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## Paper 101

### **The integration of Roma Slovak pupils into a secondary school in Sheffield: A case of school super-diversity?**

by

*Mark Payne* ©  
(University of Sheffield)

[mark.payne@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:mark.payne@sheffield.ac.uk)

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# The integration of Roma Slovak pupils into a secondary school in Sheffield: A case of school super-diversity?

Mark Payne  
University of Sheffield

## Abstract

The immigration of large numbers of Roma Slovak people to Sheffield over a relatively short period has raised questions around the settling of the new arrivals into the complex social, linguistic and cultural spaces of the diverse city of Sheffield and the ability of settled communities to retain their identities and relative stability. Schools face challenges in welcoming the migrant children, inducting and integrating them and facilitating access to the school curriculum.

This paper reports on ethnographic research in a secondary school and community in Sheffield that has experienced the migration phenomenon outlined above. Findings show that whilst the school is facing huge challenges it is engaging in innovative practices to facilitate social, linguistic and educational integration. These include employing bilingual staff, MFL teachers being retrained to teach EAL and maths being taught in Czech, Slovakian and Romani. Applying themes from globalisation discourses, the argument is put forward that the school should be considered a super-diverse school. The research raises wider questions about the impact of the macro forces of globalisation and super-diversity on the community, school, parents and pupils and the functioning and relevance of schooling systems in a super-diverse age.

## Introduction

The principal focus of this paper is the Roma Slovak<sup>1</sup> migrant children and their issues and the challenges in integrating them into an inner-city secondary school called 'Freeport'<sup>2</sup> in the multilingual post-industrial city of Sheffield, South Yorkshire. The residential area near the school, Page Hall<sup>3</sup>, has seen unprecedented immigration from Eastern Europe over the last four years, principally comprised of Roma Slovak families (Pidd, 2013; The Star, 2013). Therefore, Freeport has faced a number of challenges and, in meeting these, has had to adjust its processes and practices in integrating and assimilating the 'New to English' (NTE) pupils, adapt curriculum provision and teaching methodologies for those students and enhance provision for the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language (EAL). It is this adaptation and adjustment in the face of fast-paced unpredictable pupil arrivals (and departures) that, I argue, sees Freeport stand as an example of a super-diverse multilingual school in the UK today. It also stands as a locus for the forces of globalisation and super-diversity and in order to fully

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to 'Roma Slovak' throughout for the Roma people who have migrated from Slovakia. In terms of definitions, 'Roma' and 'Romani' often appear as interchangeable in the literature for the Roma from Eastern Europe, as do the adjectives 'Slovak' and 'Slovakian' to describe a person and the language of Slovakia. It should be noted that in the UK, British Roma people are usually referred to as 'Romany'.

<sup>2</sup> Freeport is a pseudonym. All school, pupil, staff and parent references will be kept as confidential as possible.

<sup>3</sup> For ethical reasons, the school cannot be named. However, the region of Page Hall is identified as the area of focus without pseudonym because pupils from this area are dispersed among various Sheffield schools and thus remain unidentifiable as individuals within the research.

understand the issues and challenges, the broader issues of globalisation and trans-European fast-paced mass migration fuelling super-diversity must be considered.

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, in Section 1, I discuss the methodology applied. In Section 2, I discuss the Roma Slovak migrants and focus on the social and educational challenges facing this group of people. In Section 3, the school setting is discussed. In Section 4 the specific characteristics of the school are highlighted that, I argue, merit it the label of a super-diverse school in the globalized age. Finally, in Section 5, some conclusions are drawn.

## **Section 1. The study**

### **Ethnographic exploratory research**

In order to explore what is essentially a new phenomenon, exploratory ethnographic research was deemed the most suitable methodology. Although ethnography is something of a fuzzy concept, embodying as it does aspects of anthropological research (e.g. Eriksen, 2001), sociological research (e.g. Denzin, 1970) and, in this case, linguistic/educational ethnographic research (Creese, 2008; Green & Bloome, 1997), the objectives of ethnography as outlined by Hammersley and Atkinson are an appropriate fit for the study:

“...ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts...” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3).

In accordance with this viewpoint, in-depth study and data collection took the form of regular visits to the school, averaging one day per week (since April 2013) in which: lessons were observed across a range of subjects including EAL, teachers and pupils interviewed with semi-structured protocols, pupil statistical data analysed for trends, school policy documents studied and school practices explored. Participants were sampled because they were germane to the study e.g. they worked with Roma children in some capacity, or they were suggested by other participants, a form of snowball sampling (Wellington, 2006). The aim was to gain a deep understanding of the issues facing Freeport school and its teachers, pupils and the wider community, both the new Roma Slovak children and families, and the settled, more established ‘host’ children and families. Conforming to the exploratory nature of ethnographic research - “their orientation is an exploratory one” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3) the collected data were scanned for themes and issues as a basis for tentative constructivist theory building (Charmaz, 2000).

### **Section 2: Roma Slovak migration to Sheffield**

The UK has a complex system of counting people in and out and for EU nationals, and others within Europe who are citizens of countries with specific arrangements with the UK, there is no counting at all:

“In 2013 a large proportion (88%) of the 111.1 million journeys to the UK were by British, other EEA or Swiss nationals who have rights of free movement and are not subject to immigration control” (Home Office, 2014).

