English as an Additional Language and Initial Teacher Education

AUTHORS

Dr Yvonne Foley (University of Edinburgh), Dr Charles Anderson (University of Edinburgh), Dr Jean Conteh (University of Leeds), Jonathan Hancock (University of Edinburgh)

Rationale and Overview of the Study

Context and Rationale

There are currently 1,538,724 pupils in state-funded schools[1] in England learning English as an Additional Language (EAL), 18% of the school population (DfE, 2018). The term EAL is used in this report as it allows us to refer to a commonality of issues that are linked to an increasingly diverse group of students.

This diversity can be described in different ways. For example, children or young people who are exposed to or speak one or more minority language at home, and who have a range of interconnected or differential immigration statuses. The term itself does not take into account the EAL pupil's English language proficiency level or their ability in reading in their home or additional language(s).

The policy framework for inclusion specifies that pupils learning English as an Additional Language are placed in mainstream classrooms; and the National Curriculum Statutory Guidance (2014, Section 4.5) sets out clearly that teachers must 'take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English'. Given that all teachers have this responsibility, it follows that the needs of these pupils should be addressed within teacher education programmes. Knowledge concerning the degree to which this is happening is limited.

While there has been a significant increase in the past two decades in the number of research studies which have focused on the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language, considerably less attention has been paid to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes. This research and development study, co-funded by Unbound Philanthropy and The Bell Foundation, has set out to address this gap in the literature and in practice.

General Aims of the Study

The general aims of the study were:

- **to investigate the extent to which Initial Teacher Education programmes in England are preparing student teachers to meet the language and literacy needs of EAL learners; and**

- **to design resources to extend the knowledge base of teacher educators and student teachers in relation to meeting these needs.**

To carry out these general aims we needed to gather teacher educators' and student teachers' views on:

- **to what extent their ITE programmes prepare student teachers to meet the language and literacy needs of learners with EAL; and**

- **to what extent teacher educators feel prepared to extend the knowledge base, skills and practices of student teachers as the latter try to meet the language and literacy needs of EAL learners.**

---

[1] The term 'maintained schools' refers to state schools overseen or maintained by the Local Authority. This figure does not include independent schools.

Research Design

This study has built on preceding research by the authors into the preparation of Initial Teacher Education students to teach EAL pupils in mainstream schools. It was located at two principal teacher-training sites which had partnerships with a variety of routes to teacher qualification, and involved survey work at another seven teacher training sites throughout England. This approach was able to provide both a wide overview of current preparation in relation to EAL and a fine-grained picture of current practice needs. Working closely with two sites allowed for an interactive responsive process of development of resources and materials.

It employed a mixed methods design that involved the following main elements:

- **Two online surveys, which generated both quantitative and qualitative data, were developed for student teachers. These surveys were administered at the project's two principal research sites and at a further seven sites throughout England. The first survey took place at mid-point of their ITE programme and the second survey towards the end of the training year.**

- **Focus groups and individual interviews were conducted with teacher educators and student teachers at the two principal research sites.**

- **The data collected in the project allowed the resources designed by the team to be tailored to the development needs that emerged.**

- **These resources were then piloted, first in the two principal research sites and then at a further three similar sites across the UK. Feedback was sought from participants in these piloting sessions and recorded to inform the further development of the resources.**

Further details about the research design can be found in the main report.

The following sections summarise key findings of the study, starting with an overview of the profile of experience and knowledge that the student teacher respondents to our first survey were bringing to their work in classrooms. A final section sets out the *Recommendations* that flow from the study's findings.

Key Findings

Background of the Student Teacher Respondents

Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of the current school population in England, it was important to investigate the extent to which student teachers mirror this increasing diversity, and/ or possess experience and knowledge that will enable them to respond to it. The following sub-sections summarise findings concerning the background of the respondents to our first survey. These findings can be viewed as suggesting the need for future, larger-scale research examining the profile of entrants to the teaching profession.

Location of Primary and Secondary Education

Looking at the extent to which respondents had themselves experiences of crossing national boundaries, only 13.2% stated that they had been educated outside the UK. Two thirds of this group had been educated in Europe.

Previous Experience of Teaching EAL Learners

Half of the respondents had no teaching role in relation to EAL learners prior to commencing their training.

Respondents as EAL Learners

8.8% of respondents indicated that they had been or were an EAL/English as a Second Language (ESL) learner, and one wrote of being an EAL/ESL learner 'at this very moment in the University'.

This observation raises the question of how well ITE programmes respond to participants who themselves are EAL learners. We return to this matter in the *Recommendations* section.

Formal Qualifications for Teaching English Language

Almost a tenth (9.3%) of respondents had gained a qualification in teaching English language. While such qualifications are clearly distinct from EAL qualifications, they could be expected to provide this group of respondents with a useful foundation of knowledge about language for their work with EAL pupils.

Other Languages

To investigate the extent to which trainee teachers, who would likely be working in multi-lingual classrooms, perceived themselves as capable of speaking another language, they were asked: 'Do you speak a language other than English? If so, what language(s) do you speak?'

Of the 125 responses to this question, 69, 55.2% gave a positive response, i.e. 37.9% of the total sample. Respondents to this question may have varied in the standards that they felt needed to be achieved to qualify as a 'speaker' of another language.

Even with this caveat, it is a striking finding that only 37.9% of the total sample noted that they spoke a language or languages in addition to English. The languages spoken were largely those of Western European countries, with only a small number speaking Slavic languages. Middle-Eastern, Asian and African languages were scarcely represented in responses to this question.

Teacher Educators' Conceptualisations of EAL

We turn now to look at salient features of how the teacher educators in our study understood what the term EAL entailed.

