The multilingual turn in language and education: Lessons from homes and communities

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The multilingual turn in language and education

- A recognition that most contemporary societies are increasingly multilingual and that most people are also multilingual in varying degrees
- The confluence of old and new mobilities has led to the growth of complex, multi-layered communities whose members have diverse language repertoires and complex personal identities and group affiliations which may not fit neatly to fixed and rarefied identities and affiliations ascribed to them (thus, societies are moving towards "superdiversity", Vetrovec, 2007)
- Yet, the monolingual bias still persists where monolingualism and monolingual education is considered the norm
- Language diversity in mainstream education is often regarded as a problem rather than a resource to school achievement and inclusion and a hindrance to social cohesion rather than a matter social justice

Reconceptualising multilingualism in education

- A conceptual shift in our thinking of multilingualism in education
  - from an understanding of languages as discrete and bounded entities to languages as social and ideological constructs (Blackledge & Creese 2010; Makoni & Pennycook 2007)
  - from a focus on code and languages closely related to "speech communities" to a focus on language users, their multilingual repertoires and biographical trajectories situated in local and global contexts

- A shift of focus from an "idealised" native speaker or deficit view to an asset view of multilingualism (Conteh & Meier 2014)

Reconceptualising multilingualism in education

- From monolingualism to linear bilingualism (from subtractive bilingualism to additive bilingualism; cf. "two solitudes" Cummins, 2007)
- From linear bilingualism to dynamic/flexible bilingualism and translanguaging understood as:
- "The development of different language practices to varying degrees in order to interact with increasingly multilingual communities in a global world" (García and Sylvan, 2011: 388)
- This shift reflects a broader turn in the social sciences to post-modern and post-structuralist perspectives that have alerted us to the unequal distribution and access to linguistic and other semiotic resources within and across multilingual settings

Researching multilingualism in education

- Grounding research in ethnographic and critical approaches
- A broadening of range of methods of data collection and analysis associated with a conceptual shift to visual and multi-modal research methods (e.g. the use of drawings to elicit language biographies, photography to represent language experiences)
- Greater researcher reflexivity and awareness of how researchers' historically and socially situated subjectivities, co-existing and competing points of view, shape the different stages of the research process
- Greater commitment of bringing the voices of the research participants in the research narratives
- Greater awareness of the plural and polyphonic nature of knowledge-building between research team members and with research participants

(Martin-Jones & Martin, 2017)

Questions to consider

- How can these epistemological and methodological lenses help shift educators' understandings of and stances towards students' languages, literacies and identities?

- What lessons from students' language and literacy learning experiences from homes and communities can educators draw upon to support and value culturally-sustaining, multilingual pedagogies for all young people?

Investigating Multilingualism in Complementary Schools in four Communities (ESCR-RES-000-23-1180)
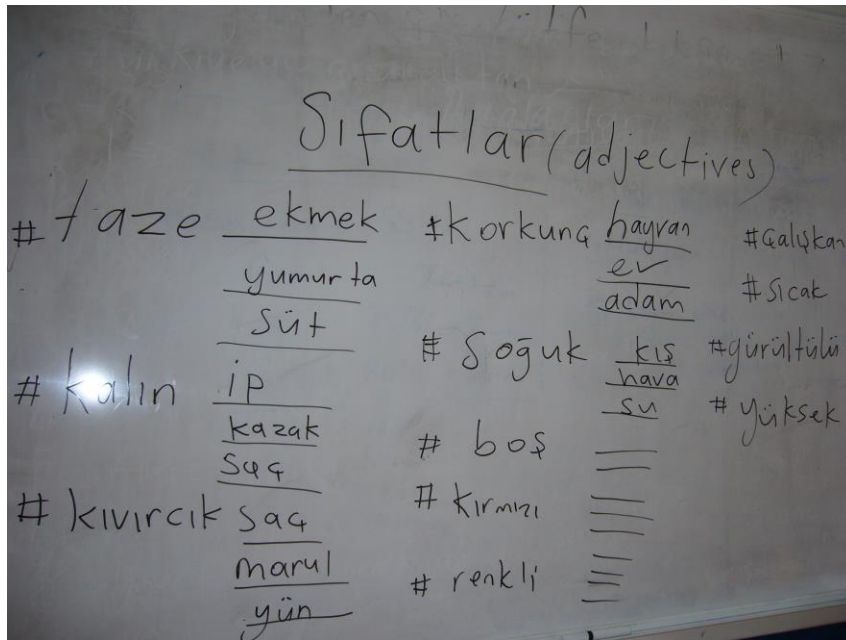
- A comparative sociolinguistic study of Gujarati schools in Leicester, Turkish schools in London, Cantonese and Mandarin schools in Manchester and Bengali schools in Birmingham

