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distributed in the definition, production and control of knowledge. As a matter of explicit opposition to the inequalities inherent in capitalist thinking, he refused to accept any financial remuneration for his part in a $^{p}ro^{j}ect$ where government resources were distributed according to established hierarchical patterns of income differentials. In reflecting together on the values and praxis of the work I became more aware that in the role of researcher, associated with the academic institution of the University, and supported, in terms of finance and access to official networks, by the state, any assumption that I had an intrinsic right to work in the community would be questioned and opposed. Furthermore it became clearer that as a non-Sylheti-speaking outsider I had very little knowledge about their language or social experience. Indeed no member of the community had expressed a real need for the research, while plenty of them held justifiable misgivings.

The emergence of these issues in our discussions was in many ways a painful and confrontational exercise, as contradictions between motives and actions on my part, and between the institutionalised power of the university and the unacknowledged rights of the community were exposed. One of my intentions in writing this paper is to share some of this challenging learning experience with other researchers. In addition, if this expression of solidarity with local Sylheti-speaking people

1) INTRODUCTION

This paper represents an attempt to tell two stories which are closely interwoven. On the one hand it attempts to describe and explain the struggles of the Sylheti-speaking *people in* East London against colonialism, racism, economic exploitation and cultural oppression. In particular the roles of language, employment and education in this conflict are examined. On the other hand the paper is an account, from a personal viewpoint of a developing struggle to free my sociolinguistic research from the institutionalised structures of racism and social injustice.
This second struggle was born out of growing dissatisfaction with the conventional paradigms of survey research, and specifically out of personal experience of the LMP's Adult Language Use Survey, which was carried out in three cities and eleven different languages in 1980-81. Detailed reflection about the way this survey had been conducted in one local linguistic minority revealed many shortcomings. With this hindsight it is possible now to make a critical review of the assumptions and methods underlying this survey work. Furthermore the availability of more detailed data, from second stage analysis of ALUS on the one hand and from a follow up case study on the other, makes it possible to throw more light on the findings of ALUS which were published in earlier reports. But more importantly it was the opportunity to learn from closer direct contact with Sylheti speakers in East London that caused me to re-examine the assumptions and stereotypes about this linguistic minority which are held and officially legitimised by the dominant majority, and which had not been sufficiently challenged by LMP's work. Furthermore the justifiable opposition and resistance to dominant racist perceptions, on the part of members of linguistic minorities, called for a fundamental reassessment of research praxis, and indeed of the very concept of 'research', as practised and understood in Western academic life.

It is often taken for granted that 'research' in the social sciences is a good thing, or at least relatively harmless. In this paper I reflect critically upon the concept of 'research', the epistemology of 'research', the functions of 'research', and the some of the methods of 'research' and come to very different conclusions about the 'normal' patterns of research. After examining and rejecting the oppressive tendencies of conventional social research. I begin the search for more acceptable participatory methods which might play a greater part in the transformation *of* society.
It has been suggested by colleagues that these topics deserve treatment as a paper (if not a book) in their own right. I have resisted that suggestion for a number of reasons. Firstly, I fear that a separate publication would have a limited professional readership and thus lead to the marginalisation of issues which

are of fundamental importance to the users and subjects of research, as well as to practitioners. Secondly, the approach I shall adopt is one in which values, theory, methodology and dissemination of findings are seen as an integrated whole, each aspect throwing light upon the others. Thirdly, while I reject the compartmentalisation of knowledge implied by the autonomy of academic specialisms, I do not feel competent enough in the disciplines of the philosophy and sociology of knowledge to work out a systematic theory of social research. And finally, since I am describin^g the historical development of my own thinking, which was a process of inductive rather than deductive learning, it is much easier to set the critique in the context of a personal history of five years of active involvement in a programme of sociolinguistic research in the particular field of minority languages.

The story I shall tell is one of developing intellectual, political and personal awareness. From a position verging on naive and comfortable empiricism, with its spurious 'objective' detachment (into which I had been socialised by my academic training), I have moved on to a recognition of the inter-relationships of faith, values, theory and praxis, and towards a solidarity with the oppressed in their political struggle for justice, and for the renewal of society.

As a committed Christian, seeking to develop an integrated world view and lifestyle, I have been trying for a number of years to reconcile my professional role as a 'researcher' with my faith commitments as a Christian living in an unjust, racist society in which people of many faiths are present but where only one faith is regarded as the norm. I have come to a position where my own faith causes me to question, and indeed to oppose, some of the widely shared presuppositions by which British society is defined, and the institutions by which it is controlled. Included here are economic materialism, the myth of an equitable democratic state, and such institutions as the 'academically free' university. I include also the institutional churches, which represent a residual Christendom that must, in my view, be clearly distinguished from living Christian faith. I make no claims to having arrived at a definitive or exclusively true understanding, nor do I expect to do so this side of the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet I believe that in my pilgrimage I have come closer to an understanding of 'research' which is at least compatible with my basic values.

In describing my personal development I hope that other social scientists, who do not necessarily share my presuppositions and value position, will think the issues through from their own perspective. Many, I am sure, will recognise mutual concerns and **see** their own understandings and commitments developing on parallel tracks. Perhaps, like me, they will find that, in the face of massive structural and institutional constraints, there are immense political and personal challenges facing those who wish to work out the implications in their professional lives.

After a brief scene-setting, the paper begins with a social and historical analysis of Sylheti and its speakers, and a consideration of some important sociolinguistic issues. This is followed by a presentation of data from ALUS which in itself begins a critique of many of my earlier research assumptions. In the next section the local economic and political situation in Tower Hamlets is described and analysed, with particular reference to employment in the clothing industry and to the political processes which centre on language rights. I describe how, in the context of a new interest by the state in minority languages in England. Sylheti, which has long been ignored, devalued and suppressed has become a symbol of resistance and of linguistic, educational, economic and political demands which have long remained unmet. Against this background I discuss the development of a small follow-up case study amongst Sylheti-speaking workers in the clothing industry. It is in this section that the issues of research values and methodologies are given their most extensive treatment, as far as this paper is concerned, as I describe the manner in which my more recent perspectives were incorporated, albeit in a limited way, into my research strategy. The findings of the case study are then presented, giving an opportunity for some Sylheti speakers to

2) TOWER HAMLETS : SCENE SETTING

For well over a century the East London Borough of Tower Hamlets has remained one of the most deprived inner city areas in the whole of England. Despite the efforts of generations of social reformers, and despite the fact that local government power has been consistently in the hands of the Labour Party, the relative position of the East End as a poor, low-status neighbourhood has remained unchanged. Comparative statistics of local authority areas still regularly place Tower Hamlets and the adjoining borough of Hackney at the top of all the league tables on indices of social deprivation, and at the bottom of those for good health, educational achievment and economic prosperity (Harrison 1982).

Housing in Tower Hamlets is almost entirely Council owned, with 82% of households living in such property in 1981. Much of the housing stock is modern high rise buildings, which means that 18% of all families live on the fourth floor or above, which is the highest proporation of any local authority in England. In the 1978 National Dwelling and Housing Survey 25% of residents interviewed were dissatisfied with their housing and 32% with their local area, mentioning such problems as the type, design and maintenance of their housing, and the depressing environment and vandalism on local estates. (LBTH 1983).

Unemployment rates are well above the national average, standing at 16% of the economically active population below retirement age at the time of the 1981 Census. For men the figure was 19% and for teenagers 22%. The Census showed that the Borough had five out of the 29 worst wards for unemployment in Inner London. Unemployment continues to rise; the MSC estimate for August 1983 was that 29% of economically active men were unemployed.

According to the 1981 Census, 27,600 (Just over 20%) of the residents lived in households where the head of the household was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan. The greatest proportion of these have connections with Bangladesh, and although no census figures are available for this sub population, official estimates of the 'Bangladeshi community' range between 14,200 and 18,000, while unofficial ones put the figure as high as 30,000.

In spite of the deployment of public sector money into the area through the Inner Area Programme and the Docklands Development Corporation, many public services remain so poorly financed that they can barely meet the needs of local people. Within the borough itself one of the most deprived areas, according to the officially recognised yardsticks, is Spitalfields ward, the neighbourhood where the largest concentration of people of Bangladeshi background lives (LBTH 1983, SHAPRS 1981). In this ward housing standards are below average, unemployment rates are above average, there are several major hostels housing the

destitute single homeless, and the neighbourhood environment is particularl^y bleak.

As socio-economic forces and government policy remould the traditional social pyramid of British societ^y into a diamond shape (Sheppard 1983), a substantial minority of the population, concentrated amongst the old, the unemployed, single parents and ethnic minorities can be recognised as an underclass, neglected, scapegoated and exploited by the comfortable majority. The socioeconomic injustice suffered by inner city residents in East London is plain to see; one has merely to walk the 400 yards from the City of London across Commercial Street and into Brick Lane to *see a* contrast in power and powerlessness, in wealth and poverty, which is as immense as any in the developed world. In addition the well-researched, and now largely undisputed, existence of institutionalised racism in terms of housing, education, employment, immigration law and its implementation,
and racist policing procedures, means that the people of Bangladeshi origin who live in the East End tend to be pushed to the very bottom of the local, as well as the national, social structure.
On top of this social injustice people of Bangladeshi origin, and other blacks in East London, have to face a deeply embedded tradition of overt racism among many white working class people in the East End. In the extreme cases fear of competition for the scarce resources of housing and jobs has been exploited by right-wing organisations, resulting in numerous incidents of violence and racial harassment. Such racism is usually at a crude and open level, and the ethnic boundaries involved are usually broad categories of skin colour; thus anyone with brown skin tends to be loosely categorised as a 'Pakki' or 'Asian' by working class whites. In a six month period between May and December 1982, [205] incidents of racial harassment were recorded by the police in Tower Hamlets, the highest number in any Metropolitan Police area. (GLC [1983]). Police reaction to such incidents has been negligible and totally inadequate; poor reaction times, refusal on the part of the police to classify an incident as [f]racial[1], reluctance to prosecute for assault, and the tendency to arrest the complianant rather than the perpetrator of racial attacks have all been causes for criticism.
In   consequence many people of Bangladeshi origin have no confidence in the official procedures,   and realise   that self-defence is the only effective strategy to meet the threat.

3) HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

In Britain today there are large numbers of people of Bangladeshi origin, with the largest single residential concentration in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The 1981 census estimates the total of Bangladeshi born persons living in Great Britain at 48,517, which suggests that the total of those living in households with a connection with Bangladesh, including British born children, is something in the order of 100,000. It is commonly assumed that they all speak Bengali as a mother tongue. A smaller number of people of Indian origin who have settled in the UK would describe themselves as Bengali mother tongue speakers. Most researchers, including the Linguistic Minorities Project, while being aware of some of the sociolinguistic differences, have treated all people from Bangladeshi backgrounds, together with those of Indian origin, as a single LINGUISTIC minority, on the assumption that all of them would express loyalty to, and seek mother tongue teaching provision and l^{i}teracy in, standard Bengali (LMP $_{1983}$, 1985). LMP's Adult Language Use Surve^y was conducted with 'Bengali-speaking' people, defined in this way, in Coventry and London in 1981. **More** recently second stage analysis of the data has been carried out by the Community Languages and Education Project. Some of these findings, which will be presented for the first time in this paper, together with more recent experience in carrying out a follow up study in Tower Hamlets have led me to question these assumptions and to reconsider our earlier general working definition of 'linguistic minority' as it applies to these particular minority language speakers.

The issue arises because the majority of so-called 'Bengali-speakers' in the UK, and almost 100% of those living in Tower Hamlets, have family origins and continuing contact with a single region of Bangladesh, Sylhet. Sylhet has a historical and linguistic tradition which is in opposition to that of the hegemonic centralist tradition of Bengal and Bangladesh. Furthermore, the recent history of Bangladeshi migration, settlement and community development in Tower Hamlets, which has taken place in the context of an unequal and racist society, has led to a high level of political awareness in the British context, and to a restatement of ethnolinguistic identity on the part of many local Sylheti-speaking people. In order to understand the processes at work it is *necessary* first of all to look in some detail at the sociolinguistic histor^y of Sylhet.

          a) History of Sylhet

Sylhet district lies in the North Eastern corner of the present state of Bangladesh and is about 200 miles from Dacca. Because of the experience of colonialism, and the fact that Sylhet has been relegated to the periphery by writers and historians based

centrally, sources are few, and often unreliable. This is particularly the case for publications in English, which in almost all cases were government sponsored, and tend to present matters from the viewpoint of ruling elites. In this section I have used and cited such sources because there is nothing else in print, but have tried to give equal weight to supplementary and alternative perspectives, presented in conversation by a number of Sylheti speakers living in London.

In the 1961 census the population of the administrative district of Sylhet *was* put at 3.5 million, of whom 2.5 million (73%) were Muslims, nearly one million (26%) Hindus and a small minority Christian, Buddhist or some other religion. By 1981 the overall population of the district had risen to 5.65 million (Census of Bangladesh 1982). The official gazetteer shows that the district is relatively well developed in comparison with other parts of Bangladesh, with several major manufacturing industries, production of natural **gas** and extensive tea estates alongside traditional agriculture (Risvi 1974). However, the district suffers both economically and politically because   of its peripheral location within the nation state.

Before 1300 A.D. Sylhet was the centre of an independent Hindu kingdom of some renown and influence. It is said that one of the first Muslims was a man called Burhanuddin and that he and his family were persecuted for his faith. Subsequently, with the arival of Shah Jalal, known as 'the bachelor from Yemen', his associates in the region, Islam was accepted by the people, rather as a result of preaching than by conquest. According to legend, the walls of the Hindu citadel collapsed spontaneously at the sound of the call to prayer. Shah Jalal and his fellow missionaries are regarded as saints because of their spiritual achievements and ascetic lifestyle, and are honoured even today at a shrine in Sylhet town. According to the official gazetteer of the district 'the Muslims of Sylhet are orthodox (Sunni) and very strict in the performance of their religious rites and festivals' (ibid. p.95). It was only in 1612 that Sylhet became part of the Mughal Empire.

By the end of the 18th century Bengal was under the control of the British colonial power based in Calcutta. Administrative boundaries were established in a fairly arbitrary manner and were frequently changed by the British, so that Sylhet was sometimes counted as part of Assam and sometimes as part of Bengal. In the later days of the Raj Sylhet district was governed from Shillong in Assam. In fact many of the leading people in regional politics at this time came from Sylhet district. The Independence movement led in 1947 to the departure of the British, but also resulted in the political reorganisation of the sub-continent. Sylhet was one of the disputed districts in the struggle to establish Pakistan. Eventually the greatest part of the district where Muslims were in the majority became part of Pakistan, although some territory which had previously been within the boundaries of the ancient kingdom and of the British Sylhet district went to India.

For over twenty years Sylhet, together with East Bengal, was governed from West Pakistan by people who had little understanding of, or concern for, local needs. A Bengali nationalist movement developed in the 1950s and 1960s and the Bengali language became an important symbol of national identity. In 1952 attempts at the suppression of the language movement led to the deaths of several people (Pal 1969). They are still commemorated in Bangladesh and Britain in the annual Language Martyrs' Day ceremonies. In 1971, following a period of ruthless repression by a Western-backed military regime, and of armed resistance by the people, Bangladesh achieved independence, after the Indian army had intervened and helped to defeat the Pakistani forces.

The Sylhetis played a leading part in supporting the national liberation struggle. especially in mobilising overseas support. Power was now concentrated in Dacca and political activity by Sylhetis within the new nation state had to relate to the national scene in terms of its organisation and alliances. In the context of a developing one party state, leading on to military rule, there was no overt organisation on a regional or language issue basis in Sylhet, although it was obvious to many Sylhetis that once again power was held by elites based outside the district, who had little real concern for the people of what they regarded as a remote and primitive 'up country' district.

Symptomatic of the peripheral position of Sylhet during various administrations is the fact that the University of Sylhet, proposed before the 1939-45 War, has never in fact been built. One result of this is that Sylhetis who have the resources to take up higher education have to move away from home, while qualified people who take government posts in the district are imported from outside the district. Most such government officials, especially the police, have a reputation for corruption and bribery, and are greatly resented by the local people. In recent years the military government has been responsible for a considerable degree of coercion, which has exacerbated the situation and heightened the level of resentment.

Among the Muslims of the Sylhet region there has been a long tradition of travel and seafaring. Despite its inland position many men from Sylhet served as merchant seamen in the early years of the twentieth century and a few settled semi-permanently in Britain, notably around the docks of East London. The information they brought back to Sylhet and the existence of bridgeheads established by these pioneers, rather than economic forces alone, explain the pattern of migration to the UK from the mid 1950s onwards. Despite remittances sent back to Sylhet and the existing wealth of the district little development has taken pales. Indeed, many people believe that the assets of the region merely provide rich pickings for the corrupt officials and elites, rather than resources for local development.

b) Some sociolinguistic definitions

Before going on to discuss the sociolinguistic background of Sylhet it is necessary to clarify some terms which are used by sociolinguists in ways which differ from their use in everyday language, or which allow us to make important semantic and political distinctions which are not always recognised. Speakers of English who have not studied linguistics often use the two terms 'language' and 'dialect' to make statements about specific forms of speech (and writing) in a manner which reflects social evaluations rather than the results of linguistic analysis. Thus a 'language' is assumed to have higher status than a 'dialect', in a way which usually reflects the lower social status ascribed to speakers of the 'dialect'. It is taken for granted for example that 'the English language' and 'the Bengali language' exist as global categories and that 'Lincolnshire dialect' and 'Sylheti dialect' are entities which in some sense are part of the respective languages. As SOCIOlinguists these categories, attitudes and perceptions in the words and lives of the general public form part of our raw material, but as socioLINGUISTS we may conclude with Hudson (1980), citing Matthews (1979), that on linguistic criteria 'there is no real distinction to be drawn between 'language' and 'dialect'.' Hudson (ibid.) provides a comprehensive coverage of the issues involved, to which the reader is referred. Here we will merely outline the definitions of key terms used in this paper.

'Language' (as a mass noun, i.e. without the definite or indefinite article) will be taken to refer to the human capacity for communication expressed in symbolic form in sound or writing.
    Temporarily at least we will avoid the use of terms such as 'the
        language' or 'a language' except when quoting, or reporting the way it is used in everyday speech to refer to a particular set of linguistic items which have been recognised and given social legitimacy by their society. Likewise we will avoid the term 'dialect' except in quoting, or reporting its use to refer to sets of linguistic items which they recognise as diverging significantly from the 'language', but as having a reasonable degree of inter-comprehensibility and some recognised historical relationship. In doing so we recognise that the terms 'The _____ Language' and 'the dialect of ____' are loaded with political and social value, in fact they are   ideological constructs. Chambers and Trudgill (1980) refer to an unattributed saying that 'a language is a dialect with an army and navy'. This discussion is of particular importance in the context of the Bengali / Sylheti issue. There are no a priori or linguistic grounds for denying Sylheti the status of 'language' which has long been accorded to Bengali. The fact that Sylheti is

often refered to as a '(mere) dialect' is nothing more than a socio-political value judgement.

In an attempt to deal more clearly with some of these value conflicts sociolinguists have introduced the term 'variety' which can be used to refer to any set of language items which share a similar social distribution. (Thus 'English', 'Bengali', 'Lincolnshire dialect', 'Sylheti' or even 'the style of French used in football commentaries' may equally be referred to as 'varieties').

The recognised codified varieties, which are used as mediums of education and are widely accepted as the model for literature, formal public discourse, and 'correct speech' are described by sociolinguists as 'standard languages', while the varieties usually spoken as a first language in the context of the home and family are referred to as 'vernaculars'. It is possible of course for some people to use a standard language as their vernacular, if they are, for example, brought up in an educated family living in a capital city. We shall avoid the term 'mother-tongue' here because, although it often bears the meaning of 'vernacular', it is sometimes, as Ilich (1981) has pointed out, confusingly used in the sense of 'taught mother tongue' (ie 'standard' according to our definition).

Since it is usually the case that individuals have access to forms of language from more than one variety, and that there is often a significant amount of variation in their speech, the term 'linguistic repertoire' has been introduced to cover the total stock or range of linguistic forms from which an individual can draw. Some individuals have a linguistic repertoire in which they draw on one or more clearly distinct varieties (e.g. English and Panjabi) and are referred to as bilingual or multilingual speakers. In some situations when two or more bilingual speakers are in conversation the boundaries between distinct varieties are not always rigid, individual lexical items, structures and whole stretches of discourse may alternate between the two varieties, a phenomenon referred to in the literature as 'code switching`. Another type of linguistic repertoire involves 'diglossia' a situation where one (high status) variety is strongly associated with a particular set of (formal) contexts and functions, and a different (lower status) variety is generally used in other (informal) situations.

It should also be pointed out that the terms 'community' and 'speech community' are Just as hard to define, although like the terms 'language' and 'dialect' used in an unexamined way in everyday speech. Again the problem is that these terms assume the existence of real entities, when in fact they are the intellectual constructs created by people in response to their

which individuals and collectivities define and redefine their sense of 'them and us' (Wellman 1978) and 'ethnic boundaries' (Barth 1969) according to their perceptions of the situation, but within the constraints imposed by the structures of the dominant society. In particular the categorisations imposed by the hegemony of monolingual and monocultural groups is relevant here (Saifullah Khan 1982), and needs to be challenged. Therefore I shall not refer to 'ethnic groups or 'language groups' or assume their existence as such, but try to describe the processes which are at work when people define these terms within society.

It will, however, be necessary to use the term 'linguistic minority' in the loose sense (as defined in LMP 1985) of the set of people who have some loyalty to or make some use of one of the 'languages' other than English. According to this definition, which was first developed in the context of policy-related research on the 'mother-tongue issue', and specifically in order to delimit the sampling universes for the eleven minority languages studied in the Adult Language Use Survey, people are categorised in relation to one of the standard languages rather than to vernacular speech.