Therefore, statistics related to EU migration then can only be estimated:

“ ... an estimated 209,000 other EU nationals immigrating and 78,000 emigrating in the year ending September 2013, i.e. a net migration of +131,000 ...” (Home Office, 2014).

To audit those that are residing here, including long-term residents, we have to rely on census information and metrics such as housing benefit claims, National Insurance registration and school admissions data. Some of these data are problematic to acquire, for example housing data will only show up information in relation to those registered at a property, not for those living there unregistered. National Insurance information will only show those registered to work, and then only crudely:

“For NINo registrations to adult overseas nationals for Sheffield for 2011-12 the figure is 4.52 thousand. For Slovaks registering for NINOs in the same year for the whole of the UK it is 9.89 thousand” (Office for National Statistics, 2012b).

There are no figures for NINo registrations for Slovaks in Sheffield for the same period. Census data collected every decade are in many ways also very crude (see below), the last Census being 2011. We do know that Roma Slovak families and their children have been arriving in significant numbers to Sheffield since Slovakia gained accession to the EU in 2004 (European Union, 2014). The table (Table 1, below) shows the Census 2011 language numbers from the A8 accession countries resident in Sheffield, the Yorkshire and Humber region and England in March 2011, which can serve to indicate the numbers of Roma Slovak inhabitants.

Table 1: A8 Languages 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2011b).

EU Language	Sheffield	Yorks and Humber	England
Polish	2611	45768	529173
Slovak	1244	6808	49066
Czech	318	3218	28284
Lithuanian	309	5054	84327
Latvian	184	4598	31159
Hungarian	291	2148	43241
Estonian	14	214	3316
Slovenian	20	99	1196
Romani Language (Any)	0	8	614

According to the Table, 1244 people in Sheffield who took part in the 2011 census deemed themselves to be Slovak speakers whilst none declared themselves as ‘Romani Language’ (Office for National Statistics, 2011a). However, this figure is not unproblematic. Apart from the obvious fact that the Census process would have required translation for Romani respondents, some of the questions raise further issues. Question 15 required a ‘National Identity’ free text response for which a Roma Slovak person would most likely have answered ‘Slovakian’, keen as they are to avoid self ascription as ‘Roma’ (Equality, 2011) as evidenced by the nil return for Romani languages in Sheffield and the low return rate overall. The ‘Ethnic Group’ question (Q. 16) contains an option ‘Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ which could confuse Romani people. Roma are often racially abused as ‘blacks’ in Slovakia so are unlikely to tick the ‘Black’ box (it is not a realistic fit

anyway as it is combined with ‘African/Caribbean’ or ‘Black British’ and not aimed at the Romani community) (Goldston, 1999). Question 18: “What is your main Language?” contains, again, the free text option. But what would a Roma Slovak person write? Aside from the disinclination to declare themselves as ‘Roma’, Romani is not classed as a standard language (see below) so respondents would probably insert ‘Slovak’, even though this might not be their first language (they will have knowledge of Slovakian as the host language of the country in which they used to reside). For all of these reasons we have to be critical of the figure of 1244 Slovak speakers in Sheffield.

Further to this, we do not know exactly how many have settled in the Page Hall area. One key school respondent informs me that it is ‘900 families’ (Source: key respondent interview). Sheffield Council statistics are difficult to access<sup>4</sup>. Based on a neighbourhood count of Roma *pupils* of primary and secondary school age (adult statistics were not provided), there were 1843 Roma pupils in Sheffield on 7/4/14 of which 891 lived in the Page Hall region. However, there are a number of caveats with this information. In terms of detail, these reports have defined ‘Roma’ on the following basis;

“if pupils have an ethnic code of ‘White Gypsy/Roma’; if they have an ethnic code of ‘White Eastern European’, ‘Any Other Ethnic Group’ or ‘Any Other White’ and Slovak as their first language; or if they have ‘Romany English’ or ‘Romany International’ as a first language regardless of their ethnicity” (Sheffield City Council, 2014b).

There is an assumption made here that ‘Slovakian’ equates to ‘Roma’ which it obviously does not. But it would appear that the council is attempting to ensure it captures all the Roma even if it means over-counting<sup>5</sup>. That said, the figures are approximate; according to the Council “Neighbourhoods with fewer than 10 Roma have been excluded from the report” (Sheffield City Council, 2014b). Considering the two sets of figures, it would appear impossible to ascertain the exact figures for Roma Slovak adults and children residing in both Sheffield and Page Hall.

We do not know the specific reasons for this trans-national migration to Sheffield, but some themes emerge from the research. One issue is that the Roma have often been persecuted back in Slovakia, residing mostly in virtual ‘ghettoes’ without adequate water and sanitation. For example, some of my research respondents come from the village of Bystrany, described by the documentary filmmakers Marc Bader and Petra Kunčíková thus:

A population of 2500 people live in the village of Bystrany in eastern Slovakia, two-thirds of which are Roma whose ancestors settled there back in the 14th century. The majority of the Roma from the *osada*, or settlement, which is the name used for the place where they live, are on social support. However, in 2004 the Slovak government dramatically reduced the level of social support payments<sup>6</sup>, and increasing poverty has only exacerbated the community's social exclusion. In the aftermath of this radical reform measure, life in the Roma settlements became unbearable, and hundreds of Roma have taken advantage of

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<sup>4</sup> I requested a Freedom of Information request on 24/3/14 for the number of Roma Slovak families in Page Hall and received a reply on 24/4/14.

