

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JUNE 2016

# Language development and school achievement

Opportunities and challenges in the education of EAL students

AUTHORS

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With the assistance of Aysel Deniz, Justina Gilevskaia, Susan Maingay,  
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The research team would also like to thank all the participants who contributed to the research and in particular the students, parents and teachers at the two case study schools at the centre of this study.

## Foreword – Anglia Ruskin University

Understanding the challenges and opportunities for pupils, their schools and families when English is an Additional Language (EAL) is of increasing local and global importance. This carefully constructed and implemented study provides a solid evidence base for practical recommendations that will support pupils, their families and schools in achieving the best possible educational outcomes. At a time when the proportion of students whose first language is not English is increasing, it is important for these students that approaches that maximise educational attainment are implemented as our future skilled workforce will be increasingly reliant on this cohort of students. Of particular importance is the emphasis on recognising the multiple facets that the English as an additional language 'flag' contains. The East of England environment in which this research was carried out reflects a very wide range of communities and environments and as such the results are likely to be applicable to other locations. Although in many ways it should be self-evident that a holistic approach to supporting EAL pupils would result in the best outcomes, the report highlights that this is not always achieved. The recommendations emphasise the absolute centrality of this holistic approach in ensuring that pupils are given the best opportunities to reach their full potential. I would like to congratulate the report's authors and thank The Bell Foundation for their support of this work.

**Iain Martin**

Vice Chancellor – Anglia Ruskin University

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## Foreword – University of Cambridge

English was my third language. I grew up in Cardiff, the son of Polish immigrants who settled in Wales in 1947, and so I did not learn English until I was five years old. This was not an uncommon experience for the children of immigrant families growing up in Britain in the post-War years.

Increased mobility across international borders, and the evermore frequent displacement of families as a result of local crises, has led to a growing number of children in the UK for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) – the figure has doubled in the past decade. This raises crucial questions about these children’s language development, about their broader academic attainment, and about their capacity to integrate. Such questions are especially acute in the East of England, a region of conspicuous disparities in wealth, opportunity and aspiration.

This study, commissioned by The Bell Foundation, and carried out by the University of Cambridge’s Faculty of Education in collaboration with Anglia Ruskin University’s Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, is as important as it is timely. It suggests that the label of EAL may not, in itself, be an accurate indicator of a child’s proficiency in English. It suggests that factors including family income, home environment or length of time in the UK are likely to be just as important for EAL children’s educational achievement. It also emphasises that the factors associated with risk of low attainment are similar for EAL pupils as for their non-EAL peers, particularly in economically deprived communities.

Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative studies, the report underlines the need for a holistic approach to EAL children’s experience, involving parents as well as schools. It calls for evidence-based approaches to the teaching of EAL students, for greater consistency in the assessment of their progression, and for a review of testing that may put them at a disadvantage.

The first step towards better policies, in education as in all other areas, is gathering the evidence. This study makes a meaningful contribution to the development of strategies that may transform EAL children’s ability to learn, to integrate and to achieve. It is a most welcome addition to the scholarship and the public debate surrounding a key issue.

**Leszek Borysiewicz**

Vice Chancellor – University of Cambridge

## Introduction

This research is published at a time of significant change in England and globally. At an international level, population movements mean that a greater number of children and families are relocating and being educated in another education system and language, including in the UK.

Secondly, the number of children with English as an additional language in the UK continues to rise and over the last ten years has doubled.

At a national level, reforms to the education system in England will mean changes to initial teacher training, to school governance and leadership, and a continuation of the self-improving autonomous school-led system.

This research, commissioned by The Bell Foundation, aims to explore the link between language development, academic achievement and social integration in the context of EAL; in particular, EAL students and parents/carers who have arrived recently in the East of England.

Crude headlines, which assert either that children with English as an additional language outperform leaving other children behind, or conversely that they are a drain on scarce school resources miss the point. The picture is mixed, complex and nuanced, as research commissioned by The Bell Foundation and others has shown. Firstly, the EAL flag alone is a poor indicator, as it gives no indication of a child's proficiency in English. It is welcome that this will be addressed in the future by the Department for Education and that schools in England will be required to test and collect information about proficiency levels in English. Secondly, many factors affect how well a child will achieve. These include where they live, levels of economic disadvantage, prior education, home environment, home language, proficiency in English, special educational need, and length of time in the UK. Research identifies that at the end of reception (age 5) only 44% of EAL pupils are recorded as having achieved a good level of development compared to 54% of non-EAL pupils. However, by age 16, this gap has narrowed significantly with 58.3% of EAL pupils achieving five A\*-C GCSEs compared to 60.9% of non-EAL pupils. Yet these average attainment figures mask a huge range of outcomes for different EAL pupils. Many of the factors associated with risk of low achievement are the same for EAL pupils as their non-EAL peers. These include (roughly in order of impact): having an identified Special Educational Need (SEN); being entitled to a Free School Meal (FSM); living in an economically deprived neighbourhood; attending school outside London; and being summer born (and therefore young for their year-group).

In addition, EAL pupils are significantly more likely to underachieve compared to their non-EAL peers if the following factors apply to them:

- i. Entry to England from abroad during a Key Stage at school: On average, such EAL pupils were 12 months behind their non-EAL peers.
- ii. Changing school during a Key Stage at school: On average, EAL pupils who joined their primary school in Years 5/6 had significantly lower achievement than those who joined in Years 3/4.
- iii. Being from particular ethnic groups: EAL pupils in the ethnic groups of White Other, Black African and Pakistani have markedly lower outcomes than their non-EAL peers. Speakers of Somali, Lingala and Lithuanian have especially low outcomes at aged 16 (See Strand et al., 2015).

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The following four hypothetical examples paint a picture of how complex and different the situations of and outcomes for children with EAL can be.

*Marie-Ange is the daughter of a French banker. She attends an outstanding school in London, has been well educated in France and enjoys a wide range of extra-curricular activities. She attends additional English language lessons at the weekends and has a high degree of fluency in English.*

*Lukas is the son of Lithuanian parents, both of whom are working in the UK. His parents work in agricultural labour doing shifts and are rarely able to attend school, help with homework or support his language acquisition – indeed Lukas often translates for them. His prior education in Lithuania has covered some of the material needed for GCSEs but he has limited English academic vocabulary needed for the exams. He attends a coastal school in East Anglia which is underperforming.*

*Sahra is a Somali refugee who has fled war and persecution and is recovering from trauma. She has had limited education and has limited literacy in her mother tongue. She has had no exposure to English and is struggling to understand lessons and to fit in and be accepted in her new environment. The school ethos is welcoming but she attends school in a poorly performing area of Yorks/Humberside where achievement is low for all children.*

*Juris is from Estonia, and he and his family have moved to England at the beginning of his secondary school. He attends a school in an urban area which has had many years of experience of supporting EAL learners to achieve. His parents have high aspirations for him and his sister and support them with their homework. He is doing well in Maths and Modern Foreign Languages but he still needs significant support to achieve the level of English proficiency required to achieve his potential in exams.*

The Bell Foundation commissioned this study as part of a five year programme of research and interventions on children with English as an additional language. It follows on from the first report: *School approaches to the education of EAL students: Language development, social integration and achievement*. The report looks at the triangle of factors which affect students with English as an additional language, and confirms the need for a holistic and systematic approach to the support of EAL pupils. It makes a series of recommendations for policy and practice.