In addition it should be pointed out that the concept of linguistic minority implies a position of relative powerlessness even in situations where speakers of a **'language'** other than English foi-m a numerical majority in a geographical area. The definition deliberately avoids the issue of whether a person must possess a certain range of communicative skills before being counted as a member of a linguistic minority, and implies no necessary subjective common identity shared by members nor the existence of objective social ties between them. There are clearly weaknesses in the definition, and several cases which test it severely (LMP 1985), but we believed it was defensible as a general concept on both theoretical and practical grounds. However, as a result of this definition Bengali and Sylheti speakers were treated as a single linguistic minority, in a manner producing descriptions which I would now recognize as misleading.

c) Language and Society in South Asia

It is necessary at this point to sketch the sociolinguistic background of South Asia and the way in which it has been described and defined by linguists in the Western tradition since the beginning of the colonial period. When European scholars first encountered the language *and cultural traditions of Asia in* the 17th and 18th centuries they were struck by the fact that there were many similarities and formal correspondences between South Asian and European varieties of language. The 'discovery' of ancient texts in Sanskrit and similar varieties provided further evidence on which to base the 'science' of comparative

philology. The philologists employed an evolutionary or 'family tree' model, which assumed the regularity of linguistic change. For example changes in the pronunciation of words were expressed as 'sound laws', where change was seen as internal to language itself and largely explicable without reference to social factors . Such scholars as Sir William Jones and the missionary William Carey at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and Sir George Grierson a hundred years later, produced a massive corpus of work detailing the structure and forms of the many different varieties of language in the sub-continent, and postulating the historical relationships which brought together the varieties spoken in northern India (Indic Languages) and the European ones in a grouping which came to be known as the 'Indo-European family of languages'.

Valuable though this work was in the development of linguistic science, it should be remembered that it was a product of its time and of European linguists. Despite their humanistic background which valued knowledge for its own sake, they were all also concerned to a greater or lesser degree with facilitating communication between the British and the peoples of the Empire, for the purposes of colonial government or Christian evangelism. Furthermore in Europe there was an assumption that written language was superior to spoken language, that writing preserved the 'pure' and original, and that poor and illiterate people, especially those living at some distance from centres   of 'civilisation' spoke 'dialects' which were inferior and corrupt.

This assumption was based on the Classical tradition and bourgeois values, and had been strengthened rather than eroded by the development of vernacular literature and the invention of printing in the 15th century.

However, the European colonialists were not unique in this, for similar preJudices were to be found in the scholarly traditions of the East amongst the Brahmin pandits who regarded Sanskrit as 'the language' par excellence, and amongst Muslim scholars in respect of classical Arabic. Such attitudes towards written standard and classical languages are probably universal in societies where literacy is a skill restricted to an elite who hold political and/or religious dominance over the masses.

It should also be borne in mind that the 19th and early 20th centuries was an age of particularly strong linguistic nationalism in Europe. Germany and Italy were in the process of national unification while the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires were breaking up into smaller nation states. Everywhere new linguistic and national identities were emerging, new standard languages and ethnic mythologies were being created. Language, territory, history, ethnic identity and religion became fundamental elements in forging the political unity of the nation state. European
    The resulting description of the sociolinguistic situation in the

Northern part of the South Asian subcontinent is still popularly *considered valid today. It sees the ᵍeoᵍraᴾhical* territory as divided into various language regions, institutionalised in modern India in the form of linguistic states. and the standard regional languages based on the conservative written form as the norms which everyone should follow. Khubchandani *(1984)* points out the inappropriateness of such prescriptive assumptions and of the language planning strategies which follow, as being out of step with the realities of modern India, 'closer (in fact) to what European realities were when the printing press   was invented.' A more sophisticated sociolinguistic understanding would deal with language planning in terms of language as 'ongoing activity or speech process' rather than as 'normative entitᵞ chaperoned through the language elite' (Khubchandani 1984). Nonetheless traditional normative ideas about 'languages' continue to be held by powerful elites in the subcontinent, with particular varieties of speech forming the rallying standard for language movements and regional and communal conflicts (Das Gupta, *1970).*

In contrast one strand in modern sociolinguistic thinking would regard the whole of South Asia, including the parts where non--Indo-European varieties are spoken, as a single linguistic area, and point out many features in phonology, lexis and grammar which transcend the geographical boundaries of the comparative philologists' 'language families'. A number of studies of language patterns at the interface or geographical. boundary betweeen Dravidian and Indic 'languages' illustrate this approach (Gumperz & Wilson, 1971; Shapiro & Schiffmann, 1981). Other research within the Indic 'languages' has stressed the gradual geographical variation in vernacular speech from village to village across the northern part of the subcontinent. The existence of politically based 'language' frontiers is found to be of minimal LINGUISTIC importance. Linguists in this tradition have talked of the notion of 'dialect continuum' and for example of the Hindi-Urdu-Panjabi-(HUP)-speaking   area   (Khubchandani 1979).

However it is impossible to ignore the existence of three other factors which complicate the picture. Firstly in any given locality in South Asia there is usually socially determined variation in speech, often based on caste membership. Secondly the influence of the standard regional 'languages', which are being imposed on vernacular speakers through education and the mass media, is growing. Thirdly the whole of South Asia is typified by a widespread social and individual multilingualism in both popular and elite sections of society. This has included numerous minority varieties (classified as languages belonging to the Indic, Dravidian and other indigenous language families) which have been the vernacular speech of particular communities for centuries. In consequence there has long been a need for lingua francas in the market place, while more recently the education system has fostered multilingualism for the elites in a regional, a national and a 'foreign' language. The 'foreign'

language of course, is almost invariably English, which continues to be widely used as a language of wider communication within the sub-continent.

d) Language in Sylhet

The status of Sylheti needs to be seen against this wider sociolinguistic background, although there are special historical and political factors which have led to the claim that it should be treated as a 'language' in its own right. As far as I can discover there has been no full scale linguistic description of the variety published, although forthcoming work in this area may fill this gap (Spratt, personal communication). There are two available sources which give a sketch of its phonology and grammar. Grierson (1903) describes and provides texts of four 'dialects' from the Sylhet district, noting that 'in the North and North East of the district ... the language is more corrupt' (sic). However, the fact that the specimens were collected in the 1690s, the problems of transcription into Bengali and Roman scripts, and the fact that the texts are attributed to British civil servants and Hindu scholars, cast some doubt on the relationship between Grierson's 'Sylhettia' and the varieties spoken in Sylhet or Tower Hamlets today. Interestingly my Sylheti speaking informants react strongly to the term 'Sylhettia' and have suggested that the -ia ending is a diminuitive suffix being applied perjoratively.

It is worth citing one paragraph from Grierson which illustrates his conviction and confusion about the relationship of Sylheti to Bengali. "The language (sic) spoken by the inhabitants of Eastern Sylhet is not intelligible to the natives of Central or Northern Bengal. It is, nevertheless, Bengali. There are some peculiarities of pronunciation which tend to render it unintelligible to strangers. The inflections also differ from those of regular Bengali, and in one or two instances assimilate to those of Assamese." (ibid. p.224)

A later description of the variety in the official gazetteer of the district (Risvi, 1974) takes a similar line, and to some extent the influence of Grierson can be seen in this sketch. There is greater stress in this description on the variation within the district, although "despite these local variations there is something in common which has given a special character to the dialect of Sylhet as a whole." (p.304)

Both Grierson and the later official description give some examples of the phonological differences between Sylheti and standard Bengali. Among them we choose four examples. The complex

consonant /k/ in Bengali corresponds to a velar fricative /x/ in Sylheti, and a Bengali /p/ in most positions is realised in Sylheti by a affricated stop /pf/ or fricative /f/. Initial /h/ is often elided, (in Grierson's terms 'dropped'), a feature which appears to carry a similar stigma to the very similar linguistic process in the stereotypical English speech of the 'natives' of the East End!

The official gazetteer also mentions the use of many Urdu. Persian and Arabic words in Sylheti, attributing this fact to the early and strong Islamic influence. Both descriptions mention the existence of a local version of the Deva-Nagri script, 'Sylhet-Nagri'. Grierson is quite dismissive of this saying, "it is extremely common for low class Muhammadans to **sign** their names in this character and the only explanation the[y] offer for its use is that it is so much easier to learn than Bengali. 'pathis' in Bengali are printed in this character, but except for this purpose and the writing of signatures by other illiterate men, the script is hardly used, never, at least. in formal documents.[11](p.224). The 'pathis' (more usually spelled 'pathis') are a distinctive local literary genre of narrative epic poetry and are still available in Sylhet in relatively modern editions.

The official gazetteer is somewhat less dismissive of the literary traditions of the district. It mentions three authors of 'pathis', whose works are available in the Sylhet-Nagri script: Sanjay Laur the earliest known writer from Sylhet, Bhabananda from the early fifteenth century, and Sadeq Ali. However, for some reason, which is probably political rather than linguistic, the gazetteer describes these authors, together with others from the region who presumably used the Bengali script, as 'Bengali writers'. It is clear that the written tradition of Sylhet has been consistently devalued by outsiders, while the lively oral tradition is scarcely even mentioned. Certain forms of poetry continue to be passed on exclusively by word of mouth, and the genre of oratory about current events is a well-established form of communication in market places throughout the district.

The explanation of this negative evaluation of vernacular speech and culture lies in the political context and value positions of Grierson and of the writer of the official gazetteer. Both clearly represent the position of a power elite, Grierson that of the colonial rulers, the later writer that of the urban educated leaders of a newly independent nation state. Both colonial and later regimes have a history of suppressing dissenting voices as for example in the case' of Nazrul Islam, the revolutionary Bengali poet (Hague 1980). From the state's point of view there is a sense in which an unauthorised medium of expression bears a similarly unauthorised message.

The gazetteer can admit grudgingly that "the people of Sylhet are

 education and cultural attainments" (p.3o3). However, the tone
makes it very clear that the writer believes that the language
use patterns of ordinary people OUGHT to be those of the educated
elite and should be brought under control by the spread of
education.

This process and the elite value s^{y}stems behind it are by no
means unique. Pattanayak (1981) eloquently exposes the process of
supression of the vernacular

> "There is ... a strong correlation   between   the
> concentration of institutions of middle and higher
> learning and affluence, language use and elite
> formation, exploitation and inequity. The multiple
> mother tongues represent the flowering of the popular
> genius.   Their   destruction   in   the   name   of
> standardisation may   lead   to   greater   ritual
> communication, but it will be at the cost of speaking
> to one another in a world   understood   by   the
> participants. Suppression of these by one in the name
> of modernization carries in it the germs of
> authoritarianism which is bound to create an oppressive
> society. Letting them wither away uncared for is bound
> to create an emotional sterility which may dwarf
> society permanently. In any case the destruction of
> mother tongues represents a situation of language
> imperialism, wherein the maJor, the dominant and the
> standard wears the badge of privilege and acts as the
> passport to rank, status and wealth.'
>   (1981 p.xii-xiii)

The final sentence in the quotation also explains why some
'educated' people with origins in the vernacular tradition are
willing to 'sell out' to the values of the ruling elites, as a
step towards personal upward social mobility. Ivan Ilich in an
essay in the same volume traces how such a process developed
historically in the European tradition, beginning with the
codification of Castillian Spanish by NebriJa in 1492. Even the
term 'mother tongue' has been expropriated $_b$y the elites, so that
it no longer means the vernacular everyday speech of ordinary
people, but the 'taught mother tongue' of the nation state. The
relationship between Sylheti and Bengali is a clear example of
this phenomenon: in Bangladesh the official policy is to ignore
and devalue the vernacular tradition, while in Britain the
position of the Bangladeshi elites in the mother tongue debate
tends to be based on the desire to teach the national language,
Bengali. However this position is being modified in response to
linguistic facts and political pressure, as we shall see later.
As a next step we shall need to look at the current language use
situation in Sylhet, as it is described by Sylheti speakers in

In the educational field it follows that in Sylhet, for pedagogical reasons, Bengali should be taught not as a 'mother tongue' but as a second **language**. Political considerations at present mean that schools cannot countenance such a language policy, at least not overtly. However, out of necessity and in order to facilitate understanding by the pupils, the spoken medium of instruction used by teachers is in fact Sylheti, particularly at the primary level. On the other hand, writing in Sylheti is not taught, and the fact that a tradition of writing Sylheti in the Nagri script exists is witheld from many Sylheti speakers. Sylheti is looked down on by many local teachers, as well as by Bengali vernacular speakers from other districts, and this low evaluation is often internalised by Sylheti-speaking children in schools. This widespread process whereby children come to believe the negative **image** of themselves, their language and their culture, which is transmitted by their teachers is well documented by researchers who have worked in many different settings. Milner (1975) deals with racial stereotyping, and McCaulay (1977) with linguistic.

The preceding discussion of the sociolinguistic background in Sylhet is of course highly relevant to the politics and methodology of mother tongue teaching in Tower Hamlets. In Chapters 4 and 7 these themes and their implications will be taken up **again**, but for the moment it is neccessary to turn our attention to the findings of the Adult Language Use Survey in this linguistic minority in London.

4) THE ADULT LANGUAGE USE SURVEY (1981)

a) Assumptions, Methods and Mistakes

In order to understand the context in which the Adult Language
Use Survey was carried out in Tower Hamlets it is necessary to
present a brief outline of the overall work of the Linguistic
Minorities Project. LMP was a policy related sociolinguistic
research project, sponsored by the Department of Education and
Science and initiated in 1979, partly in response to the
developing educational debate on the 'mother-tongue issue'. In
the early planning stages the DES indicated that one of their
main interests was in building up a 'linguistic map of England',
presumably using language census techniques. The academics and
educationalists involved in the early negotiations, and later on
the LMP research team, successfully resisted adopting this
restrictively narrow focus, arguing that comprehensive
'head-counting' would be both impossible on technical grounds,
and misleading at the applied level. Instead it would be better
to build lip a more detailed, sociolinguistically informed,
picture of the status and use of selected minority languages in a
small number of localities, and of the educational efforts
towards language maintenance which were being made by the
voluntary and statutory sectors. It goes without saying that, had
there   been wider democratic consultation with speakers of
minority languages at this early stage, the terms of the
discussion   would   have been mainly political, rather than
technical.

In the eventual programme of work which emerged as a result of
these negotiations, and which was carried out by LMP between 1979
and 1982, four different surveys were designed and used. The
Schools Language Survey (SLS) responded directly to the concerns
of the DES, was used as a language census of pupils in the
schools of five Local Education Authorities, and remains on offer
as a tested methodology for other LEAs. The Secondary Pupils
Survey (SPS) was used to investigate in more detail the language
use patterns of bilingual and monolingual pupils, and developed
into teaching materials for use in language awareness projects.
The Mother Tongue Teaching Directory Survey (MTTD) was a small
scale survey of the statutory, state-assisted and totally
voluntary institutional involvement in mother tongue teaching in
three particular areas.
The fourth and largest survey *was* the Adult Language Use Survey,
which was an attempt to produce a description of the
sociolinguistic context of minority languages in three cities. A
total of eleven different languages was covered, the majority of
them in at least two different cities. This wide coverage
necessitated a basically uniform approach across the languages,
in order that data which would be comparable, even at a broad

level, could be collected, and so that a data base about the generally unresearched field of 'minority languages' could be established. Inevitably detail would be obscured, and we were well aware that a survey approach based on self-report data could not provide reliable information on linguistic behaviour, which might be collected by observational studies. In   fact   we considered whether to carry out small case studies as a preliminary investigation before the larger surveys, but were persuaded, mainly on administrative and logistical grounds, to tackle the major survey work first. Nor was it possible to build a longitudinal element into the study, although the fact that interviews were conducted with people of different generations, and with linguistic minorities who had arrived in the UK at different periods, enabled us to make some useful observations about the processes of language shift and language maintenance.

It has already been pointed out that in the context of the ALUS we used the general concept of 'linguistic minority' in deciding which sub-sections of the general population should constitute our sampling frames. Although, as I have already mentioned, there are theoretical problems with the concept, and difficult cases in its application (Allardt, 1984), it was the only feasible strategy for the large scale survey work to which LMP was committed. Furthermore the generally low level of awareness of sociolinguistics and of the field of minority languages in England, made it essential to formulate questions in a way which respondents, policy-makers and other members of the general public would understand and relate to. The notion of linguistic minority seemed to be appropriate in this context. We could only hope that an account of the difficulties encountered as a result of this strategy, and the qualifications with which we had to present our findings, would provide a sociolinguistic education for our readers, as it had done for ourselves.

From an early stage the LMP team was aware of the problems of this definition of linguistic minorities in the case of speakers of Bengali and Sylheti. For example one of the early working papers (Smith 1982) discusses the problem of language naming for South Asian languages in the SLS, and the way in which the perceptions of teachers, pupils and monolingual peers might affect the way in which Sylheti-speaking children answer the seemingly straightforward question, 'What is the name of (your) language?' Our understanding of this particular issue was made somewhat sharper in the course of ALUS fieldwork in 1981. However, it was only after LMP had ended and CLE had begun, that it has become clear just how unsatisfactory and misleading our previous assumptions were. This came about as a result of undertaking second-stage analysis of the survey data, and in the course of fieldwork for the case study. In particular our decision to treat speakers of Sylheti and Bengali as a single linguistic minority now appears to be based on a gross over-simplification. It is instructive to examine not only the evidence which led to a change of mind, but the process which led us to accept misleading assumptions in the first place. In doing

so we shall raise some fundamental questions about the nature, structure and strategies of sociolinguistic research on minority languages.

LMP first used the ALUS with the 'Bengali-speaking' linguistic minority not in London, but **in** Coventry. There, as in Tower Hamlets, the maJority of people of Bangladeshi origin are Sylheti speakers. However, they are relatively few in number and the debate about the nature and status of Sylheti was not high on the agenda locally, as far as we could judge in 1981. We perceived that the only problem in respect of the fieldwork would be in translating the questionnaire into a variety (of Bengali) which would be acceptable to, and widely understood by, all respondents including Sylheti speakers. On the basis of advice from the language consultants who translated and back-translated the questionnaire we believed we had produced a version which would serve us well, especially given interviewers who were sensitive to the issue and familiar with spoken Sylheti. In Coventry no maJor problems were reported in the use of this version.

For the survey in Coventry we made no special provision in the format or coding of the questionnaire to enable us to distinguish between answers referring to the two different varieties. Nor did we make a particular effort to recruit Sylheti-speaking interviewers, although most of them had at least some knowledge of, or regular contact with the variety. The ALUS for 'Bengali speakers' in Coventry was carried out successfully (in our own terms), and although with hindsight it is clear we missed some of the richness of potential data, we did not encounter any great problems in analysis and interpretation.

Later in 1981 ALUS was carried out in seven linguistic minorities in North and East London. We became aware in our 'networking' before the fieldwork started that the social characteristics of the 'Bengali-speaking' minority in Tower Hamlets were somewhat different from those of the much smaller population of 'Bengali speakers' in Haringey. We therefore decided to conduct fieldwork in both boroughs, with 75% of interviews in Tower Hamlets and 25% in Haringey, and selected samples accordingly (Smith 1984). We were aware that there were more people of Indian Hindu background in Haringey, so attempted to recruit at least some interviewers of similar characteristics to work there, while only Muslim people of Bangladeshi origin were to be employed in Tower Hamlets. We were not at the time fully aware of the political dimensions of the Sylheti / Bengali issue in East London, and were therefore ready to employ people who had origins in other parts of Bangladesh and who had limited knowledge of, or commitment to, Sylheti. Because our recruitment was mainly through the educational networks, it was not surprising that most of the interviewers were, for example, teachers or community workers who worked, but did not necessarily live in Tower Hamlets. Although two of our younger interviewers were local Sylheti speakers who had lived most of their lives in the East End, even they did not strongly oppose the understanding of

Sylheti and Bengali which we held at the time.

In fact, when the Bengali version of the questionnaire was used in London some of the interviewers complained that in certain parts it was a poor translation. in some places not literal enough, in others expressed in a Bengali which they considered to be 'sub-standard'. This gives some indication that our interviewers, for the most part accepted the traditional elitist language ideology, that relegates Sylheti to the inferior status of a 'dialect of Bengali'.

We were more aware by now that answers to many of the ALUS questions could be phrased in terms of Sylheti rather than Bengali, and made an ad hoc arrangement for coding such replies. This involved establishing at an early stage whether or not the respondent knew and generally spoke Sylheti, and then only preserving the distinction between the two varieties when questions referred to literacy. It would have been better to insist on the distinction throughout, but this could only have been done at this stage by redesigning and reprinting the whole of the questionnaire with its precoded categories, which had already been prepared. To have done this would have been costly in terms of time and money, and would have gone against our overall strategy of using a standard questionnaire in all the different languages.

b) 'Bengali Speakers' in Two Boroughs : Findings

All of our interviewers, whatever their own background and feelings about the status of Sylheti, were very conscious of the issues involved, and in the debriefing sessions that we held with them after the interviews carefully and objectively reported and commented on the situations they had found in different families. It was obvious that almost all the Tower Hamlets respondents actually spoke Sylheti. On the other hand it appeared, if only through lack of contradictory evidence, that some people were willing to accept a description of their speech as a dialect of Bengali, or to use the label Bengali rather loosely, particularly in the context of an interview structured in terms of a straightforward contrast with English, and presented without explicit discussion by the interviewers.

In North London the interviewers reported a contrasting situation, with many respondents there speaking varieties which were described as Bengali, either in its standard form or in a regional variety originating in Indian West Bengal or in parts of Bangladesh other than Sylhet. Sylheti was mentioned only by a minority of Haringey respondents. In the LMP report (1983) and in the LMP book (1985) we do not distinguish between these two situations but presented statistics for Bengali speakers in London as a whole, together with a few comments and caveats about

Sylheti. However, it is now possible to present some aspects of the data in more detail, and to contrast the sociolinguistic situation of the (predominantly) Bengali speakers in Haringey with that of the Sylheti speakers in Tower Hamlets.