<sup>5</sup> This can be for well-intentioned reasons such as ensuring extra resources are put in place; new arrivals are registered with GPs and school places identified.

<sup>6</sup> N.B. the timings of Slovakia’s accession to the EU and the reduction of social support for the Roma in Slovakia appear to coincide.

Slovakia's membership in the European Union to leave this nest of poverty behind (Bader & Kunčíková, 2006).

The move from such settlements in Slovakia to other countries in the EU could be termed a natural move from 'periphery' to 'centre' in globalisation discourse (Blommaert, 2010). It is not clear why the Roma from Slovakia are bypassing other European countries such as Austria, France and Germany and heading specifically to England. Nor is it clear why Sheffield, suffering as it does from post-industrial economic depression and hosting some of the most deprived wards in the UK (Sheffield City Council, 2014c), should be a locus of migration from Eastern Europe, although it is common for areas of traditional inward migration to become established migratory destinations, i.e. migrants follow migrants, resulting in "a layered immigrant space" (Blommaert, 2010, p.7). The area of Page Hall is comprised of largely Pakistani heritage people, the families of the men who came to England from about the 1950s onwards to work in the factories and steelworks (Runnymede Trust, 2011). One of the original Roma Slovak incomers to Page Hall, 'Miro', arrived in Sheffield in 2004 and worked initially in a chicken factory on the East side of the city before taking on advisory work for the Roma community (Source: interview with Miro). He does not know the reason for the larger recent influx of Roma families to Page Hall but puts it down to Roma Slovak community coherence (families wanting to be near other families) and ease of trans-national contact with Roma families back in Slovakia encouraging more family members to come (Block, 2004).

### **Section 3: The School Setting**

Freeport school is an urban inner-city school of 1140 pupils in the age range 11-16, some 35% of whom have EAL (Department for Education, 2014). The school serves what is described as one of the most deprived wards in the country (Sheffield City Council, 2014c). Though formerly a comprehensive school, Freeport is now an academy, part of the Academy Enterprise Trust, one of 77 schools in the chain (Academies Enterprise Trust, 2014). Formerly, as a comprehensive working in conjunction with the Local Education Authority (LEA)<sup>7</sup>, the LEA would have received its education budget and passed a share to Freeport. Freeport would have relied on the LEA to assist with staffing and recruitment and support services, such as for special needs and traveller children (Sheffield City Council, 2014a). Now the academy chain receives funding directly from government, is responsible for setting terms and conditions for staff, and can buy in support services from the Local Authority (Department for Education, 2012).

The school is situated within a large estate of mainly tenant-occupied council-owned housing and is surrounded by a high metal fence. Once inside the school, the nature of the school and its pupil body becomes more apparent. Many of the children are, according to the UK Census 2011 terminology, 'white British', and the largest other group is of Pakistani or other Asian heritage (Office for National Statistics, 2012a). Many of the other pupils are of various ethnic backgrounds, with some 20+ countries represented in the school pupil body (Source: key respondent interview)<sup>8</sup>. Apart from those who were born in Sheffield, these pupils are the children of inter-regional migrants, their families may be political asylum seekers or they could be the children of economic migrants. This means that there is a variety of languages and dialects present in the school and many of the pupils have more than one language in their linguistic repertoires (Blommaert, 2013). My experience of the school itself, and comparing it to schools I

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<sup>7</sup> Now called Local Authority (LA).

<sup>8</sup> School pupil statistical data is problematic to collect due to data protection and child protection issues and the Academy status of the school, which sees its data managed off-site.



widely (Graddol, 1998; King, 2000; Pennycook, 2007). In terms of globalisation and super-diversity, there are significant published works (e.g. Blommaert, 2010; Cadier & Mar-Molinero, 2012; Hobsbawm, 2008; Vertovec, 2007a, 2007b). In relation to the concept of the super-diverse school itself, there is as yet very little to report from the literature. This is but a small selection and many of the debates and issues raised by these works in terms of the assimilation and integration of a diverse range of peoples into schools and communities, the linguistic and cultural challenges, and the wider debates on bilingualism, English language policy, code-switching and so on would resonate with the pupils, teachers, parents and the wider community served by Freeport School. Therefore the question is: what is it that makes Freeport stand out as a super-diverse school?

In presenting super-diversity, Vertovec acknowledges that he is not so much presenting a new phenomenon as a new way of viewing the current diverse globalized world:

“Much of the material and data in this article are certainly not new or unknown to specialists in the field; what is hopefully of value, however, is its assemblage and juxtaposition by way of re-assessing how diversity is conventionally conceived” (Graddol, 1998; King, 2000).