**Diana Sutton**

Director – The Bell Foundation

## 1. Focus of the study

The research project which forms the basis of this report comprises a two year longitudinal study conducted by members of the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. The report follows on from the first report on *School approaches to the education of EAL students*, funded by The Bell Foundation (see Arnot, Schneider, Evans, Liu, Welply & Davies-Tutt, 2014) and provides further insights into the link between language development, academic achievement and social integration in the context of EAL; in particular, EAL students and parents/carers who have arrived recently in the East of England.

The research is based on a mixed-methods approach, which linked a number of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to understand the perceptions and positions of EAL students, parents of EAL students, and school staff, with regard to EAL opportunities and challenges. Certain aspects had a longitudinal character, such as the tracking of EAL students' progression and language development over 12 months. Case study findings were further contextualised using a regional survey of schools.

The research highlights that a multilingual and multicultural body of students offers schools both challenges and opportunities. Schools have developed a range of strategies to meet these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities. However, schools in recent years have had to do this in the context of fundamental changes to the way EAL funding and training has been structured in England. In 2011 the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) was mainstreamed into the Direct Schools Grant with the result that services formerly provided free of charge by local authorities either closed down or became available on a chargeable basis for many schools. While schools have greater autonomy in how they spend their budgets, they are not directly accountable, other than through the Ofsted framework, for how much is actually spent on EAL provision. The educational context, therefore, is one in which there is a continuing risk of disparity in the quality of provision of support. Since 2013, the government has introduced an EAL factor in local funding formulae in order to meet the needs of EAL children in the first three years of their schooling in this country. For 2015-16 the minimum funding levels for each EAL student within the three year limit are £466 (primary schools) and £1,130 (secondary schools) (DfE, 2014).

Several research reports published in the UK since the publication of our previous report have highlighted the continuing urgency of the need for a greater understanding of the implications of the increasing sociolinguistic diversification of the student population in this country (Murphy, 2015; NALDIC, 2014; Strand et al., 2015; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2014). Such an understanding can no longer be regarded as sufficient without an integrated view of the variables of language development, academic achievement and social integration in the performance of EAL learners in school and of the role of school ↔ home communication. The current flow of refugees into and across Europe adds further urgency to this call for research-based evidence of effective educational policy and practice that draws on insights from the lived experiences of the newcomer children and families with little or no command of English on arrival.

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The wide geographical spread of the East of England and the contrasting levels of experience of schools in different parts of the region, resulting from the recent expansion of families with first languages other than English, provide an important setting in which to research progression in the children's learning and the support provided by schools. The study at the centre of this report investigated how the educational progress of newly-arrived students with EAL is supported at secondary level, asking the following main research questions:

1. What are the perceived and experienced connections between English language proficiency, academic achievement and social integration?
2. What strategies do teachers employ and what are the implications for their professional knowledge and pedagogy?
3. To what extent are parents of EAL students encouraged by schools to be involved in supporting their children's educational progress and how can this be improved?

These questions were explored on the basis of the following sources of data gathered for the study over the 2013-2015 period:

- A survey of EAL provision completed by 46 secondary schools in the Eastern region of England.
- A longitudinal analysis of evidence from two case study schools in the region consisting of the tracking of the educational progress of 22 EAL students with limited competence in English who had arrived at the school in 2013, 44 semi-structured interviews with the participant pupils, 407 questionnaires completed by Key Stage 4 pupils at the two schools, 18 interviews with teachers, 10 interviews with parents/carers of EAL students, and a survey completed by 64 parents/carers of EAL students at the two schools.



## 2. A holistic approach to EAL support

Overall, the findings confirm the need for a holistic, systematic approach to the support of EAL pupils. Language development and social integration (including the engagement of parents) are crucial for the academic progression of EAL students. The findings of the linguistic analysis of EAL learners' progression in section 3 of the full report offer objective data on the link between language development, social integration and progression, while sections 4 and 5 present perceptual data on this link. Overall, the findings confirm that effective school provision for EAL students and their parents/carers depends on information, co-ordination, support and communication, as reflected in our first report and Figure 1 (see Arnot et al., 2014).

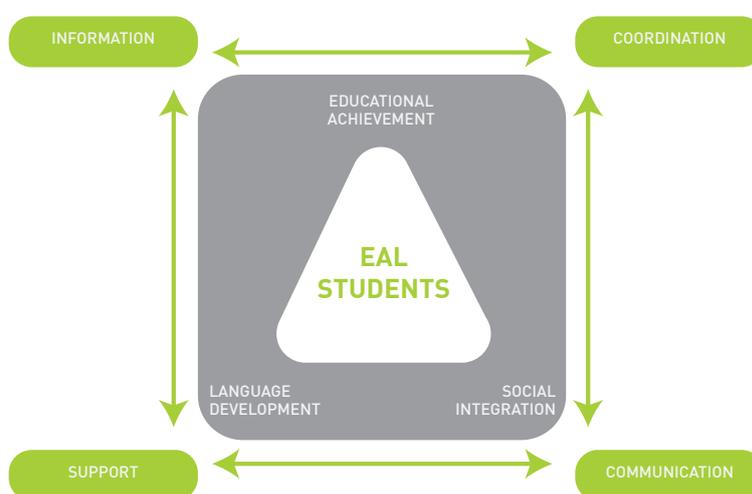


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the school provision of support for EAL pupils

EAL students' educational achievement, host language development, social integration and sense of identity are integrally related as research has shown (Cummins, 2011; Esser, 2006). Negative stereotypes can hold back migrant children's success in academic attainment in school and EAL status itself is sometimes perceived as a barrier to success (Tereshchenko & Archer, 2015). The attitudes conveyed by schools generally and by teachers individually towards EAL students' cultures and languages therefore play a key role in establishing the right conditions in which EAL students' learning can flourish. Our study suggests that even in schools where such support and positive multicultural messages are promoted, the inevitable anxieties and their identity-related consequences arise as a result of the experience of immersion in a new linguistic and educational environment. While with time and increased socialisation into the new culture the sociocultural constraints on educational achievement are reduced or eliminated, the challenge for schools is to be alert to the pressures on and perceptions (real or imagined) of EAL students during the transitional phase of schooling in the host country and to adopt appropriate compensatory strategies.