- Four interlinking case studies

- Complementary (also known as "community", "supplementary"or "heritage" language) schools are voluntary schools serving specific linguistic, religious and cultural groups, particularly through community language classes

Research aims

- To explore the social, cultural and linguistic significance of complementary schools both within their communities and in wider society

- To investigate the range of linguistic practices used in different contexts in the complementary schools

- To investigate how the linguistic practices of students and teachers in complementary schools are used to negotiate young people's multilingual and multicultural identities

- To develop innovative ethnographic team methodologies using interlocking case studies across diverse social, cultural, religious and linguistic contexts

- To contribute to policy and practice in the inclusion of complementary schools in the wider educational agenda

Methodology and data collection

- Multi-sited team ethnography; 4 research pairs in 8 schools

- Data collected simultaneously and shared by the full team over a 10 week data collection period;
- Four weeks into the fieldwork two key participant children per school were identified and digitally recorded during class and break-times;
- Key participant children, their parents, teachers and school administrators were interviewed;
- Key documentary evidence and photographs collected
- In this presentation, I focus on data collected in the Turkish schools

Turkish complementary schools in London

~ 30 Turkish complementary Schools in London- secular orientation

- Pupil population: children of Cypriot-Turkish heritage, children of mainland Turkish heritage, and increasingly from other European countries, children from mixed ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Few children of Kurdish heritage

"EAST LONDON TURKISH SCHOOL" (1987)

- ~250 pupils
- 13 teachers
- Catchment area: North, NE and East London

"WEST LONDON TURKISH SCHOOL" (1988)

- ~110 pupils
- 9 teachers
- Catchment area: West, SW, NW and greater London

Linguistic resources circulating in Turkish Schools

- Turkish-speaking young people were dominant in English (and its regional, classed and youth varieties)
  - standard languages (English, Turkish, Quranic Arabic, other instructed foreign languages)
  - regional and diasporic varieties (Cypriot-Turkish and other regional varieties depending on their families' histories of migration to the UK, *Londralı* Turkish also referred to as London Turkish)
  - regional and classed varieties of English (e.g. London English)
  - youth varieties (appropriated from popular culture, the mass media and digital technology, urban "street" cultures and participation in multilingual/multicultural peer groups)
- Turkish teachers were mainly dominant in Turkish (and its regional varieties) and very often had a low competence in English

"Separate bilingualism" and "flexible bilingualism" (Creese & Blackledge 2010)

- Teachers repeated to pupils to "speak Turkish" <Türkçe konuş> in instructional exchanges;
- They often compartmentalised Turkish and English during instruction treating them as two seperate and discrete systems by encouraging and sometimes explictily demanding the use of the first and discouraging and sometimes overtly sanctioning the use of the second;
- They also corrected regional accents and the use of Cypriot-Turkish vocabulary in instructional exchanges

- At the same time, teachers acknowledged that their pupils had differential language proficiencies and preferences and endorsed the juxtaposition and mixing of a wide range of linguistic resources during instruction → "pragmatic flexibility" (Martin et al. 2006)
- Beyond instructional exchanges language use was less policed and more flexible

- While seemingly often complying with their teachers' requests to "speak Turkish", through juxtaposing and mixing different linguistic resources students attempted to challenge language ideologies that sought to keep their linguistic resources separate (Lytra and Baraç 2009, Lytra 2013, 2015)

Challenging the compartmentalisation of linguistic resources

- **Excerpt 1**

1 Pupil 1:   Bir kiz shoplara gidiyordu annessine hediye <A girl was going

2   to the shops [to buy] a present for her mother>

3 Artun Bey: shop??!!

<Pupils laugh>

4 Pupil 1:   kiz mağazaya gidiyordu annesine hediye alaçaktın anneler günü

5   için. Giyisiye bakıyourdu ama annesine uygun birşey bulamadi

6   … <The girl was going to a shop to buy her mother a present

7   for Mother's Day. She was looking for a dress but she

8   couldn't find anything for her mother>

Speaking "temiz Türkçe"

- Turkish teachers tended to reproduce the discourse of the institutional recognition and authority of standard Turkish drawing on the iconic relationship between speaking standard Turkish and being an "educated" and "knowledgeable" person
- Standard Turkish was also implicitly juxtaposed against Cypriot-Turkish and other regional varieties of Turkish, which were represented as less "proper/clean" and perhaps "polluted" by traces of other linguistic resources
- *Although* some teachers, especially those politically active in promoting Cypriot-Turkish, challenged the implicit negative representations of Turkish varieties by voicing an alternative discourse where Cypriot-Turkish was intimately linked to their sense of self and their Turkish-Cypriot roots