Similarly, I take the ‘traditional’ UK urban multilingual school and apply a Vertovecian lens to re-assess and to make the case that the school is super-diverse according to certain characteristics, akin to “... a multidimensional perspective on diversity” (Vertovec, 2007b, p.1025). However, not all of Vertovec’s super-diverse traits can be applied to the school setting in question. I have mapped the more appropriate of these against observations at Freeport school in Table 3, below.

Table 3: Mapping of super-diverse school traits

<b>Vertovecian (2007) Super-diversity Traits</b>	<b>Freeport School Traits</b>
“... a marked rise in net immigration and a diversification of countries of origin” (p. 1028)	Increased immigration from Slovakia, particularly Roma Slovaks alongside other countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Czech Republic etc. Evidence of immigration from a country other than country of origin, e.g. a Somalian pupil from Norway.
“... most of this new and diverse range of origins relates to places which have no specific historical-particularly, colonial-links with Britain” (p.1029)	Slovakia, Czech Republic, Afghanistan and Somalia have no particular colonial links with Britain, unlike India, Pakistan and the West Indies.
“... there may be widely differing statuses <i>within</i> groups of the same ethnic or national origin” (p.1039)	Slovak pupils may or may not be Roma; Roma pupils may be Slovakian or Czech; Roma Slovak pupils may or may not: have any prior schooling; have been to mainstream school in Slovakia; have been to a segregated school; have already been educated at another school in the UK prior to arrival; have moved up from a UK feeder primary school; have literacy skills. Roma in Slovakia are referred to as ‘black’, non-Roma Slovaks as ‘white’.
“emergent forms of racism: (a) among resident British targeted against newcomers ... (b) among longstanding ethnic minorities against immigrants; and (c) among newcomers themselves, directed against British ethnic minorities” (p. 1045)	Within school there has been very little reported racism. Some incidents have been reported as new to English children begin to learn English. But not enough to support Vertovec’s contention. Outside school, there have been some incidents reported in the media.

Based upon this mapping exercise Freeport does manifest some super-diverse



characteristics according to Vertovec, particularly in the differing statuses within groups. I would argue, however, that Freeport manifests additional traits of interest that require an amplified view of the school. I summarize these in Table 4, below, to present the empirically grounded characteristics of Freeport school that I consider to stem from the forces of globalisation and super-diversity more widely.

Table 4: Freeport school, globalisation and super-diversity

Characteristic	Manifestation	Notes
Unpredictable intake	Speed, numbers, languages, pupil biographies, health, prior schooling, country of origin, original country of origin.	Original country of origin: some pupils seek asylum in a EU country and then move to the UK from there later.
Unpredictable pupil churn	Irregular date of arrival, time of arrival, date of departure. Unpredictable arrival, departure, attendance.	Irregular refers to outside of traditional terms and school day models; Unpredictable means 'unpredictability within the irregularity'.
Structural uncertainty	School status: Academy, comprehensive, free school, funding arrangement, Local Authority support and services	There is unpredictability in terms of the receiving school and structures in place.
Departmental uncertainty	MFL, EAL, MFL and EAL merged, NTE centre, off site, on-site	Difficult to predict who will work where, who will teach what, what the departmental focus is.
Professional uncertainty	MFL teachers acting as EAL teachers, new language skills required, Head of MFL also Head of EAL, Traditional EAL staff versus new EAL staff, traditional community languages versus new languages.	Professional trajectories hard to predict, languages skills hard to predict, the place of traditional i.e. Indian subcontinent origin EAL teachers in question, new types of EAL teachers i.e. qualified MFL teachers.
Adaptations and innovations	New start centre; Recruitment of Romani speakers onto staff; Czech maths teacher teaching maths in Czech, Slovakian and Romani; MFL teaching EAL; English teachers teaching phonics; A move away from 'English only' to 'immersion+'.	Various Romani speakers and Czech or Slovakian members of staff but not entirely clear who understands which language to which degree, particularly Romani. A blending of lessons so that MFL and EAL merge. A move away from English-only immersion to some use of CLIL-type strategies and use of Czech/Slovakian in maths teaching to facilitate learning and teaching.

Each of these characteristics will now be discussed in turn.

### Unpredictable intake

Vertovec's seminal paper introduced us to the notion of super-diversity as a way of viewing diversity as complex, problematic and something not experienced before in the UK, and highlights additional variables in terms of:

“differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents. Rarely are these factors described side by side.

The interplay of these factors is what is meant here, in summary fashion, by the notion of ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007b, p.1025).

The forces of globalisation fuel Vertovecian super-diversity, to include, I would argue, speed of human travel, electronic communications and, in the case of Europe, an open border policy enshrined in the Schengen agreement (Europa, 2009). Adding to this is the economic crisis in the Eurozone, which sees some countries such as Greece and Spain struggling and others, such as the UK and Germany, relatively economically thriving (BBC, 2014a). It should not come as a surprise when rapid trans-national migration takes place. Furthermore, conflicts and political unrest worldwide, such as the war in Syria mean that asylum seekers seek refuge in the UK (UNHCR, 2014). What this means for a school such as Freeport is that the school catchment area, which once would have been tightly demarcated by the housing estate surrounding the school (Sheffield City Council, 2014a), has now been extended quite literally to embrace Europe and, arguably, the world. People in Europe can travel to the UK and choose to reside in the Freeport area. People seeking asylum in Europe, who gain citizenship of a European country, can also eventually reside in the local area. This means that Freeport school cannot make reliable predictions about pupil numbers and this ‘unpredictability’, I would argue, is a significant facet of super-diversity.

