Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge Chelmsford Peterborough

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Education

School approaches to the education of EAL students

Language development, social integration and achievement

REPORT AUTHORS
Madeleine Arnot, Claudia Schneider, Michael Evans,
Yongcan Liu, Oakleigh Welply and Deb Davies-Tutt
With the assistance of Karen Forbes and Diana Sutton

Funded by
the bell foundation

Research Aims

a) To identify the contributions that primary and secondary schools make to addressing the language development, social integration and academic achievement of EAL students.

b) To understand school practice regarding these three themes from the perspective of school management, teachers, children and parents in primary and secondary schools.

c) To highlight the potential of school practice to address the diversity of school populations in a constructive way.

Methodology and Context

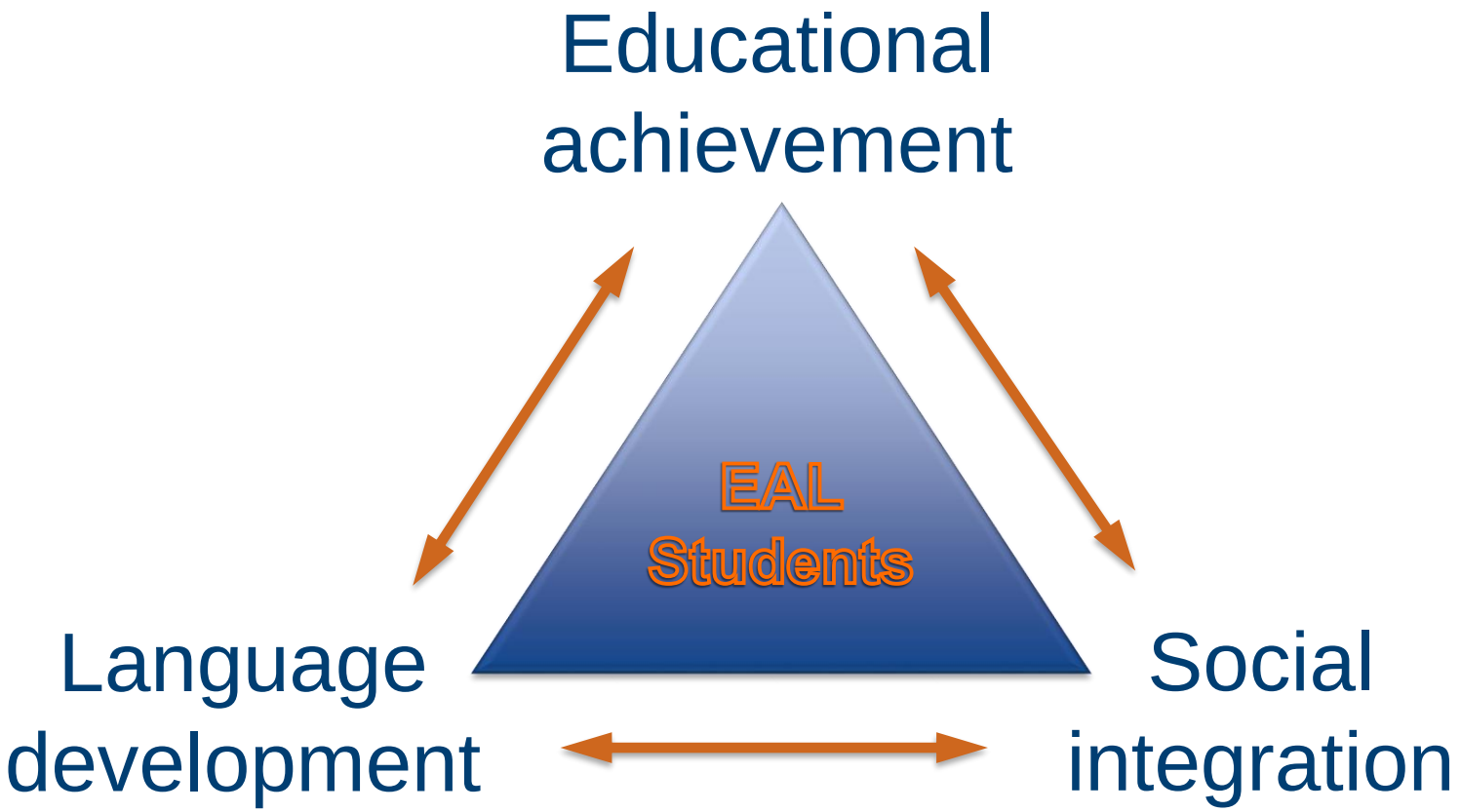
Research on EAL education in the East of England:

- The second largest region in England with a diverse urban and rural make-up.
- A relatively wealthy region although the North and East of the region is marked by deprivation.
- A key destination for European citizens from the new Accession countries (A8) which joined the EU in 2004.