Resisting the correction of regional accents

- **Excerpt 2**

- Artun Bey writes the answer to question two on the board: *"Elma, armut, portakal gibi meyveler ile ıspanak, lahana, domates ve salatalık gibi sebzeler var"* (There are fruits like apples, pears, oranges and vegetables such as spinach, cabbages, tomatoes and cucumber). When Artun Bey asks the class to identify the fruit pictured in the market stalls in their textbook, Yildiz and Berna shout out *"ıspanak, salatalık"* (spinach, cucumber). He queries their suggestions: *"Bunlar meyve mi? Onlar sebze"* (Are these fruit? These are vegetables). They then discuss the pronunciation of the word *"sebze"* (vegetables). Some of the children, including Berna, have been pronouncing *"sebze"* as *"zebze"* and Artun Bey corrects them. Berna is not happy being corrected. She insists that the correct pronunciation is *"zebze"*, arguing that that's the way her mother pronounces the word. Artun Bey has this to say: *"Annelerimiz öyle diyor ama doğrusu sebze"* (our mothers may say it that way but the right way is *sebze*) (Field notes, 18/06/2006)

Sibel Hamin's flexible bilingualism approach

- **Excerpt 3**
- I am immediately struck by the amount of English the teacher and children use during the lesson. Sibel Hanım seems to be very proficient in English and I notice that she moves from Turkish to English and back all the time. The children move between languages too. Sibel Hanım asks David in Turkish what he ate during his recent trip to Istanbul over the Easter holidays and he says "balık" [fish], then she inquires whether he ate "hamsi" [a very popular small fish and a Bosporus delicacy] when John asks "how do we say 'trout' in Turkish?". I also notice that Sibel Hanım lets the children share their personal and family narratives drawing on their available linguistic resources: David recounts in English an incident that happened during his recent trip to Istanbul over the Easter break. He tells how he went to a fish restaurant and asked for ketchup for his chips only to find out that the ketchup had pepper in it. Sibel Hanım and the other children listen attentively and no one tries to stop him from telling his story in English or asks him to revert to Turkish. At the end, Sibel Hanım repeats the gist of the story in Turkish. (Fieldnotes 18/06/2006)

Ekrem Bey reflecting on his pedagogic approach

- Teacher-fronted whole group instruction mainly in Turkish
- Lessons dominated by repetitive substitution drills and the reading aloud of short texts followed by comprehension questions and vocabulary building exercises
- Activities tended to be decontextualised with little attempt to draw upon and make connections with children's everyday lived experiences

- Teacher's awareness that English is students' strongest language

- **Excerpt 4**

Ekrem Bey: when I'm at school I use Turkish and English […] I don't find it necessary to use English during Turkish language teaching. Only when I'm giving instructions or when I want to ensure they have understood I use English, because you need to make sure the child has understood, so in such cases I use English

Dilek Hanim: not during Turkish language teaching

Ekrem Bey: not during Turkish language teaching but when disciplining the children. This is because when you use English to discipline them the children take you more seriously.

Translation as pedagogic practice

- "This is one of Ekrem Bey's typical lessons both in terms of content (he is teaching grammar, the connectives) and mode of delivery (he writes the connectives on the whiteboard and then asks the children to produce sentences which they then share with the rest of the class). Today Ekrem Bey provides the English translation of several unknown words and whole sentences for the children"

  (Fieldnotes, 10/6/2006)

- Teacher-led and student-led translation practices common feature of classroom discourse

- **Excerpt 5**

Aylen: öğretmenim, "rahmen" nedir? <sir, what does "rahmen" mean?>

Ekrem Bey: "Rağmen" şey demek "**although**" <"rağmen" means "although">

Aylen: Ona ne yazabılırım? <what can I write for that?>

Ekrem Bey: Kış olmasına rağmen çok sıcaktı <although it was winter, it was very hot>

Aylen: Hhh?

Ekrem Bey: Mesela <for example> **although it's winter it's very hot**

Aylen: Ohh!