The speed of change in terms of the arrival of new children is unprecedented, e.g. 16 children arrived unannounced one Monday morning at the school (see below). This represents a swift and sudden change in pupil profile and need. Whereas ‘old diversity’ was characterized largely by slow and predictable migration, the ‘new diversity’ pattern is fast-paced with families able to travel over from Slovakia within 24 hours by coach or car<sup>9</sup>. This means that Freeport has made slow and steady progress over the last forty or so years in integrating the arrivals from the Indian subcontinent, for example, and developed measures to facilitate integration of the pupils (Source: key respondent interview). This fairly predictable state has been exposed as wanting by the sudden arrival of the Roma pupils. Added to this, and somewhat overshadowed by the Roma statistics, are the arrivals of various asylum seeker refugees and others to the school, all with their own needs and often complex biographical trajectories; there are now some 50+ languages represented in the school. These pupils can arrive as unpredictably as the Roma but there are fewer of them and they are integrated more readily within the school population. Due to the school enhancing its EAL provision, it could be argued that these pupils benefit from the greater expertise and emphasis on integrating EAL pupils. However, I observed a NTE class with 12 pupils, 10 Roma Slovak and two from Sudan. This skewed the lesson towards a Roma Slovak focus with reference to Romani words, the teacher speaking some Russian to facilitate communication (she is a former Russian teacher at the school) and the pupil meta-language being entirely Romani.

Considering the Roma Slovak cohort at Freeport more closely, available school data for 2014 are presented in Table 2, below.

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<sup>9</sup> Slovakian registered cars are common in the area local to the school.

Table 2: Numbers of Roma children in Freeport at 13:20 on 14/01/2014

Year Group	Ethnicity: Gypsy/Roma	First Language: Slovakian
7	5	8
8	10	9
9	12	12
10	16	24
11	16	20
Total	59	73
Date of Admission	Ethnicity: Gypsy/Roma	First Language: Slovakian
Prior to 2/9/13	36	47
After 2/9/13	23	26

On arrival, parents, with the assistance of a translator, are requested to complete a language and ethnicity questionnaire. The above data expose a number of issues. As with the 2011 Census, parents are not keen on declaring themselves as ‘Gypsy/Roma’ and it is often the translator who will check this box for the family. The parents are usually more prepared to check a box that says their language is Slovakian. Although not always the case, it can often be assumed in the context of Freeport school, that a person who checks the ‘First Language: Slovakian’ box is also Roma. According to these figures, the total number of Roma pupils can only be estimated at 73 (for 14/1/2014) if the 59 Gypsy/Roma pupils are included within this figure. This comprises about 6% of the school population. However, Year 8 presents an anomaly in that there are more Gypsy/Roma pupils than Slovakian. This is explained by the presence of Roma/Czech pupils in that year group. On the basis of this exercise and the statistical evidence I would argue that in the super-diverse school the pupil profile data will never be accurately captured (see: BBC, 2014b).

The Romani language itself is a non-standardized oral language of multiple varieties. According to the Romani language website ROMLEX:

“Romani is the only Indo-Aryan language that has been spoken exclusively in Europe since the middle-ages. It is part of the phenomenon of Indic diaspora languages spoken by travelling communities of Indian origin outside of India... in current Romani linguistics five main dialect groups are differentiated: Vlax, Balkan, Central, Northwestern and Northeastern” (ROMLEX, 2013).

Such varieties are mutually intelligible to a degree but issues can arise. As Matras points out:

- a) All Romani speakers are bilingual, and are accustomed to freely integrating words and phrases from their respective second languages; this creates potential difficulties when trying to communicate with Romani speakers from other countries.
- b) Romani was traditionally used primarily within the extended family and close community, and there is little experience in communicating with those who come from farther away and whose speech form is distinct. (It is this inexperience that often leads speakers of Romani to label the speech of other Roma as a different ‘language’).
- c) There is no tradition of a literary Standard to which speakers can turn as a compromise form of speech” (Matras, 2005, p.4).

As there are no official Council-approved Romani translators in Sheffield (Source: personal communication with County Council), Slovakian translators are employed “though cannot always communicate with Romani Slovak speakers” (Source: key respondent interview). Furthermore, to highlight the linguistic complexity, three different Roma Slovak employees at one Sheffield school were asked to translate a word, and they gave three different versions of the Romani translation (Source: key respondent interview). Probably the most obvious challenge in language terms is that there is not a Romani/English dictionary available for teachers at Freeport school and the Romani speaking staff employed by the school are themselves not experts in linguistics, language or translation (not that they should be) so can only support basic translation duties (I have engaged Romani speakers in conversations about language, Romani varieties, Slovakian versus Romani etc. but they have not understood my questions).