Heterogeneity

There was a clear consensus among the teacher educators we interviewed that pupils who are labelled as EAL constitute a diverse group, as the following quotation illustrates: 'EAL pupils, or pupils perceived as having English as an Additional Language are far from a uniform bunch.' Certain teacher educators had a concern that many student teachers might not appreciate the breadth of reference of the term.

The Value of Employing the Term EAL

In one of the research sites, the question was raised as to whether, or not, the term EAL was 'actually a barrier', had a negative influence on teachers' perceptions of their pupils. One teacher educator can be seen, in the following interview extract, considering both sides of an argument concerning the value of employing the term:

> ...would these pupils' and schools' perceptions do better if the term didn't exist? Does good teaching really cover it all, or does good teaching do a pretty good job but unless there's a specific EAL focus it misses certain things?

Requisite Knowledge about Language and Language Diversity

Some of the teacher educators in the study were concerned about the lack of knowledge about languages and language diversity that their students brought to their training. At the same time, while the teacher educators we interviewed had considerable concerns about student teachers' knowledge in the area of language, they did not present a blanket deficit view of their linguistic capacities. In particular, it was noted that trainee teachers who themselves were multilingual and had experience of diverse cultures could be a positive force in the classroom, with one teacher educator observing that:

> I think that trainees who have English as an Additional Language themselves are much better placed... they've got many more strategies than English as a first language trainees.

Distinguishing Between EAL and SEN

In discussing the question of how to conceptualise EAL, the teacher educators made the point that there can be a lack of clarity over the distinctions between EAL and SEN. One teacher educator suggested that this lack of clear demarcation of the two areas could be partly the consequence of the models of practice that student teachers are exposed to in schools and the lack of 'definitive' official guidance for EAL practice.

Arguing from these observations concerning the need for greater conceptual clarity in discussion of EAL and SEN, it would appear to be important to distinguish between:

- EAL and SEN as distinct fields of practice;

- how individual schools may maintain distinct divisions between, or blur the boundaries of, EAL and SEN provision; and

- the profile of EAL and SEN needs of an individual pupil.
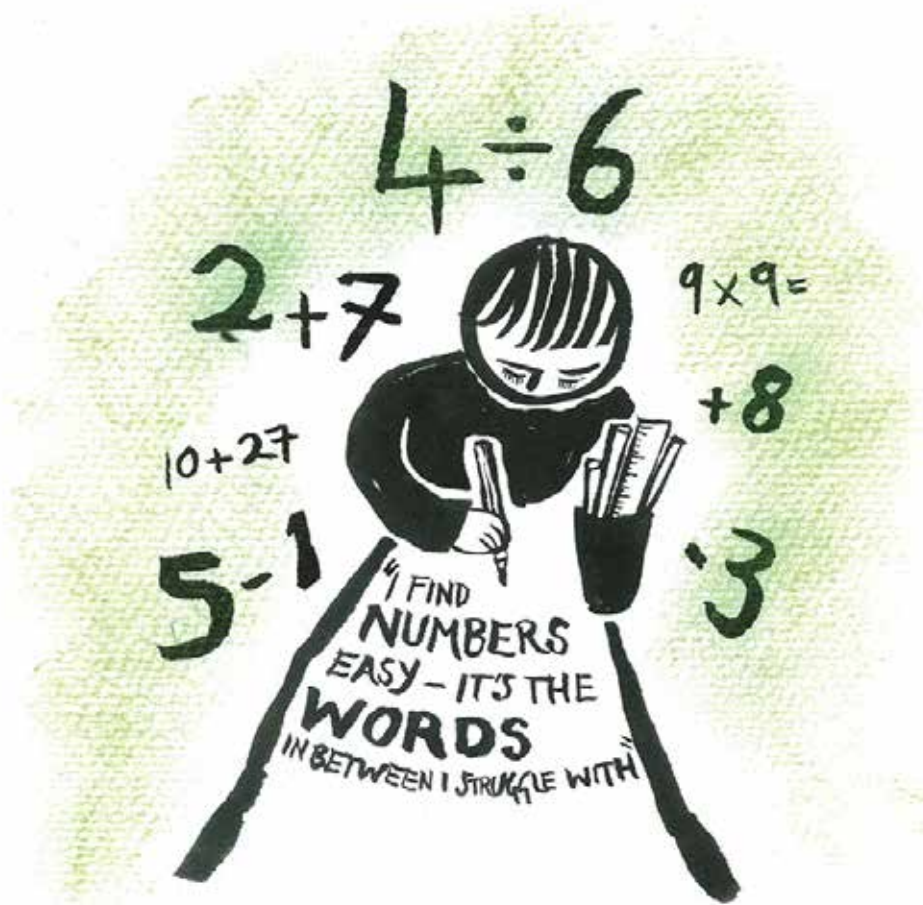
Professional Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to EAL

Teacher Educators' Perceptions

The teacher educators we interviewed gave a clear sense that they had taken on board the message that EAL learners were the responsibility of *all* members of the teaching profession and believed that this message needed to be conveyed to their student teachers. It was noted that EAL, in their terms, was about 'permeation', i.e. absorbed to become an everyday feature of their practice and should be 'implicit' to all practitioners. The main thrust of their expectations concerning students' responsibilities to address EAL learners' needs is captured in the following quotation:

> ...we want our students to create an EAL-friendly learning environment, regardless of – they might never teach a child who would be identified within the school as a child with EAL. But if they did, if that child did arrive, that learning environment would already be set up.

They recognised that they themselves had responsibilities in relation to EAL, but many of them expressed a lack of confidence in their own expertise in guiding their students in EAL practice.

The *Recommendations* consider how teacher educators can address the issue of lack of confidence in their expertise in their own professional development.