Ekrem Bey: Kış olmasına rağmen çok [sicakti

Aylen: [sicakti

Ekrem Bey: Çok yaşlı olmasına rağmen <although he is very old>

Aylen: Çok ne?<very what?>

Ekrem Bey: yaşlı olmasına rağmen çok sağlıklıydı <although he was very old he was very healthy>

Aylen: Haa tamam. Çok yaşlıdır <he is very old>. **Coz he's so old he's still really healthy.** Onu yazayım da getiririm <I will write it and bring it back to you>
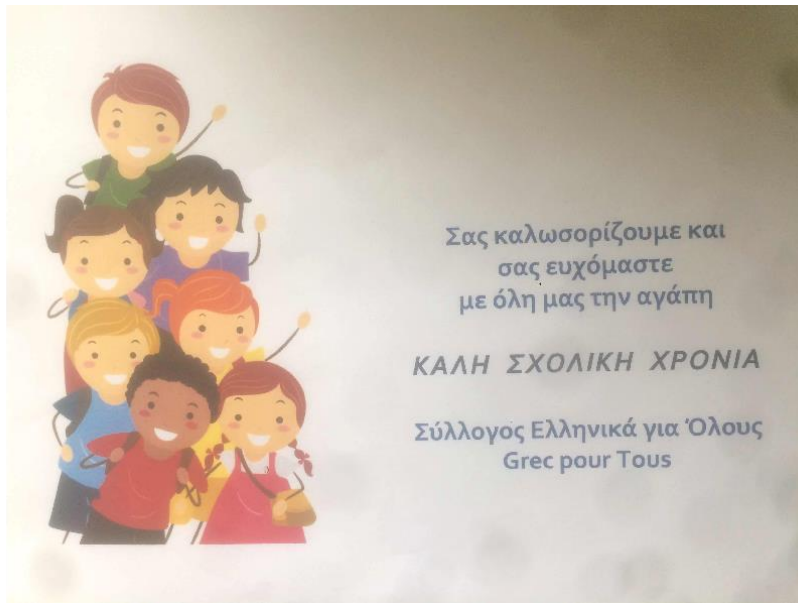
Teacher's ambivalence over students' English language abilities and use

- **Excerpt 6**
- Ekrem Bey: The children speak English to each other in class. They do speak Turkish but very seldom. I do warm them not to speak English but we don't have much influence on them
- Dilek Hanim: Does it create a sense of unfairness, I mean the children speaking English?
- Ekrem Bey: Yes it does, because they speak English beyond my grasp and I can't understand some of the things they say
- Dilek Hanim: it's uncomfortable for you
- Ekrem Bey: Yes it is

Linguistic and pedagogic expertise in complementary school classrooms

- "Separate bilingualism" as an institutional ideology places expertise with the teacher
  - Emphasis on the standard variety of the community language
- Teacher controlled highly repetitive initiation-response-feedback (IRF) sequences that put control and endorsement of linguistic expertise with the teacher (teacher as transmitter of knowledge)
- "Flexible bilingualism" as institutional ideology allowed expertise to be more equally distributed
  - Emphasis on the use and juxtaposition of all available linguistic resources
- Exploitation of all available linguistic codes and registers allowed for the disruption of IRF and created opportunities for bringing into the classroom knowledge and experiences from the students' everyday lives (e.g. narrating a recent trip to Istanbul; translating between languages to understand a grammatical construction)

Greek school as "bridge" across languages and cultures

Σας καλωσορίζουμε και
σας ευχόμαστε
με όλη μας την αγάπη

ΚΑΛΗ ΣΧΟΛΙΚΗ ΧΡΟΝΙΑ

Σύλλογος Ελληνικά για Όλους
Grec pour Tous

- The historic Greek community of Lausanne and its environs has witnessed its membership increase sharply over the past ten years as a result of new mobilities from Greece and secondary migration from other European countries and North America (Association Hellénique de Lausanne, 2015)

- The confluence of old and new mobilities has inspired new cultural and educational initiatives. Since 2009, I have been observing and documenting these new initiatives as part of an on-going ethnographic study of continuation and change in practices, identities and ideologies in the context of the Greek diaspora in Lausanne.

- One such initiative is a newly established non-for-profit educational and cultural association (since June 2017)

- The aim of the association is to provide Greek language and culture classes to children and adults. An important distinguishing feature is the emphasis it places on bridging Greek language and culture with the multiethnic Swiss society

Reconceptualising community education

- In their mission statement, the founding members of the school claim:

- *Grec pour Tous, plus qu'une écolel a nouvelle association ambitione de relier langue et culture grecques avec la société pluriethnique suisse* [*Greek for All*, it's more than a school, the new association aims to connect Greek language and culture with the multiethnic Suisse society]

  https://www.grecpourtous.ch/

- In the school's website there is a personal statement by each of the teachers that represents in a nutshell their teaching philosophy:

- *Με ενδιαφέρει η διδασκαλία της ελληνικής γλώσσας σε δίγλωσσους μαθητές, ως εκπαιδευτικό και μητέρα δίγλωσσων παιδιών.* [I'm interested in teaching Greek to bilingual learners as a teacher and as a parent of bilingual children]