The findings from our study support the assumptions inherent in our model above, insofar as they demonstrate that EAL students' language development,

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social integration and educational achievement result from a dynamic interplay of information, co-ordination, communication and support. To optimise the positive effect of this model, a strong professional knowledge base, which can be shared and developed within the school and within the educational community more widely, is needed. Our research findings clearly show that aspects of such a professional knowledge base relating to EAL provision are evident in different ways in both schools. Our regional survey suggests that for many schools this is lacking.

While in some senses the model is applicable to all learners, there are specific reasons why it is particularly pertinent for EAL new arrivals, those with low English competence and those from low-income backgrounds. The unique circumstances of these learners mean that without the appropriate support they are likely to struggle to adapt to their schools and to succeed. The key to successful negotiation of their background and new identities and to their success in studying the new curriculum with which they are confronted in the UK is acquisition of English. Our findings indicate that the EAL students in our study naturally prioritised the goal of developing their competence in English before focussing substantively on their academic learning. The teachers also admitted that the language barrier remained the biggest hindrance for EAL students, particularly in relation to writing and the development of academic English, which can take up to seven years (see Demie, 2013). This underlines the importance of establishing a long-term, realistic and consistent policy which supports EAL learners beyond the initial stages and throughout this process. This is where the EAL co-ordinators in our study played such a vital role, in gathering and communicating the information on EAL students to teachers, co-ordinating an approach to their learning, and supervising and supporting classroom teachers and assistants to ensure the students' academic and linguistic progress and social integration.

## **A child-centred approach**

The work in the two schools in our study was premised on the fundamental principle of differentiated 'education for all'. At the heart of this principle is a child-centred approach: holistic support systems are based around individual children's needs within different contexts. These contexts are defined, broadly speaking, by learning and social factors. Ultimately, each EAL child is an individual, no less than a non-EAL child is: 'we are all learners of English', stated a deputy head at one of our schools, stressing that it is important to acknowledge that EAL students share similar learning needs with their English speaking counterparts. The challenge of all schools with EAL students, however, is to balance the individualised support provided by teachers and others with a critical awareness of the additional specific needs of an EAL student. For example, in order to make informed decisions in the classroom, teachers need to be aware of the learning (and ideally social or cultural) histories and, where possible, the prior performance levels of the EAL students they teach. Teachers' awareness and understandings of the EAL students' needs and challenges can be heightened through dialogue with individual students but also through more collective activities. At one of the case study schools, for instance, a video was made by some EAL students in which they talked about 'what it's like to be a bilingual learner' and included sections in which they spoke in their home language in order to draw attention to the 'scary' feeling of immersion in a new linguistic environment. Systems of reporting and monitoring developed and informed by the principles embedded here, need therefore to be as all-encompassing as possible and to involve all stakeholders.

In our case study schools the adoption of a child-centred approach, where teachers drew on information provided by EAL co-ordinators and then used their professional judgements about how best to teach individual learners in their classrooms, reflected this core principle. A range of strategies were implemented in the classroom, such as differentiated instructional input and provision of

learning materials, additional language support, buddying and grouping for both social and academic outcomes, and monitoring learning through continuous assessment for learning. These strategies were used in a measured manner, which were needs-sensitive, context-dependent, and individually-based. Classroom strategies were either language-focussed, such as giving key words at the start of a lesson and allowing the students to write the translation in their first language (L1) beside each one, or through the use of 'speech starters' to support talk in class and 'sentence starters' for writing. Strategies were also based on task-design, such as doing plans and elevations in maths lessons using cubes which can be manipulated physically in order to support their cognitive understanding of the problem. Finally, strategies were in place in relation to target-setting. Level ladders were used for monitoring progress, particularly with EAL students who were identified as having learning difficulties. At Parkland School, in particular, EAL students were given very specific targets in their English exercise books relating to features such as phrasing and register switching between formal and informal written English.

## Parental engagement

Parents, too, play a vital role in the holistic approach of school provision for the support of EAL students, and effective school ⇔ home communication is crucial. All participants in the research; parents of EAL pupils, EAL pupils themselves, EAL co-ordinators, teachers and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), highlighted the importance of parental involvement in the school to help the educational achievement, social integration and language development of EAL pupils (see also Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2010; Walker, 2014). EAL co-ordinators play a key role in school ⇔ home communication and EAL staff in both schools showed outstanding commitment to facilitate effective school ⇔ home communication. However, it is also clear that this is one area within the holistic approach which remains a challenge and is in particular need of resources and further strategic thinking by different stakeholders.

Importantly, the research confirmed that parents of migrant children are very interested in their children's education, reflecting opportunities for schools to include them in the holistic approach towards school provision for the support of EAL students (see Tomlinson, 2000). However, school staff often use a very limited definition of parental engagement, conceptualising it in terms of attending parents' evenings (see Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010 for a wider conceptualisation of parental engagement). Consequently, staff often make wrong assumptions about parental interest and, at times, interpret lack of achievement by pupils as lack of parental interest.

On the other hand, our research highlighted that parents of EAL students, and here especially parents who arrived recently in the UK and/or have low levels of English, lack vital information about the school system and their child's learning (see Hamilton, 2013; Pascal & Bertram, 2007; Walker, 2014). However, parents of EAL students who have been in the UK for longer (over five years) also showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of the school system and need to be targeted with specific strategies (e.g. confidence-building) as they might have missed out on induction meetings which newly-arrived parents are invited to.

School information about families of EAL students is also crucial for a holistic approach. However, EAL co-ordinators or assistants have generally more knowledge than other staff regarding effective school ⇔ home communication; they are also more aware of the 'funds of knowledge' and forms of social capital which are available in EAL students' homes (see Devine, 2009; González, Moll & Amanti, 2013; Naidoo, 2013). Most of the teaching and senior management staff are less knowledgeable and rely on assumptions rather than information,

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as a systematic collection of parental views and barriers to engagement is rarely available. Furthermore, the research identified an inconsistency between teachers, subject departments and central school administration with regard to communication, information and translation strategies. Therefore, a clear, consistent and transparent co-ordination across the school is necessary to maximise school ⇔ home communication within a holistic approach of school provision for the support of EAL students. It is vital that schools find ways to involve parents of EAL students in school decision-making and policy development (see, for example, Coady, Cruz-Davis & Flores, 2009). However, parents of EAL students are hardly ever represented in the decision-making structures of schools (e.g. parent-governors, parent-teachers associations and working groups of parents of EAL students). If such representation was facilitated, information about effective school ⇔ home communication could be more easily gathered and disseminated amongst all staff.

Overall, school ⇔ home communication needs to focus much more clearly on the empowerment of parents, of which knowledge of the school system is a central factor. Empowerment also means that the school and staff reflect an 'outreach mentality' (Hamilton, 2013) and an 'empathetic climate' (Emma Brech, Renaisi Bilingual Advice Service, November 2015) and are aware of the following: parents' lack of knowledge of the English school system; the need for consistent and effective co-ordination of communication with parents; the identification and acknowledgement of parents' specific needs; the avoidance of over-relying on pupils to mediate and translate information between school and home; and the avoidance of labelling and underestimating the engagement and interest of parents of EAL pupils (e.g. on the basis of country of origin) in their child's learning.