Student Teachers' Perceptions

Key questions for the education of EAL pupils are where the responsibility for meeting their needs lies; and to what extent individual teachers see themselves as having a central role to play in ensuring that pupils' needs are met. Accordingly, we explored in both surveys where student teachers saw the responsibilities for meeting the needs of EAL learners as being located. Using a five-point scale (very large responsibility, large responsibility, some responsibility, little responsibility, no responsibility), they were asked to rate the degree of responsibility in relation to EAL learners of: ITE providers, EAL specialist services, English teachers, class teachers of subjects other than English, classroom assistants, school management, SEN teachers and coordinators.

Responses to this set of questions were heartening, with very few falling in the categories 'little responsibility' and 'no responsibility'; and none in these categories for 'English teachers' and for 'class teachers of subjects other than English'.

Unsurprisingly, around 90% of respondents in both surveys believed that EAL specialist services had 'very large' or 'large' responsibility; and around 80% in both surveys saw English teachers as having 'very large' or 'large' responsibilities in relation to EAL. However, in general, supporting EAL learners was not seen as only a matter for EAL specialists and English teachers, with 70.2% of respondents in the first survey and 75.9% in the second survey seeing class teachers of subjects other than English as having 'very large responsibility' or 'large responsibility'.

Around three quarters of respondents in both surveys viewed school management as having 'very large' or 'large responsibility'.

A difference was evident across the surveys in the rating of the responsibilities of classroom assistants, with 49.7% of participants in the first survey and 68.5% in the second survey answering in the categories 'very large responsibility' or 'large responsibility'. This change in view may possibly reflect student teachers' greater exposure to the important role that classroom assistants often play in assisting EAL learners. There was also a somewhat higher rating of the responsibilities of SEN teachers and coordinators in the second survey, (first survey: 64.1% answering in the categories 'very large responsibility', 'large responsibility'; second survey: 74.1% answering in these categories).

Change was also evident in the expectations placed on ITE providers. 47.5% of the students in the first survey, as opposed to 62.9% in the second survey, considered that ITE providers had 'very large' or 'large' responsibility.

Talking and Thinking about Language

Student Teachers' Ratings of the Importance of Areas of EAL-Related Input

First Survey

As both a research objective, and to inform a development of the resources, we set out to gain a detailed sense of what the student teachers themselves viewed as priority areas for their education in EAL for their future careers. Accordingly, they were asked in the first survey to rate the importance of input on a range of aspects of language learning and literacy development, on a five-point scale of: essential; very important; important; fairly important; not important. These aspects of language learning and literacy are set out in the following list, together with the percentage of respondents who answered within particular categories.

- **Specific input on how a second/additional language is learned**
  'essential' 27.8%; 'very important' 31.8%; 'important' 23.3%;
  'fairly important' 15.9%; 'not important' 1.1%

- **Recognising the specific language that can cause challenges for pupils learning EAL within your subject area**
  'essential' 32.0%; 'very important' 36.0%; 'important' 25.7%;
  'fairly important' 5.1%; 'not important' 1.1%

- **The development of literacies**
  'essential' 24.6%; 'very important' 36.0%; 'important' 30.9%;
  'fairly important' 6.8%; 'not important' 1.7%

- **Learning literacy in a new/additional language**
  'essential' 28.2%; 'very important' 33.9%; 'important' 27.6%;
  'fairly important' 8.6%; 'not important' 1.7%

- **Language across the curriculum**
  'essential' 31%; 'very important' 31.6%; 'important' 27.6%;
  'fairly important' 6.9%; 'not important' 2.9%

- **Learning vocabulary in a new/additional language**
  'essential' 29.4%; 'very important' 32.2%; 'important' 28.8%;
  'fairly important' 5.6%; 'not important' 3.9%

- **Learning grammar in a new/additional language**
  'essential' 24.1%; 'very important' 31%; 'important' 30.5%;
  'fairly important' 5.6%; 'not important' 3.9%

- **The importance of academic language**
  'essential' 14.8%; 'very important' 28.4%; 'important' 38.6%;
  'fairly important' 15.3%; 'not important' 2.8%

- **Theories of bilingualism/multilingualism**
  'essential' 20.1%; 'very important' 19%; 'important' 32.2%;
  'fairly important' 24.7%; 'not important' 4%

- **Training in cultural/diversity awareness**
  'essential' 35.1%; 'very important' 29.9%; 'important' 28.2%;
  'fairly important' 5.7%; 'not important' 1.1%

- **Assessing EAL/bilingual learners**
  'essential' 44.8%; 'very important' 29.1%; 'important' 22.1%;
  'fairly important' 2.9%; 'not important' 1.1%

The list reveals that only a very small number of respondents viewed these aspects as 'not important'. This finding, taken in conjunction with the student teachers' responses on class teachers' responsibilities for EAL learners, can be interpreted as indicating a lack of resistance to engaging with EAL learners.

The highest rating was given to 'assessing EAL/bilingual learners', perhaps reflecting students' concerns about how they would address this matter in everyday practice, 'recognising the specific language that can cause challenges for pupils learning EAL within your subject area' and 'training in cultural/diversity awareness'. The resources that we have created within this project have addressed these topics.

Second Survey

Here a different set of items was deployed with a focus on everyday teaching tasks. The response categories were: very useful; useful; some use; little use; not required. The following list presents the percentage of respondents who answered within the categories 'very useful' and 'useful'.