- *Με ενδιαφέρει η ελληνική γλώσσα ως φορέας πολιτισμικής και γλωσσικής παράδοσης που φέρνει κοντά ανθρώπους διαφορετικής προέλευσης.* [I'm interested in the teaching of Greek as a means of transmitting linguistic and cultural heritage and bringing together people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds]

- Reconceptualision of community or heritage education as beyond merely transmitting the community or heritage language and culture
- Taking as point of departure an every increasingly heterogeneous pupil population with diverse and complex language competences and aspirations, family backgrounds and migration trajectories and children and adult learners' multiple ethno-cultural identities and multilingual/multicultural repertoires and experiences situated in a multiethnic Swiss society
- This new educational reality entails new challenges. At the same time, it opens up possibilities to innovate practices, and transform identities and ideologies in Greek schools
- It raises an important question, what implications might the discourse of Greek school as "bridge" have for the development of the school's curriculum and pedagogy as well as it relations with other Greek community institutions and the broader Swiss society?

Becoming Literate in Faith Settings:
Language and literacy learning in the lives of new Londoners
(ESRC- RES-062-23-1613)
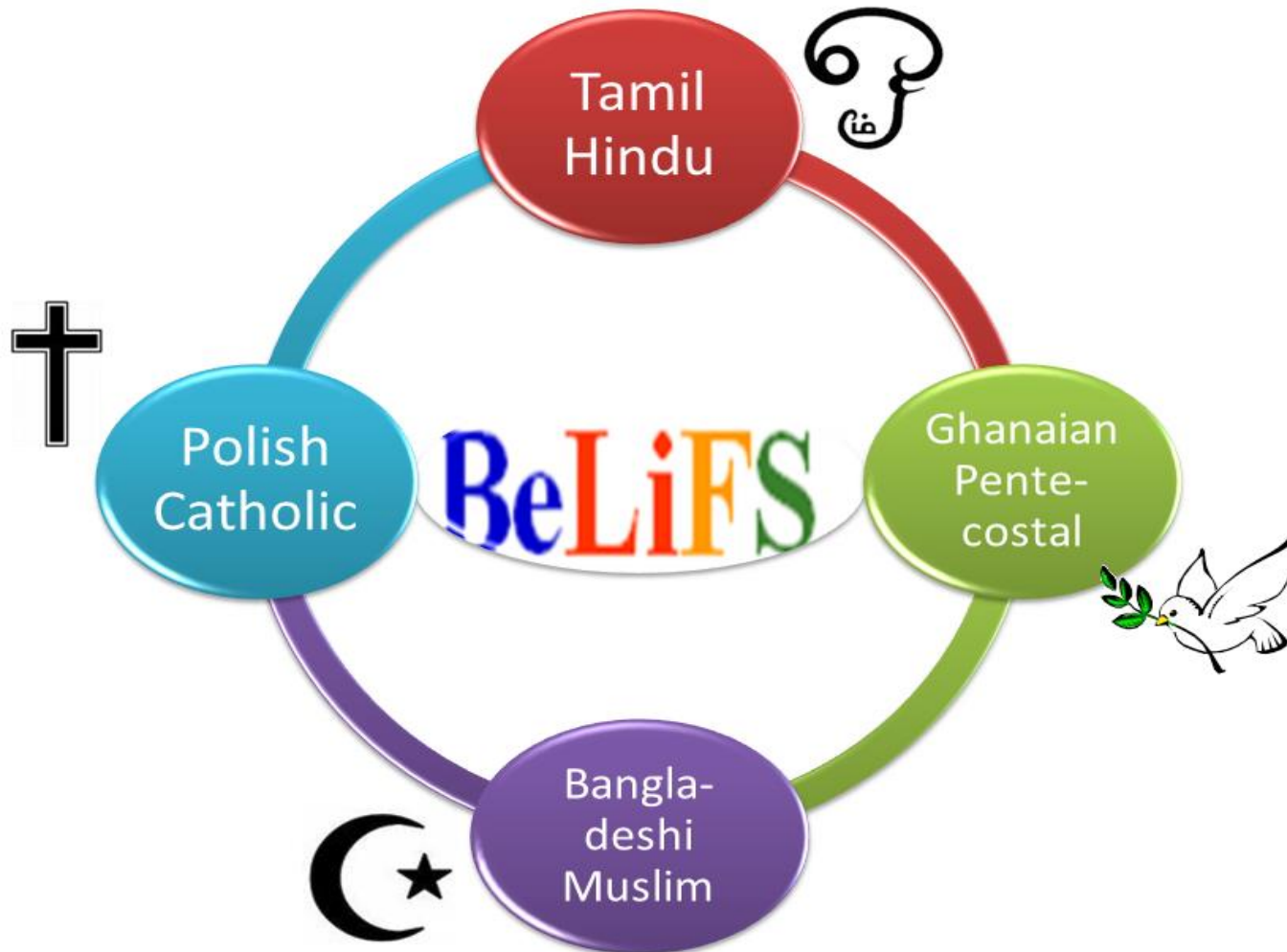
BeLiFS research questions

RQ1 What is the scope and nature of literacy practices in each faith setting?