### 3. The social, linguistic and academic dimensions of progression in learning: the EAL students' perceptions and performance

What are the perceived and experienced connections between English language proficiency, academic achievement and social integration? This question was addressed by investigating the patterns of progression in these three areas of EAL development evident in our analysis of the EAL students' academic and linguistic performance, as well as their perceptions as formulated in the interviews and Key Stage 4 student survey conducted in the case study schools. The findings also pinpoint intersections between the three domains (see Section 3 of the full report; <http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/ealead/>).

#### English language development

- There was evidence of significant improvement in the following areas of the EAL participant students' proficiency in English at interview: comprehension of interviewer questioning; willingness to speak (as measured by length of replies); and in certain areas of language production such as in the range and accuracy of verb tenses, and in expression of conjecture, comparisons, likes and dislikes and expressions of feeling. There was also a significant reduction in the need for interpreter intervention.
- There was no significant effect of home and school use of the L1 on the spoken English performance of our sample of EAL students. On the other hand, having mixed language friendship groups (L1 and English-speaking) had a more positive effect on the EAL students' spoken competence than monolingual-based groups did, particularly in the first few months following admission to the school. EAL students in mixed friendship groups registered fewer problems in a range of items relating to language production and comprehension and registered the highest scores for correct use of a range of formal language features.
- EAL students stated that they were more confident in speaking than in other aspects of English language use and that they encountered problems with listening comprehension, whether in the classroom or outside, more than with other aspects. Native speaker accents and speed of delivery in English reportedly posed problems for some EAL students. There was little acknowledgement by the students of the difficulties they were evidently encountering in grammatical construction or written expression of thought, indicating that they conceptualised their progress in English more in terms of informal interpersonal language development rather than more formal linguistic competence.
- Increased confidence in English writing was indicated by increased word count in the writing tasks between the two rounds of testing by most participants in the sample. There was an increase in correct usage of present tense. While some participants used L1 words in the written task in the first round, no L1 words were used a year later in the second round of testing. There was an overall increase in correct uses of formal features and communicative functions in writing and an increase in the ratio of correct uses to incorrect attempted uses in all features, but this was only significant for correct use of present tense and expression of conjecture. Otherwise, there was little general evidence of improvement in writing skills. Weaker students made very little progress in writing in the intervening year.

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- There was no evidence that using the L1 as the main medium of communication at home was a barrier to improvement in writing or speaking English, other than in accuracy of spelling.
  - EAL students in mixed friendship groups performed best in the writing tasks and, conversely, EAL students who reported having mostly L1 speakers as friends in school performed least well in the writing tasks.
  - There was some correlation between initial assessment on admission and scores for writing and speaking in the study, indicating a degree of accuracy in initial language assessment procedures at the two schools.
  - There was evidence of a shift of focus in the students' prioritisation of English language acquisition, academic achievement, and social integration following the initial phase of their new school experience. In the first year following admission, the EAL students' primary concern was with acquiring English language proficiency and social integration into the school and community. From the second year on, there was evidence that assessment and teacher endorsement of their academic achievement was more important to them.
  - EAL students indicated that in the first few months following admission they mainly continued to think in their home language in lessons and elsewhere. Some students said they did this in all lessons and when completing homework while others said that it depended on the subject, such as maths and science, or on how difficult the task was, or in some cases on location (L1 at home and English at school). The home language seemed to serve as a vital mediating tool in learning at this stage. After a year, the students reported a shift in their language of thought and said that they had begun to think spontaneously in English rather than in the home language. They also reported less reliance on mental translation of the English input from teachers and others into the home language.

## Academic achievement

- Analysis of the school achievement data for the participants reveals little evidence of progress in attainment within a given year. For most subjects, there was no change in the grade awarded to most of the EAL students studying the subject over the year. The exception was for grades awarded in maths and art and design, for which the majority of the students in the sample improved by one grade or more. These subjects involve 'context-embedded' tasks (Cummins, 2000), which may partly explain the relative success displayed by the EAL students' grades.
- A comparison of the schools' predicted grades with the actual GCSE grades obtained by the EAL participant students in 2015 shows that 31 grades were the same as predicted, 20 were higher than predicted, and 14 were lower than predicted. In just under a third, therefore, the teachers under-predicted the EAL students' exam performance.

- Very few EAL students studied drama, Modern Foreign Languages, or music at Key Stage 4 in the two case study schools. Moreover, many were entered for BTEC rather than GCSEs in the subjects they studied, particularly science and ICT. The more practical and vocationally-oriented subjects and more coursework-based BTEC exams were considered more manageable for EAL students with low levels of English competence. While decisions will be justifiable in some cases, schools should not be applying this as a default exam entry strategy for all their EAL students.
- The Key Stage 4 student survey revealed that the subject in which EAL students felt that they had made best progress was maths: 53.6% of EAL respondents said they were doing very well in maths compared to 48.7% of English native speaker respondents. On the other hand, 70.3% of 'bilingual students' (self-defined as having English and another language as first languages) said they were doing well or very well in English language, compared to 63.6% of EAL respondents and 62.7% of English native speakers. The findings relating to perceived progress in maths are interesting because they suggest that, comparative to their English proficient peers, EAL students have more confidence in their ability in maths, perhaps because it is a less language-dependent subject of study. The high percentage of 'bilingual students' who believed they were doing well in English is evidence of the value-added benefit of bilingual competence in terms of confidence in further language development and acquisition.
- EAL students with little knowledge of English on arrival reported focusing in the first year primarily on developing their competence in the language rather than on the subjects they were studying. In the second year, the students reported a shift to focussing on their academic studies rather than on English language development per se.
- The students perceived their English language learning as mainly 'a mainstream classroom experience', largely reliant on continuous and naturalistic exposure to the language in all lessons rather than consisting of systematic and explicit study.
- Reference to continuity of achievement and positive assessment feedback were key features in the students' accounts of their success in learning at the new school. Achievement was defined in terms of building on knowledge and skills already developed in their country of origin.
- There was some, though not extensive, evidence that, on initial arrival at the school, EAL students' lack of competence in English was interpreted as a reflection of the level of their intelligence: 'People thought I was stupid because I couldn't speak English'.

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## Social integration

- EAL students reported high levels of anxiety on first arrival at the school, due primarily to their inability to communicate effectively with their English-speaking peers. Lack of English also had a negative effect on how newcomer EAL students were perceived by other students.
- Peers, and in particular speakers of the same first language, played a key role in helping newly-arrived EAL students to settle in the school. This was either arranged through the school's buddying system or emerged from naturally developing friendships.
- By the second year of the study the EAL participants almost all reported a strong sense of belonging in their respective schools and local communities. Students credited this enhanced feeling of being 'at home' in their new community to their improved communicative competence in English.
- First language competence played a role in the composition of the EAL students' close friendship circles. 30.2% of EAL respondents to the Key Stage 4 survey said they normally spoke in the L1 with their close friends in school and 52.3% did so out of school. The two case study schools differed in the proportion of reported friends from a mix of countries, with Parkland School students reporting a much higher proportion of mixed background friendship circles.