- **Developing EAL learners' vocabulary – 98.1%**

- **Involving EAL learners in group work – 94.5%**

- **Involving EAL learners socially in the life of the classroom and school – 94.3%**

- **General input on learning/teaching an additional language – 92.6%**

- **Recognising language that can cause challenges – 92.6%**

- **Devising resources/materials – 92.6%**

- **Differentiation of content/activities – 92.6%**

- **Language for conceptual understanding of your subject(s) – 92.6%**

- **Drawing appropriately on EAL learners' own linguistic and cultural background – 92.6%**

- **Involving EAL learners in whole class work – 90.7%**

- **Creating appropriate assessments – 87%**

- **Providing effective feedback – 82%**

This list reveals that all of the items in this set were given high ratings; and that even at this later stage of their training, these student teachers were still highlighting the usefulness of 'general input on learning/teaching an additional language'. It can be seen from the list that respondents were not simply confining their attention to the practicalities of 'devising resources/materials' but were also giving attention to the social integration of EAL learners and to how they could draw 'appropriately on EAL learners' own linguistic and cultural background'.

The overall pattern of responses to these sets of items in the first and second surveys on areas of EAL input can be viewed as providing an argument for offering a wide-ranging education concerning EAL. We consider in the *Recommendations* how this might be achieved within the constraints of very full Initial Teacher Education programmes.

How Can English Best Be Acquired?

Given that teachers' beliefs concerning language(s) and learning are likely to inform their practices, a set of questions in both surveys explored student teachers' beliefs about language acquisition and how EAL pupils might best be supported in their learning of English. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the following statements using a five-point scale of: strongly agree; agree; unsure; disagree; strongly disagree.

- **English is best acquired by being immersed in an English-speaking environment**
  There was a very large degree of agreement with this statement.
  (First survey: 25.3% 'strongly agree'; 59.6% 'agree'; second survey: 42.6% 'strongly agree'; 48.6% 'agree'.)

- **English is best acquired by the explicit teaching of the vocabulary and structure of the language**
  There was a distinct division of opinion and a broadly similar distribution of responses to this item across the two surveys. Around half of respondents in both surveys answered in the categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree', around a quarter were 'unsure', and a significant number 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed', (first survey: 24.1%; second survey: 18.6%).

  This pattern of response is clearly not in line with the strong emphasis in some of the EAL literature on the need for an element of explicit teaching of language structures and forms, and that simply 'being immersed in an English-speaking environment' is not sufficient. Neither is it consonant with the very high rating given in the second survey of the usefulness of input on 'developing EAL learners' vocabulary'.

- **Learners need to be taught explicit strategies for transferring meaning from their first language to their second language**
  A more positive view of explicit teaching was evident in responses to this statement, which received a largely positive reaction from respondents.

  (69.5% of respondents in the first survey answering in the categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; 77.7% answering in these categories in the second survey. A lower proportion of respondents in the second survey, 14.8%, were 'unsure' about the truth of this statement, than in the first survey, 26.6%.)

- **EAL learners acquire language best through participating in mainstream classes**
  A large majority of respondents in both surveys agreed with this statement, with a certain shift towards a more positive view between the first and second surveys.
  (First survey: 13% 'strongly agree', 50.3% 'agree'; second survey: 27.8% 'strongly agree', 50% 'agree'.)

  It needs to be noted, however, that around a quarter (27.7%) of respondents in the first survey and a fifth (20.4%) in the second survey were 'unsure' about their position on this statement.

- **EAL learners acquire English best through being withdrawn from mainstream classes for targeted interventions**
  There was both variation in opinion and considerable stability across both surveys to this statement. In both surveys just under half of respondents 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with this statement, around a third were unsure as to its truth, and a quarter indicated their agreement with it.

- **EAL learners will learn better if they can use their home languages in the classroom**
  Division in views was revealed in the responses to this statement and there was no positive shift in opinion between the first and second survey.
  (First survey: 'strongly agree' and 'agree' 43.8%; 'unsure' 42.1%; 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' 13.5%. Second survey: 'strongly agree' and 'agree' 42.6%; 'unsure' 35.2%; 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' 22.2%.)

  There is a strong consensus in the EAL literature on the value of EAL pupils being able to draw on their own languages in school, but clearly this message has not been taken on board by just over half of the respondents to these surveys.

  Prompted by this pattern of response, our recommendations draw attention to the need to convey more forcefully the message concerning the value of the use of home languages in the classroom in Initial Teacher Education.

Language and Literacy: Central Themes from the Qualitative Data

The following central themes concerning language and literacy emerged from the qualitative data gathered in the project.

Learning Englishes

A considerable proportion of teacher educator and student teacher participants displayed an understanding that EAL pupils face the task of not simply learning a unitary, discrete body of knowledge about English but rather they need to master a variety of forms of English and different academic literacies. This includes the task of understanding a local dialect, as exemplified by one teacher educator who talked of EAL pupils coming 'to somewhere like the Black Country where it's not just an accent but it, you know, there's dialect.'

One of the resources developed in the project draws attention to features of dialect, a matter that tends not to receive any sustained attention in EAL education programmes; and involves participants in considering differences between the grammar of spoken and written language.

The Cognitive Demands of Moving between Languages

Some of the student teacher and teacher educator interview participants revealed an awareness of the considerable cognitive and associated emotional demands that EAL learners may face in moving between their first language(s) and English – a first language that may have very different phonological, morphological, syntactic and textual structures from English. On this theme, one student teacher wrote of how:

> ...being able to speak another language has enabled me to empathise with and support EAL student needs, such as understanding how tired you can feel when translating for prolonged periods of time. How children (EAL) who seem to be working at or above the expected level in all subjects can sometimes struggle with a complex task such as syntax.

One of the activities deployed within a resource created in the project sets out to provide a close approximation to the active problem-solving, hypothesis testing and inferencing that EAL pupils may employ in moving between the structures and lexis of their own languages and English.

Vocabulary Development: What Does it Entail?