RQ2 How do teaching and learning take place during faith literacy activities across different settings?

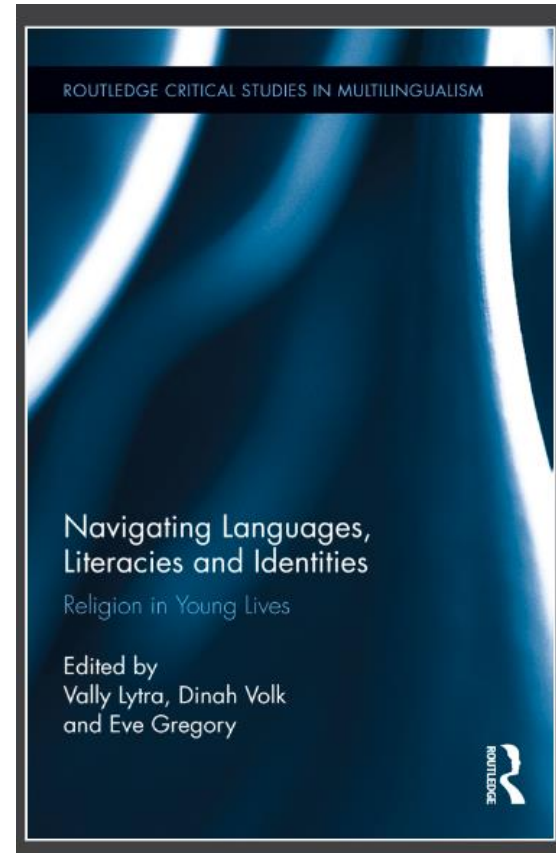**RQ3** In what ways have faith literacy activities changed:
- over time?
- in the London setting?
- perceptions across generations?

RQ4 How does participation in faith literacies contribute to individual and collective identities?

Theoretical underpinnings

- Focus on *faith as cultural practice* embedded in specific local and global contexts providing children and adults with membership and a sense of belonging in the faith community through active participation and apprenticeship often mediated intergenerationally (Heath 1983; Gregory and Williams 2000; Gregory, Long, and Volk 2004; Lytra, Volk and Gregory 2016)

- *Uniqueness of faith learning*: the knowledge, competences and performances learnt and perfected over time are the means to building a relationship with a higher and eternal being

- Yet, in educational research, faith literacies in young lives are frequently invisible or considered problematic, particularly in relation to school literacies (Dávila 2015, Genishi and Dyson 2009; Skerrett 2013)

ROUTLEDGE CRITICAL STUDIES IN MULTILINGUALISM

Navigating Languages, Literacies and Identities

Religion in Young Lives

Edited by
Vally Lytra, Dinah Volk
and Eve Gregory

The BeLiFS team

The BeLiFS Team

Our participants

- 16 Children
- Their Families
- Faith Leaders
- Faith Teachers
- Older members of the faith community

(www.belifs.co.uk)

A multi-site three year team ethnography

o Collaborative team ethnography (Conteh et al 2005): Participatory and intergenerational aspects

o Multi-method approach to data collection:
o *Phase 1:* Ethnographic observations in faith settings and religious education classes; interviews with faith leaders
o *Phase 2:* Case-studies of 4 children per site; audio- and video-recordings of faith activities at home and in religious education classes; children's scrap books; interviews with children, parents and faith teachers
o *Phase 3:* Audio- or video-recordings of intergenerational interviews between focal children and older members of the faith community

o Collection of photography and documentary data throughout the project

Sri Lankan Tamils in London

- Migration waves post-1948 Sri Lankan independence:
  - Socio-economic and educational factors
  - Discriminatory measures
  - Civil war (1983-2009)