Figure 1: Pie Charts showiniz country of backAround of Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

In Tower Hamlets 99% of the respondents mentioned somewhere in the interview that they had come from, or had some continuing contact with Bangladesh, **whereas in Haringey** 57% of the respondents indicated they were from India and only 43% **from Bangladesh.**

TOWER HAMLETS   HARINGEY

COUNTRY OF BACKGROUND   COUNTRY OF BACKGROUND

BANGLADESH   INDIA

99%   57%

1%   43%

INDIA   BANGLADESH

100% = 149   100% = 35
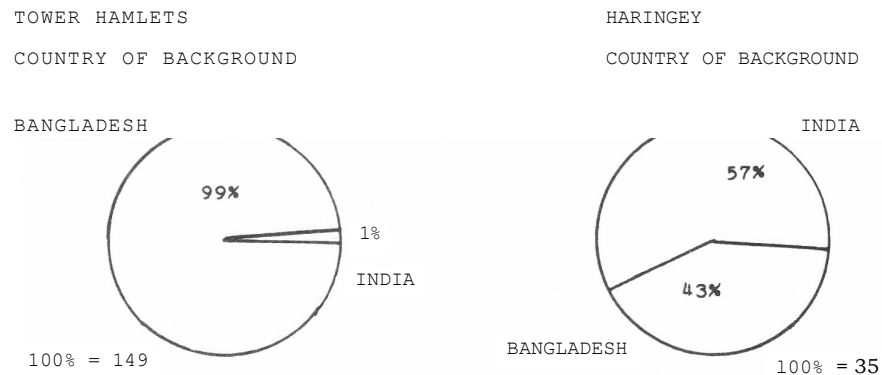
Figure 2: Pie Charts showing religion of Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

98% of the Tower Hamlets respondents said that they were Muslims compared with only 51% of the Haringey ones. **There was** a **strong correlation here with country of origin, with almost all of the Hindus having connections with India, and most, but not all, of the Muslims having connections with Bangladesh.**

TOWER HAMLETS   HARINGEY

RELIGION   RELIGION

HINDU

49%

2%
HINDU   51%

ISLAM   ISLAM

100% = 35

Figure 3: Pie Charts showing place of upbringing of Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

In Tower Hamlets three quarters of the respondents said they had spent the first sixteen years of their life in an overseas rural setting and most of the rest had been brought up in the UK. By contrast two thirds of the Haringey respondents had been brought up in an overseas urban environment, and only a quarter in an overseas rural one.

TOWER HAMLETS
UPBRINGING

OVERSEAS RURAL

HARINGEY'
UPBRINGING

OVERSEAS URBAN

68%

AT LEAST
PART IN UK

9%

111VAT LEAST P A R T
I N   U K   OVERSEAS
URBAN 100% = 147

23%

OVERSEAS RURAL

1009 - 34
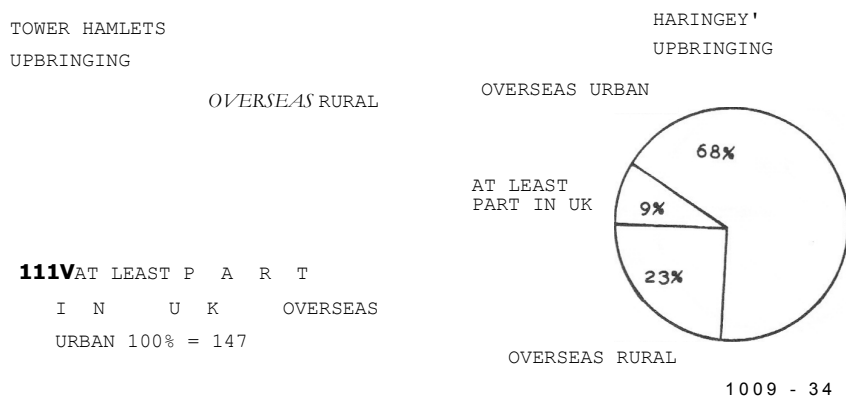
Figure 4: Pie Charts showing housing tenure of Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondentq.

Whereas eighty per cent of the Tower Hamlets respondents were living in council accommodation, 80% of the Haringey ones were owner occupiers. This is an obvious reflection of the patterns of housing tenure in the two boroughs, but also suggests a higher level of prosperity and socioeconomic status among the Haringey respondents.

TOWER HAMLETS
HOUSING

HARINGEY
HOUSING

COUNCIL

80%

8% OWNER OCCUPIED

12% OTHER

100% - 149

COUNCIL

6%

OTHER

14%

80%

OWNER OCCUPIED

100% = 35
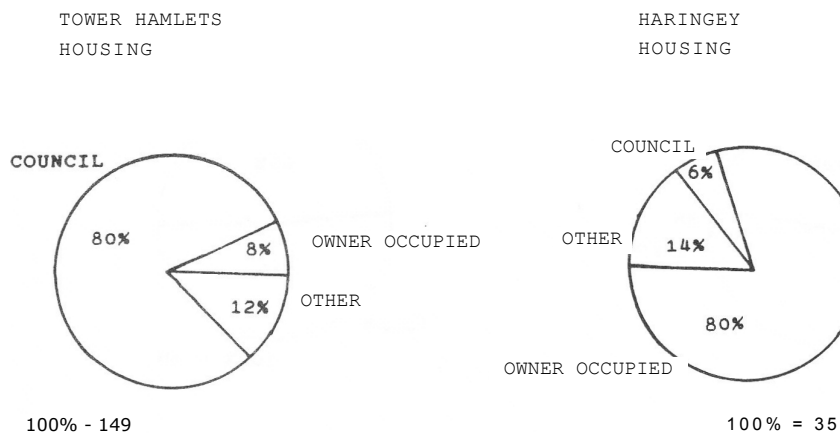
Figure 5: Pie Charts showing occupational status of Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

Our simplest analysis of occupation and social class was based on a threefold categorisation of occupations into professional or other non-manual, skilled manual, and semi-skilled or unskilled manual. For working respondents, including women, social class was always assigned on the basis of the respondent's own Job. For non-working respondents the occupation of a working spouse, father or other relative was used. The occupational category 'machinist', which was very common in the data, was treated as a semi-skilled occupation. In Tower Hamlets over two thirds of the respondents worked (or had a relative who worked) in a semi skilled or unskilled occupation. In Haringey on the other hand over two thirds of the respondents worked or (had relatives who worked) in non-manual occupations. (Further analysis of the occupational data will be given in Chapter 5.b)
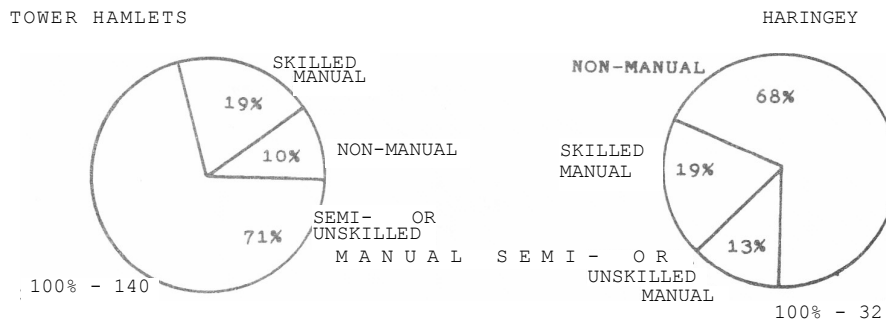
Figure 6: Pie Charts showing length of schooling of Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

In Tower Hamlets only 11% of respondents reported that they had received twelve or more years of full time schooling. Over half had received less than seven years of full time schooling. Haringey respondents had generally received more schooling, with about two thirds of the respondents reporting twelve or more years of schooling and almost all the rest more than seven years.
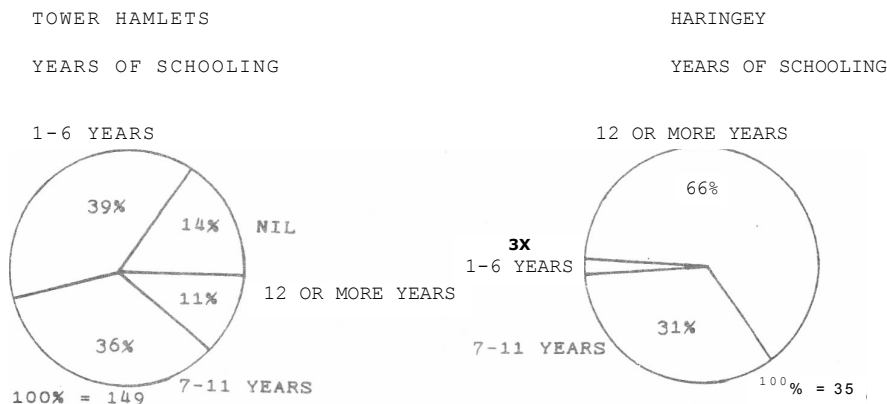
Figure 7: Pie Charts showing use of Sylheti reported by Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

The information here is based on the two questions which began the interview, in which respondents were asked to list all the languages they knew and when they had last used each one. Interviewers were specifically alerted to report any mention of Sylheti and these questions were especially closely monitored in the regular debriefing sessions. 93% of Tower Hamlets respondents mentioned they knew Sylheti and had used it on the day of the interview, and all the respondents mentioned at least some use of the variety. In contrast only 29% of Haringey respondents had used Sylheti on the day of the interview, and nearly two thirds did not mention Sylheti at all. It is of course very likely that this latter group consisted mainly of Hindus with an Indian background, and Muslims from parts of Bangladesh other than

TOWER HAMLETS
LAST USE OF SYLHETI

HARINGEY
LAST USE OF SYLHETI

93% **WITHIN 1 DAY**

WITHIN 1 WEEK

4% NOT MENTIONED

3X

WITHIN 1 WEEK

WITHIN 1 DAY

29%

6%

65%

NOT MENTIONED

100% - 149

100X - 35
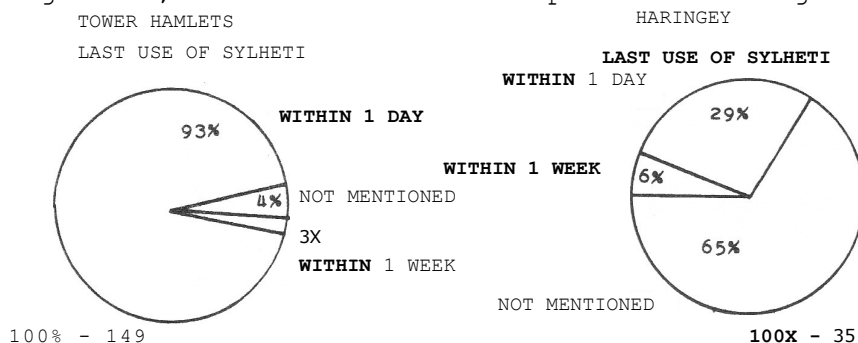
Figure 8: Pie Charts showing literacy in Bengali reported by Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

In Tower Hamlets 64% of respondents reported that they could read and write Bengali 'very well' or 'fairly well'. Given that Bengali is linguistically quite distant from their vernacular speech, and that many of these respondents have had limited access to formal schooling, the literacy rate is remarkably high. In Haringey the corresponding figure for literacy skills in Bengali was 97%.

TOWER HAMLETS
LITERACY IN BENGALI

HARINGEY
LITERACY **IN** BENGALI

SOME LITERACY SKILLS

10%

MINIMUM LITERACY
SKILLS REPORTED

26%

64%

FULL LITERACY SKILLS

FULL LITERACY SKILLS

97%

SOME LITERACY
SKILLS 3x

100N = 149

100% = 36
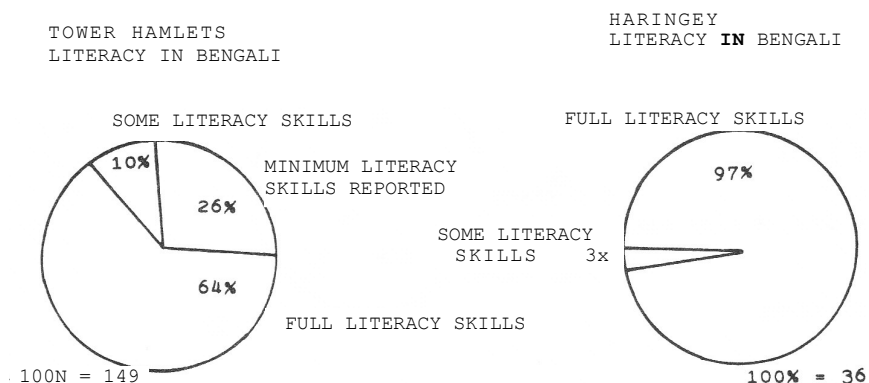
Figure 9: Pie Charts showing oral skills in En^{g}lish reported by
Harin^{g}e^y and Tower Hamlets respondents.

40% of the Tower Hamlets respondents said they could understand
and speak English 'very well' or 'fairly well', but over half
reported lower levels of aural and oral skills. In **Haringey** 80%
reported the **higher** level of skills.

TOWER HAMLETS   **HARINGEY**

ENGLISH ORAL SKILLS   **ENGLISH** ORAL SKILLS

MINIMAL ORAL   FULL SKILLS
SKILLS REPORTED

53%   80%

MINIMAL ORAL
SKILLS REPORTED   14%
FULL SKILLS

SOME   7%   40%   6%
SKILLS ^{SO}ME SKILLS

100% - 149   100% - 35
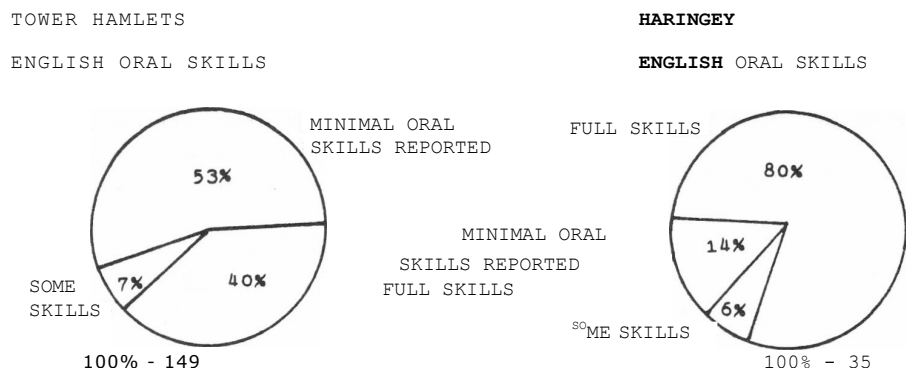
Figure 10: Pie Charts showing literac^y in English reported by
Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

30% of **the Tower Hamlets respondents said** they could read and
write English 'very well' or 'fairl^y well', while **in Haringe^y** 80%
said they could do so. In Tower Hamlets two thirds of respondents
reported lower or no literacy skills in English.

TOWER HAMLETS   HARINGEY

LITERACY IN ENGLISH   LITERACY IN ENGLISH

MINIMUM LITERACY   FULL LITERACY
SKILLS REPORTED   SKILLS

66%   80%

MINIMUM LITERACY
SKILLS **REPORTED**   11%

4%   30%   FULL LITERACY   9%
SKILLS
SOME LITERACY SKILLS ^{SO}ME LITERACY   SKILLS

100% - 149   100% - 35
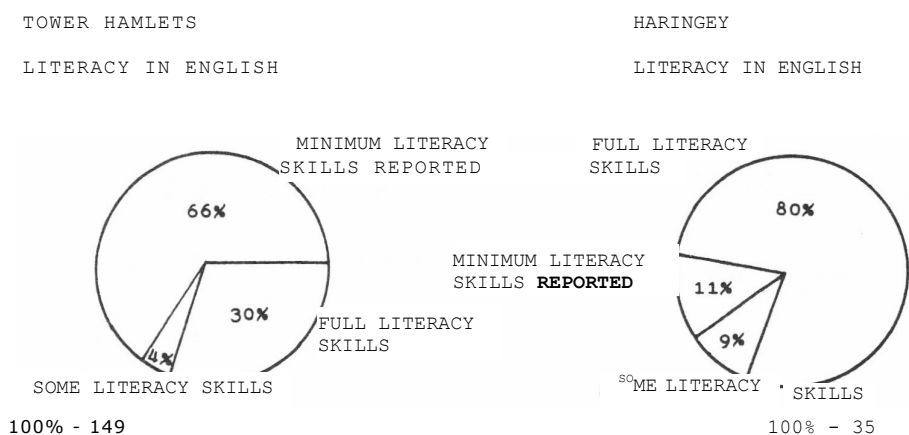
Of the respondents with children in the household. 9% of those in Tower Hamlets said their children used only **English with the other children in the household, while in Haringey nearly half** did so.

TOWER HAMLETS   HARINGEY
LANGUAGE USE BETWEEN CHILDREN   LANGUAGE USE BETWEEN CHILDREN
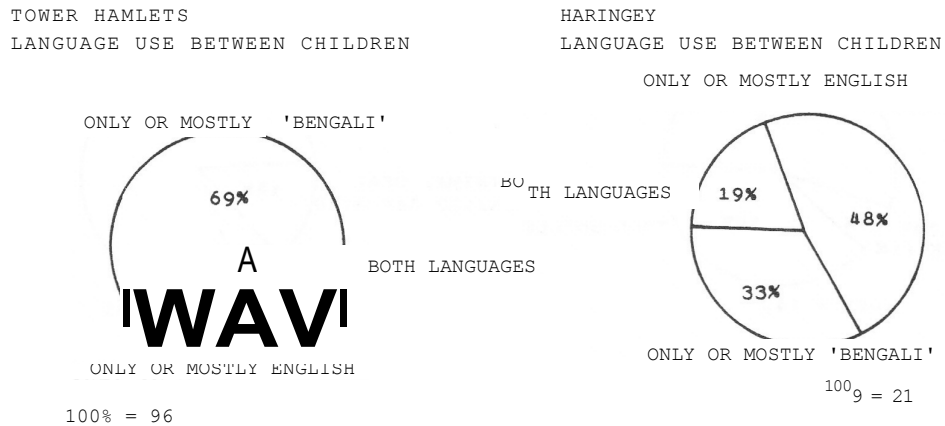
Figure 12: Pie Charts showing language use between mothers and children as reported by Haringey and Tower Hamlets respondents.

Of the **respondents** with at least one child in the household almost all respondents in Tower Hamlets reported that the mother spoke to the child(ren) only in 'Bengali' while at least a third of the mothers in Haringey spoke at least some English.
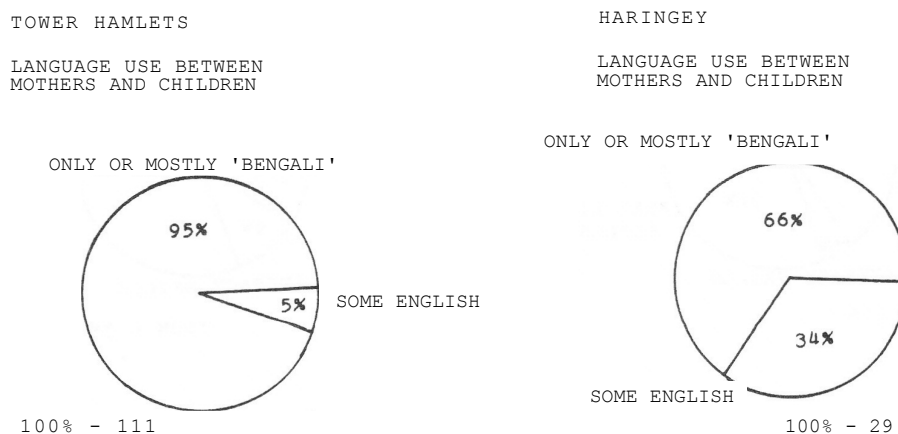
The conclusion to be drawn from this data is that it is unwise to treat two such radically divergent sets of people as a single linguistic minority. The experience of ALUS in this instance also highlights the dangers of undertaking broad scale survey work in a variety of different sociolinguistic and local settings, without first investigating the local context in some detail and defining the relevant issues, using ethnographic, collaborative or participatory research methodology *(see* Chapter 6.a). The primary difference between respondents in the two boroughs relates to social class, with the Haringey residents holding a higher proportion of non-manual jobs, owning their own homes and having had more experience of formal education. Although there are some Sylheti speakers in the Haringey sample, it is likely that they differ from those in Tower Hamlets in this class-related way, and have much in common with the other Haringey respondents who originated in more urban parts of Bangladesh and India. Levels of English skill and use appear to be higher in Haringey than in Tower Hamlets, a factor not unrelated to the class difference, but probably compounded by the lower density of settlement of 'Bengali speakers' in the former borough.

An analysis of the ALUS findings which divided the linguistic minority into two on the linguistic criterion of whether a respondent knows Sylheti, would make more sociolinguistic sense than simply using place of residence. However this cannot be easily done on the basis of existing (or indeed of any self-report) data. Furthermore the marked class, social and power differences between the two boroughs exist regardless of whether respondents speak Sylheti. As a result the class issue has important political dimensions reflected in terms of language loyalty. It is obvious that while many respondents identify themselves with Sylheti, others identify more with standard Bengali or even English, and some of these latter groups may even have grown up with Sylheti as their vernacular speech. I will go on in the following chapter to examine some of the political consequences in Tower Hamlets.

5) SYLHETI SPEAKERS AND THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY IN TOWER HAMLETS:
   BACKGROUND TO THE CASE STUDY

a) Perceptions of Ethnolinguistic Identity

Perceptions of the existence and value of any given 'language' are derived consciously or unconsciously from social, political, philosophical and religious structures, values, presuppositions, myths and loyalties, which are mediated and reproduced by the major institutions within society. Within the context of British inner cities there are multidimensional socio-political conflicts involving the local and national state agencies, various **grass** roots organisations and the many less formalised networks of local people. Everyone involved in these debates, including academic researchers, has vested interests, whether acknowledged or not. Vested interests mean that different sets of people hold conflicting perceptions of the local situation, and although researchers may wish to describe many of these different views from a distance, it is impossible, and indeed undesirable. to attempt to do so in a 'value free' manner.

Against this background, therefore, we need to examine two contrasting perceptions of people of Bangladeshi origin and their language in order to understand the developing 'language politics' of the area.