## Recommendations

EAL students' progression in English can be enhanced by the following strategies and measures:

- **EAL students' progression in English should be seen as a process that is integral to their progression in learning all the subjects they are studying in school:** This should be monitored and supported systematically within the different subjects. This support should be ongoing and its duration should reflect the length of time it can take for students to develop proficiency in academic English, which may be longer than the three years currently allocated in the funding formula.
- **Developing and implementing appropriate interventions which support EAL students to develop their writing skills:** The focus of such support should be on explicit instruction on how to compose the different text types that the students will need to write as part of their coursework and assessment requirements in their curricular subjects. This could involve study of relevant model texts displaying a range of formal and communicative features typical of their register and genre, ample opportunities for students to notice and practise using such features in their own writing, systematic feedback on their progress and on the difficulties they have with their formal linguistic production, and peer editing and assessment of writing tasks. In particular, effort needs to be invested in supporting lower attaining learners.

- **Peer learning and support opportunities should be maximised:** Opportunities which involve task-based communication and problem solving, particularly in pairs and groups with English-speaking buddies, should be provided for EAL students in order to enable them to have exposure to rich linguistic input and to benefit from collaboration with peers in completing learning tasks.
- **Teachers should employ a wide range of differentiated strategies in order to provide support for the students' processing of the language, such as:** task simplification; translation or modification of materials or oral input using e.g. bilingual staff, software, dictionaries, translated books/materials, prompt cards; teacher instruction simplification; buddying with other students, e.g. who share the same home language.
- **Teachers should employ strategies to compensate for the delayed focus on subject learning:** To counterbalance the students' tendency to focus on language rather than on subject content learning in the first six months or so following admission, teachers should develop appropriate strategies to compensate for the delayed focus on subject learning through, for instance, catch-up sessions in specific subjects where appropriate. Such strategies could, for example, consist of tuition in the L1 or the use of scaffolded English to support learning in particular subjects.
- **Extensive reading should be promoted:** Given the evidence of the importance of independent reading in English in our study, it is recommended that schools survey their EAL students to find out if they are reading English in their leisure time and to look into ways of promoting reading with individuals both in English and in the home language. Given the importance of transference of literacy skills between home language and English as an additional language (Jang et al., 2013), students who are literate in their L1 should also be encouraged to continue to read for pleasure in their home language.

#### 4. Flexible and differentiated: what type of professional knowledge base do teachers need for EAL pedagogy?

The summary of findings listed below emerge from the comments made by the subject teachers, EAL co-ordinators and senior leadership staff we interviewed at the two schools. In an attempt to define the dimensions of the professional knowledge base needed for EAL pedagogy, we draw on the teachers' understandings and representations of good practice at the two schools. The insights fall under four headings, which form key components of an integrated pedagogical approach. We use the term 'pedagogy' in its broader sense, defined by Alexander as 'what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command, in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decision of which teaching is constituted' (2008, p.47).



##### System-related

- The EAL co-ordinators, and their teams, were viewed by staff and students at the two case study schools as lynchpins of the system, and were well respected in both case study schools as sources of knowledge, expertise and practical support.
- School leadership teams, EAL co-ordinators and subject teachers viewed high quality induction and on-going support for EAL students as a priority, and were willing to devote significant energy and as much resource as was available to this.
- Teachers and school leaders valued the diversity that the EAL student population brings to a school and to classrooms. At a whole school level EAL learners' heritages and cultures were celebrated in various ways, such as culture days and tutor group activities, and teachers reported attempting to introduce culture into subject lessons where possible.
- School staff reported dwindling central local authority support for such services as bilingual translation and a need for high quality in-house Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to replace external expertise.
- School leaders demonstrated support for EAL co-ordinators and their teams through practical measures, such as providing suitable rooms and direct line management to gain a better understanding of their work.

##### Strategy-related

- Staff in both schools respected the principle of avoiding easy labelling, preferring to view every learner, including EAL students, as having particular needs. The principle of differentiated 'education for all' was commonly held by the teachers interviewed.
- Teachers reported that they monitored the progress of EAL students particularly closely and adapted practice as necessary. This included the use of target-setting to support progression in English language acquisition as well as subject learning.

- Teachers believed that they were best placed to make their own decisions as to how to deal with the learning needs of each EAL student, having received information on their prior learning, any particular needs, and, for newly-arrived EAL students, the results of diagnostic tests.
- There was a recognition of the need for discretion in any adjustments that were made for EAL students.
- Teachers reported using a number of differentiated strategies to ensure optimal participation and learning in lessons: for example, modified materials; translation resources (software, dictionaries, translated books, translated materials, prompt cards, bilingual staff); task simplification; teacher instruction simplification; buddying with other students who shared the same home language or with English speaking peers.
- Visuals (picture dictionaries, cartoons, TV programmes) and kinaesthetic activities and aids (manipulating objects, making models) were felt to be especially helpful. However, teachers also saw visuals as an additional scaffolding resource rather than as a substitute for language processing. The history teacher at Parkland School, for instance, reported that the school was following advice of giving EAL students 'a lot more reading, a lot more opportunities to challenge the issue that they have [with English literacy]'.
- Teachers noted that modified oral input was important, whether simplified language, slower speech, or repetition, and noted that training had benefited them greatly with understanding how to do this effectively.
- Integration-related strategies reported by the teachers included the use of multicultural buddying activities in order to create a rapport between groups of students who would otherwise not mix (such as interviews of newly-arrived Year 10 EAL students by Year 7 students about life in the former students' country of origin).
- Grouping was commonly viewed as a useful strategy serving the dual aim of learning content and language simultaneously. EAL students with low levels of proficiency benefited from listening to input from their peers and also from opportunities to learn through collective problem-solving.

## Language-related

- Teachers and EAL co-ordinators viewed a lack of English proficiency to be the biggest barrier to successful social and academic inclusion (see Strand et al., 2015).
- While it was felt better to keep students in mainstream classes, extra support (whether one-on-one or in small groups) was offered where there was a perceived need. Some subject departments also provided additional subject-specific support classes.
- Teachers were aware of the particular demands on EAL students of having to deal with both curricular content and language.