In terms of pupils’ complex biographies, there are two further issues for Freeport to consider: ‘race’ and ‘health’. Due to skin colouring, the Roma of Slovakia are often referred to as ‘black’ in Slovakia, non-Roma Slovak citizens are termed ‘white’ (Springer, 2013). This means that the Roma are more easily identifiable and open to persecution, segregation and abuse in Slovakia (see e.g. Goldston, 1999). There are also certain health issues that have emerged from researching the Roma in Sheffield (Roma Source, 2012). Due to the nature of the schooling and health systems for the Roma in Slovakia, many children have not received what might be regarded as the traditional childhood vaccination programme, e.g. for Measles Mumps and Rubella<sup>10</sup>. This means Roma Slovak children are more open to those viruses, diseases and conditions and, furthermore, the overall herd immunity is affected. A noticeable health issue is the scale of hearing impairments amongst Roma Slovak children. This group makes up 12% of all hearing impaired cases in Sheffield (Sheffield City Council, 2013). The cases of hearing impairment range in seriousness and some of the children observed at Freeport wear two hearing aids. Hearing impairment can affect language acquisition and pose challenges for integration into the school and classroom<sup>11</sup>.

It is clear that educational experiences for Roma Slovak children in Bystrany and elsewhere in Slovakia are not always positive. Many of the Roma children at Freeport have had little or even no former traditional schooling compared with children who reside in the UK. Roma Children in Slovakia (and the Czech republic) are more likely to attend a special school, a school for children with a designated Special Educational Need (35-50% of pupils in Special schools in those two countries are Roma, from 2-3% of the population) (Equality, 2011). According to Amnesty International

“In some parts of eastern Slovakia, 100 per cent of schools are segregated. Romani children often receive a second-rate education and have a very limited chance of progressing beyond compulsory schooling. In 2006, only 3 per cent of Roma children reached secondary school” (Amnesty International, 2007).

And according to Springer reporting on a segregated school in Slovakia that was compelled to integrate Roma children:

“Roma children start school very unprepared. Often they don't have the basic skills that other kids have to be able to go through the education system. [For

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<sup>10</sup> A child born and growing up in the UK can expect to receive about 17 injections by age 18, some of which are so-called 5-in-1 vaccines (NHS, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Not reported is the degree of hearing impairment amongst the wider Roma Slovak adult population.

instance,] many of these children don't speak Slovak — the official language of state schools" (Springer, 2013).

Adding to biographical complexity, there is evidence of pupils migrating to Sheffield via other EU countries other than their country of origin. This sees some pupils already schooled in mainstream education elsewhere. For example, one Somali girl has attended school in Norway prior to arriving in Sheffield and so can speak, read and write Norwegian. Such diversity as manifested in this girl's trajectory is often overlooked, for example, she could have been placed in German language classes as a FL somewhat similar to Norwegian.

To sum up, it is impossible to forecast how many new pupils will arrive at Freeport day by day, what languages they will speak or know (or claim to speak or know), and how much if any mainstream schooling they will have had. The biographies are complex and Roma children comprise a far from homogeneous grouping.

### **Unpredictable pupil churn**

Traditionally in England, pupils start school at the beginning of the school year in September, and finish the school year in July (dates depend on the school or region) (Sheffield City Council, 2014a). Cohorts of pupils generally move up the school together, year by year, with any new children arriving at the beginning of the school year, or perhaps, in exceptional circumstances, during a school year. I finished teaching in schools in the year 2000 and I rarely received a new pupil once the school year had got underway. In what might be termed the 'Vertovecian super-diverse era', this predictability has been swept aside. With the arrival of the Roma Slovak families to Sheffield in particular, the predictable rhythms of pupil ebb and flow have been replaced by an almost daily arrival of new pupils to be integrated. As one respondent told me: "Fifty families arrived in the summer from Slovakia and on the Monday after Christmas there were 16 new Roma Slovak children who arrived unannounced" (Source: key respondent interview). Another respondent reports: "I was teaching my Chinese class and the door opened and the teacher said 'here you are, Miss, two new pupils' [one Roma Slovak, one Chinese]" (Source: teacher of EAL interview). This is not to say that pupils have not arrived in UK schools during term time before. People are generally free to travel for work; one cannot choose one's moment to seek asylum that corresponds neatly to the target country's educational calendar. But in general, in more traditional times, such a high rate of pupil 'churn' did not happen. Now, with the Roma Slovak group in particular, this has become the norm for Freeport. I would argue that in a 'borderless' Europe where people are free to move from 'periphery' to globalized 'centre' (Blommaert, 2010), more schools are going to be exposed to unpredictable pupil churn.

### **Structural uncertainty**

Structural uncertainty refers to the status of the school within the UK educational context. Many schools, Freeport included, have opted for academy status funded directly from central government. The aim is that schools will be more independent and freed up to buy in services from wherever they want, not just from the local council. This means that, in turn, Council services have diminished due to lack of uptake. It should be noted that the current government is committed to seeing most comprehensives turned into academies (Department for Education, 2012). Colleagues in schools working with the Roma pupils in particular cannot rely on Council intervention in the form of Traveller support services. Furthermore, it is not actually clear whom EAL leaders should be contacting as those traditional support lines are often ruptured. This sees school staff

facing an unpredictable situation in terms of Roma and EAL pupils and quite literally having to make up policy as they go along. I have been asked to help share good practices in relation to working with the Romani across three schools in Sheffield; I take this as evidence of lack of support for these schools from elsewhere.