1) First of all there are 'official' views which are typically held by people working for the national or local state in such professions as teaching, planning, social work *and* community relations. Such people are usually, but not invariably, recruited from the dominant 'white' majority, and hold power over the distribution of educational and other resources. These views are also commonly held and transmitted by the more serious sections of the mass media. It is usually taken for granted from this viewpoint, that there is an identifiable and largely homogeneous 'Bengali community' in Britain, with a major local 'stronghold' in East London. For some purposes such as immigration and international relations the term 'Bangladeshi community' is taken as broadly synonymous, while for religious questions the wider term 'Muslim community' may be used. For planning purposes a more generalised term such as 'ethnic minorities' or 'Asian' population is often used. In the 1981 Census, after studiously **avoiding any direct question** on ethnic background because of political and definitional problems, OPCS published statistics based on a constructed variable; 'persons resident in households where the head of household was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan'. This is now used by planning authorities etc. to measure the politically important question of the distribution of 'black' people.

Educational statistics are more closely related to linguistic characteristics. The ILEA Language Censuses of $_{1978}$, 1981, and

1983 focussed on the category of those children 'using a language other than or in addition to English' (ILEA, *1979; 1981; 1983)*. Teachers were also asked to record the names of languages spoken by children. The 1983 findings for Tower Hamlets suggested that *30%* of the school population used a language other than English, and that 70% of these spoke Bengali, with numbers increasing and likely to increase for several years to come. Any answers which were phrased in terms of Sylheti were pooled into *the* 'Bengali' category. In the mother tongue debate amongst teachers and educationalists the term 'Bengali-speakers' is often accepted uncritically as defining the population for whom a specific form of provision should be made. Although there is a growing awareness that most of these children actually speak Sylheti, there is considerable reluctance to treat Sylheti as a 'language' in its own right.

Broadly speaking these assumptions about 'Bengali' and its 'speakers' derive from the type of colonial anthropology and linguistics described earlier, where Sylheti was not recognised as a *'language'* but stigmatised as a 'corrupt dialect'. Of course most monolingual teachers and educationalists have not had the time or opportunity to read and reflect on the works of Grierson. Instead most have relied on information suplied by 'Bengali-speaking' intermediaries, who are normally members of the professions approached because they are perceived as articulate in English and as 'members of the community'. Because institutionalised racism has excluded all but a few members of black ethnic and linguistic minorities from professional networks and positions of power, the few individuals who are to be found in these circles inevitably become the prime sources of 'inside' knowledge about their 'community'. And because such individuals have a personal stake within the existing system of values and institutions, their perceptions and viewpoints tend not to challenge radically the status quo.

Generally speaking, the values and insights of modern sociolinguistics have not penetrated very far into the consciousness of non-specialists, in particular amongst those who have been educated in the hierarchical and elitist schooling systems of South Asia. As a result many people who have been looked to as 'experts' on Bengali and Sylheti have very limited awareness of the sociolinguistic issues. Often these people have origins outside Sylhet. Some, indeed, are not Muslims from Bangladesh but originate in Indian West Bengal. Even those who do have a family connection with the Sylhet district, will have been educated in the 'Bengali great tradition' and, for reasons connected with upward social mobility, will tend to look down on the vernacular culture and language of workers of Bangladeshi origin in the East End.

Furthermore many of these Bengali speakers, who are accepted uncritically by the dominant majority as 'spokespeople' or 'community leaders', are prosperous enough to buy homes in the middle class suburbs of outer London. Together with most of their

white professional colleagues, they commute daily to work in Tower Hamlets, but withdraw to the comfort of more desirable areas to spend their salaries and raise their children. Such behaviour on the part of professionals is often correctly perceived by working class inner city residents as part of the mechanism of oppression. Among the people of Bangladeshi origin in East London this geographical separation of the spheres of professional work and domestic consumption tends to perpetuate the social, economic and power relations between the elites and the masses which is found in the country of origin. Thus in Tower Hamlets just as in Bangladesh the vernacular values and culture of the Sylhetis is largely ignored, devalued and suppressed, and the majority of people from this background remain in powerlessness.

There is a probability therefore, that teachers, educational planners and other representatives of the local and national state, even though they may sincerely be trying to work against racism and for positive action on behalf of minorities, are likely to be misled by their reliance on intermediaries representing the vested interests of the more powerful. Add to this the traditional and racist assumptions about language and society which are commonly held, and we have a recipe for ill-informed debate, political conflict and botched educational planning which will do little to cater for the linguistic and social needs of children in London schools.

2) There is however an alternative set of views emerging from within the Sylheti-speaking people of Tower Hamlets. Despite suppression and marginalisation, vernacular values and varieties of speech have a habit of persisting. They become symbolic of cultures of resistance to oppression, as alternative ways to express solidarity with one's fellows and to assert social distance from one's oppressors for example in the case of British black English (Hewitt, 1982; Edwards,1979). Sometimes such resistance leads to political mobilisation around lannguage. Well researched examples of this phenomenon include the language politics of French Canada (Coons, Taylor and Tremblay, 1977) and of Welsh nationalism (Williams, 1978). There are **signs** that in Tower Hamlets *a* political struggle is developing focussed around the recognition of Sylheti as a language in its own right.

The local social and political context in Tower Hamlets has encouraged the development of reformist and radical political groupings in a number of *ways.* Firstly, there are real injustices which need to be fought, and a need for people who are under physical and political threat to organise in order to protect their rights, interests, properties and persons. Secondly, simply because of the high level of concentration of Sylheti-speaking people in a small geographical area, there is the opportunity for frequent interpersonal contact in the various local networks and thus for political mobilisation at a grass roots level. Thirdly, in recent years a large number of community development initiatives have been sponsored and funded by the national or

local   state   agencies, or have sprung up from the local
'community'.

There is an inherent ambivalence in such initiatives when funding
comes from the state, for although they are presented as being of
benefit to the 'local community', they can equally be seen as a
useful means by which the state can strengthen its control over
the people, expropriate their cultural resources, and neutralise
opposition leaders by incorporating them into the state machine.
This analysis of the state is held by a number of
Sylheti-speaking activists in local politics, and as evidence
they cite the fact that much of the employment associated with
state-funded projects has been given to people who have no real
understanding of, or solidarity with, local people, indeed often
to elite Bengali-speakers who have negative and hostile attitudes
towards Sylheti, and whom they characterise as careerist
collaborators with British racism. A few people benefit directly,
while the indirect effect of such projects on the community as a
whole is minimal, if not obstructive.

The status of Sylheti as a language, and the rights of local
Sylheti-speaking people first led to political mobilisation as
long ago as 1973. This was in reaction to an article in The
Sunday Times (2.12.73) in which many Sylheti-speakers felt they
were treated with contempt. It was clear that the journalist
involved had used as sources people who had very little inside
knowledge of the community, and had simply reproduced their
stereotypes and prejudices. Comments made by Bengali professional
workers about ' Sylhetis clinging to their religion', about
'religious reasons against birth control' and that 'the priests
have too strong a grip on that society', were profoundly
offensive to many. A group of young Sylheti speakers, incensed at
the way they had been represented in the press, had the article
translated and widely distributed and began to protest. This
marked the beginning of what can be called the 'Sylheti
anti-racist movement'.
In the following years, the situation itself, and the
encouragement on the part of the state for the involvement of
local people in local projects, has meant that some new local
leaders have emerged and that new forms of community action and
community politics can be observed. In particular a range of
radical 'Bangladeshi Youth Organisations' emerged in the 1970s
partly as self-defence groups in reaction to the physical attacks
on people of Bangladeshi origin perpetrated by the supporters of
the National Front and British Movement. In recent years their
activities have expanded to include general youth and community
work, children's summer projects, welfare rights work, cultural
activities and educational projects.

Major recent developments in the educational field in have
centred on the launching of the 'Tower Hamlets Initiative' by the

Inner London Education Authority in $_{1983}$. This arose from a growing awareness of the increasing numbers of 'Bengali-speaking children' and of the 'mother tongue' issue, and a limited recognition of the failure of the educational services to meet the needs of children of Bangladeshi origin. These educational needs were becoming more clearly articulated with the emergence of a grass roots lobbying group known as BENTH (= Bangladeshis' Educational Needs in Tower Hamlets). BENTH currently claims a membership of between $_{700}$ and 1000 members of the Bangladeshi community who are concerned about the educational rights of their children, and besides providing a forum for educational debate, it has organised a number of seminars and conferences on local educational issues, and publishes a regular Bulletin. At a large public meeting in $_{1983}$ the chairperson of BENTH was one of two representatives elected to serve on ILEA's 'Ethnic Minorities Section'. As a result of the Tower Hamlets Initiative some new funding has been made available to a number of community schools and youth organisations.

It is difficult for me as a white monolingual outsider to assess how strong, active, united or successful the Sylheti anti-racist movement has been, but at least the issue of language rights and the rejection of racism in all its forms continue to be articulated. For example the BENTH Bulletin of August / September 1984 refers back to the $_{1973}$ Sunday Times article, in the context of criticising an article by a Bengali writer in the 'Asian' paper 'NEW LIFE' of 10.8.84 as 'a new attack on the Bangladeshis'. In the same issue of the BENTH bulletin there is an extensive criticism of ILEA's booklet 'Bangladesh - An Introduction' which accuses the 'Asian' author of 'aid(ing) and abet(ing) the racist cause' especially in respect of his thoughts on the image of the Sylhetis. Similarly the BENTH bulletin of May-July 1984 complains against a more recent anti-Muslim article *in 'Time* Out'(12.4.1984). The most detailed critical analysis of journalistic and other coverage of Sylheti and its speakers since *1973,* appears in the BENTH bulletin (nos. $_{15/18)}$ for October *1984 - January 1985.*

The demand that local Sylheti-speaking people should be employed as community workers and teachers in preference to Bengali-speaking outsiders is regularly made. In the local bilingual paper 'Bangalee Shomachar' of 15-31 August 1984 this view is articulated in an article about the Montefiore Centre "which has become a springboard for non-locals to arrive in Tower Hamlets, grab whatever grants and other facilities there are and then enter the local services which continue to fail to employ the relevant local applicants". In a second article entitled 'Retire B....' where it is pointed out that the author of the ILEA booklet referred to earlier "is not a Sylhetti speaker and is understood to have been directed - wrongly - to 'consult' some persons recently available in Tower Hamlets who advised him on a normative characterisation of the Sylhettis".

The movement appears to be growing in strength, and people who

have not themselves been favourable to Sylheti are beginning to be aware of the issues involved and for various reasons to support some of the Sylheti-speakers' demands. In the issue of 'Shomachar' already mentioned a local person joins in a debate which has been taking place in the Bengali language papers, with a piece in English which disputes the claim that "Sylhetti ... is a language which cannot be written." Rather ... "the Sylhetti language is more well known as Sylhetti Nagri. This language is a sufficiently scientific language. Only because of the lack of practice and research the Sylhetti **Nagri** is beginning to disappear. In the villages and towns of Sylhet today books written in this language still provide food for excitement and thought in peoples' minds. Compared to the Bangles language the Sylhetti Nagri has a smaller number of letters in its alphabet. And Sylhetti **Nagri is** so easy to learn that it is said that if a person cannot learn the Sylhetti alphabet in seven hours they will not learn it in 27 years. Those who know the Sylheti Nagri know that the saying is completely true."

The conflicts between the radical pro-Sylheti sections of the local community on the one hand, and the professional pro-Bengali elites from outside have become more sharply polarised, with the pro-Sylhetis gaining the upper hand at the 1984 AGM of BENTH and voting to exclude paid employees of ILEA from membership. Allegations of corruption over the dispersal of public funds have been published in English in the Shomachar, and are openly reported, and argued, in the Bengali medium press. They are often complex in terms of both issues and personalities, and it would be unwise for a non-Sylheti speaker to claim an understanding of the whole story. However, they must be mentioned here as a first step to an analysis of the structural and political issues involved.

Finally in terms of mother tongue teaching practice there is a growing recognition that Sylheti is the vernacular variety spoken by children in local schools, that it is linguistically different from standard Bengali and that a special pedagogical approach is necessary. Nonetheless the issue is still generally addressed in terms of 'Dialect V. Standard language[9], and 'mother tongue teaching' is generally practised with the intention of developing literacy skills in the national standard language of the country of origin. A seminar reported in the BENTH Bulletin of January 1984 points out that participants "recognised there is little scope for the presence of the dialect in the teaching materialst? but "there should be a proper recognition of the children's dialect as far as the use of language for communication purposes is concerned and it should be possible to promote children's dialect specially in the pre-literacy stage."

The same group recommended programmes on TV and radio in 'Bangles', and the recruitment and promotion of 'Bangles-speaking' teachers in schools. It does not appear that the people involved in this seminar saw any conflict between the promotion of 'Bangle' as the language of literacy and culture, and the

retention of 'dialect' as a children's language of communication. Nor is there much evidence to suggest that they had questioned the notion that a written standard 'language' is inherently 'superior' to a 'mere dialect'. The implications of these questions for 'mother tongue education' for Sylheti speakers will be covered in more detail in Chapter 8, after the methods and findings of the 1984 case study have been presented.

b) The Clothing Industry; ALUS Findings

It was with a developing understanding of the issues outlined already that a small case study on Language in the Workplace was designed as part of the research proposal for the Community Languages and Education Project submitted to the Social Science Research Council in 1982. CLEP was eventually funded as follow up project to LMP by the SSRC's successor, the Economic and Social Research Council, with the continuing involvement of some of the LMP research staff.

The original design of the case study was based around the hypothesis that the development of 'ethnic' or linguistic minority sectors of the local economy would have important effects on the process of language maintenance. The research method would have involved examining the ALUS data on language in the workplace in some detail, then designing and implementing in-depth interviews and observational studies. The possible educational applications of such a case study were seen to be centred on further and adult education, in particular the development of work-related language training and industrial skills training through the medium of minority languages. As we shall see, the specific social and political conditions in Tower Hamlets and our growing understanding of them made the implementation of the case study in its original form, especially the later fieldwork stages, considerably more difficult than had been envisaged.

In the following section I describe the relatively easy process of second stage analysis of ALUS data on employment, where the researcher simply interrogated the computer-stored data file. The next chapter moves on to describe how preliminary contacts with the local community forced me to rethink my research values, presuppositions and research methods, and how this process led to methodological and analytical revisions for the case study as a whole.

TABLE 1

WORKING RESPONDENTS IN LONDON ALUS: SOCIAL AND LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Variable	TOTAL	WORKERS	CLOTHING TRADE	OTHER
N	185	86	48	38
Females	76	7	1	6
Tower Hamlets	149	70	47	23
Haringey	35	16	1	15
Non Manual		20	0	20
Skilled		12	6	6
Semi or unskilled		54	42	12
12+ years school		26	5	21
Overseas Urban upbringing		13	1	12
Self Employed		13	7	6
Some Training		17	2	15

LANGUAGE SITUATION

		WORKERS	CLOTHING TRADE	OTHER
All mates speak 'Bengali'		33	25	8
Boss speaks 'Bengali'		23	16	7
Full Bengali Literacy		69	38	31
Full English Oral		57	24	33
Full English Literacy		44	15	29
Speaking Bengali essential		32	18	14
Speaking Bengali helps		24	14	3
Reading English essential		32	9	23
Reading English helps		14	10	4

Detailed analysis of ALUS data for the London 'Bengali-speaking' sample showed some very interesting patterns of language use in the workplace, especially for workers in the East London clothing industry. The key points of interest are summarised in Table 1 and in the histograms (Figures $_{13}$ and 14).

Once again in this section the contrast between Sylheti speakers and Bengali speakers cannot be made; the pre-coding of the questionnaire pooled the two varieties, a decision which seems in

retrospect to have been misleading. However, the contrast of borough of residence does, as we have shown above in Chapter 4, broadly reflect the sociolinguistic contrast. In the data presented now the focus will be on workers in the clothing Industry, who, with only one exception, were Tower Hamlets residents and Sylheti speakers.

Out of 185 respondents in the total London ALUS sample 86 described themselves as in employment, either outside the home or in a family business on the premises. The remainder mostly described themselves as housewives, students or unemployed. From the brief job descriptions given, 48 of the working respondents can be classified as in the garment manufacturing industry. All but one of these clothing workers lived in Tower Hamlets. Nine workers were in catering and twenty-nine in other occupations and industries.

Only 20 of the 86 workers were in non-manual occupations; none of these was in the clothing trade, and the vast majority lived in Haringey. Of the remainder, 12 have been classified as skilled workers and 54 as semi-skilled or unskilled in accordance with our adaptation of OPCS categories. Only 7 of the 86 workers are female and only one of these women lived in Tower Hamlets. Female workers were mainly in non-manual occupations. The figures do not include homeworkers, who may in any case be substantially under-reported.

It is instructive to examine the correlation between particular occupations and the respondents' replies to questions about the language skills which were required for their work. Occupations where respondents said that literacy in English was needed included 'accountant, accounts clerk, architect, bank, civil servant, clerk and sales clerk', and almost all such cases involved Haringey residents. Jobs where spoken 'Bengali' was needed were of two types, those in the clothing trade such as 'cutter, presser, tailor, machinist and clothing factory owner' and those providing services to the 'Bengali-speaking community' such as 'bank, grocer, restaurant owner or worker, shopkeeper, travel agent, health education officer, community worker and teacher'. The occupations in which all the worker's colleagues can speak Bengali were 'presser (4), machinist (19), tailor (2), factory owner, waiter (2), restaurant owner, community worker and travel agent'.

Figures 13 and 14 summarise graphically the contrast between the social background and linguistic environment of workers in the clothing trade and those in other industries.

Figure 13. Social Background of Working Respondents

Shaded area represents clothing workers.

Number of workers
10   30   50   70   90

- Number of workers
- Female
- Tower Hamlets
- Haringey
- **Non Manual**
- **Skilled**
- **Semi or unskilled**
- 12+ years school
- Overseas Urban upbringing
- Self Employed
- **Some Training**
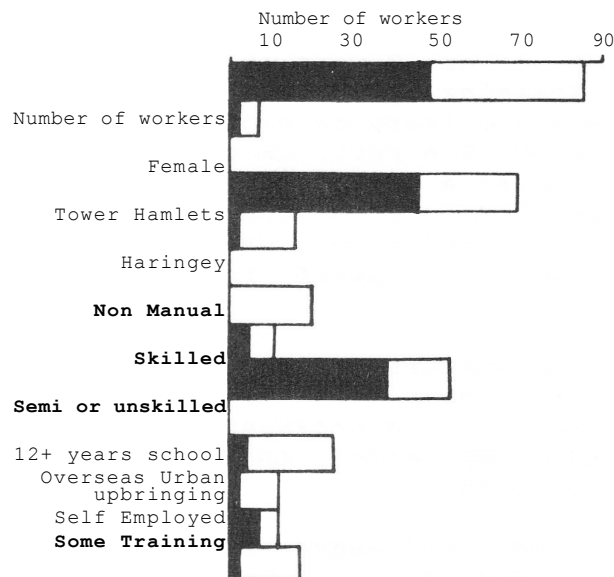
Figure 14: Linguistic background of working respondents.

Shaded area represents clothing workers.

Number of workers
10   30   50   70   90

Number of workers
10   30   50   70

- **All mates speak 'Bengali'**
- Bose speaks 'Bengali'
- Full Bengali Literacy
- Full English Oral
- Full English Literacy
- Speaking Bengali essential
- **Speaking Bengali helps**

Reading English **essential**

Reading English helps
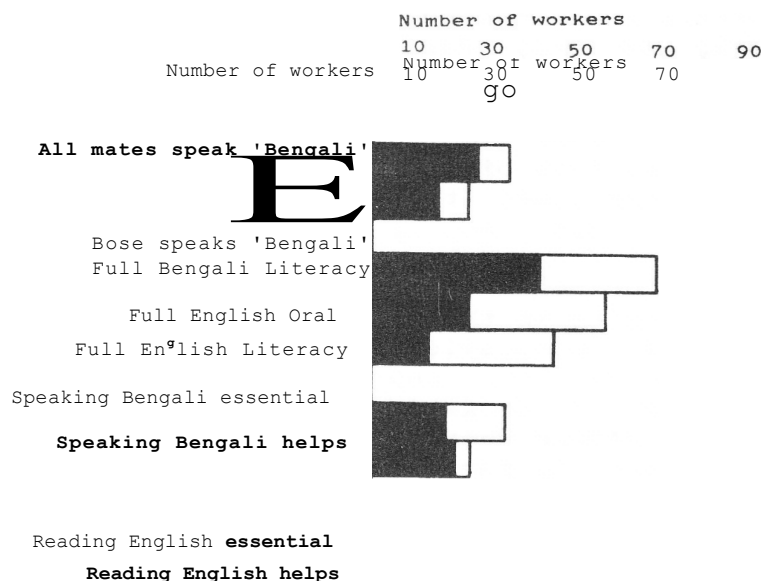
Of the 48 workers in the clothing trade only one was female. 24 of them reported a high level of English Oral skills (i.e. they said they could understand and speak English 'very or fairly well') and $_{15}$ a correspondingly high level of English literacy skills. The other *33* said they had little or no literac^y skills in English, but 38 out of the 48 had high Bengali literacy skills. In contrast *33* out of *38* workers in other jobs reported a high level of English oral skills.

Of the *48* clothing trade workers 7 were self-employed. Only 2 of the *48* had received any training other than experience gained on the Job. 6 were in some supervisor^y or employing position. *33* of the 48 worked a *40* hour week. The rest, except for 2 part-timers, worked between *44* and 67 hours a week. There was a wide variation in the number of colleagues, from 1 to 200. However, 45 of the 48 mentioned 3 workmates in the detailed questions in the grid, indicating that there were at least four people in their workshop.

18 of the *48* clothing trade workers said it was essential to speak Bengali at work, and a further 21 said that it helped to do so. However only one said it was necessary to read Bengali. On the other hand only 9 said they needed, and 10 that it helped, to be able to read English at work.