- Developing good levels of literacy was felt to be more difficult to achieve than oracy (Cummins, 1981, 2000). Teachers commented that the majority of EAL students developed functional oral proficiency within a year but continued to struggle to use appropriate academic English, even at Key Stage 4. The EAL co-ordinators identified this dimension of proficiency as an area of need to be addressed.
- The 'cultural connotations' of some subjects, such as English and history, were felt to be potentially challenging for some EAL students.
- In subjects such as maths and science, recent changes to the curriculum that have placed more emphasis on functional linguistic skills were felt by teachers to disadvantage EAL students, while in the past any lack of academic English would not necessarily have been a disadvantage.
- There was no consistent approach to the use of the home language. While in language-related subjects such as English and foreign languages, the teachers were keen to develop bi-literacy and multilingual competence, other subject teachers in these schools seemed to have a different approach, allowing for some use early on (e.g. bilingual dictionaries, writing or sharing ideas orally in the home language) but this was seen as a bridge that would lead to English only as quickly as was practicable (see Liu & Evans, in press). The home language was sometimes seen as useful in allowing students to write down their ideas and thoughts in response to a particular task before translating them into English. Students were often aware of the differences in practices between teachers but had no understanding of the rationale.
- Teachers supported the use of the home language for socialising among peers in school as long as it was not used to exclude other students.

## Assessment-related

- Both schools relied on adaptations of the QCA's (2000) *A Language in common: Assessing English as an additional language* as a scale for initial and subsequent monitoring of the students' progress in English. The EAL co-ordinators at both schools acknowledged the limitations of this scale. At Parkland School all newly-arrived EAL students were also asked to complete Cognitive Ability Tests.
- Many teachers felt that the information on EAL students' prior attainment obtained at admission was fragmentary and unreliable. There was a preference for in-house assessments and they only used the information provided by the local authority as 'an indicator' of issues that required special attention.
- Both schools employed strategies for academic inclusion. Students with knowledge of English were placed in mainstream classes on arrival. If they had no English then there was a phased induction.
- With respect to setting, both schools were keen to emphasise that performance in substantive subjects, and not level of English, determined the set that EAL students were assigned to.

- In cases where the level of academic attainment was yet to be established, newly-arrived EAL students were placed in middle or top sets for a time to ascertain in which subject groups they should be placed longer term. At Parkland School, a criterion for choosing classes to place newly-arrived EAL students was that of availability of good language role models in the class. Another key criterion for placement was an individual's potential, rather than their current performance.
- EAL co-ordinators at both schools followed up on monitoring the students' progression subsequent to initial assessment through consulting the centrally stored records of classroom assessments in each subject. There was no systematic monitoring of English through intermittent testing against the assessment scales after the initial assessment.

## Recommendations

- **Implementing a child centred approach:** A child-centred approach should be the core principle of EAL provision in schools, whereby EAL students are given additional support when needed, for as long as it is needed. Given the diverse range of linguistic, academic and social integration needs and profiles of EAL students within a school, individualised support, informed by a rounded knowledge of each student's profile, needs to be provided rather than a one-size-fits-all template of EAL provision (Bourne, 2001; Safford, 2003). In order for teachers to be able to work effectively within this pedagogical framework, the professional knowledge base of teachers regarding EAL pedagogy should take account of the following areas:

### Classroom and pedagogy

- **Provision of targeted individual support:** While keeping students in mainstream classes should remain the principal approach to EAL students' schooling (Leung 2001, 2007), targeted individual support, in both language and subject matter, should be provided at the early stages of learning where necessary and school leaders should support this practically.
- **Cultural and cross-linguistic awareness:** Teachers should be sensitive to features of different languages and cultures of learning to which learners may have been exposed, as this will help them make better pedagogical decisions. Similarities and differences between the home language and English can play a part in both helping and impeding acquisition of English. Similarly, awareness of the extent to which a newly-arrived EAL student has had experience of group work or other classroom interactional practices can help smooth the transitional process within mainstream lessons.

- **Awareness of the need for whole-school consistent language practices:** As indicated in our first report (Arnot et al., 2014), a fully implemented language policy helps reduce inconsistencies in teachers' attitudes and practices regarding the use of the EAL students' home language in the classroom and beyond, and promotes a cohesive and systemic whole-school approach. Individual teachers may have different explanations of whether or not given practices are appropriate in their particular contexts and subjects, but these justifications must be part of an overall coherent school rationale that acknowledges the value of bilingualism, and attempts to minimise the need for EAL students to adjust to potentially conflicting messages and pedagogical practices.
- **Developing academic English:** CPD activities in school should include a focus on how to monitor progression in academic English within different subjects, and also more globally through the use of EAL-appropriate scales and competency descriptors.

## Developing and supporting the work of EAL co-ordinators

- **The status of the role of the EAL co-ordinator:** The development of a national qualification for EAL co-ordinators is needed and should be introduced for new EAL co-ordinators. The current disparity between the Masters level qualifications required of new Special Educational Needs (SEN) co-ordinators (National College for Teaching and Leadership) and the absence of any qualifications required of EAL co-ordinators in the UK needs to be addressed by the Department for Education.
- **Raising the status of EAL support with the school:** The current situation in which schools have no suitably qualified or experienced EAL co-ordinator in place, despite significant numbers of EAL students at the school, needs to be addressed. Increasingly this support is provided by a teaching assistant without particular expertise in EAL. Given that this work is central to the successful academic performance and social inclusion of EAL learners, and that schools need to provide adequate support for their EAL students, senior leadership should appoint a suitable senior member of staff to assume this role. This support should include:
  - **A co-ordinated approach:** Designated EAL funding along with practical support needs to be used by schools to allow the EAL co-ordinators, or others fulfilling this role, to develop their expertise so that they can effectively assess, review, plan with individual and groups of teachers, and connect up all EAL-related activity across the school.
  - **Sharing expertise:** Opportunities for the EAL co-ordinator and his/her team to work with school departments, and especially English and languages departments, to share expertise should be encouraged by school leadership teams.
  - **Developing guidelines:** Departments should be encouraged to develop appropriate guidelines based on agreed principles supporting EAL teaching and learning. Some strategies will be common across departments (e.g. use of home language; scaffolding students' use of English) and some subject-specific (e.g. dealing with the metalanguage of particular subjects).

- **Whole-school awareness:** School leadership teams should encourage a whole school ethos that values linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset to the school. Such symbolic valuing of language diversity should be backed up by policies and strategies to help teachers and students have a better understanding of how multilingualism can be a beneficial resource for academic and social purposes.

### Formalising appropriate monitoring and assessment systems

- **Flexible initial assessment:** Initial assessment systems should have sufficient flexibility to accommodate the varying needs of the students. The key focus in using this assessment should be to promote the EAL students' potential development within the UK curricular framework. However, stronger intergovernmental mechanisms and protocols should be developed for ensuring transmission of relevant academic profiles to the host school in the UK, particularly in the case of arrivals from other EU countries.
- **Assessment procedures/diagnostic tools** should also be developed for ascertaining English literacy and oracy baseline levels for newly-arrived pupils.
- **Assessment of progress:** School leaders should put in place procedures for the assessment of EAL students' progress in academic and curriculum-related English on an on-going basis and this should be relatively fine-grained so that individual areas of difficulty can be identified and addressed.
- **Monitoring the pace of progress in subject areas:** The pace of progress in most subject areas, beyond mathematics, needs to be carefully monitored and accelerated in order for students to meet their full potential within a shorter timespan than is available for most native speakers. Appropriate resources and strategies need to be developed by EAL experts in consultation with subject teachers working in different curriculum areas.
- **Whole-school EAL support and monitoring systems:** A whole-school EAL support and monitoring system should be devised which covers a longitudinal period from students' first arrival to advanced stages.