Methodology and Context

- A review of the relevant research literature.
- Two school case studies:
  - a state funded primary school within an urban setting
  - a state funded comprehensive secondary school in a semi-rural area.
- Focus on EAL pupils from the A8 countries: in particular pupils from Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (although other national groups are also mentioned).
- 40 interviews including headteachers, EAL school and regional co-ordinators, teachers, parent governors, parents, EAL and non-EAL pupils.

Conceptual Framework



Educational Achievement

Educational achievement refers to the child's academic progress through his/her school career. This element drew upon:

- Teachers' knowledge of EAL students' prior achievements.
- Available local authority data and school results and on the EAL students' achievement.
- Subjective perceptions of educational achievement were also gathered through the interviews with teachers, EAL co-ordinators and EAL pupils themselves.

Language Development

- **Language development** refers to the development of the students' mastery of English *per se* and as a mediating tool for the learning of subject matter.
- Schools use a variety of tools and approaches to measuring and recording progress in the students' acquisition of English.
- Our framework also includes consideration of the role of the students' home language(s) as part of the process of language development.

Social Integration

- **Social integration** is defined as full academic and social participation in all school activities whether in the classroom, playground or sports fields, in assemblies, school events such as plays, outings etc.
- Levels of participation affect the children's sense of belonging and identity, their ability to make friends with their peers and their ability to work within the cultures, ethos and discipline of the school.
- Our definition of social integration also emphasises collaboration and cohesion, as against exclusion, marginalisation, fragmentation, and polarisation. It includes a sense of belonging, forming relationships within the school and being attached to the school.

Findings: Educational Achievement

- Absence of appropriate and sufficient pupil achievement data (at national, regional and school level) which measure the link between achievement and factors such as English proficiency, length of stay in UK school, national origin, economic and social disadvantage (e.g. on free school meals/social class/gender/ethnicity), and prior academic achievement.
- The primary school staff stated that EAL students who arrived in the early years achieved as well as their non-EAL counterparts by the end of Key Stage 2 (although there were no data available to support this assumption).
- Overall, the school data for 2012/13 showed that non-EAL children had performed considerably better at the end of KS2 than EAL pupils.

Findings: Educational Achievement

- The primary school data also highlighted that there were pockets of EAL achievement in Year 3 and Year 4 which outstripped the achievement of the overall cohort.
- Secondary school staff thought that newly arrived EAL students developed fairly quickly a reasonable level of English for everyday communication but were unlikely to reach an appropriate level for GCSEs. They were less likely to select Humanities subjects, English and Maths for their GCSEs.

'Their curriculum English isn't developed so they underachieve in terms of exam results' (Local Authority EAL Manager).

Findings: Language Development

What is new? Nothing new! - Language policy

- There appears not to be a school-wide written language policy which would provide commonly agreed principles and clear guidance on which language (English and home languages) should be used, when and where.

- Classroom teachers seemed to have their own policy about language use which was underpinned by their beliefs about languages.

  'We need to guide staff.. we're trying to draw up some [language policy] guidelines about 'how much translation is too much?' (Secondary school, Pastoral Care teacher)

Findings: Language Development

What is already known? Complexity and variability

•There existed a variety of different multilingual practices.

•Teachers and EAL staff used a variety of strategies to enhance the language development of EAL students.

•The literacy strategies in the primary and the secondary school were different.

•Different stakeholders involved (i.e. EAL students, non-EAL students, EAL children's parents, teachers, EAL coordinators and senior management staff) have different and often contradictory views about the role of home language in English language development.

Findings: Social Integration

- Senior management of both schools highlighted the beneficial impact of multilingual and multicultural school cultures for their pupils.
- Staff in both schools were aware of the range of strategies required to meet the goals of social integration.
- The primary school had effective strategies which helped newly arrived EAL children integrate in school (e.g. buddy system and young interpreter scheme). However, it was not clear how social integration was monitored and supported after the initial period of settling in.
- Although there was evidence of commitment to integrate EAL students into the secondary school, it was not always conceptualised in a systematic way across different members of staff and teachers.

Findings: Social Integration

- In the primary school, despite positive peer group support towards social integration, not having other children from the same linguistic background was experienced as a difficulty for some children.

  'It's really hard to learn English because there is no-one to help you like in the Bulgarian language.' (Petia, Bulgarian EAL pupil, Brenton Primary School)

- In the secondary school, strong language integration did not always mean stronger achievement or feeling of successful integration in the wider community.

  'And like I was in a park […], and this boy was keeping, kept calling me a foreigner, like Latvians are stupid […]' (Juris, Latvian EAL student, Windscott Academy)

Issues raised

- What do schools know about EAL students' prior educational records, families and countries of origin? What don't they know? What could they know?

- How much do schools know about the strategies used by classroom teachers?

- How much EAL parental engagement in schools is there?

Questions for Discussion

- How can we be confident that EAL students are achieving their full potential in English schools?

- How can schools address the complex issue of when, where and how students could use their first language (L1)?

- How can schools integrate recently-arrived EAL children?