25 of the 48 said all of their colleagues could speak Bengali, a further $_{13}$ that most could, *6* that some could and only *4* that none could. Out of the $_{38}$ workers outside the trade in contrast, only *8* said all colleagues could speak Bengali, and 14 said that none could do so. Of the clothing trade workers only 4 reported some use of English with the three workmates they had listed in the grid while only *6* recorded no use of Bengali. Of the *23* clothing trade workers who mentioned a foreman or su^{p}ervisor 15 said they spoke mostly or only English to him/her (no real language choice was involved in most cases). However, of 41 who mentioned a boss 16 spoke to the boss in only or mostly Bengali, while 22 spoke to the boss in only or mostly English. This probably reflects the fact that bigger firms which have foremen and supervisors are more likely to be English-owned, while the smaller sub-contractors are mainly Bangladeshi-owned and -staffed.

Of the 29 respondents working in the clothing trade who mentioned children in Section D of the questionnaire, 25 said the children used only Bengali with each other, and 100% said the parents spoke to children only in Bengali. The 9 families of worker respondents in the whole *sample where some* English Is used by the children, or to the children by parents, are all either skilled or non-manual workers.

A more sophisticated statistical analysis would be difficult and dubious because of the small numbers involved, and because type of work is so strongly correlated with borough of residence.

However, some Partial Correlations and Analyses of Variance were run on the data and tended to show that language use, not only in the workplace, but also between the workers' children is correlated strongly to the proportion of Bengali speakers in the respondent's workplace. These relationships seem to hold even when controlling for borough, level of English skill reported, length of schooling and social class, although of course these control variables are inter-related.

A factor analysis for all the working respondents on a group of key variables suggests that the following variables are strongly related: high proportion of Bengali-speaking colleagues, low use of English at work, high use of Bengali at work, borough, and high use of Bengali between children. A second factor groups together as strongly correlated variables, English oral skills, English literacy skills. Bengali literacy skills and length of schooling. The third factor groups social class with level of professional training and borough of residence.

Although we are not Justified in making causal inferences from the ALUS data,   the overall picture is very clear. The Bengali-speaking respondents in Haringey are somewhat more privileged in terms of housing, formal education, socio-economic status and employment than the respondents living in Tower Hamlets. In terms of language use it appears that the East London respondents are using the mother tongue more than the North London ones, both in the home and at work. This most probably results from the denser, more multiplex, minority language networks (Milroy, 1980) that are possible in Tower Hamlets. Because a predominantly 'ethnic' sector of the local economy has developed, in this case the clothing trade, it is much more likely that an individual living and working locally, will interact in multiple role relationships (.e.g. kinsman, neighbour, workmate, brother in Islam) with a small number of people all of whom will speak Sylheti. In contrast respondents from Haringey, who are less densely residentially concentrated, and who work in linguistically mixed settings, where English is the lingua franca, are likely to have a wider range of contacts, each of whom interacts in a single role. The different patterns of interaction are clearly reflected in different patterns of language use, and it will not be surprising if   language maintenance is more successful in Tower Hamlets than in Haringey.

c) History and Structure of the East End Clothing Industry

Before going on to describe the case study which investigated language in the clothing trade, it is helpful to give a brief outline of the structure of this local industry as described in several recent reports. London, and in particular the North East inner areas of the metropolis, have been the centre of the British garment manufacturing trade for over a hundred years. From the beginning of this century there has been a high level of involvement on the part of ethnic minorities; first of all by

Jewish people, and more recently by the populations of Cypriot and South Asian origin. Tower Hamlets has concentrated on the production of women's dresses and outerwear, and more recently on leather garments. This has tended to introduce a seasonal cycle into production patterns, with peaks in the spring and autumn as new styles are needed in the shops, and slack periods and layoffs at other times (Duffy; 1979).

Relocation of the industry outside London, and the migration of capital to more competitive (i.e. exploitative) labour markets overseas, has meant that, nationally and locally, the number of people employed in the trade has declined in the last fifty years. In 1938 it *was* estimated that there were 34,000 clothing workers in Tower Hamlets; by the mid-1970s the figure was no more than 8,000, and the recession of the early 1980s has no doubt reduced the figure still further. However, there is some evidence that the garment trade is far from dead, and that there are opportunities for expansion in certain sectors. Despite the appallingly high local level of unemployment (about one in four of the labour force), there is a continuing complaint from employers that skilled labour is not available in sufficient quantities.   (Brierly, 1983). Of course it is possible to interpret such complaints in terms of the employers' unwillingness to pay the true value of labour, let alone to invest in training their workers. Wage levels have been **notoriously low; in** 1979 men's hourly earnings were slightly less than £2 per hour (82% of the national average for manufacturing industries). and women's £1.40 per hour (86%).(Birnbaum et al., 1981).

The structure of the clothing industry in East London does nothing to improve the conditions of workers. There are some large manufacturers who undertake the production process through all its stages from designing to distribution. However, the majority of workers have always been employed in small firms, and a large proportion of the work is contracted out to such firms, to 'self-employed' outworkers, or to individual (usually female) homeworkers. The stages of production are thus undertaken by different people, resulting in deskilling of workers. The decentralisation of production means that trade unions are almost impossible to organise.

Furthermore, the use of outworkers and homeworkers considerably reduces overheads for the manufacturer, who does not *have to* find rent, heat and light for premises, or to comply with official regulations about tax, national insurance or health and safety. Sub-contractors and self-emplo**yed** workers usually have to buy or rent their sewing machines, and are responsible for their maintenance. Piecework is still a common method of payment, allowing greater flexibility of production but heightening insecurity for the workers. Even where a worker or group of

6) RESEARCH VALUES AND METHODS (1984)

a) Fundamental Values in Research

Given the social, economic and political situation of Sylheti-speaking workers in Tower Hamlets described so far, it will have become clear to the reader that it is difficult, if not impossible, to undertake conventional sociolinguistic survey research in such a setting. A non-Sylheti speaking outsider, who is obviously 'white', and who represents a powerful establishment institution such as the University of London, will inevitably meet problems of communication and be faced with quite justifiable suspicion as to motives. The track record of previous research projects in the inner city and race relations field (Downing, 1980) means that any new project is likely to be perceived by many local people as compounding their oppression, rather than offering hope of change.

There is, however, a more fundamental challenge presented by the people of areas like Tower Hamlets to the conventional paradigms of social research, which goes far beyond questions of public relations and maximising the effectiveness of fieldwork strategies. The nature of the political and socioeconomic conflicts in the area mean that research cannot remain 'objective', 'detached' and 'value free'. Reflecting on, and writing about the people of the area inevitably involves taking a position in some of the conflicts which are taking place. An attempt to remain neutral, or keeping silent on important issues, merely reflects implicit acceptance of the status quo and therefore siding with the powerful. In fact, unless the researcher involved actually held the values of the oppressive establishment, or was extremely naive, such an approach would be deceitful, and might be seen to be deceitful to everyone concerned.

It is better for reasons of academic integrity, as well as in the interests of good relationships in the field, to examine and declare one's presuppositions at the outset. For it is these values which control, or at least should control, the choice of topic, the design, methodology, analysis and dissemination of the findings of any piece of research. Undoubtedly many of the writer's personal moral and political values have already become evident. However, this seems a more appropriate time to make them more explicit, rather than at the beginning of this paper , since it was at the point of entry to the field work of the case study in 1984 that I was faced with the opportunity for a radical reassessment of my academic values and previous research practice. This opportunity arose from contacts with a few Sylheti-speaking people living in Tower Hamlets, through listening to their experiences, and to their powerfully articulated criticisms of previous research projects, including the Linguistic Minorities Project of which I had been part. In

the following paragraphs I attempt to describe and reflect upon
the content of these discussions, to discuss the values,
strategies and constraints of LMP's ALUS work, and to share what
I **have** discovered about my   personal   values,   and   their
implications for the case study and for future work.

My experience with the Linguistic Minorities Project had laid the
foundation for exploring these issues. LMP was a collective
undertaking on the part of six researchers of differing academic
and professional backgrounds and personal ideologies. At a very
early stage in our work together we came   to a shared
understanding that social science could never be totally
value-free. We discovered that we held many social and political
values in common and that these would explicitly guide the
methodology, analysis and presentation of our research. Our
attempt to make explicit some of our values was quite unusual for
government sponsored, university-based research projects in the
UK in the early 1980s, and indeed was seen by at least some of
our academic colleagues as rather 'too political'.

We were all able to agree on a series of principles specifically
applied to our field of interest, which we stated in many of our
publications. These were :-

> 1) that bilingualism is a positive resource for
> individuals and for society as a whole: thus we were
> seeking to change the monolingual perspective which is
> inherent in the dominant and racist institutions and
> language policies in England.
>
> 2) that language rights of speakers of languages other
> than English are important, and that in consequence
> there is a need for radical changes in the fields of
> multicultural and anti-racist education.
>
> 3) that the members of linguistic minorities were not
> to be simply objects of our research, but would be
> involved in the research process and would be one of
> the main audiences for our findings.

Four years later I still find these principles acceptable, yet,
in view of my recent work in Tower Hamlets, not strong enough. My
own fundamental values underlying research *cannot* be separated
from who I am as a person. I need *to* reiterate that my own stance
is that of a Christian who takes the Bible seriously as the basis
for thought and action. Furthermore, I have lived, worked and
been involved in community action, in inner city neighbourhoods
of East London (although not in Tower Hamlets) for nearly ten
years, and in the process have developed a more radically
critical stance towards British society and a commitment to work
for its transformation. At the end of the paper I present a short
theological apologia to explain how I have arrived at this point.

It is placed separately so as not to bore, alienate or exclude readers who do not share my faith perspective, but who, from a different value position, may broadly agree with the practical outworkings of my presuppositions. However, it has to be pointed out that there were occasions during the fieldwork for the case study where it was appropriate, and indeed necessary to **engage** in such detailed theological discussions with Sylheti-speaking Muslims who were taking part in the project.

From this base I want to offer the following observations on social research, and reflections on the work of LMP.

    I) All people as individuals, and in the setting of their community are infinitely valuable in the totality of their physical, mental, spiritual and social being. Those who suffer the most social and economic injustice and who are robbed of their human dignity to the greatest extent, should have the highest priority in all our social involvement as researchers, and as people. It therefore follows that people in the local community should be involved, as active participants, in defining the terms of the research, in a monitoring and feedback role and as the prime audience for the findings (not Just used as respondents and interviewers).

In LMP thinking along these lines led us to develop community based collaborative research strategies, particularly for the ALUS and MTTD surveys along lines suggested by De Lange and Kosmin (1979) and by Wallman et al. (1980). This was a result of our shared basic value position, which sought to involve bilingual people centrally in the surveys and to affirm their linguistic skills. One of our hopes had been to help legitimise the use of languages other than English in public spheres, and the fact that questionnaires, interviewing and publicity for the surveys were mainly in these languages was a step in this direction. Thus our collaborative, bilingual strategy was devised not simply in order to increase the 'technical' success of the research in terms of response rate etc., although it certainly helped in that respect.

It was also on the basis of such principles that the LMP team worked hard to establish the associated Language Information Network Co-ordination (LINC) project, in order to engage in a strategy of active dissemination of our findings. Within this strategy one of the most important audiences for the research was defined as the members of linguistic minorities, particularly those people who had been involved as respondents, interviewers and collaborators in the surveys, and those who were actively involved in the voluntary provision of mother tongue teaching. To a limited extent at least, LINC was able to make available findings to people who were certainly interested, and had a right to the information, but who might easily have been denied access to it in a conventional research programme.

  However, I am now convinced that what LMP and LINC tried to do

was only a small step forward, and that our 'good intentions' were often defeated because as a team we faced many conflicting demands, and had not the time or incentive to develop a detailed political analysis, and act upon it. I have come to believe that our solidarity with people in their conflicts with the forces of domination, should have been our over-riding priorit^y, even if necessary at the expense of some of our research goals. This leads on to my second observation, which takes the form of a value judgment about traditional patterns of 'research'.

    ii) Because every society is less than perfect, full of conflicts and vested interests, and because control of information ^{g}ives power, research can be, and is used by the powerful to exercise and legitimise social control and to keep people and communities powerless. Social policy oriented research originated by the articulate and powerful in society, often by *the* state, is carried out upon the powerless among whom the 'problem' is perceived to lie. As a consequence they tend to be either stereotyped as 'beyond help', blamed for their own misfortunes, or subjected to experimental remedies which may ease the pain and help to preserve the public peace, but which do not get to the root of the 'problem', which is often the visible symptom of unjust social, political and economic structures. This approach to research is not ethically or politically acceptable, and should be resisted by researchers wherever possible.

In such state-sponsored research, because of the internal d^{y}namics of technocratic institutions and the frailty of human nature, even when the intentions of the sponsors of the research, and of the researchers themselves, is liberal and 'benevolent', there is an inevitable tendency for truth and justice to become secondary concerns. People and institutions involved in research have their own vested interests and presuppositions, which are rarely if ever acknowledged, but which often distort the research process. Political pressures on researchers, such as the need to 'deliver the goods' to the policy-makers, and the need to obtain subsequent funding, undoubtedly play a part. There are also more subtle legitimizing processes which control the production and distribution of knowledge and which lead to a relatively unthinking acceptance of the terminology and categories of dominant ideology.

One of the mechanisms of control of information is the professionalisation of the research industry. Techniques become more and more impenetrable to the non-specialist, reports are written in Jargon which inner city residents, for example, cannot understand, which are made available only through library services they don't know how to use. Decisions based on research are taken by public servants who have minimal accountability to powerless minorities. Conversation with almost any inner city person about planning research and policy will soon reveal

designed, educationalists do not have to send their own children to inner city schools.

Language planning in many parts of the world (Kennedy, 1984) has similar inbuilt processes of domination. Governments employ linguists and sociolinguists to conduct research on minority languages, educational policy and national development. Often the powerful elites are concerned about problems of national cohesion, technical problems of modernisation and language standardisation. The hidden agenda is often about control of information and ideas as a method of preserving and strengthening existing power relations.

While none of the researchers involved in the LMP team would knowingly participate in work of such a nature, there remains the uncomfortable question of whether the Government initiative which led to the establishment of LMP fits such an analysis. In fact all of us became involved in the hope that the research might eventually lead to substantial and worthwhile reforms in minority rights and language policy in England. Furthermore, we all became involved 'beyond the call of duty' in public advocacy for such reforms. Nonetheless, there was often frustration because of the lack of enthusiasm showed by the policy makers, and at times by the resistance to change. Moreover, we sometimes suspected that the existence of a research project on minority languages was merely a convenient 'fig leaf' to cover inaction on the issue, a useful stalling procedure until the political pressures brought on by the mother tongue debate had lessened.

Even without invoking a conspiracy theory, the structural factors weighing down any state-sponsored research appear, to me at least, to be overwhelming. I find it increasingly hard to believe that conventional methods and structures of research can make more than a marginal impact upon social and educational policy, let alone produce the radical transformation of society which is needed if Justice is to be established. However, there are alternative patterns available, and to these I now turn.

III) Research can and should be used as a weapon in the struggle against injustice. It is a moral imperative on researchers, to orientate their work towards this end. If research is about the production and control of knowledge. it follows that putting knowledge into the hands of the previously powerless can help them in their struggles. In the case of a 'liberal democratic' state, it may perhaps be possible to make some progress by persuading the powerful on the basis of research findings, backed up by political pressure, to modify policy in a more Just direction. However, structural and political factors minimise the gains, as outlined above. In many states this reformist approach

It is necessary therefore, to examine alternative approaches to research, which offer more hope for the those who are denied Justice. There is a growing literature emanating mainly from situations in the countries of the South, on the Participatory Research Approach (PRA), and the role of research in the process of social transformation and resistance to oppression. The intellectual roots of this approach are diverse, but are found most notably in the adult education work of Paolo Freire (1970a & b) developed in Latin America. Hall, Gillette & Tandon (1981) give several case studies of the PRA in action, and Kassam & Mustafa (1982) discuss epistemology and praxis. For me, the discovery of this literature came too late in the day to have any major impact on the development of the case study. However, it should already be clear that my thinking was beginning to move in parallel directions.

Generally the PRA has been implemented either within   the framework of a historical materialist or of a pragmatist philosoph^y, although other frameworks are possible. Christian presuppositions could provide one possible alternative. Already Christian activists have taken up some of Freire's themes, for example, in the methodology of Biblical reflection, and the historical materialist analysis, found in the different forms of liberation theology. In the circle of Christian sociologists with which I am most familiar, an attempt is being made to articulate a distinctive Christian perspective on sociology, which, while not rejecting the truthful insights arising from other viewpoints, including Marxism, seeks to integrate theory, method and social action within the set of values derived from Biblical ethics (Lyon [1983], Holman [1978]). Within such a   Christian perspective there is every possibility for the use and development of the PRA, often in alliance with researchers and activists of other persuasions, and yet with a distinctive Christian emphasis. New trends in Islamic sociology, based on religious concern   for absolute ethical standards, social Justice, and the notion of human beings holding material possessions as 'viceregents of God' (Rahman, 1981), might well develop on similar lines.

One of the themes originating in Freire's work and appearing in much of the PRA literature is 'conscientisation'. We became aware in the course of LMP research that asking the right questions can be a consciousness-raising experience for the respondents. Some of our interviewers and respondents felt a distinct sense of personal liberation through their participation in LMP research. This raising of awareness is only a first step in enabling people to resist oppression and work for the transformation of their situation. To fight for their cause, organisation and information is essential. The LINC project with its strategy of active

their demands more clearly, in negotiation with local education and other services.

Of course this does not **solve ever**^y problem, for even when people who are denied power over their own lives develo^p a clear understandin^g of their situation, the fact of conflicting interests remain. Movements ^{for a m}o^re Just societ^y from the Peasants' Revolt in medieval England to El Salvador in the 1980s have involved struggle and conflict. For researchers, taking sides in particular struggles for Justice and social transformation raises the question of how best to use technical skills in solidarity with powerless people in their particular struggle. There is also the question of ends and means; should lies ever be used to support truth, unjust tactics to bring about justice, violence to establish peace? As Freire has pointed out, any revolution which merely changes one set of oppressors for another, has by definition already failed.

iv) Against the background of these ideals and principles I have become progressively more aware of the limitations of our tentative steps in LMP. Strong institutional constraints, and our structural position as university researchers, prevented us from going far enough in the right direction. We need therefore, to consider the issues with which research projects in the field of 'race relations' in Britain in the 1980s will inevitabl^y be confronted, and the radical question of whether such research is ever Justfied.
Both LMP and the follow-up CLE project have been the object of strong criticism from some members of 'black' linguistic minorities, because of the racism which they see represented in
our institution, and specifically because of the minimal participation of 'black' people as full-time researchers. We have been made quite painfull^y aware, of the fact that the LMP/CLE research team had only one member who is bilingual in one of the minority languages of England, and a European language to boot. Obviously the detailed understanding of the minority language situation might have been much stronger, and the politics of presenting the project in the field much easier, if more of the research team members had been 'black' bilinguals. The setting up of a 'white', mainly English native speaker, team with strong qualifications in sociolinguistics and research experience, could perhaps be seen as exhibiting racist assumptions in the interviewing panel. However, it is more likel^y that it reflects the deeply institutionalised racism of British society, mediated through the education s^ystem, which has effectively prevented most of the talented individuals of 'black' linguistic minorities from obtaining the academic qualifications and training which are required as a passport to such posts.

It would be nonsensical to blame any member of the research team for accepting a post which might possibly have been offered to someone from another background, or to blame the interviewing

panel who had to make Judgements according to established academic criteria. But it is legitimate to question the criteria, recruitment procedures and the institutional and wider social structures which made such appointments almost inevitable. To propose substantial changes would undoubtedly meet with resistance on the part of the professionalised hierarchies of the academic world.

At this point we must face up squarely to the fact that academics as a group (whether they come from minority or majority backgrounds) have vested interests, which tend to conflict with any values for justice and freedom that *we* may hold. Academic researchers have to make a living and are dependent for this on a limited number of institutional sources of finance. Although, in the UK at least, there is a fair amount of 'academic freedom', research topics and methods are not a matter of totally free *choice.* Projects are approved on the basis of negotiation involving senior academics and bureaucrats, and career prospects depend upon 'performance' and 'achievement' as Judged by colleagues in an increasingly competitive market.

However, academics are a Privileged and well-paid profession, under pressure to some extent at the moment because of cutbacks in university finance, but in comparison to most people, and to most members of linguistic minorities in particular, form a privileged elite. For example, the hierarchical valuations built into the salary structure of the university mean that a research officer, such as myself, can work a three day week (with totally flexible working hours, and minimal supervision), and take home as much as a university secretary working five full days, or a university porter working 80 hours overtime a month.

Traditionally the academic world has been not only hierarchical, but also individualistic in its distribution of status and rewards. When as LMP we struggled to establish the principle of collective responsibility for research and writing we became aware that our individual reputations and careers might be adversely affected. And although some of us informally discussed the possibility of a totally non-hierarchical team, where salaries would be distributed on an egalitarian basis, we knew that the inertia of the University system would rapidly be mobilised against the merest suggestion of such a departure.

Of course the internal inequities of university life pale into insignificance when set against the Tower Hamlets situation. For when the relatively fortunate among Sylheti-speakers in East London are working 60 hours each week in order to earn a living wage, there is racial injustice on an immense scale. The two worlds interface at the point of recruiting and paying assistants, collaborators and interviewers for a research project. When it becomes known that a research project with a

between the generous salaries paid to research officers, and the fees and expenses offered to assistants in the field places a strain on working relationships. And *if* we pay highly skilled bilingual interviewers a mere £4 an hour (in 1984) and give them nothing more than an honourable mention in the final paper, we **are betraying** our tacit acceptance of hierarchical university values. Yet to pay even that much can be seen as 'buying' people who are willing to 'sell out', or even as a patronising form of charity. Many inner city people believe that too many researchers have made their reputation and 'fortunes' on the backs of the poor. It is scarcely surprising that university-based researchers are not much loved by the working class members of linguistic and ethnic minorities.

What is needed in the long term for the healthy development of social and sociolinguistic research, and for the sake of a more just society is a totally new structure, not merely a new style, of participatory research. This is not the place to set forth a detailed programme for more democratic research, but some things are obvious. A new structure of research would involve specialist researchers and local people working in partnership, recognising the distinct but complementary gifts of each, with equitable sharing of funds, from a fulltime base within a local community. It would involve complete solidarity with the people, on the part of the academics, leading to active struggle and suffering with them.