### Opportunities for CPD and teacher development

- **Internal CPD:** Schools should run regular internal CPD sessions on EAL support, drawing on the existing expertise of members of staff.
- **Access to external CPD and networking:** Schools should provide opportunities for teachers to attend regular training and networking events to update general and subject specific aspects of EAL knowledge and practice, and in order to share expertise and engage in collaborative projects with professionals from other schools to develop their knowledge and skills in this field.
- **Access to information and resources:** Potentially facilitated by EAL coordinators, schools should ensure that staff are aware of the resources available to them (e.g. key websites such as NALDIC) and how to access information relevant to the learners.

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- **EAL induction and training for newly qualified teachers:** EAL induction should be made compulsory as part of the school orientation for newly qualified teachers. School-specific EAL guidelines for new staff should be developed in consultation with EAL staff, subject teachers and experts in the field. Similarly, all initial training programmes should include training in embedded EAL support, drawing on local practitioner expertise and up-to-date relevant research in the field.



## 5. Parental knowledge, school ↔ home communication and parental engagement in children's learning

Our research indicates that while there has been considerable effort by schools, teachers, parents and EAL students to bridge the communication and information gap between families with different language and/or countries-of-origin profiles, there is still much more to be done. Schools with a large number of language backgrounds among their EAL students and families and schools with less experience of working with EAL students face challenges, but also opportunities in the context of an increasingly international student body. Overall, the reduction in services (such as bilingual translation) provided by the local authority make it increasingly difficult for schools to offer effective support strategies for parents of EAL students with lower levels of English. The study highlighted the following findings in the context of parental knowledge, school ↔ home communication and parental engagement:

- Interviews with parents of EAL students confirmed existing findings that parents cared considerably about their children's education (Hamilton, 2013; Tereshchenko & Archer, 2014). However, if parental engagement is mainly understood by school staff as attendance at parents' evenings, it is unlikely to represent the actual level of involvement and interest of parents in their children's learning (see Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2010).
- Parents of EAL students, especially those who have low levels of English and/or are new to the English school system, face a range of specific barriers including: lack of understanding of the workings of the English school system and, therefore, difficulties in supporting children in their homework and assessment tasks, difficulties communicating in English, difficulties in organising translators for school meetings and low levels of confidence to engage with the school. While newly-arrived parents often benefit from an induction meeting with the school, parents who have been in the UK for longer (over five years) will not have been invited to such a meeting and our findings showed that they also struggle to understand the system, in particular if they have low levels of English. Strategies such as confidence-building in engaging with the school need to therefore be applied to all parents of EAL students.
- The research found that parents (particularly those who have low levels of English) have a significant lack of knowledge and understanding of important areas such as GCSE choices, groupings into sets of ability, school tests, school reports, the A-Level system, vocational training, subjects within school topics and exam topics. These are all crucial areas for effective parental support for their children's academic progression in the short and long term (see also Walker, 2014).
- School communication structures present further barriers such as inconsistency regarding the use of translations and translators, the lack of shared data on parental education and knowledge, and different levels of parental involvement in school processes. Teaching staff reflected a range of assumptions about the aspirations of parents of EAL children, which could potentially hinder the development of targeted communication and information strategies.

- Overall, the strong interest of parents of EAL children in the latter's schooling offers a considerable opportunity for schools to find resources in support of EAL learners' progression. For this support to be effective, schools need to empower parents more effectively via engagement in school decision-making, through appropriate targeted communication and information.

## Recommendations

School ⇄ home communication is a complex area and a range of issues should be addressed by school management and teaching staff to make it more effective:

### Encouraging parental involvement

- **Developing an 'outreach mentality':** Schools should take advantage of the opportunities offered by the high levels of interest from parents of EAL students in their child's schooling and offer school strategies which reflect an 'outreach mentality' (Hamilton, 2013) and an 'empathetic climate' (Emma Brech, Renaisi Bilingual Advice Service, November 2015) which sees speaking English as an additional language as an opportunity rather than a barrier.
- **Seeing parents as an asset:** Our research has highlighted that school ⇄ home communication should not mainly rely on EAL students to transmit and/or translate information for their parents (see also report by Cline & Crafter 2014). Secondly it highlights that parents of EAL students have high levels of interest in their children's learning and need to be viewed as a resource rather than a hindrance to the school system. Given this, the presence of such families in a local community offers numerous opportunities for the English education system to engage with the assets which the families hold (see Devine, 2009; Tomlinson, 2000). Regional, local and school-based resources should be harnessed, be they through multi academy trusts, local authorities, maintained schools, community networks or informal parental networks to assist in the bilingual support of school ⇄ home communication. This could for example include sharing translations of routine school information, avoiding duplication and sharing strategies for effective parental engagement.

### Raising staff awareness

- **Raising awareness of staff regarding a wider conceptualisation of parental engagement** (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010): Engagement cannot be merely measured via attendance at parents' evenings, as it ignores the diverse and complex involvement of parents in their children's learning at home and the assets and 'funds of knowledge' available at home (see González, Moll & Amanti, 2013). Different migration, geographical and/or language backgrounds can produce proactive and stimulating interaction between parents and students at home which can, in turn, be seen as an advantage, rather than a hindrance to a child's educational achievement.
- **Having targeted strategies for parents with limited English:** Staff need

to be aware that parents of EAL students, and especially those who have low levels of English, will need targeted school ↔ home communication strategies. Schools also need to be aware of and find ways of circumventing the exceptional employment conditions. Parents of EAL students (and here especially those who are labelled as migrant workers) often have working conditions which are specific to agency work in the agricultural and care sectors (see Schneider & Holman, 2011), which poses a particular barrier to parental involvement at school.

- **Developing communications that help parents to understand the school system by:**

Firstly, ensuring that all parents understand the school system and know the specifics such as exams and homework tasks, GCSE choices, groupings into sets of ability, school tests, school reports, the A-Level system, vocational training, subjects within school topics and exam topics. Language barriers for parents of EAL children and recent arrival in the UK should not prevent parents' involvement in and support for the child's educational choices, academic progress and achievement (see Pascal & Bertram, 2007; Walker, 2014).

Secondly, highlighting and clearly communicating the aims of information evenings (e.g. GCSE) to parents to support their involvement and confidence. Additional information evenings can be provided in (main) community languages (with the help of bilingual advisers, volunteer experienced parents and/or interpreters).

