Conclusions and implications for schools

- Some teachers saw the value of home languages as a valuable resource for students. However, speaking a language 'beyond English' was not clearly expressed as a right, but constructed as more of a negative problem amongst staff.

- Developing an environment where home languages are seen as a valuable societal skill is unlikely to be achieved through government policies as English is, and remains, the language of power in the UK and across the commercial world. However, individual teachers can affect positive change through their ideological practices in the classroom.

- Schools would benefit from engaging with researchers to share ideas and understanding around the benefits to pupils, communities and society as a whole of maintaining Languages Beyond English.

Data collection and analysis

- Interviews with the participants were transcribed and analysed using a critical discourse approach. The language used by participants was coded to pick out the linguistic choices they made when talking about home languages. These language choices helped to reveal the attitudes they expressed.

Participants and setting

- 1 junior school and 5 primary schools took part.
- 13 teachers were interviewed including Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and EAL Coordinators

Missing meta-language amongst staff

- One participant said pupils were embarrassed to use their home languages at school, yet struggled to articulate why this might be.

Monolingualism

- In four of the six schools: Teachers expressed opinions that home languages belonged outside school, whereas English was the language of school.

Parental English

- In three of the five schools, teachers saw parents' 'bad English' as a problem. Parents were seen to have 'impoverished' language skills - having poor knowledge of their home languages and little grasp of English - which rebounded onto children who arrived in school with a consequent 'lack of language development' in either home language or English.

Language Attrition

- Research suggests that migrant pupils can lose their home languages between second and third family generations. Because of this loss, one teacher described home languages as 'holiday languages'.

Parental responsibility

- The maintenance of home languages was seen by staff as the responsibility of parents. The inflexible curriculum and demands on teachers' time in planning and delivering lessons, prevented the maintenance or development of home languages within school spaces.

Research Findings

- Participants and setting
- Data collection and analysis
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- Missing meta-language amongst staff
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