There are at least two problems. The first is finding academics (inside or outside such communities) who are willing to make such a personal, political and financial commitment to the powerless, at the risk of their academic reputation and financial security. For in consequence of taking such a commitment, one logical option to be considered is that of resigning from one's present post in the university. The second problem is finding resources for research and action. Traditional funding bodies, even when they contain members of the academic community who are sympathetic to such research, to the extent of being willing to risk some of their own vested interests, are likely to meet resistance to such plans from the guardians of the status quo. The political reaction on the part of the powerful, to proposals which they might see as 'subversive', could well result in a further cutback in the total funding assigned to social research.

The vision of research and politics outlined above is clearly utopian. At first the vision presents only the logical possibility of completely rejecting all forms of applied social research either for exclusively political action, or for the life of the cloister. Both lifestyles seem equally unacceptable ways of avoiding the dilemma. Yet from a faith perspective on life, as well as from other perspectives, a radical critique guided by utopian visions, alongside action in the present world, is not excluded. It is possible to hold forth the absolute ideal and at the same time to take substantial, if limited, provisional, imperfect steps towards it.

Indeed, I have shown how, starting from a broader-based value position, and within strong institutional and political constraints, the work of LMP involved some very preliminary steps towards participatory and liberating research with bilingual people. The learning experiences resulting from it, and the reflection on personal values summarised **above, provide the basis** for understanding the developing presuppositions and strategies of the 1984 case study with Sylheti-speaking workers. In the following sections therefore, I move on to a description and critical evaluation of the case study itself, and of my faltering steps to carry out a more ethically acceptable form of research.

b) The Case Study Research Process

i) Origins

The idea of setting up a case study to look at the patterns of language use among workers of Bangladeshi origin in the clothing industry originated in discussions within the LMP team about the influence of the 'ethnic economy' on language maintenance. It was further stimulated by our contacts in Tower Hamlets, and by examining ALUS questionnaires completed in the autumn of 1981. Before these could be analysed statistically, we found we were devoting much of our time and energy to writing a research proposal which would allow us to follow up the LMP work. The system of short term contract research means researchers have to write up new proposals whilst still fully involved in existing projects, and without having the time or evidence needed to explore the full im^{p}lications of the proposed work. There is certainly little or no time in such a procedure even to begin the discussions with people in the field which are an essential prerequisite to relevant and effective research. So, although the original idea arose from genuine academic interest in the area, and could be justified on applied grounds, it is fair to say that the decision to carry out the case study was the result of participation in the process of research funding which of necessity has to be played according to rules not of one's own devising, and in which the consequences   include   research salaries.

The first version of the proposal which was submitted by the LMP team included draft outlines of a dozen possible studies, and indicated ways in which some of the emphases of the participatory approach, such as the recruitment and training of bilingual researchers might have been developed. In the process of negotiation with the SSRC/ESRC, by which the eventual CLE project on a much smaller scale was established, the case study on

or

In consequence, when CLE began to operate, the preliminary work for the case stud^y had been done from the safety of a university office, was expressed in academic terms, and no consultation had taken place with educational agencies or members of the community in Tower Hamlets as to whether such research was necessary, feasible or desirable. Thus, like many researchers before us, we were committed to a case stud^y without having examined in detail whether it could be put into practice with the time and resources we had been given. In this context it was inevitable that the focus and strate^{gy} of the proposed case study would develop in ways which had not been envisaged in the proposal.

By the time that CLE was under way in the summer of 1983, ALUS data was becoming available and the sociolingusitic implications of the distinction between Sylheti and Bengali (as discussed in the earlier parts of this paper) were becoming more evident. By the beginning of 1984 relevant background data from ALUS had been extracted, the content of the case stud^y had been revised, a preliminar^y draft of various survey instruments had been made and I was ready to re-establish community contacts. Once again it is important to stress that all of this work had been done from the comfort of a university office. Research now had to move from there into the field, as it were from the ivory tower to the coal face!

ii) Networking stage

January 1984 saw the beginning of the 'networking' stage for the case study. It soon became evident that one of the biggest problems at this stage was going to be shortage of time. The maximum amount of the researcher's time available for the case stud^y was one day per week, over a period of several months. The community contacting phase of the work really needed a seven days per week involvement, preferably by a Sylheti-speaking researcher, working in Spitalfields over an extended period. We were further embarrassed in renewing contact with those who had taken part in ALUS by our inability (again owing to time pressures) to deliver the findings of the 1981 survey in the locality in a form appropriate for the local people. Since 1981 the research climate locally had become more sensitive, as other research projects had been undertaken in the East End, while the housing, educational, political and economic conditions of Sylheti-speaking people had not significantly improved. Local people were feeling quite cynical about researchers who, as a whole, had failed to make much impact on the local scene. It was very difficult to establish credibility for a university-based project, even such a small one as this case study.

Choosing the best entr^y point for a community-based piece of research was a particularly difficult problem. In an area like Spitalfields a detailed knowledge of local community politics would have been a tremendous asset. Of course it must be admitted that such knowledge usually implies participation in community

politics, and some degree of identification with particular groupings which may alienate other potential contributors. Fearing the possibility of disastrous first steps, the first approaches for advice were therefore through 'white' professional contacts and networks in the educational field. Quite deliberately the first contacts were people who had known the local scene quite well, but had now moved on, and were therefore somewhat distanced in their perceptions. This approach can be challenged as betraying racist assumptions and going against all the values and principles outlined earlier, but at the time, and given the time constraints, it seemed the only feasible way to begin.

The second stage involved a number of visits to Tower Hamlets, to renew contact with people who had helped on the ALUS survey two years earlier, and to make new contacts. At this stage the aims were to share information about LMP and *CLE*, to discuss the aims for the case study, to seek help in recruiting interviewers, and to find out as much as possible about the local situation.

It became clear at an early stage that the key organisation to work with initially was the Tower Hamlets Training Forum (THTF). They are a local community-rooted organisation providing adult educational courses including language training. The Forum is involved mainly in skills training for the clothing industry, and is staffed by a team of teachers and instructors, most of whom are speakers of Sylheti. At the practical level the Forum offered us a geographical base, and access to many local networks in community work, in the clothing industry and in the field of education. However, since the Forum is another state-funded, and not uncontroversial organisation, it was important not to become too closely identified with its work.

Two stages now commenced in parallel.

iii) Recruiting and Training Interviewers.

Firstly it was necessary to recruit and train interviewers. In ALUS three years earlier we had found that the best approach was by word of mouth, through the local professional and community networks. For the case study I followed the same procedure and, significantly, it was through the contacts with the Training Forum that the persons appointed as interviewers emerged. The criteria for employing interviewers stressed the need for understanding of, and acceptability within, the local situation, an ability to create and *maintain* rapport with Sylheti speakers in the clothing industry, an ability to understand and explain the purpose of the research, and fluency in Sylheti and English. Given the fact that the vast majority of such workers in the clothing trade are men, we could only realistically choose male interviewers, unfortunately sexist as this is.

Finding potential interviewers who met these criteria was difficult and very time-consuming. My local contacts put me in

touch with several individuals who they believed to be suitable.
 However, almost all of them were already over-committed in other
directions and could not spare any more time. Applicants who did
not live locally, or who represented the Bengali-speaking elite
rather than Sylheti-speaking workers were deemed unsuitable. To
assist in the selection procedure, especiall^y with regard to
language skills, we found a consultant who was a Bangladeshi
community worker in another part of London.   Eventually we
appointed two interviewers who met the relevant   criteria and
embarked on the training process.

The preparation for interviewers was spread over several sessions
and a number of weeks. It consisted of a series of general
discussions of aim, content and translation of questions, and of
field procedures, together with opportunities to try putting some
of the questions of each other. A written guide to the survey
methodology and questionnaire was produced, and given to the
interviewers as a reference manual. The most important stage of
training was the practice interview, which the interviewers
conducted on a friend. Discussion of this in the debriefing
session enabled us to clarify many points of procedure and
interpretation.

iv) Questionnaire Design

Secondly it was necessary to devise, refine and finalise the
research instruments. In the original proposal for the case
study there were some explicit hypotheses about the influence of
the 'ethnic economy' on   mother   tongue   maintenance,   and
suggestions for a quasi-experimental research design, with
matched groups of respondents etc., to investigate, verify or
falsif^y them. It is interesting to reflect here how late in the
day the traditions of logical positivism and empiricism
maintained their hold over my approach to research. At the same
time as my understanding of the implications of value positions
for methodology were shifting, practical experience began to
make it obvious that such a research procedure would not be
possible, given the constraints on time and resources and the
pattern of life in the real world of Tower Hamlets. Instead it
was decided to move somewhat closer to an 'ethnography of
speaking' approach, using questionnaires about language use
backed   up   by observation of linguistic behaviour in the
workplace.

The questionnaire was to be based on the Language Skills,
Language Use in the Household, and Language Use in the Workplace
sections of ALUS in an attempt to gather basic background
information, together with a longer section of open-ended
questions exploring language experience and use in the workplace.
 This included specific questions about the role of language at
work, the training opportunities that respondents had or had not
received, and about their demands for improvements in the work
situation   and   for their children.   (See Questionnaire in

Appendix). The aim at this stage was to interview if possible all workers in two contrasting factories: one where only Sylheti speakers were emplo^{y}ed, the other where the labour force had a mixed language background, and then to arrange several structured observation sessions in the two factories.

The first draft of the questionnaire was shown to a number of people for comment. A workshop session on the questionnaire involving the interviewers, one of the workers from the Training Forum and others from the local Sylheti-speaking community was most useful in improving the instrument and looking at the presuppositions and assumptions behind the research. In particular we clarified the questions about Bengali and Sylheti, so that the names for the two varieties were used rigorously and the term 'your language' substituted where the distinction was un-necessary.   We   also   decided   to   add   a   number   of 'consciousness-raising   questions',   which   would   encourage respondents to think through with the interviewer some of the issues of linguistic suppression, racism and economic exploitation. For example they were to be asked specifically about the possibility of writing in Sylheti, and about the role of trade unions in the clothing trade.

A draft observation schedule was also produced at this stage, but eventually was abandoned, as time available for the case study began to run out.

        v) Setbacks

Originally the schedule had been to conduct interviews **in** April 1984, followed by observation in May and completion of the fieldwork by midsummer. In fact, it was not until the beginning of May that interviewers had been appointed and trained, and the questionnaire was ready. It was now that unforeseen difficulties really began.

Our first major task was to find factories where the interviewers could work. The research design entailed that we should select two contrasting workplaces, each one with about ten workers engaged in a similar production process, but with a different linguistic repertoire amongst the workers. The interviews need not take place in the workplace itself but the appointment with the interviewer had to be made there.

The first problem was in contacting workplaces, for even with my wide range of local contacts, it was difficult to identify factories which fitted the   criteria, and where we had any prospect of co-operation.   Furthermore, given the ethnic and linguistic background of the researcher,   such   preliminary contacts were of necessity delegated to the interviewers or bilingual staff of the THTF. Inevitably their perceptions of what was required and awareness of what would constitute the technical success of the case study could not be the same as that of the researcher who had designed the study.

Eventually a few factories were identified where we could hope for co-operation. although none of them ideally fitted the criteria that had been originally envisaged. One factory where interviews commenced had only five workers, (all Sylheti speakers) rather than the ten or twelve we had been looking for. And in this setting the interviewer, who already knew most of the workers, found it difficult to explain convincingly why all five of them should submit to a lengthy detailed interview about language. It was obvious that the workers had talked among themselves after the first interview had taken place, and quite reasonably decided that it was either a waste of time, or an intrusion of privacy. As a result it was impossible to complete more than two interviews at this workshop; the non-reponse rate was by conventional standards rather too high.

Other factories proved no easier. The result was that it was impossible to maintain the structure of the research design, and the interviews that were completed represent a relatively haphazard selection from a number of individuals working in different clothing factories.

Throughout the summer further delays beset the fieldwork. *We* failed to meet the original deadlines for completion of interviewing. This had been set at the end of May, because for a month in June it would be Ramadan when people who are fasting have more important duties than conducting or responding to surveys. As soon as the fast was over various people were involved in summer holidays. One of our interviewers dropped out before he had completed a substantial amount of work. The other. who was very committed, skilled and successful, found many pressures on his time. When he had taken on the job of interviewer he had been unemployed, but by the summer he had a full time youth work post demanding evening and weekend work, and involvement in summer holiday projects for local children. Obviously these committments should have a higher priority than academic research. I myself, as a part time research officer, found the organisation of my limited time in co-ordination with the interviewer particualrly problematic. Furthermore I *was* well aware of the impending end of the CLE project, which gave absolute deadlines for the completion and writing up of the work.

In the final analysis the case study was transformed beyond recognition from what it had set out to do. By the end of September we had completed nearly a dozen detailed interviews, and at that point it was decided to call a halt to fieldwork, in order to find time for writing and dissemination. The findings therefore are very limited by the usual standards of survey work, but are well worth presenting as they give some indication of the situation and feelings of some Bangladeshi workers in Tower Hamlets in 1984. When set in the context of the developing research process, with its emphasis on participation and authenticity, they provide a valuable insight into issues which would have been left untouched by the case study as originally proposed.

7) FINDINGS OF THE CASE STUDY

The findings to be presented here are based on only 10 completed interviews. However, these interviews consisted of a structured set of in-depth and open-ended questions, each interview taking at least two hours to complete, sometimes spread over two or three sessions. They were all given by male workers (aged between 19 and 35) in local clothing factories, who were known to the interviewer, who operated in a relaxed style in the medium of Sylheti. The interviews took place in a number of different settings, including respondents' homes and workplaces, as was most convenient to the parties concerned. Usually the interviewer had put in a lot of preparatory work in contacting the respondent, explaining the purpose of the study, and persuading him to take part, in one or more conversations before the questionnaire itself was introduced. The interviewer wrote down as the replies in as much detail as possible, usually in English, and met with me within a few days in order to discuss what he had discovered.

The respondents show a remarkable degree of uniformity in their perceptions of the socio-economic, political, linguistic and educational situation. Although it could be argued that a larger random sample would produce a much more varied picture, the present findings cannot be dismissed until such a large scale survey, with the same level of qualitative safeguards as built into this case study, has been carried out. The sceptical reader might also suspect that the interviewer subconsciously filtered the information to match his own perceptions and commitments. One argument to refute this is the type of interaction which took place in the debriefing sessions, in which the interviewer took great care to stress the differences between respondents, and to express his personal disagreement with some of the views expressed.

At the time of writing it has only been possible to feed the findings of the study back into the community for reflection in a fairly limited *way.* However, the interviewer and some of the key contacts have been given an opportunity to comment on earlier drafts of this paper, and in October 1984 I was given the opportunity to participate in a BENTH seminar on educational issues. On this occasion I talked to a large audience about the case study, its findings and implications, and in a group discussion situation was able to engage, alongside local Sylheti speakers, in a process of reflection on research and education. In addition, I have given an interview to the BENTH bulletin, in the hope that its publication in a forthcoming issue will stimulate discussion and encourage appropriate action. The findings presented below should be seen not as definitive results. but as pointers towards a better understanding of the true situation, which can be checked out, verified and if

necessary, modified by anyone who is willing to spend some time talking to Sylheti speakers who live in Tower Hamlets.

The four main areas of findings to be discussed are language (perceptions, skills and use), employment, work-related training and the education of children.

a) Language Use

Home Language and First Language

All of the ten respondents had learned Sylheti as their first language and used it most of the time. Nine of them said they had Used it in the last day or so, and the other one within the previous week. Sylheti was the only language used with other members of the household, except that a few respondents had children who sometimes used at least a little English when speaking to their parents. Eight of the ten also mentioned that they knew some Hindi, and indicated that they had used it quite recently. Eight of the ten also mentioned they knew some Bengali, but most indicated that they did not use it very often or very fluently in everyday conversation.

Awareness of Sylheti

With only two exceptions respondents described their awareness of the issue in the following terms. They had received their primary education in Bangladesh in the medium of Sylheti, although literacy teaching and secondary education had been in standard Bengali. Most were aware that Sylheti had been suppressed by government policy in Bangladesh. "Because the authorities didn't want it, even from the time of British rule ... , the Bangladesh government intentionally eliminated it.." and "the Ministry of Education never introduced it in school and college"..."Sylheti was suppressed to are typical comments.

About half of the respondents said they were aware Sylheti had a script and a claim to be a language in its own right. Several said they had heard about this from parents or relatives, one that he had heard about it in school and one said, "I didn't know anything about the Sylheti language before coming to the U.K., but now I've realised we have our own language."

Learning and Skills in English.

Half of the respondents indicated that they could understand and speak English at least fairly well, and half not very well, although only one of the ten said he needed to rely on a friend as an interpreter in such situations as going to hospital. Respondents were generally less confident about their ability in written English, although several said they often read papers such as the Daily Mail and the Daily Express. Obviously skills and confidence in English varied with the length of time spent in the UK and the proportion of education that had been received in

English in Britain. Most of the ten respondents had in fact come to live in the U.K. as school-children or teenagers, and had at least some years of schooling in London.

Literacy

Five of the ten respondents said they could both read and write Bengali 'very well' or 'fairly well', the others were less confident of their skills, especially in writing. Most mentioned that they sometimes read one of the Bengali language papers, but the questionnaire failed to pick out any other uses for Bengali literacy. There was generally no need for literacy in Bengali in the work setting, although literacy in English was often thought useful for basic tasks such as reading and marking tickets and labels on pieces of work.

Language Use in the Work Place

All except one of the ten respondents worked in small factories or workshops where all the other workers were Sylheti-speaking. In this setting there was generally no need for any other language to be used, although it was clear that a number of common words and technical words in the clothing trade were recognised to have origins in English. For most of the workers interviewed the only time an English conversation was required was when a driver came to collect or deliver work, or the 'governor' called to discuss details of a contract.

The one respondent who did not follow this pattern was a skilled presser, who was working in a medium size factory where only half his workmates were Sylheti speakers. The remainder of the workers were Turkish native speakers, and the employer was an English monolingual. As a result the lingua franca of the workplace was English.

b) Employment

Type of Work

Most of the respondents were semi-skilled machinists working for the most part on women's coats. Their work involved sewing together all the pieces from a bundle of cut pieces, including sleeves, flaps and pockets, a task which they completed between 10 and 20 times each day (depending on the pattern). Even the two respondents who described themselves as employers spent most of their time machining. We have already mentioned one respondent who was a skilled presser, and one more said he did both machining and pressing.

Hours and Pay

Almost all of the respondents said they normally worked about fifty hours a week. This is of course considerably longer than

the standard working week in most industries, **and is brought** about by the low rates of pay which force the workers to put in long hours to earn a living **wage.** The respondents were all very conscious that the pay for their work was unsatisfactory. No-one thought that they were paid a fair rate for the work they did, and almost all, when asked to talk about the bad things in their job situation, mentioned the low pa^y. Many said that the only good thing was that at least they had a Job to **go** to. Some said that they had received better pa^y in previous employment, and stressed that the clothing trade was in a very bad state at the moment. "Nowadays it's ver^y difficult to **get** the right wages", and "I'd like to change Jobs, because I'm not satisfied with this one, but wherever we go it will be the same problem for us .... we only want our right wages," were typical comments.

Insecurity

Insecurity of employment was also a marked feature of the respondents' experience of work. Many of them had had between 5 and 12 previous jobs in the clothing industry in the previous few years, and most reported at least short periods of unemployment, either between jobs or in the slack season each year. For example a 22-year old, who had been working in the clothing trade for five years said he had had five Jobs since leaving school, all in Tower Hamlets or Hackney, and that he had had several short periods of unemployment. Like most of the other respondents he said he had never been to the 'Unemployment Benefit Office' and had claimed no support from the state to help him through these periods without work. Further research would be necessary to establish the reasons for this failure to receive benefits which are available, but undoubtedly this pattern of work and unemployment can only heighten the sense of personal and financial insecurity felt by such workers.

Looking for a Job

There appeared to be two main *ways* of finding work: informal contacts through friends, and, much less commonly, looking for local newspaper advertisements. No-one had ever been to visit a job centre, most because they had never heard about the service or had not felt it necessary to **go.** As one man put it "I got my present job through the help of a friend, .. He is English... We don't **go** to Job centres because in our community we are very helpful to each other, by communication with each other we get to know the information (about Jobs)." Another respondent made specific criticisms of the job centres along these lines. "We never go there because they don't put up an^y clothing or labouring Job vacancies. You only find clerical, technical, computer, and office work... jobs which require a good education."

Self-Employment

Seven of the ten respondents were employed in small workshop

situations, and were paid an hourly rate, with tax and National Insurance deductions under the PAYE scheme. Two others were self-employed, in fact small employers in their own right, taking in contract work from manufacturers. Each had about four employees, but worked alongside their workers in the production process. Interestingly these two 'bosses' were just as aware of the issues of low pay, exploitation by larger firms and the need for an effective trade union presence as any of the employees. Businees life for them *was* clearly a struggle; "we suffer from **Black** times but I persevere... though I'd really like to change jobs" was one man's view. The other employer hoped " one day to have my own manufacturing company.. but it will take my whole lifetime to fulfill that ambition." The final respondent was part *of* an informal co-operative arrangement, whereby a group of young men had banded together to hire a room and their machines, again taking in contracts from larger firms, but all of them remaining self-employed and under a piece-work payment scheme.

Trade Unions

Not a single one of the ten respondents was a member of, or had any real contact with, the Trade Union movement. About half of the respondents had little or no idea of what a trade union was for, and in fact had to have the idea explained to them by the interviewer before they could make a response to the question. Those who showed any awareness in this area were clear that the Trade Union movement had little or no concern for unskilled working class people in Tower Hamlets. "They are for the better off and powerful groups of workers like the miners.. They don't want to know about us," was a typical response. One or two people said "It's the intellectuals and trade union leaders, who get the benefits from the unions, not the workers," or "Since 1970 the Trade Unions in the garment trade have been ruined by the intellectuals and politicians. Nobody has tried to organise unions in the factories since then, because once something is broken it's difficult to re-establish unless you work at it from the grass roots."