Thirdly, by providing clear guidance in an induction meeting about expectations and opportunities for parental involvement, and how to access homework and exams tasks. The research project produced a template (see Appendix B in main report), which can be used to encourage newly-arrived families to get involved by presenting their country of origin/previous country of residence.

Fourthly, school communication strategies with parents need to reflect a reasonable level of consensus, co-ordination, continuity and quality across departments and among staff. Phone calls are often problematic as a communication tool and whenever possible email and face-to-face communication (with translators or translation tools) should be used.

- **Having a representative voice:** Parents of EAL students are significantly underrepresented in school structures (e.g. as governors, in parent-teacher associations etc.). Recently announced plans to reform school governance may make this even more difficult to achieve. The representation and involvement of parents of EAL students should be actively encouraged and supported. The formation of parent networks is cost-effective and helps parents of EAL students to understand the school system and to integrate. It also offers opportunities to contribute their own language, values, skills and recommendations (see Ramalingam & Griffith, 2015, on community and parent-led strategies).

### School ↔ home communication and translations

- **Using technology to facilitate home/school communication:**  
Technological advances and increasing use of computers/tablets for student learning at school and at home can support the communication with parents of EAL students in order to overcome language-related barriers (if internet is accessible in the local area). Parents should be informed about IT training and access to computers at the school/in the community, so that tools such as Skype meetings, podcasts and online translation sites can be used for school ⇔ home communication.
- **Developing a clear and consistent policy regarding translations**  
across the school with the help of parents of EAL students (central administration, departments and classrooms). Relying on EAL students for translations is potentially problematic and other means (outlined below) should be considered whenever possible (see report by Cline & Crafter, 2014).
- **Providing translations of all general information, which is available on the school website:** Some schools are already using a device which indicates different languages at the bottom of the school website, which can then be clicked on, so that the entire content of the website (including attached letters etc.) is translated automatically into the required language. Other strategies such as simplifying the language for parental letters and developing glossaries of relevant words for parents in different languages can further support the communication process. Organisations such as Renaisi (<http://www.renaisi.com>) also offer effective bilingual parent support services (in combination with ongoing cross-cultural advocacy and community support work).
- **Local, regional and school-based resources should be made available**  
for the bilingual support of school ⇔ home communication. Our research has highlighted that this communication should not mainly rely on EAL students who transmit and/or translate information for their parents (see also Cline & Crafter, 2014).



## 6. Implications for policy

This research, which is longitudinal, cross-disciplinary and uses mixed methods, has a number of implications for policy.

It is firstly important to be cautious in making any assumptions that the issue of EAL attainment has been solved, as this has largely been due to historic long-term targeted investment in this area, which included the existence of specialist local authority teams, many of which have now disappeared, resulting in a loss of expertise. This was evidenced in the schools surveyed for this report and has been widely reported elsewhere. As schools are now operating in a self-improving school-led system, and if the roles of local authorities diminish as envisaged in the Government's recently published White Paper, (DfE, March 2016) it will be important to incentivise the systematic sharing of best practice for EAL learners. As classrooms become more diverse, solutions are needed which ensure accountability, sustainability and sharing evidence and good practice about what works for this group of learners.

Secondly, it is important for policy-makers to move towards a narrative that recognises the reality of the current available data and evidence. For some EAL learners, along with some white working class children and other ethnic groups such as the Roma, there are significant under attainment issues which persist for certain children, particularly outside London, which need to be addressed through mechanisms including the systematic use of evidence, funding, improved accountability and best practice sharing. There is a welcome emphasis on the sharing of evidence in the White Paper, *Educational excellence everywhere* (DfE, March 2016). It is recommended that:

### Recommendations

- **Evidence-based approaches inform pedagogy:** More opportunities for focussed, research-informed thinking about effective EAL-related strategies and practice should be organised at school level, within subject teaching communities and within teaching school alliances, and other school improvement bodies.

In the context of rising numbers of EAL pupils, and a changed funding system, it is important to improve accountability within the current system.

- **Develop an accountability mechanism for EAL funding:** Accountability for and transparency of expenditure of existing EAL funding is currently absent. Under the current funding system there is no direct accountability mechanism regarding schools' use of EAL funding. This contrasts starkly with the requirement on schools to annually account for their use of Pupil Premium funding and to evaluate its impact. Schools should be held accountable for how their EAL funding contributes to improving pupil attainment in the same way as they must demonstrate how Pupil Premium spending impacts on disadvantaged pupils. This could be done in the same way as for the Pupil Premium monies and, if done, could improve transparency and sharing of best practice. This could additionally be addressed through school governance and through strengthening the current Ofsted framework.

- **Incentivise the sharing of best practice:** With the loss of many of the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) teams in local authorities, there is a pressing need to capture and promote existing good practice and expertise on raising the attainment of EAL learners and new arrivals. It is important to build incentives into the current system for schools to improve their EAL provision (including pupil attainment, teacher training and parental engagement strategies) and offer this expertise to other schools.
- **Build better assessment of English language proficiency:** It is welcome that the DfE from September 2016 will require schools to implement and test for proficiency in English for EAL learners. Greater coherence and consistency is needed in the assessment of EAL students' acquisition of and progression in English. Schools will need clear guidelines on the form and frequency of assessing EAL students' performance in English. More nuanced, research-based and practice-informed frameworks and scales should be adopted by schools, serving the prime purpose of formative development of the students' competence in English. The guiding principles for such an approach and validated scales are being developed by The Bell Foundation (see Evans et al., 2015).
- **Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) tests:** SPaG criteria that have recently been incorporated into public examinations should be reviewed for their impact on and potential disadvantage to EAL learners. Research should ascertain whether EAL students are, on the whole, disadvantaged by this measure and, if so, how this can be addressed.
- **Developing an emphasis on academic English:** It is also important to maintain support for 'more advanced EAL pupils' who, although fluent in everyday English, need support for developing 'academic' English. Noting the government's position below, there is a body of evidence that suggests that, although a basic level of fluency may be obtained in three years, academic proficiency takes up to seven years. EAL learners, and particularly those joining at secondary level, need to be able to function at a high level of academic English because schools often assume fluency when in fact a pupil may not possess the skills to write academic English.

*We want all schools to address English language need quickly. We do not want the funding system to reward schools for delay in this regard. This is why we permit local authorities to provide additional EAL funding for a period of three years only. (DfE, Consultation on fairer school funding for 2015 to 2016, Government response)*

Developing academic proficiency in written and spoken English, (particularly that which is subject specific and exam based) is important for other disadvantaged pupils broader than EAL learners.

- **Improve provision in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** Meeting the needs of pupils with EAL could be addressed by including in the DfE's new ITE core framework a greater and more systematic emphasis on the needs of pupils with EAL during the training year. For example, a greater component on teaching to the diverse classroom and also an improved focus on language in the initial teacher-training curriculum could then be supplemented by on-going continuing professional development.

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