It was noted in the interviews with teacher educators that a positive feature of the new curriculum in England was its emphasis on vocabulary development. At the same time, it was stressed that vocabulary development needed to be informed by an understanding of 'the importance of world knowledge', prior experience and the culturally specific meanings that surround individual words. In line with these comments, resources developed within this project to assist vocabulary development aim to move teacher educators and student teachers away from narrow denotative definitions to considering the networks of meanings associated with words and the contexts of their use.

Subject-Specific Literacies

A considerable number of the student teachers and teacher educators we interviewed were alert to the challenges that the lexis, syntax and text structures of individual school subjects might pose for EAL learners. The main thrust of talk on this topic is captured in the following quotation from a teacher educator:

> **Scientific literacy... I don't think students realise that the absorption of English takes as long as it does – and then on the outside a child could be functioning, speaking, getting on with peers but, you know, when it comes to specific subjects like science actually it's got a whole language and literacy on its own that need sort of an understanding.**

Some participants highlighted the problems that can arise for EAL learners when difficult concepts cast in subject-specific lexis are being explicated in English. Subject-specific literacies have featured in the development activities of the project; and the main report reveals how a session created for student teachers on EAL and subject literacies met with favourable comment.

The Importance of Knowledge about Languages

A number of the teacher educator participants recognised that student teachers' engagement with literacy across the curriculum and with subject-specific literacies was strengthened when they had a foundation of knowledge about language and a metalanguage in which to discuss language and literacy. Such a foundation of knowledge would allow student teachers to monitor their own language use and be aware of how it might impact on their pupils. Certain teacher educators appreciated that this knowledge of language needed to expand beyond the confines of English grammar. In the words of a teacher educator participant:

> **I'd also want students to appreciate linguistic features. So, having appreciation or an understanding that a child's first language, or their home language might well impact on the way in which they access English ... So that they might then be mindful of the kind of misconceptions, or the issues that children might have in their written English, or indeed their spoken English, and appreciate that that might well be that the child is directly translating from a first language, or another language. That for me is absolutely key.**

In our main report it is noted that: 'Assisting EAL learners to understand the grammar of English will be enabled if teachers have at least a basic knowledge of how structures and forms vary across languages. In other words, a strong argument can be made that in contemporary multilingual classrooms teachers' knowledge about language is not wholly confined to the English language.'

Responding to this need to expand linguistic understanding, a resource created within this project seeks to give teacher educators and student teachers a clear sense of central ways in which structures and forms differ across languages.

Meeting Language and Literacy Needs

Student Teachers' Openness to Recognising the Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge of EAL Learners

Given the strong consensus in the EAL literature on the importance of schools being aware of and appreciating the languages that pupils speak outside the classroom, a number of survey questions explored the student teachers' openness to recognising the cultural, linguistic and literacy knowledge and experience of EAL learners. These questions employed a five-point scale of: strongly agree; agree; unsure; disagree; strongly disagree.

The summary provided in the following bullet points reveals a distinctly positive pattern of response to this set of questions.

- **Schools should recognise and value the languages that their pupils speak at home and in their communities**
  First survey: 'strongly agree' 55.1%; 'agree' 34.7%
  Second survey: 'strongly agree' 63.6%; 'agree' 33.3%

- **It is important for all teachers to know what languages their pupils speak outside school**
  First survey: 'strongly agree' 54.2%; 'agree' 39.5%
  Second survey: 'strongly agree' 66.6%; 'agree' 31.5%

- **Knowing about their pupils' schooling before coming to the UK is necessary for all teachers**
  First survey: 'strongly agree' 44.6%; 'agree' 44.1%
  Second survey: 'strongly agree' 55.6%; 'agree' 37.0%

- **It is important for all teachers to know about their pupils' literacy skills in languages besides English**
  First survey: 'strongly agree' 36.5%; 'agree' 46.1%
  Second survey: 'strongly agree' 50.0%; 'agree' 42.6%

Meeting the Language and Literacy Needs of EAL Pupils: Actions and Challenges

When participants were asked in the surveys what they perceived to be helpful approaches to meeting the language and literacy needs of EAL learners, there was a range of different responses. Several students referred to specific 'strategies' (e.g. using images as support, translation of key words, extra time given to complete work), while others wrote about the importance of immersing students in English and recognised that a pupil's home language could be a valuable asset for learning:

I think allowing the pupils to continue to develop their home language can be used as a useful tool to assist with their learning, and ensure they understand the content of the lesson.

Responses in the surveys from several students drew on input they had received on their courses and in schools on meeting needs, and highlighted the importance of understanding and empathising with the experience and challenges of being an EAL pupil in English medium classrooms:

> **An understanding of their position. Best lesson I was ever given was when a Swede gave a 15-minute lesson in Swedish and gave us worksheets to complete to understand the perspective of EAL students in class.**

Student teachers in the focus groups at the main research sites described a number of strategies that they were employing to meet the needs of EAL learners. Providing space and tools for operating in other languages, along with engaging in particular communication strategies featured in discussions about how best to support pupils.

The interviews also brought into sharp relief how students' teachers' own provision for, and interaction with, EAL pupils could be bounded by the policies of the schools where they were located, as the following quotation shows:

> **We've got an English-only policy in all classrooms. And they're not allowed, unless, I invite, you know, if I said, 'Oh, can you explain'. Other than that, they're not allowed to speak any other language than English. But at social times it's very much encouraged 'cause they need, you know, so they've got that identification with everybody who speaks their language and comes from their culture and, yeah, freedom of choice.**

The teacher educators in our study talked of the general principles and approaches that they wished to see actuating student teachers' actions and encounters with EAL pupils. One tutor made the important distinction between actions which only made tasks 'simpler' versus ones which made the curriculum 'accessible':

> **Lots [of specific actions], well I mean in terms of primary practice, emphasis on practical experiences, emphasis on making learning meaningful, whether that might be the use of words in home languages, the use of displays. I don't necessarily mean, and this is what I challenge the students on, making it simpler, but making it accessible so the children can actually achieve at an appropriate level, as opposed to it just necessarily being dumbed down.**