•Tamil language and culture persecuted by Singhalese majority in Sri Lanka

•Strong desire to sustain Tamil language, culture and religion in the diaspora

Chantia's scrap book entry:
"Why do Hindus consider 'Om' sacred?"
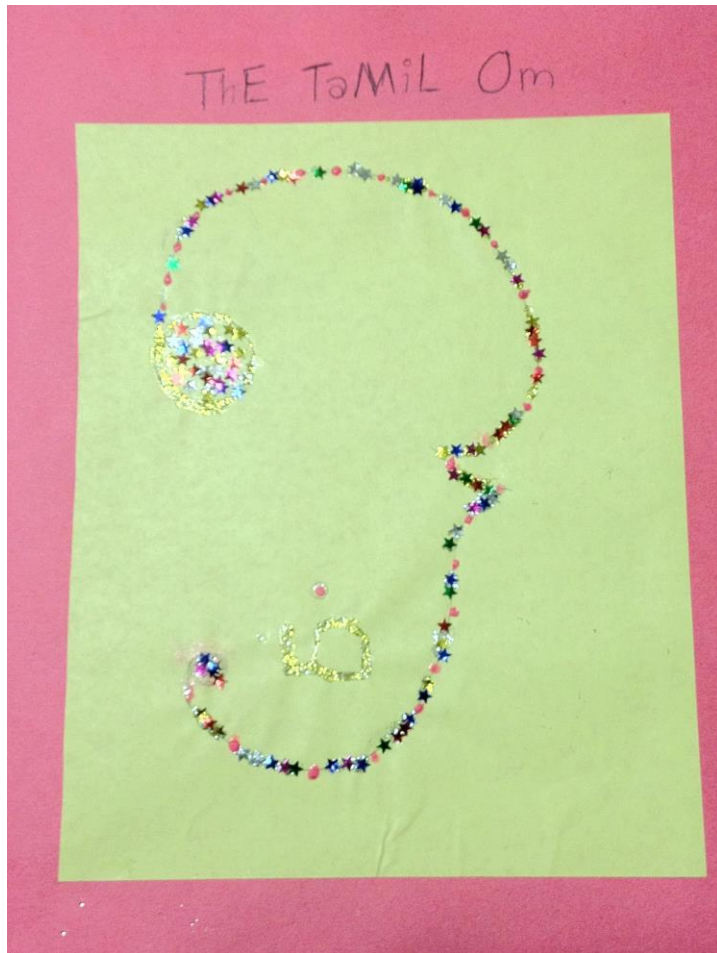
- Arani: So now you've drawn a lovely glittery 'Om' and you've explained about 'Om'. Did you get this from the book as well? That same book yeah?

- Chanthia: Yeah

- Arani: So explain to me ...why do we have a Tamil 'Om'? Why do we have a different 'Om' (pointing to the Tamil 'Om') to this 'Om'

- Chanthia: Mmm it's like to say like to mmm it's our [like to represent

- Arani: [ours

- Chantia: Tamil people [...]

Chantia's explanatory text
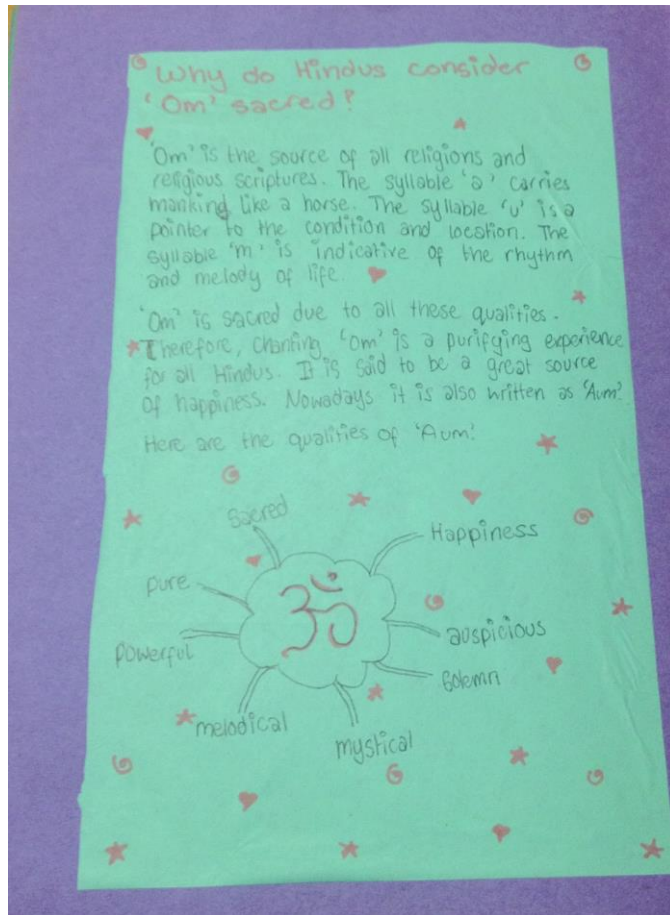
- "'Om' is the source of all religions and religious scriptures. The syllable 'a' carries mankind like a horse. The syllable 'u' is a pointer to the condition and location. The syllable 'm' is indicative of the rhythm and melody of life.