### **Departmental uncertainty**

An example of departmental uncertainty is the MFL department at Freeport. The teaching and learning of EAL is one of the major adjustments made in the school, it is now a major focus. For various reasons, the teaching of Modern Foreign Languages has waned at the school, one reason being that EAL children are often prioritized with more English language learning than taking on another language such as French, German or Spanish. This erodes teaching hours in MFL and contributes to the teachers of MFL at Freeport now being retrained as teachers of EAL. One teacher, who I trained as a French and German teacher, now also teaches EAL. This initiative has been a success in that teachers of MFL appear to have the skills to teach English as though it were a foreign language, i.e. communicatively (Pachler & Field, 2001). They know how to break down language, build it up again, work on pronunciation and incorporate language-related activities and games. However, some retraining is required for more sophisticated knowledge of teaching phonics and teaching reading and writing to those that have never written a word or read before, not even in their own language. As one teacher said to me, "I never thought I would be teaching EAL, never". Others have said, independently, "I'm not sure if I'm doing the right thing" (Source: teacher respondent interviews). They allude to the fact that there is no orthodox EAL curriculum or syllabus and very little guidance in terms of methodology (NALDIC, 2014). I would argue that the MFL department is in a state of flux in terms of its identity as a place where modern foreign languages are promoted and taught.

### **Professional uncertainty**

Related to departmental uncertainty in many ways is professional uncertainty. Formerly, in traditional mainstream secondary schools, roles were quite clearly delineated, for example, a maths teacher taught maths and a Spanish teacher taught Spanish. Teachers knew that some degree of flexibility would be required, for example the maths teacher might be asked to teach statistics and the Spanish teacher asked to take on a second language e.g. French. But such changes to the norm for subject specialists was unsurprising. At Freeport, however, there is a degree of professional uncertainty with MFL teachers now being required to act as EAL teachers; therefore, new language skills are required. The Head of MFL is also the Head of EAL, tasked with leading on a field she has no training or expertise in. There is a degree of uncertainty about how to best go about retraining, redeploying staff and addressing the challenges. More widely, there are unforeseen consequences in this policy. If teachers of MFL are teaching less MFL and more EAL, where does this place them for future promotions or moving to other schools in terms of their MFL expertise? In my position as a trainer of teachers of MFL, how do I now best prepare teachers for the future? Should I be incorporating more EAL alongside French, German and Spanish and associated pedagogies? What seems clear is that in the super-diverse school, the MFL department is more than just a place to learn French, German or Spanish (or other FLs). It is a place where 'language' is developed, be it Spanish or English or whatever. Unfortunately, this may come at a cost to developing skills in FLs but it may benefit those NTE learners and EAL children for whom withdrawal for one-on-one lessons is now impossible due to the numbers of those pupils.

### **Adaptations and innovations**

A final characteristic to introduce is that of adaptation and innovation. I would argue that the ways in which a school adapts to new arrivals, the speed and scale of the adaptations, including to often long-standing policies and systems is a measure of super-diversity.

Freeport school and its staff have experienced minor and major adaptations, as follows:

Due to the arrival of large numbers of Roma Slovak children the school established a New Arrivals Centre where the children were made aware of the norms of behaviour in Freeport school and taught rudimentary English as well as Personal, Social and Health education, including basic hygiene skills. New arrivals are first tested for English, with the help of the Romani translators, and assigned to a new arrivals class. After about two months, depending on progress, the pupils are integrated, with support, into mainstream lessons, often with adapted timetables to include more EAL support (Source: key respondent interview).

When pupils have not been mainstream schooled prior to arrival, certain behaviours manifest themselves in terms of classroom behaviours. When taken alongside the fact that most of the new arrivals cannot speak, read or write English and cannot write another language either, the issues are complex. Such centres are not new, Bullock comments on them in his landmark report from the 1970s (Bullock, 1975). Whilst the school would rather have integrated new arrivals immediately into the classroom with additional support for English (Respondent interview), the number of new pupils and the complexity of issues necessitated a special arrangement. Although the original New Arrivals centre was situated away from the school site, it is now an integral part of the school building with pupils kept on-site.

In times of more traditional migration, it was highly common for urban multilingual schools to recruit staff with the languages of the new migrants – Panjabi, Urdu, Hindi and so on (Marland, 1987). Freeport already had Somali and Arabic staff and, following this lead have employed two Romani speakers. This has resolved many communication issues between the staff and pupils and the school and parents, e.g. letters can be translated into Slovakian for the Roma parents<sup>12</sup>. It has facilitated integration and assimilation and the two staff are a real gain for the school. However, I note further issues when interviewing these staff. Notably, whilst speakers of Romani, they cannot engage with discussions around which dialects or varieties of Romani they speak. For example, if Romani speakers arrive from other European countries, their languages may not be mutually comprehensible (Matras, 2005). At a recent Council migration event in Sheffield, a key speaker announced that all schools should employ Romani speakers (Sheffield City Council, 2013). But that exposes assumptions about the Romani language and the varieties of Romani in existence. This is yet another aspect facing the super-diverse school, which has to now be reactive in addressing the language issues as they manifest themselves.