She then went to list lines of questioning and suggestions that can help student teachers to understand and empathise with the situation of EAL pupils, and move them away from a patronising sympathy:

> **So, we do activities like that to try to get them to empathise, and also to move them away from the deficit, slightly benevolent model [of] these poor EAL children who don't speak a word of English.**

Gaps and Differences in Cultural Knowledge Impacting on Comprehension

Statements made by student teachers and teacher educators within our study displayed an understanding of how lessons may position EAL learners as cultural outsiders. It was recognised that participation in a common curriculum was not sufficient in itself to allow EAL pupils to access the meanings embedded in classroom talk and texts. The focus groups with student teachers and with teacher educators identified cultural and prior knowledge as important aspects of the development of language and literacy. Some of the student teachers we interviewed described how they intentionally set out within their lessons to connect with EAL pupils' backgrounds and to draw on their cultural knowledge and perspectives on particular political issues and events.

The extended quotation on p.64 of the main report illustrates how a student teacher gave close attention to how connections can be forged to EAL pupils' backgrounds and experiences and set out to take the perspective of pupils who may have had direct, and troubling, experience of political and social conflicts, negotiating the moral complexities that may arise in a multicultural classroom. This student recognised that specific words or topics can activate different meanings, images and emotions from an EAL pupil whose family has fled to the UK from difficult circumstances in their country of origin. Such experiences can conjure up different social and cultural understandings and interpretations of the world.

The design of resources within this project has taken these important matters into account. Activities and tasks have been designed that enable teacher educators and student teachers to reflect on the cultural knowledge and experience embedded within English vocabulary and class texts, seeking to develop an understanding of how space can be made in classrooms to explore embedded meanings, and to allow for different interpretations of a word or text to be considered.

Student Teachers' Confidence Concerning their Ability to Support EAL Learners

Questions in both surveys aimed to gain a sense of how confident student teachers felt in their ability to support EAL learners. There was considerable variation in the ratings of confidence of respondents to the first survey:

- not confident at all 5%; little confidence 26%; some confidence 41%; confident 25%; very confident 3%.

The figures for the second survey were:

- not confident at all 0%; little confidence 18%; some confidence 43%; confident 35%; very confident 4%.

Responses in the second survey display a certain increase in confidence. The main report stresses the need for caution in interpreting this set of findings; but even when these cautionary notes are taken into account, it can be viewed as of concern that around a fifth of the respondents in the second survey, at a late stage in their training, still had 'little confidence'.

Student Teachers' Perceptions of their Preparation in Relation to EAL

These findings concerning confidence, in particular the variability within the pattern of response, need to be read against the findings from the second survey and from interviews, concerning the levels of input and degree of experience that the student teachers had gained concerning EAL matters.

Course Input

An open-response question in the second survey asked the student teachers if 'you had any input during the institution-based part of your course directly related to working with EAL/bilingual learners'. The general pattern that emerged in response to this question was one of limited input concerning EAL in initial training, for example: 'One lecture'; 'EAL lecture, framework task to complete'.

A few answers, however, described a more extensive and intensive experience:

> **Yes. We completed a 'buddy initiative' whereby we paired up with EAL students and took part in various activities with them over the course of six weeks. We then completed an essay on our experiences and reflected on the barriers to teaching EAL. We also worked closely with MFL[2] students and took part in a teaching workshop which allowed a select group of students to teach a sport in a different language.**

A following sub-section presents students' perceptions of the degree to which input concerning EAL had been sufficient.

School Input and Experience

Given that the balance of teacher education has shifted from universities towards schools, the student teachers were asked in the second survey: 'While you were in schools did you receive any specific training in relation to meeting the language and literacy needs of pupils learning EAL?' Around half of respondents to this question indicated that they had not received input concerning EAL while in schools.

When support was mentioned, it had sometimes taken the form of a whole school Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session or sessions, and a few responses mentioned advice from an EAL specialist. At the same time, a few respondents wrote of how interactions with experienced staff had been helpful: 'School with 24 languages spoken. Often discussed with staff the approaches taken to support EAL pupils'; 'Spent time with the new starters class, this is run by a teacher who is passionate about EAL.'

Separate from the issue of the extent to which student teachers had received professional development concerning EAL in schools, focus group interviews with the student teachers in our two principal research sites revealed distinct disparities across schools in the extent to which they had had contact with EAL pupils during their training. This is an issue to which we return in the *Recommendations*.

In the interviews some students also raised concerns about the models of practice in relation to EAL that they had observed in schools. Positive examples of practice were identified, but there was also a clear perception that some of the pupils they encountered were not getting the kinds of support they needed.

---

[2] MFL refers to Modern Foreign Languages

Input on EAL: Gains in Understanding and Strategies

In addition to exploring the extent of input concerning EAL, the second survey asked for ratings of the degree to which any input on their training course and in schools had given them:

a)   a better general understanding of the needs of EAL learners; and

b)   strategies, ideas and resources for responding effectively within their own subject specialism(s) to EAL learners.

There was a somewhat positive picture in relation to general understanding of the needs of EAL learners:

- no/very little understanding 13.2%; some increase in understanding 66%; considerable increase in understanding 20.8%.

There was a considerable spread in the ratings of gains in strategies and ideas:

- no/very little increase in strategies and ideas 26.4%; some increase in strategies and ideas 50.9%; considerable increase in strategies and ideas 22.6%.

This spread of responses may well reflect the variation in input and experience revealed in the preceding sub-sections; and it would seem to be a matter of concern that a quarter are answering in the category 'no/very little increase in strategies and ideas'.