  'Om' is sacred due to all these qualities. Therefore, chanting 'Om' is a purifying experience for all Hindus. It is said to be a great source of happiness. Nowadays it is also written as 'Aum'. Here are the qualities of 'Aum'."

The syncretic nature of children' faith-inspired text making

- Through their religious socialisation children acquire rich and complex language and literacy repertoires, spanning two or more languages and scripts, including vernacular and standard forms of English and Tamil and Sanskrit
- They combine languages and scripts with the materiality and technological dimensions of multimodal practices

    – In her faith-inspired text-making, Chantia draws on the rich visual imagery of Hinduism to juxtapose and combine different linguistic, scriptal and aesthetic threads from diverse sources
    – Her explanatory text alludes to the school genre of explanatory writing whose purpose is to convey information accurately and clearly to her audience
    – She personalises her entry by designing a pictorial representation of the qualities of the sacred sounds "Om" and decorates the pages with tiny red spirals and hearts

- Seen through the theoretical lens of syncretism, her text-making unites these different elements to "create something that is greater than just the sum of the constituent parts" (Gregory et al. 2013: 323).

Chantia's morning prayer in front of the family prayer alter

- Chanthia closes her eyes, places her palms together in prayer position and begins chanting the *Gayathiri Mantra* in Sanskrit seven times. The *Gayathiri Mantra* is addressed to God as the divine life-giver, symbolised by the Sun, and it is most often recited at sunrise and sunset. Chanthia then brings her hands down in front of her while keeping her eyes closed, as she recites the morning *shloka* (form of prayer) in Sanskrit once. Afterwards Chantia performs the *Thopukaranam* ritual practice which consists of pulling on the ear lobes with the right hand tugging on the left ear and vice versa and squatting 10 times. She ends her morning prayer ritual by applying *Thiruneeru* (white holy ash) with her finger in the form of a horizontal line across her forehead

Bridging the human and the spiritual realms

- A similar syncretising of linguistic resources drawing on Sanskrit and English and other communicative resources is evident in Chantia's morning prayer in front of the family prayer alter

- The highly scripted individual prayer Chantia engages in reminds us how learning to pray is an embodied experience, where children learn to draw on and combine a range of semiotic resources, including the use of different languages (Sanskrit and English), gesture (the ritual practice of tugging one's earlobes and squatting) and body posture (bowing head, closing eyes and placing palms in prayer position) and perform prayer by exhibiting appropriate feelings and sincere intentions

- Prayer, whether individual or collective, is a moment-to-moment experience firmly rooted in the here-and-now (in our example to mark the beginning of the day) but it also links the children to a wider Saiva/Hindu congregation, both locally (in London) and transnationally (in India, Sri Lanka and with other Saiva/Hindu communities across the globe)

Flexible multilingual pedagogies in Tamil RE classes

- Tamil had been traditionally viewed and continued to be regarded in London as the devotional language par excellence. It is the language of sacred texts as well as the language of mediation of religious experience, practices and beliefs

- At the same time, faith teachers recognised that English the language the children were most comfortable and competent in had to be used alongside Tamil as a learning resource reflecting everyday language use

- "I think we need to have use of both languages. If you stick to only Tamil, say we are Tamils we got to speak to the children in Tamil, you're going to lose out some of the children, because if the children can't understand what we are saying, especially in terms of faith, we are missing out, we'll be losing a good opportunity, and children will be losing interest, and if they can't understand, obviously, they're not going to come to the classes."

- Teaching the religious curriculum by drawing on the children's full linguistic repertoire emerged as a pragmatic and contextual response to their heterogeneous language and literacy competences and experiences in Tamil, in a diasporic context

Learning to see students with fresh eyes

- A strengths perspective to young people's multilingual/multisemiotic resources highlights the complexity of their trajectories, repertoires and identities while attending to the broader social, cultural and institutional processes involved in meaning-making and identity negotiations (Lytra et al 2016)

- "For dynamic plurilingual education to succeed in the 21st century, teachers would have to be educated to pay close attention to the singularities that make up our plurality—to clearly notice the individual linguistic experience that is the "moving force" in learning an additional language and all learning. In so doing, teachers would learn the value of having students use their home language practices to support learning. Rather than being told what language to use when and where, educators must practice noticing the learner as he or she is engaged in meaningful instructional activities" (García & Sylvan, 2011: 398)