One respondent, one of the small self-employed employers, gave a more detailed analysis. "The local trade unionists get their instructions from the big trade unionists, those who are sitting on top. They never think of working class people. The Trade Union leaders are working with capitalist people.. how will they consider our problems? Because very few are working class background on top how can you think they will fight for us? I'll give you an example. I'm on friendly terms with (a local T.U. organiser). His father was once a cabinet minister. How can you imagine anyone with that background will work for working class people? If he had suffered the way we are suffering here today then he would be able to realize. This is the reason I believe that the way we are suffering today will perhaps continue for the rest of our lives."

c) Training

Informal Training by Experience

Almost all the respondents said they had acquired the not inconsiderable work skills that they possessed by learning them on the job. "I learned this job with the help of one of my friends, I used to **go** to his factory and learn it" is a very typical comment. One man described his progress as follows. "At the beginning I used to go to one of our countrymen's factory. I tried to control the machine, then I started by sewing a straight seam on a piece of cloth. After trying several days I became a plain machinist. Gradually I improved my standard and I became a second machinist. After working several years as a second machinist I became a top machinist."

Tower Hamlets Training Forum

Almost all of the ten respondents were aware of the existence of the Training Forum, and the fact that courses in skills for the garment trade were available for local men and women. However none of them had ever been on a course there, especially surprising since all were contacted on the network of an interviewer who had previously done part-time work at the Forum, and several of them did not appear to be aware that tuition was available through the medium of Sylheti as well as through English. The general impression was that such courses were of limited benefit. "How many THTF trainees actually get Jobs afterwards?" was one man's question. A number of respondents suggested variations on the following theme, "what's the point of learning sewing? The clothing trade is in a bad way at the moment and young people don't want to learn it. They think garment making is old fashioned as a Job and want something more technical."

Type of Training Suggested

The first improvement in skills training suggested by the respondents was a widespread feeling that skills for other industries than clothing were urgently required, and that courses in motor mechanics, TV and electronics repair and computer skills were necessary. A few respondents recognised that they themselves might find it difficult to go on such courses, but as one put it "what I'm interested in now is for our children." However, over half said they would at least consider going on such new courses, provided the practical difficulties were not too great. Finance was obviously important to them, no one felt they could afford to pay for tuition, or lose pay in order to do a course, and most were keen that grants should be available. Everyone felt the courses should be very local, within the El postal district if at all possible, and all the respondents thought that learning in their own language would be very helpful. In fact very few felt they could cope with a skills course taught only through the

medium of English.

d) Education

General View of Schools

The respondents as a whole made an overwhelming indictment of the local schools, and showed minimal confidence in their achievements. "Unless the education system is changed the future of our children is in danger" was typical of the general comments. "They are only wasting time at school, they are going year after year but learning nothing, they don't get basic education," said one respondent. Another commented "They don't *get* proper instruction, they are misguided." One respondent expressed a clear political analysis; "The British administrators are administering the system against the interests of labouring people... The government won't identify with our problems, they deceived the British people at the last general election with a manifesto written in such intellectual language that the people didn't understand, and now they are cutting everything, for example the GLC." A second respondent also believed that "the education institutions work against the interests of the working class."

Specific issues in education that worried some of the respondents were the closure of local schools, the fact that children were leaving school without adequate skills in English and maths, that they were   getting no qualifications, and there were few opportunities and little finance for further and higher education. The time children were spending in school was being frittered away to no purpose. There was also a high level of awareness that without proper education and skills training the young people leaving school would be in a hopeless position when they entered the labour market.

Aspirations for Children

Just like parents from almost every community throughout the world, the respondents who expressed a preference for the future careers of their children without exception mentioned jobs which implied upward social mobility. High status jobs like doctor and engineer, and commissioned officer in the army (it is not clear whether he meant the British or the Bangladeshi one) were naturally popular. Some of the respondents were very aware that such jobs depended on a good education, plus some element of talent and said that a technical or skilled manual job was their realistic hope for their children. Three respondents implied that education was valuable for its own sake, and that once their children had a good education they would be in a position to decide on a career for themselves. And one respondent wanted a good education for his children so that they could understand government policy and make a mark in the task of renewing society.

Language Education

English language skills were generally regarded as very important for successful functioning in education, work and in society generally, but there was a high level of dissatisfaction with the achievements of the schools in this field. "They only teach them shopping English" and "Our children still only speak broken English when they leave school.. as a result they can't get any job," was the gist of the remarks here.

There was also widespread support for the teaching of the mother tongue in schools. All the respondents were generally in favour of some provision being made. As one put it, "our language should be taught to children in day school. Although in an area heavily populated with Bangladeshis mother tongue classes have been set up (by the community workers), it is still not sufficient." In this respect the attitudes of the case study respondents reflect those of the larger ALUS sample (LMP 1983).

8) CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation for people of Bangladeshi background in Tower Hamlets as presented in this paper is a disturbing one, at least for anyone who possesses any concern for equity and Justice, whether that concern is based, for example, on liberalism, Marxism, Islam, or Christianity. There are numerous conflicts of interest which may be intractable. In some respects it seems that all the powerful forces, vested interests and institutions of society conspire to deny Justice in social, economic and status terms to the Sylheti speakers who live in the area. They appear to be marginalised and powerless, yet they are not merely the passive victims of a cruel world, but active agents for opposition and change. Indeed they are increasingly engaging in political and organisational activities intended to lead to a radical transformation of their situation. It is of particular interest and importance that much of this activity is focussed on educational and language issues.

An understanding of this particular sociolinguistic situation throws some light on the theoretical issues involved in the analysis of the processes of language shift and language maintenance. In the first place the existence of both vernacular and standard varieties, and their use in different contexts by members of the linguistic minority, make it clear that any model which merely accounts for two standard varieties is inadequate to explain the processes involved. The emergence of a Sylheti language rights movement highlights the need for a political analysis of the issue which recognises the inherent conflicts between different interests which are reflected in language politics. Once this macro-level analysis has been undertaken, there is an opportunity for further micro-level sociolinguistic research which would explore variation within language use, code switching and language choice, and the processes of language change in the context of language shift and maintenance. While the macro-level analysis would have more immediate implications and applications at the political and social structure levels, the more detailed linguistic work is essential for example, for the development of sound pedagogical methods.
 The data presented in this paper, which is almost entirely at the macro (sociology of language) level, already   suggests some factors such as ethnic and class conflict, and political mobilisation, which may play a part in the process of language maintenance, and which need to be incorporated into models of ethno-linguistic vitality (Giles et al 1977). There is plenty to suggest that class, and economic factors play a maJor role, alongside demographic factors, in that in Tower Hamlets, where large numbers of Sylheti speakers live close together and where economic forces tend to keep them within an 'ethnic' sector of the economy, opportunities for vernacular language use remain very frequent. The close, dense and multiplex network structures

which are the result of these economic forces act as a restraint on linguistic innovation. Historical factors are also important but not in any simple way. The early versions of the Giles et al theory (1977) suggested that 'ethnolinguistic groups' with a strong historical tradition and identity would have higher levels of vitality than those groups which had no such tradition. The Sylheti speakers of Tower Hamlets, who in the eyes of the dominant majority, and of the Bengali-speaking elite had no tradition, are currently remaking their own history and identity. As a result it is likely that, both statutory and voluntary sector institutional support for the vernacular language and culture will be   more strongly established, but for the foreseeable future at least, always in conflict with   the overwhelming institutional support for English and for Bengali.

The fight for the status of the Sylheti language, and for public appointments reserved for local Sylheti speakers is one plank in a wider struggle against racism and for Justice, in employment, housing and education. Sylheti speakers in Britain have begun to confront the forces by which they **are** exploited and oppressed, and demanding recognition on the part of wider society of their legitimate rights and aspirations. Quite reasonably, in view of their real contribution to the economy through production and taxation, and to British society in general, they will be satisfied with nothing less than fundamental changes to the system by which they have been, and continue to be, obstructed.

Of course alternative strategies are available to individual Sylheti speakers, including the search for personal economic and social mobility through business, or through obtaining a post in the public sector. Yet for the majority of Sylheti speakers such options are not open, given the processes of economic exploitation and the racism prevailing in society. Alternatively they could withdraw into their own community, seeking as far as possible to maintain a culture and value system diametrically opposed to that of mainstream society. However, the high level of political consciousness in the community suggests that it is unlikely that the Sylheti vernacular tradition will be content to remain a covert 'language of resistance.'

Political mobilisation based on ethnic group and class consciousness is likely to prove a more promising route by which conditions can be improved, and as far as one can tell from the experience and findings of the case study this is the strategy that is increasingly being developed. The more Sylheti speakers feel themselves to be a community under attack, the more likely is it that they will react by strongly asserting their identity and claiming their rights. In consequence, if there are not major concessions on the part of the local and national state, and a radical transformation of the social and educational situation, the medium term prospect is for an increase in frustration and anger, leading in all probability to a vicious circle of violence and repression in the area.

If such a gloomy prophecy is not to be fulfilled, radical action in favour of the Sylhetis and other powerless people in Tower Hamlets and similar areas, needs to be taken at once. To achieve such a change in a comprehensive way would call for a revolutionary transformation of societal structures, values and institutions, at the political, economic. social, personal and indeed spiritual level. Sadly, the evidence of history is that such a hope is a utopian dream, reserved for Paradise or the coming of the Kingdom! And an appreciation of the current political scene in Britain **suggests** that things are more likely to move in the opposite direction, as the rich get richer and the powerful become more powerful.

However, from a faith perspective it is not legitimate simply to despair. Moreover, it is appropriate to present the possibilities for transformation as an ethical imperative to be worked out (or reJected) at a political level. The situation in Tower Hamlets presents a moral challenge to the state, which has a duty to maintain justice and protect the weak, but has rather tended to protect the vested interests of the strong, and all this through the nature of the political system rather than through any individual tyrannical ruler. Employers in the clothing trade, inextricably bound up in the structures of capitalism, must face up to the fact that they have exploited their workers and got rich on the profits.

White society, particularly the more powerful elements within it has used and abused the Sylheti-speaking people from the days of Empire to the 1980s. Bangladeshi society with its hierarchical structure, and legac^y of colonialism, has denied a voice, a culture and basic human dignity to the people of Sylhet. It would of course be misguided to absolutise the rights of Sylheti-speakers or to suggest that if they were left to themselves oppression and injustice would come to an end. But on the whole the Sylhetis both in Bangladesh and in Britain, are more sinned against than sinning. Fortunately, there are still some *ways* whereby those who recognise their complicity in the structures of inJustice can begin to make appropriate restitution, and begin the work of transforming society, in solidarity with the oppressed.

In the interim however, there are, a number of specific and positive steps which the appropriate government services, even though the^y do not share the value perspective of the writer, could reasonably take to improve matters. In the following section specific recommendations in the fields of employment and training, mother tongue teaching, general education and research will be made.

It goes without sa^ying that programmes aimed at enabling local initiatives, by providing resources with few strings attached, will be much more acceptable and more likely to effect change, than large scale intervention by official bodies. The interventionist approach will tend to be seen as, (and may in

fact be) an attempt by the powerful 'them' to interfere with and control the lives of the powerless 'us'. The problem with the former strategy is in identifying which initiatives are genuine, broad-based and not simply the opportunity for certain articulate and well placed individuals to obtain a high status job for life. Perhaps the assumption that every project needs full-time professional staff for it to develop effectively should be subject to close scrutiny, on the part of both grass roots voluntary organisations and of funding agencies.

a) Employment & Training

i) The case study has made it very clear that Sylheti-speaking workers in the clothing industry are, and feel themselves to be, exploited by the capitalist system of production, and that they see little prospect of breaking out from it. It is not simply a question of workers against employers, since many of the small employers and self-employed workers are equally at the mercy of the pressures of the market and the whims of the large manufacturers. The trade union movement has manifestly failed to protect the interests of clothing workers, and workers of Bangladeshi origin in Tower Hamlets are scarcely even aware of its existence. At least one respondent **suggested** that there might be a useful role for a new grass roots co-operative union, including some of the small employers (sub-contractors) and self-employed, in fighting for a better bargaining position within the industry. Local community activists could consider whether it is worth devoting some of their time and resources to this end. However, they should bear in mind that it seems unlikely that official involvement on the part of the existing union and labour movement will be received with any degree of enthusiasm or confidence.

ii) Almost all the workers questioned feel there is no long term future for the local clothing trade and therefore that training within it, such as that provided by the Training Forum is of minimal long-term benefit. In any case most have learnt their skills on the Job, *by* long experience rather than by training courses. However, a demand has been articulated for training provision in more technical fields. Most respondents were favourable to the idea of training courses in such trades as motor maintenance and electronics, provided they were local, bilingual and free or grant-aided. It could well be appropriate for an organisation such as the Training Forum to branch out in these directions.

However, the widest participation by potential trainees, and careful planning, would be needed to ensure that appropriate courses were offered which suited the needs of the least advantaged, which actually succeeded in reaching the target population, and which eventually resulted in increased access to better opportunities in the local labour market. There would be no benefit whatever in ineffective training schemes which led

onl^y to dead end jobs in declining sectors of the local economy.

Training opportunities for people of Bangladeshi **origin in Tower** Hamlets in fact need to be seen in the context of potential redevelopment and industrial renewal in the East London Docklands as a whole.

iii) The huge gap between the agencies of the state and the people of Bangladeshi origin in Tower Hamlets is illustrated by the fact that none of our respondents had ever used a job centre, and most of them categorically denied they had ever claimed unemployment benefit, even during relatively lengthy periods of unemployment. This lack of confidence in the official welfare system is balanced by a strong informal support system within the community. Advocates of 'Victorian values' may well reJoice at this reliance on self-help. However, those who believe in a welfare state which deals equitably with all our citizens will be concerned that these services are failing in their duty to provide even a safety net for a large group of people. Action should be taken to identify and remove the institutionalised racism in the services of the Departments of Employment and Health and Social Security, which is evident here.

b) Mother Tongue Teaching

i) The Case Study findings have underlined those of PLUS, that there is a strong level of demand amongst parents for tuition in the mother tongue to be available in the mainstream school curriculum (see LMP $_{1983}$. **1985**). The resources which have recently become available are therefore welcome but more are needed if the task is to be properly tackled.

ii) The case study has highlighted an important issue about mother tongue tuition, that of 'which language should be taught?' This issue of competing varieties is by no means unique to Sylhetis in East London, as consideration of the Italian dialects case (Toss 1984), and the Mirpuri / Panjabi / Urdu case (LMP **1985**) makes clear. What is unique is that a 'language movement' to raise the status of Sylheti, to redefine it as a 'language' has emerged and that the long-suppressed ethnolinguistic identity of a people is being redefined in Tower Hamlets. This fact raises the question of the obJectives of, and values underlying 'mother-tongue teaching' **in** a particular **setting**. Language maintenance programmes and bilingual education can be supported by educational, psychological, cultural, and economic arguments. Let us look at each in turn.

The educational arguments in favour of language maintenance and mother tongue teaching centre on the idea that bilingualism is beneficial in general cognitive development, and language development in particular. There is a wide literature based on

various bilingual education programmes supporting this claim, at least where the social environment is supportive. (Cummins 1983). There is no evidence to suggest that a multilingual linguistic repertoire is any less helpful than a bilingual one, in fact there is some evidence that language learning skills are generalisable, and that when two languages have been mastered the third and subsequent languages are much more easily learned. In the present context there is therefore every reason to aim towards a fully developed and active trilingual repertoire in Sylheti, English and Bengali, for every child of Bangladeshi background in Tower Hamlets. Literacy in all three scripts should be encouraged, although it is hard to envisage that many pupils would use the Sylheti-Nagri script except for reading existing traditional literature, unless a whole new school of writers emerges in the near future.

There are of course problems in instituting such a programme, deriving from the fact that very few teachers (and possibly not all parents) are likely to be sympathetic to the teaching of Sylheti, or sophisticated in their sociolinguistic analysis
        Sylheti has wrongly been regarded as a 'mere dialect; with no written tradition, and prescriptive attitudes towards 'chaste' Bengali are so strong, Sylheti is likely to remain the poor relation unless a major change of attitudes can be effected. This would necessitate firstly a major programme of curriculum research and development, secondly provision for in-service training with a large component of sociolinguistics for practising mother tongue teachers, and thirdly the recruitment of new teachers from within the Sylheti-speaking community who are committed to the proposed policy, and not merely interested in 'bettering themselves'. The question of job descriptions, of criteria for such appointments, and the still more crucial one of who sits on the panels which make them, is a highly political one. But it is essential to get this right, for mistakes at this level will probably result in more harm than good to the children concerned.

The main developmental psychological argument in favour of a bilingual approach is focussed on the young child in school, and suggests that the transition from home to school is best handled in the language of the home, in which the child will feel less insecure. On the basis of this kind of argument 'transitional' programmes of bilingual education have been set up in various parts of the world. If such arguments are accepted for children of Bangladeshi background in Tower Hamlets, it is obvious that more Sylheti-speaking teachers in nursery and reception classes are needed, and that they should be allowed and indeed encouraged to use the oral informal variety of Sylheti which is spoken in the home.

A further psychological argument for language maintenance is that a child whose identity and culture is positively supported and valued by the school will have fewer problems over identity conflicts and self-image. The growing child will know who (s)he

is and will not be ashamed of it. A^{g}ain, if this argument is accepted, our analysis of the Sylheti-Bengali conflict in Bangladesh and Tower Hamlets suggests that Sylheti is the variety which should be affirmed as the vehicle of vernacular identity and culture.

The 'cultural' arguments in favour of language maintenance are those most often expressed by parents and community activists, and concern the need to keep alive, or at least keep in touch with the language and culture of the country of origin. It is often these feelings which lead to the establishment of minority institutions such as art and drama groups, religious groups and mother tongue schools, and to bilingual education on the lines of Ontario's Heritage Language Programmes (Cummins 1983). The problem for Sylheti speakers in this is that there are two competing traditions, the 'great tradition' of Bengal and the vernacular tradition of Sylhet. Although the latter has been submerged, it has not been completely eliminated and shows signs of re-emerging. Yet few people of Sylheti origin would want to deny their Bangladeshi national identity. It is probably desirable that both traditions should be supported in so far as they are compatible. The question for Sylheti speakers is how far is it possible to support and maintain the great Bengali tradition, when part of that tradition has been to expropriate and devalue the Sylheti vernacular tradition.

As a parallel, consider for a moment the imaginary possibility of a large group of Yorkshire migrants settled in a South American cit^y. Regularly they meet to sing rousing renditions of Ilkley Moor Bah tat. and to argue vehemently over Geoffrey Boycott and Yorkshire cricket. But when H.M. the Queen pays a state visit, they, with the whole expatriate community are out on the streets waving Union Jacks. Thus both regional and national cultures and identities are kept alive. The problem of ultimate loyalties would only arise if the British government were to undertake a military occupation of Yorkshire and a ruthless suppression of the Yorkshire vernacular.

The economic benefits of any mother tongue teaching, except in the case of a small number of major European or international languages, are relatively trivial given the national and international importance of English. Furthermore, there appear to be no explicitly recognised economic advantages in speaking Sylheti, other than easier communication within the informal minority networks in the local economy, and in the present context of local community politics for fluently bilingual individuals who are looking for posts in community development or mother tongue teaching. There may however, be some marginal advantages in the context of commercial and inter-governmental contact with India and Bangladesh for at least some people to maintain and develop their literacy skills in Bengali. Yet, given the dominance of English, a lack of skills in Bengali will hardly lead to a total breakdown of communication.

There are then a series of strong arguments in favour of responding in a positive wa^y to the demands of the Sylheti language movement. However, two words of caution are necessary. Firstly there is a need to undertake serious and detailed sociolinguistic and linguistic research into the questions of variation, code-switching and emerging varieties in the speech of Sylheti speakers living in London. This is necessary, before any language corpus planning can be undertaken in order to produce a normative variet^y of Sylheti, lest the form chosen should turn out to be a fossilised traditional variety which would be irrelevant to the needs of the 20th century. Walker (1984 p 179) gives some interesting examples of the failure of an educational programme on these grounds in the case of North Frisian. Secondly, any move to support Sylheti must be taken with a full awareness of parallel developments (or lack of them) in Bangladesh itself.

c) In general education

i) Mother Tongue teaching must be seen within the general context of schooling in society, and ma^y even be rejected if parents think a school system is not educating their children properly (Walker 1980). The case study has come across a massive distrust of the education system in Tower Hamlets, with parents being very concerned about the closure of schools, and the way that children are passing through the system without acquiring basic skills, let alone qualifications or the ability to enter the labour market at a reasonable level. Some teachers might argue that parents and pupils have 'unrealistically high aspirations', although to do so often betrays the acceptance of racist sterotypes. Other teachers complain that 'Asians' do not understand modern educational objectives and methods, but rarely question in any depth the values underl^{y}ing their own concept of education, and the basic structures of the school system, or the class structures which it serves to reproduce. Obviousl^y there is a mismatch of expectations because of different cultural understandings of schooling, but this only serves to underline the failure of, and the racism implicit in the education system. However, if the debate on the nature and structures of the education system is opened up by the articulation of demands from a bilingual people, that can be no bad thing.