A follow-up question to these ratings asked if there had been 'any particular type of input that you found to be particularly helpful?' Around a quarter of responses to this question identified a lack of input; but the majority of responses covered quite a wide range of forms of input and of specific content concerning EAL. Positive contributions that were identified included the answer:

I found the EAL lectures particularly useful as they gave me a greater understanding of the importance of encouraging students to become bilingual, and to continue using their home language to help their learning.

Some student teachers highlighted experiences in schools that had proved useful, and others wrote about specific knowledge, strategies or techniques in relation to EAL that had been helpful, such as the observation that:

I found the suggestions regarding using visual materials, providing scaffolding for writing tasks, and generally explaining how language acquisition develops particularly helpful.

A range of responses was evident in answers to the question: 'What strategies or ideas have you encountered regarding EAL that you now mean to put into practice in the classroom?' Here a number of respondents wrote about the use of L1 in the classroom as a result of their learning regarding EAL. One student noted that:

> **Differentiation is key to teaching EAL pupils. I always have key words defined on the board and make sure that I make the lesson accessible to EAL learners.**

Another student described how an increased awareness of, and responsiveness to, the needs of EAL learners had led to a general enhancement of classroom practice:

> **It has made me more aware of the different needs of all pupils, and I have been able to look at my planning and delivery closely to check it is accessible for all; including grammar on any presentations, or how accessible my resources are.**

How Might Initial Education in Relation to EAL be Enhanced?

The respondents to the second survey were given the opportunity to 'Indicate, in relation to support for teaching EAL learners, a) any matters that you felt were not covered that should have been covered, b) matters that you felt were covered, but that you felt needed to be addressed in greater depth.'

This question attracted some positive comments about the coverage of EAL issues, such as 'I feel matters were covered as much as possible'; while other respondents indicated a clear lack of support and that their programme should place greater emphasis on addressing EAL issues. Many respondents detailed exactly what was missing from current provision. Their responses largely fell into four categories: the need for more strategies and resources; more EAL-related subject-specific input; more opportunities for practical experience or observation; a greater focus on specific teaching strategies and techniques. These calls for clearer delineation of techniques and strategies and greater specificity in illustrating appropriate practice in working with EAL pupils have been taken into account in the design of resources within this project.

Teacher Educators' Knowledge and Confidence in Relation to EAL

An earlier section has summarised how the teacher educators in our study recognised their responsibilities in relation to EAL. At the same time they generally expressed a lack of confidence in their own knowledge in this domain and talked about their own lack of experience with EAL learners when they were mainstream teachers. With a few exceptions, the teacher educators we interviewed observed that they had had no systematic professional development around matters relating to EAL. They also highlighted their uncertainty about how informed schools were in terms of supporting student teachers in developing the knowledge and skills required to meet the needs of EAL pupils. They perceived a lack of professional learning opportunities for teachers in schools:

> I think the general perception in schools and I'm not saying whether this can be justified or not, but the impression I get is a lot of teachers in the schools feel, feel that this is a new situation for them that they haven't been trained to deal with, and they haven't had the CPD input or, or provision that would, would enable them to develop these skills, and they've just been sort of left to get on with it. That may be quite unfair, but it's a perception they have.

We turn now to the *Recommendations*, where we consider the question of how coherent professional development in the area of EAL for teacher educators in school and university settings might best be achieved; and draw out from our findings key implications for Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development programmes.

Recommendations

A number of headline recommendations can be seen to flow from the findings of this study. These are outlined to address a range of audiences, i.e. Initial Teacher Education providers, professional development providers, and policy makers.

Initial Teacher Education Providers and Policy Makers

The students we surveyed and interviewed, drawn from different training routes and training sites, recognised the need for input concerning EAL across a broad front. Preceding sections have noted how the resources created within the study have aimed to address important gaps that the student teachers identified. Interviews with student teachers revealed distinct disparity in the degree of their experience of working with EAL learners during their training period. The student teachers we surveyed also showed markedly contrasting levels of prior interaction with EAL learners. The teacher educators in our study recognised a lack of confidence in their knowledge concerning EAL.

An overview of the study's findings does not support a simple black-and-white deficit view of Initial Teacher Education related to EAL, but it does show variation in the extent and adequacy of the coverage of EAL. In addition, the study provides a number of pointers as to how this situation may be addressed.

- **Contextualising Initial Teacher Education within career-long learning:** Before we make recommendations about the enhancement of Initial Teacher Education concerning EAL, it is important to place Initial Teacher Education within a wider frame, as only the first stage in a career-long process of professional development and the enhancement of day-to-day practice. Attention needs to be given to how input concerning EAL in Initial Teacher

Education is aligned with the training that individuals receive during their period as newly qualified teachers, and with schools' general schemes of CPD in this area for all teachers. Working groups could be created in order to map out a detailed blueprint of how a more integrated career-long approach to teacher education concerning EAL could be achieved.

- **Shifting EAL from the margins to the centre:** It can be argued that a shift in mind-set concerning EAL would greatly enhance both the education of teachers entering the profession and CPD for serving teachers. Rather than viewing EAL as simply a specialised area of expertise that needs to be squeezed into a packed teacher education curriculum, the accent could rather be on assisting student teachers to make all lessons more accessible to the multilingual, multicultural classes that they will encounter in many English primary and secondary schools. Such a shift would conceptualise multilingualism and multiculturalism as the *new norm*, thus transforming a monolingual, English-only mainstream.

Professional Development Providers

- **Teacher education in schools:** Given the shift in the balance of teacher education away from universities and towards schools, there is a need not only for teacher educators in universities and training agencies to be adequately prepared to guide student teachers to meet the needs of EAL pupils but also for this preparation to be extended to teachers within schools who have key mentoring and training responsibilities. Accordingly, the following paragraphs adopt a broad definition of the term 'teacher educator', using it to refer to staff in schools who have key mentoring and training roles as well as members of training institutions and agencies.

