don't really like poetry that much. It's not really my hobby. I'm more of a like an artist or story-writing person, but while thinking of writing this poem it kind of like taught me that it's actually kind of beautiful of how like the words flow and the meaning behind them, and everyone has a different perspective towards it.

Zenib Reja Akhtar wrote of writing her poem with the help of grandparents on the phone from Pakistan and reflected: 'I wrote this poem because it represents me and I feel proud of myself that I actually made a poem which represents me' (51).

Sometimes, what poetry allows you to share can be complex, even difficult experiences. In one respect the complexities expressed in the entries to MTOT are linguistic complexities: the complexities of hybrid identities and cultural resources. In another respect these linguistic complexities are the symptom of other complexities - the complexities of migrant and diasporic experience - which can be traumatic. A secondary teacher wrote in their reflective diary before starting the five classroom sessions they planned to support participation in the competition that, although they hoped that pupils 'will feel proud of the literature and poetry of their culture', they also worried that the programme 'might evoke painful memories for some of the pupils.' A year 6 pupil from a case study school spoke in her interview of being supported by her parents to write a poem in Somali about the conflict that had made them refugees and in which she had lost her grandfather. Mojan Moghadasi reflects, in our winners anthology, on a Farsi song that he found on the internet whose metaphors have helped him understand and cope with the emotions he feels after becoming separated from his father when he left Iran (Hussain 36). As Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor and Dorine Preston put it, in their study of bilingual poetry work with Latino pupils, 'writing poetry provides a space to consider language and life together, to process cultural complexities within an inventive linguistic space'. (Cahnman-Taylor and Preston 2008, 245).

Limitations of the Project and Next Steps

In many respects our evaluation suggests that the Mother Tongue Other Tongue project is succeeding in achieving its aim to support inclusive education in multilingual classrooms. However, both the evaluation and recent research in

creative multilingualism in education suggest limitations in its approach that further development might address. One current limitation is in the support we give through the resources provided for the competition to foster family and community involvement. This could be addressed by the structured approach modelled in the Tower Hamlets project described by Kenner et al, which starts with a community resource (the Bengali lullaby), and supports the children to research it at home (Kenner et al 2008, p94-5). Another current limitation rests in the project's implicit assumptions about the relationship between languages in multilingual practice. Following the 'translanguaging' turn in applied linguistics, Sam Holmes and Rachael Gilmour both critique the conventional understanding of multilingualism which presumes autonomous uses of linguistic codes in different situations (e.g. English at school; mother language at home), misrepresenting a reality where 'a speaker's language practice is drawn adaptively from the range of linguistic resources and ways of making meaning at their disposal' (Holmes 2015, 3; Gilmour 2017, 298).

The reality of translanguaging, as 'the act of languaging between systems that have been described as separate, and beyond them', is confirmed emphatically in our evaluation by the experience of the pupils who had learned Italian on their migrant journey (Garcia & Wei 2014, 42). In their interview the year 10 (age 15) pupil whose parents had migrated from Bangladesh via Italy reflected:

Because for me, since when I was born, it was all mixed up and we never spoke just one language. For me, it's multiple languages. But obviously, I can't write the poem in two or three languages. And even our home, my mum,

even in normal sentences, she says in three or four different languages. So it's all a bit mixed up and I just wrote it in Italian.

For the 'third culture kids' represented in our anthology, cultural connection through poetry and song might not be something that involves your family. In this context the kinship metaphor of 'mother tongue' begins to seem complicit with the linguistic nationalism implicit in monolingual education and the hierarchy of 'native' and 'second' or 'additional' language speaking. Afifa Chaudhry chose to enter and reflect not on a poem or lullaby read to her by family members, but on a song from 'an Italian animated series called Winx Club that I used to watch as a child' (60). But Chen Ji is the only entrant in our winners anthology that entered a polylingual poem - in Mandarin, English and German (28). Chen Ji writes in their reflection on the relationship between this translanguaging and their own experience of cultural hybridity.

In an account of a project run in two East London schools, Gilmour argues for the value of supporting pupils to draw creatively in this way on 'polylingual' language resources which they are able to 'employ in improvisatory and fluid ways to make meaning in different contexts' (Gilmour 2017, 301). This kind of classroom practice, concludes Gilmour, currently 'marginalised by education policy in relation to English teaching', encourages pupils to become reflective and critical users of language, including English (Gilmour 2017, 306). In a project with a South London School, Catherine Barbour and Karina Lickorish Quinn describe the results of supporting children to write 'translingual' poetry, 'moving away from didactic teaching to engage dialogically with the children on their writing choices and processes' and thereby

allowing 'for the vibrant discussion and mutual exchange of languages and cultures, which gave the children agency, autonomy and representation in their own learning process (Barbour & Lickorish Quinn 2020, 21).' Supporting participants in Mother Tongue to experiment translingually in their creative poetry writing where they want to, and rewarding this experimentation through new judging criteria, will be an important next step for the project.

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ⁱ See de Britos 2016 for an account of the Scottish version of Mother Tongue Other Tongue.