A more general finding is the gradual move away from what might be termed an ‘English only’ policy to one of ‘immersion+’ in terms of English. Schools such as Freeport, in common with most mainstream schools in England, are premised upon the concept of subtractive bilingualism (García, 2009). The intention is that pupils will learn English in order to have access to the curriculum and subsequent examinations. Therefore, a sound knowledge of English is essential to succeed in the English school system. That is not to

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<sup>12</sup> Letters cannot be translated into written Romani, even by Romani speakers at the school.

say that schools deliberately undermine home languages (L1s), but language maintenance is not a school priority. Therefore, by and large, subject teachers have always conducted their lessons in English with resources produced in English. In terms of Freeport school, some adaptations in this area have evolved, an example of this is maths taught by a Czech maths teacher. Observing him, he teaches only Roma Slovak pupils and utilizes Czech, Slovakian and Romani as appropriate (Source: lesson observation notes); the pupils only speak their L1s with him. More research will be required to determine the most effective way of teaching the substantive content, i.e. do pupils learn maths more effectively in their L1s? But it appears that such are the low levels of English among many of the pupils that the school has decided to encourage communication via the L1 if possible in some lessons, leading to what I term ‘English immersion+’.

This gives an insight into the adaptations that have been made in the school and which I consider give it a measure of super-diversity. I would go further and highlight two ‘indexes’ of school super-diversity: minor adaptations and major adaptations. Minor adaptations are characterized by employing extra teaching assistants who can speak the languages of the incoming pupils, in this case Slovakian/Romani, or adapting certain signs or worksheets to facilitate access by the pupils. These are fairly minor adjustments. In terms of major adjustments, these are significant alterations to policy or practice such as establishing a whole new centre for new arrivals, re-focusing the MFL department to act as the EAL department with the MFL staff taking on responsibility for EAL teaching and learning, and employing a more specialist teacher such as the Czech maths teacher. These major adjustments point to a school that has had to move on from being a regular comprehensive school in an urban context to a super-diverse school that can accommodate large numbers of new arrivals and cater for their linguistic, educational and social needs.

Of course, other schools, particularly in London, will be more diverse, and possibly taking these measures into account, more super-diverse as well. But focusing on Freeport, this is still a major adaptation and sees the school moving beyond the traditional multilingual, multicultural and multi-ethnic school of pre-super-diverse times and being reinvented as a case of a super-diverse secondary school.

## **Section 5: Conclusions**

“We cannot return to a pre-super-diverse era” (Phillimore, 2014).

It is clear from this study that the effects of globalisation and super-diversity extend far beyond the global cities such as London. The unfettered movement of people and goods around Europe has seen the arrival of Roma Slovak people to Sheffield and to Page Hall as one particular location, and ushered in school super-diversity. This super-diversity is evidenced through empirical data from a case study which finds that large numbers of Roma Slovak pupils are arriving at unpredictable times, with unpredictable needs in terms of language and prior education, and the school, in turn, is adapting in unforeseen ways. This case study reinforces Vertovec’s claims that we are now living in a super-diverse Britain, one characterized by a complexity of diversity.

Little research has been done on the super-diverse school before now (Phillimore, 2014), and I would argue that this research sheds light on what I term ‘measures of super-diversity’. When considering a school and whether or not it is ‘super-diverse’ one must consider the linguistic profile of the school. But a linguistic profile only points to the



numbers of languages in a school. It does not point to speed of arrival or rate of churn nor the adaptations made by the school to adjust for the diverse needs of the pupils. The unpredictability of the super-diverse school is also manifested in the need of staff to retrain or be retrained, for example English specialists who are able to teach the literature of Shakespeare to advanced pre-university level pupils being retrained in the teaching of basic phonics to NTE children. The MFL teachers have been particularly influenced by the impact of the arrival of the Roma Slovak children with language teachers now teaching EAL. None of the language teachers I spoke to imagined they would be teachers of EAL as a part of their instructed teaching time. This in turn may impact on my role as a trainer of teachers of MFL: Should I be training teachers of MFL *with* EAL? There are limitations to my argument that Freeport represents a super-diverse school, based as it is on empirical data from one secondary school in South Yorkshire. I would argue though that whilst I cannot generalize from the research, there is a degree of reliability with these findings. Based on Bassey's notions of fuzzy generalization and prediction (Bassey, 1999) I would argue that many schools in urban settings in the UK will be experiencing similar (or the same) issues in relation to immigration, EAL and unpredictability, with unpredictability a key variable. I would not argue that all urban schools are experiencing the same issues. In agreement with Phillimore (2014) I would argue that for schools such as Freeport there is no return to a pre-super-diverse era. Indeed, I would expect schools such as Freeport to increasingly become the urban 'norm'. The overarching theme that has emerged from this research has been that of 'unpredictability'. In considering the pupils and staff at Freeport, and the issues and challenges of welcoming new to English children, there has been little that can be predicted. The school itself is situated in a context of unpredictability in terms of its academy status and its relationships with both the local authority and central government, via the academy trust. This sees the school exposed to the forces of globalisation and the free market to a degree not experienced before as schools compete for pupils and resources. What can probably be predicted, however, is that this underlying *unpredictability* will remain, as one significant aspect of the super-diverse school.

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