- **Teacher educators and EAL:** Such a shift in mindset clearly requires teacher educators themselves to engage in development activities (underpinned by literature reviewed in this study) that raise their awareness of the needs of EAL learners and provide input on how these needs can best be met. Resources developed within the current project have been designed to broaden the knowledge, understanding and strategies of teacher educators as well as of student teachers.

  A key challenge in developing such a programme of 'education for the educators' is in finding mechanisms for the mutual sharing of expertise and resources between universities, other training providers and schools. As a preceding paragraph has advocated, there is a strong case for creating a more 'joined-up' approach to teacher education in relation to EAL and a national programme of development.

- **EAL learners in Initial Teacher Education programmes:** The results of our surveys serve as a reminder that Initial Teacher Education programmes themselves contain student teachers for whom English is an Additional Language. It is important that their needs are considered and the contributions they can make are recognised.

- **EAL within Initial Teacher Education programmes: a way ahead – a 'dual' approach:** Preceding survey and development work in Scotland on ITE and EAL led us to suggest that a 'dual' approach is taken to the development of EAL practice within teacher education programmes' (Anderson, et al., 2016, p.183). In this dual approach a number of sessions would give a grounding in knowledge and strategies. The bulk of input and the requirements placed on students for reflection and action would then be 'infused throughout individual

subjects, e.g., drama, mathematics, and, importantly, across all of the core concerns of a Teacher Education programme, such as differentiation, feedback, assessment, group work, etc.' (Anderson, et al., 2016, p.183). The findings of the current study can be seen to provide strong backing for adopting such a model.

Such a 'permeation' of EAL throughout a Teacher Education programme can be seen to possess a number of advantages. Principally, it ensures that EAL is given a central place, where the focus is on making all lessons accessible rather than treating EAL as a 'bolt-on' addition to existing programmes. It also allows for, and indeed requires, a very subject-specific response to EAL issues, strategies and techniques. This would include attention to issues surrounding the assessment of EAL learners in individual subjects – a matter which the students in our first survey clearly identified as one where they required guidance.

Teacher Education Providers and Policy Makers: Central Matters

The value position that we take is that any 'core' sessions on EAL for student teachers should foreground questions of *social justice, equity and inclusion*.

Salient findings, along with the sociocultural context of this study, highlight the importance of including the following messages and topics within the general sessions on EAL provided within a programme, and of reinforcing these messages throughout a programme.

- As we have indicated earlier in this summary, there appears from our findings to be a need to convey more forcefully in Initial Teacher Education **the value of the use of home languages in the classroom.**

- While one can expect that current Initial Teacher Education programmes will include knowledge about the English language to prepare student teachers to teach the grammar and spelling content of the National Curriculum, a strong argument can be made that it is important for trainee teachers to also have some wider **knowledge about languages.** They will be able to act with more awareness towards EAL learners when they have a clear sense of how structures and forms differ across languages.

- A more informed understanding of the challenges faced by EAL learners is also fostered when student teachers are given a direct experience of **the cognitive and associated emotional demands of moving between languages.** Activities can be provided which give student teachers a close approximation of the active problem-solving and inferencing that is customarily involved in moving between the structures and vocabulary of another language and those of English.

- Student teachers will expand their understanding of language and literacy and be able to act more responsively towards EAL learners when they are assisted to reflect on the cultural knowledge and experience embedded within the texts used in classrooms, allowing them to recognise **how differences and gaps in cultural knowledge impact on comprehension.**

- A similar point can be made in relation to **vocabulary development** where, as we have noted earlier, attention needs to be given to the importance of world knowledge, prior experience and the culturally specific meanings associated with words.

- It is also desirable that student teachers appreciate that EAL learners face the task of learning **Englishes, of mastering a local dialect as well as the 'standard' English employed in classrooms;** and also consider **the differences between the grammar of spoken and written English.**

- **School experience:** We recognise that it may be difficult in some regions to ensure that all student teachers interact with EAL pupils during their training period. However, it is clearly desirable that as far as is possible, student teachers do have such experience. When this cannot be put into practice, they can, as we have suggested in an earlier report: '[have] the vicarious experience of watching teachers in a range of classrooms interacting with EAL learners and then talking about their practice' (Anderson, et al., 2016, p.182). Such recordings would also be a valuable resource for all student teachers and better prepare them for the diversity that is now 'the norm'.

Conclusion

We conclude this study by recognising that concepts of mainstreaming and inclusion are powerful engines that drive the need for all educators to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that allow them to become linguistically and culturally responsive to the needs of pupils learning EAL. It is important for teacher educators to receive the support and professional development opportunities that will enable them to prepare student teachers to achieve this informed responsiveness. Such preparation needs to be tied to the realities in today's classrooms.

The centrality of diverse languages, literacies, and cultures within schools makes such knowledge a fundamental requirement across all teacher-training routes. This requires a joined up, systematic approach that enables professionals in schools and universities to work collaboratively, despite the different programme philosophies, goals, and understanding of teaching and learning in order to improve the quality of teacher education. Collaborations of this kind can break down the 'silos' that may exist in these domains and allow the expertise of the various participants across these settings to prepare teachers who are equipped to meet the needs of EAL pupils, thus enabling them to develop well-rounded literate lives.

References

Anderson, C., Foley, Y., Sangster, P., Edwards, V., Rassool, N. (2016a). *Policy, pedagogy and pupil perceptions: EAL in England and Scotland*. (Funded by The Bell Foundation.) Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Department for Education (DfE) (2018.) Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2017. London: Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719226/Schools_Pupils_and_their_Characteristics_2018_Main_Text.pdf (last accessed 1 September 2018).