There is a growing realisation on the part of ILEA that people of Bangladeshi origin are interested in education (BENTH bulletin Aug/Sept 1984), and there is the possibility of wide-ranging consultations with the 1000-strong membership of BENTH. This paper is not the place to discuss specific changes of educational policy. I merely underline that for successful and radical reforms to the educational system to take place, which will cater more Justly for the needs and aspirations of people such as those living in Tower Hamlets, it is essential that the issues of the philosophy and practice of education for a just societ^y are aired as widely as possible, with no holds barred, and with no

potential   reforms   ruled out as a priori unacceptable or impossible.

        d) In Research

i) We have already argued in Chapter 6 about the research values and methodologies which are necessary for sociolinguistic and social research alongside bilingual communities who are denied power. Here I reiterate the points that basic values should be made explicit, vested interests and professional shibboleths should be recognised and discarded, and that open collaboration with, and dissemination *of* the findings to, ordinary members of the participatingcommunities   should be required of all researchers in the field. The development of appropriate participatory strategies is a moral and political, as well as a professional challenge.

ii) It is important for funding bodies such as the ESRC to consider whether grants for future research into the sociology and sociolinguistics of ethnic minorities should continue to be awarded mainly on the criteria of academic reputation, and of the academic acceptability of the theoretical section of the research proposal. There is a strong case that more account should be taken of the proposal's acceptability and relevance in human terms to the people who are the focus of the research. These factors should have been assessed before the proposal was written, in a period of preliminary consultation at the grass roots. Of course there are implications here in terms of the recruitment and paper qualifications of staff, and the more equitable distribution of research finance to all assistants, consultants and collaborators.

Short term research contracts and a hierarchical salary structure may not be the most effective strategy to encourage the growth of participatory research. New types of research initiative may in fact lead to descriptions and explanations of society which are more enlightening, more acceptable, and more useful in problem-defining and problem-solving than the traditional pattern of research. Finally, all research proposals should be considered not merely in view of their contribution to our understanding of society, but to its transformation.

9) APOLOGIA : CHRISTIAN VALUES AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

In conclusion I have decided to present a brief account of my theological thinking, which underlies the values and applications of them to research that have been made explicit in the paper. I do this for several reasons. Firstly in my own mind I constantly try to integrate all my thinking and action on the basis of my Christian faith. As a result I am not willing to be confined in any 'autonomous' academic discipline or tradition. Secondly these issues were not peripheral to the case study work in Tower Hamlets, but were fully and openly discussed with some of the participants, as we began to grapple with the political issues surrounding the research. Thirdly I am aware that some readers of this report will not be familiar with recent developments in Christian social thinking, especially the branches which have influenced me. The account I give is a mere summary, and is an example of 'doing theology' rather than a fixed 'systematic theology'.

Many Muslim readers, quite Justifiably, may be suspicious of Christians in view of the lamentable record of Christendom, with its Crusades, missionary imperialism and continued alliance with racism and capitalism. On the other hand Islam shares a theistic world view with Christianity. Marxists and others may also be critical, pointing out the undeniable fact that historically Christianity has been used ideologically, as a powerful instrument for supporting the privilege of the powerful and the power of the state. I *am* aware that the institutional church in Britain today largely continues that tradition. In reply I would argue that authentic Biblical faith leads in a totally different direction, and that the support of injustice, racism, sexism or economic exploitation by Christians is a fundamental 'heresy' from true Christian faith. In doing so I acknowledge that I probably share common concerns with a larger proportion of Marxists, than of Christians.

Sources

The main source of my value system is the Bible, which I take as the authoritative revelation of God. Of course my understanding of it is conditioned by my cultural background, by my conscience and by discussion with fellow Christians. In particular I have tried to listen to those who are challenging the status quo from the 'underside', to black Christians, to Christians from the 'two thirds world', and to a limited extent to those of other faiths. I am thankful that all truth is God's truth and while it is impossible for us mortals to apprehend absolute and total truth, I remain convinced that the search for truth is possible, and should be central to human life.

Many Christian writers have influenced my thinking on social issues. Broadly speaking I follow the philosophical

presuppositions outlined by such authors as Francis Schaeffer (1972) and the hermeneutical ones suggested by Wright (1984). Other key writers are Ellul (1964, 1970), Wallis (1976, 1981), Kirk (1980), Sheppard (1974, 1983), Lyon (1983), Paget-Wilkes (1981), Escobar (1985), Marshall (1984). Sider (1977), Sugden (1981), and Dowley (1983).

Several key doctrines underly my approach.

a) The Nature of God

Because the One Almighty God is perfect in truth, Justice and love the search for truth, Justice and love is one of the highest aspirations of human life. Because God is the only absolute, there are absolute ethical standards.

b) The Created Nature of Human Beings

Because all people are the creation of God human beings are relatively insignificant, yet because all are created in the divine image each one is immensely valuable, possessing intrinsic dignity, value, moral responsibility and creative potential. Furthermore all people are intrinsically equal before God. And because God created a world in which there was abundance of all good things, it was never part of the plan that there should be poverty.

c) The Fall

Because of human disobedience and rebellion against God, from the earliest time until now, human life falls short of the ideal in every aspect, and the world abounds with injustice, inequality, disharmony and alienation. Sin is present not only when individual people contravene divine standards, but also infects the structures of society, and the categories of human thought.
In contrast modern 'scientific civilisation' rests on the mistaken philosophical foundation of autonomous humanism, and the assumption that human beings can ultimately control and perfect their physical and social environment. The Christian is far more pessimistic about purely human efforts to build a better world, for the problem of corrupt human nature will remain in each new generation. On the other hand we have a 'certain hope', because God has already acted in Christ to bring about the redemption of sinners, and the healing of the world.

d) God's Justice in the Law and the Prophets

The Old Testament scriptures reveal the God who has a particular concern for the poor, the powerless and the oppressed. God is portrayed as the righteous judge of all the earth. No individual, society or institution can lightly flout the absolute ethical standards which come from God. Divine justice, simply because God abhors inJustice and oppression, is in human eyes 'biased to the

poor'. It was God who liberated the slaves from their captivity in Egypt. After the Exodus the Mosaic law was specifically designed so that such oppression could not arise in the new society they were building. Not only was there legislation for the relief of the 'widows, orphans and aliens', but there was radical equalisation of wealth envisaged, most explicitly in the law of the Jubilee. (Leviticus 25).

Judaism, Islam and Christianity have a tradition of prophets who use the plumb line of God's revealed law by which to measure society. Time and time again they thunder out against the twin sins of idolatry and oppression of the poor. There is an assumption in both Old and New Testaments that human beings have a moral and political responsibility to structure society in a way which challenges injustice and prevents or destroys poverty (Dt.15;4). We have to admit that no society, even those which have been explicitly based on a higher law, e.g. Israel under the Torah, Puritan New England, or Islamic states under Sharia law, has matched up to the ideal. Fortunately God is also merciful, and willing to forgive those who repent and sincerely seek to follow the revealed way. In this context all three religions put a high value on the intention of human beings as God alone sees within the human heart.

e) The Kingdom of God

The central theme of the New Testament, particularly of the Gospels, is the Kingdom of God, which has been inaugurated with the appearance of Jesus the Messiah. The Kingdom is first of all about the Rule of God upon earth as it already exists in heaven. The Kingdom is already bursting into the present age if only we submit to God's rule in our lives. There is an unresolved tension between what has arrived in the Messiah, and that which is still to come in all its fullness. While we look forward in faith to the redemption of the whole of creation (Romans 8;19-21), to the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21;1-4), we see this as the work of God, and not as a human political programme. In the meantime we expect to see individuals coming into the Kingdom by faith in Jesus, and through their action as salt and light, to see substantial healing in the fallen world.

Alongside this is the strong belief that God is already at work, beyond the limits of the believing community in this process of societal transformation. and that ultimately complete Justice will be done, and be seen to be done. It must be pointed out very clearly, that from a Kingdom perspective, this ultimate hope is not merely an opiate with which to lessen the pain felt by the oppressed. It is rather, a vision to inspire, a target to aim at, and a measuring rod which will allow us to discern whether specific changes and achievements, which result from present historical struggles, are indeed substantial improvements.

f) The Incarnation and the Atonement

I hesitate to develop this final strand in m^y thinking, for I know that, however softly and carefully it is presented, the claim that Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully divine, and that his death and resurrection provide a unique way of salvation, will be offensive to some readers. To the Muslim such claims which associate any created being with God are blasphemous, as they *were* to the Jewish priests, for such was the religious charge on which Jesus was crucified. These claims are also subversive politically, for they assert the authority of a king other than Caesar, and were of use to the prosecution in the trial before Pontius Pilate. To those of a relativistic viewpoint they will also present problems for they are particular claims to a universal and exclusive truth, demanding a ^{p}ersonal response. However, because I believe these doctrines to be true, and also relevant to socio-political action (as well as to personal forgiveness and salvation), I cannot avoid mentioning them.

The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus is central to my thinking on social issues, because it shows that God is not distant and unapproachable, but cares for the world so much as to come into human life in person, in a specific Asian culture, at a specific *point of* history. In Jesus, God shared our human nature, with all its pain, suffering and injustice, even to his death on the cross. This solidarity with suffering humanity, is for me the model for divine and human solidarity with the powerless and oppressed today. And the fact that the cucifixion was not the end, but that Jesus rose from the dead testifies that even where evil and *injustice* are at their strongest, they shall not have the final word.

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APPENDIX : The Case Study Interview Schedule

QUESTIONNAIRE NO

FACTORY

INTERVIEWERS NAME

DATE

CHECKED

SECTION A: LANGUAGE SKILLS AND LEARNING HISTORY

1) Which languages do you know (even a little), including any regional languages and dialects? When did you last use each one?

NAME OF LANGUAGE	within I day	within 1 week	within 1 month	within I year	over a year ago
3				4	
2) -------------- ---	1	2	3	4	5
3) -------------------	1	2	3	4	5
4) ------ ----------	1	2	3	4	5
C)	1	2	3	4	5
j ----------- ------					

2) Which language or dialect did your mother mostly speak to you when you were a young child':'

3) And which language or dialect did your father mostly speak to you when you were a young child?

4) Which country were you in when you first started to speak your language?

           I   Bangladesh

           2   U.K.

               Other

5) How well would you say you understand your own language when it is spoken to you?

        0 not at all

        1 not very well

        2 fairly well

        3 very well

61 How well would you say you speak your own language'

        0 not at all

        I not very well

        2 fairly well

        3 very well

7) How well would you say you read Bengali?

           0 not at all

           1 not very well

           2 fairly well

           3 very well

8) How well would you say you write Bengali?

           0 not at all

           1 not very well

           2 fairly well

           3 very well

9) Did you learn to read Bengali at home?

           I Yes

           2 No

10) Did you learn to read Bengali at school?

           1 Yes

           2 No

11) Did you learn to read Bengali at language classes outside ordinary school times?

           I Yes

           2 No

12) Which country were you in when you learned to read or write Bengali?

           I   Bangladesh

           2   U.K.

           7

           j   Other

13) Did you ever learn to read or write Sylheti? If Yes how and why? If not why not?

14) How many years of full time education have you had?

15) When you went to school which language or dialect was the medium of instruction (i.e. which language did teachers usuall^y speak to you in the classroom) at each stage of your education?

           Primary School Secondary   College or University

	Primary School	Secondary	College or University
S^{y}lheti	1	1	1
Bengali	2	2	2
English	0 3	3	3
Other	4	4	4
More than one	5	5	5
Did not have this stage education	6	6	6

           If 4 or 5 circled please write in which languages

16) How well would you say you understand English when it is spoken?

           0 not at all

           1 not very well

           2 fairly well

           3 very well

17) How well would you say you speak English?

           0 not at all

           1 not very well

           2 fairly well

           3 very well

18) How well would you say you read English?

          0 not at all

          I not very well

                      2 fairly well

                     very well

19) How well would you say you write English?

          () not at all

           1 not very well

          2 fairly well

          3

           3 very well

20) Where did you start to learn English?

          1 home

          2 school

            somewhere else

If 'somewhere else' please say where e.g. work, night school etc.

21) Roughl^y what age were you when you started to learn English?

22) Which country were you in when you started to learn English?

          1   Bangladesh

          2   U.K'

          3   Other

23) Which country were you in when you first used English outside school?

          I   Bangladesh

          2   U.K.

             Other

24) Do you ever (these days) have someone to interpret or translate for you?

          I   Yes

          2   No

25) If Yes:

    Who is that person? (Relationship not name)

    What are the circumstances (where you use an interpreter)?

SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD LANGUAGE USE

SECTION C: HOUSEHOLD LANGUAGE USE

ASK THE RESPONDENT QUESTIONS 72 TO 80 ABOUT EACH MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD. WORK DO COLUMNS STARTING
WITH THE RE SPONOENT. WRITE IN EACH MARRIED COUPLE SIDE BY SIDE AND DRAW A LINKING LINE BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE.

Now many people live in this household including yourself? PLEASE WRITE IN NUMBER

I Would like to ask you a nuinber of questions about each person in the household in turn:

			1	2	3	4	5	6
72.	Relationship to re ponders?, e.g. RID thr husband Sister, friend. etc.		RESPON- DENT					
73.	Sex of person	MALE	1	1	1	1	1	I
		FEMALE	2	2	2	2	2	2
74.	How old is this person							
75.	Where was this person brought up (First 16 years)?	OVERSEAS RURAL	1	1	1	1	1	1
		OVERSEAS URBAN	2	2	2	2	2	2
		OVERSEAS MIXED	3	3	3	3	3	3
		U.K. & OVERSEAS	4	4	4	4	4	4
		U.K. ONLY	S	5	5	5	5	5
76.	How is this person oW Dyed?	WORKS OUTSIDE HOME	1	I	I	1	1	1
		WORKS FOR PAY IN FAMILY						
		I US INESSON PREMISES	2	2	2	2	2	2
		WORKS AT HOME FOR PAY	3	3	3	3	3	3
		FULLTME HOUSEWIFE	4	4	4	4	4	4
		STUDENT/SCHOOLCHILD	5	5	S	5	5	5
		OTHER	6	6	6	6	6	6
77.	How well does this person know your La...NO T	VERY WELL	1	1	1	1	I
		FAIRLY WELL	2	2	2	2	2
		NO T VERY WELL	3	3	3	3	3
		NOT AT ALL	4	4	4	4	4
78.	How well does this person know English?	VERY WELL	1	1	I	1	1
		FAIRLY WELL	2	2	2	2	2
		NOT VERY WELL	3	3	3	3	3
		NOT AT ALL	4	4	4	4	4
79.	whom the respondent this person talk with each other. which Sp.!kthiol?	ONLY OR MOSTLY SYLHrt AND ENGLISH	2	1	1	1	1
		on MOSTLY ENGLISH	3	2	2	2	2
			4	3	3	3	3
		ONLY OR MOSTLY OTHER	5	4	4	4	4
		OTHER MIXTURE	6	5	5	3	5
		OTMEA', PLEASE WRITE IN:		6	6		6
W.	When talking with respondent, 1,1,, other person sp eak?	ONLY OR MOSTIL) S Y L H E i S Y L " – T - 1 AND E 4011,	J	1	J	1	1
		ONLY OAMO STLYENGLISH	2	2	2	2	2
		OTH 4M 0 ENGLISH	3	3	3	3	3
		ONLY OR MOSTLY OTHER	4	4	4	4	4
		OTHER MIXTURE PLEASE WRITE 100;	5	5	5	5	5
			6	6	6	6	6

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SECTION E: LANGUAGE AND WORK

101) What is your occupation?
      NAME *OF JOB*
      What do you have to do?

102) What is the occupation of other people in your household who work?
            Relationship   Occupation
1)

3)

MAKE A NOTE IF ANY WORK IN THE SAME FACTORY AS RESPONDENT

103) Do you work for yourself, in the family business or for someone else?
                1 Self employed
                 2
                 2 Family business
                 3
                 3 Someone else

104) How many hours a week do you work usually?

105) How many people are you responsible for supervising, managing or employing?

 106) How many colleagues or workmates are you in regular contact with during your working day?

107) How many of these can speak your language?

SECTION El HISTORY OF PRESENT JOB

200) How long have you been working in the clothing trade?

201) When did you start your present job in this factory'

202) How did you hear about your present job?
Who from?

Did you ever go to a job centre in search of a job? If not why not?

203) Did you know anyone working there before you started?
    Who'?

204) Had you any skills, or experience of this type of work before you started here?

Details?

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যাদের কথা বলোছেশায়
তাদের এক এক জনের সাথে
আপনি কোন ভাষায় কথা
বলেন ?

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Could you please answer Soar questions about the languages used by people you work with?

ASK THE QUESTIONS IN THE GRID, WORK DOWN THE COLUMNS. THE FIRST 3 COLUMNS ARE FOR UP TO 3 WORKMATES, COLLEAGUES
FREQUENT CONTACT RESPONDENT

	WORKMATE OR COLLEAGUE OR FELLOW-STUDENT			b FOREMAN SUPERVISOR	C Boss MANAGER	d MOST SUBORDINATES	e MOST CLIENTS CUSTOMERS
		2	3				
111. Which languages can the Follow- speak? at work	2 3 5 7	2 3 5 7	2 3 5 7	2 5 7	2 3 5 7	2 1 5 6 7	2 3 S 6 7
112. Which language do you speak to this person at work?	2 3 4 5 7	2 3 4 5 7	2 3 4 5 7	2) 4 5 7	2 3 Y 5 7 8	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	2 3 4 5 6 7
113. Which language does each use when speaking to you?	2 3 5 7	5 7	2 3 5 7	2 3 5 7	2 3 5 7	2 3 s 7	2 3 5 7

111. Which languages can the Follow- speak? at work
ONLY IENGLISH I
ONLY ENGLISH
OTHER AND ENGLISH
OTHER ONLY
111 .
DON'T KNOW
NOT APPLICABLE
IF 'OTHER' OR 'MIXED' PLEASE EXPLAIN:

112. Which language do you speak to this person at work?
ONLY or MOSTLY
ENGLISH
ONLY OA MOSTLY
E N G L I S H
OTHERAND ENGLISH
ONLY OR MOSTLY OTHER
DON'T 'T SPEAK
NOT APPLICABLE
IF 'OTHER' OR 'MIXED' PLEASE EX-LAIN:

113. Which language does each use when speaking to you?
ONLY OR MOSTLY
I NG IS.
OTHER AND ENGLISH OR
MOSTLY OTHERN
0
DON'T SPEAK
NOT APPLICABLE
IF 'OTHER' OR 'MIXED' PLEASE EXPLAIN;

205) What were you doing before taking this job? (Bet as many details as you can without imposing on the respondent of previous employment history in UK;

eq. How many jobs?
What kind of work? Was it local in Tower Hamlets?
Better or worse pay/ condifions than present job?
Any periods of unemployment?)

206) If you were ever employed in Bangladesh what was your work there?

SECTION E2 NATURE OF PRESENT JOB

207) What exactly do you have to do?
(GET A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF e.a.MACHININ6, PRESSING)

208) How many times a day do you do each cycle of work tasks or how many garments/articles do you work on each day?

20Y) Could anyone do your job or do you need to have particular skills? If 50 which skills?

210) How did you learn the skills you now use in the job?
From whom?'
Has you level of skill improved since you started in the clothing trade?

211) Are you satisfied with the job or would you like to change?
 Why?

212[1] Do you think it likely/possible that you could change your job?

If so what would you likeiexpect to do?

213) Are you paid piece work or an hourly rate?
Do you think you get a fair rate for your work?

2141 Is it regular work or do you get slack periods and layoffs? When?

215) Do you belong to a Trade Union?

If so: what does it do for you and what do you do for it?

If not :why not? Why do you think there are no unions in your factory?

SECTION E3 ENGLISH AND BENGALI FOR WORK

250) In your workplace how much freedom do you have to use your own languageI

for instance: Does the governor tell you you must speak. in English?
Do your workmates laugh at you or get angry if you speak in your own language?

251) Do you ever need to speak k in your own language at work?
When & why?

252) Do you ever need to read Bengali at work?
When & why?

253) Do you ever need to speak English at work?
When & why?

254) Do you ever need to read English at work?
When & why?

3161 Do you think ability in speaking English is necessary or important for getting a good job? Why? Do
you think that is fair?

717) Do you think you might be able to get a better job if you spoke better English than you do?

716) Is speaking your language important or ever an advantage for getting a good job?

If so, in what ways is it useful especially for getting a job round here

3191 Do you think it makes a difference to your work what language the governor/boss speaks? Why?

320) What are the good things and the bad things about your present job?
e.g. the kind of work, the pay, the people who work here.

How could it be improved?

321) Do you know of any training courses that could help you learn more skills for your job or to help you get a better
job (either inside or outside the clothing industry)?

  if yes please try to get details of type and place of course?

  Are these courses in English or your own language or both?

322) Have you ever been on any such training courses?

  if Yes. please describe your experience and the way it helped you.

IF NO: Would you perhaps go on such a course if it was available?
  If so find out in what conditions e.g.
cost   if you had to pay/free/if you were given a grant

time   in employer's time /weekends !evenings

place   in E1 / Tower Hamlets/ anywhere in London

language in English 11 in Your language

content e.g. machining/other clothing industry skills/ other

SECTION E4 LANGUAGE IN THE WORKPLACE

320¹ How is language and communication important for you in the workplace?

323) When working do you talk to the other workers about the work you are doing? in
 which language?

(If mainly your own language then Do you ever use words which were originally English to talk about your work? get
examples)

324)   Who gives you instructions about what work to do? In
  which languagel

  is there ever someone in the factory who acts as an interpreter for you?
  IF SO who and when?

.25)   What if your machine breaks down, who do you tell about it? and in Which language?

326) Who else do you talk to at work and in which language˙) e.g. boss, delivery driver, customers, people in the office
Which language?

11-˝
-%4,)if you take a lunch or tea break (or chat to your mates while working) in the factory who do you mostly talk to?
About what sort of things? and in which language?

328) in these breaks do people hang about together in particular groups? If so who sits with who? (men/women, different
languages, young/old)

SECTION E5 CHILDREN

329) What job would you like your children to take up if they do well at school?

330) What work do you expect they will in fact do?

331) Do you think they will be able to get the qualifications, training and employment opportunities they would need?

332[1] What about education and training courses for your children (in particular teenagers and young people)?
What do you see as their greatest needs in education and employment'

Do you think that their language skills are developed enough in school?

a) in your own language

b) in English

333) Which of the following are most important for their job prospects? TRY TO RANK IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE AND THEN
DISCUSS WHY EACH fro IMPORTANT AND IF OTHER THINGS ARE MISSING.

a) English Language
b) Maths.
c) home Language
d) Practical skills e.g. sewing, computing, metalwork etc.

334) Have you anything else to say about language, work or education?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

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Szz close 0 mqs,