Language development and school achievement: Opportunities and challenges in the education of EAL students

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INFORMATION

CO-ORDINATION

EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

EAL LEARNERS

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

SUPPORT

COMMUNICATION

Arnot, M., Schneider, C., Evans, M., Liu, Y., Davies-Tutt, D. and Welply, O (2014)
School Approaches to the Education of EAL Students, The Bell Foundation

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

the bell foundation

Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge & Chelmsford

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?
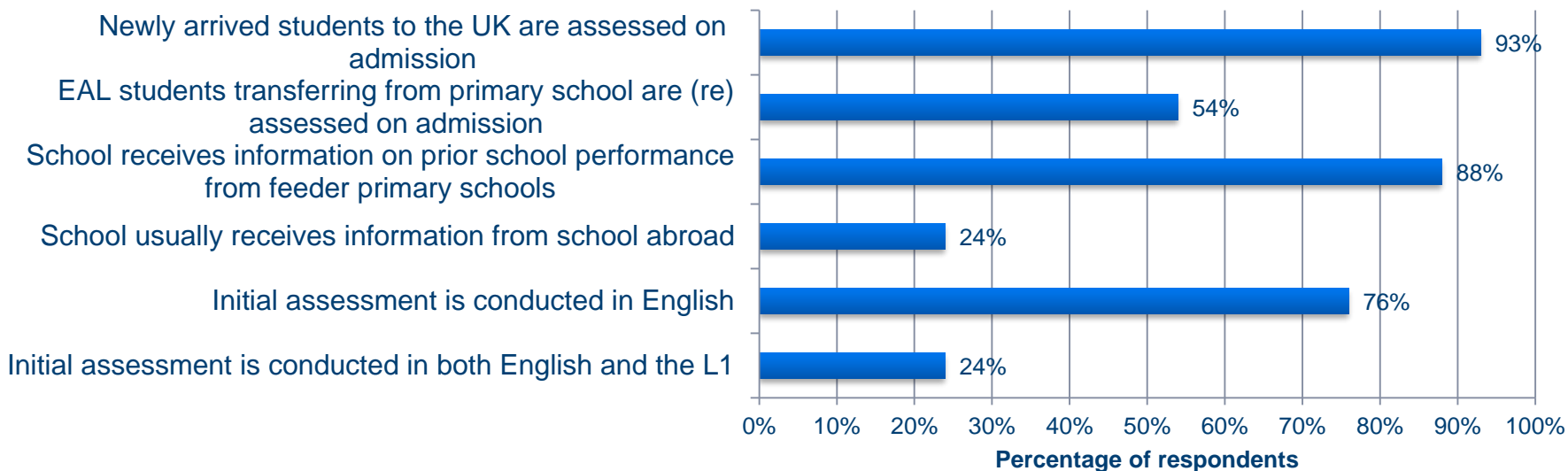
Overview of research project

2014-2016

- Survey of secondary schools in East of England.   N = 46

- Tracking 22 newly-arrived migrant pupils over time at two case study schools (both secondary) in East of England.

- 70 interviews including Head teachers, EAL school co-ordinators, subject teachers, parents, EAL pupils.

- Analysis of written and oral English performance of the 22 pupils.

- Surveys of KS4 pupils at the 2 schools and of parents of EAL pupils at the 2 schools N = 407 + N = 61.

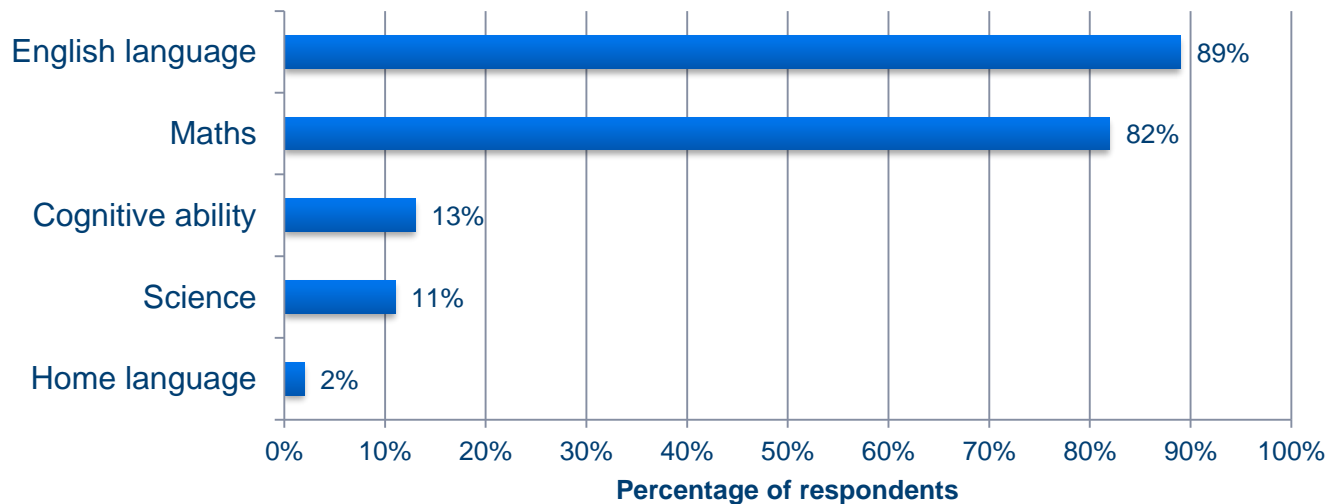- School EAL-related assessment data.

Regional survey: assessment

Assessment Procedures

	Percentage of respondents
Newly arrived students to the UK are assessed on admission	93%
EAL students transferring from primary school are (re) assessed on admission	54%
School receives information on prior school performance from feeder primary schools	88%
School usually receives information from school abroad	24%
Initial assessment is conducted in English	76%
Initial assessment is conducted in both English and the L1	24%

Regional survey: assessment

Topics of Assessment

Topic	Percentage of respondents
English language	89%
Maths	82%
Cognitive ability	13%
Science	11%
Home language	2%

Percentage of respondents

Induction Programmes

•In 53% of schools EAL pupils follow a specific induction programme

•Examples include:

- time with an EAL specialist before gradually joining mainstream lessons

- a 'buddy' system

- academic skills sessions

Language Development

Analysis of progression in writing

Formal features:

Word count / Use of L1 / Spelling mistakes / Connectives / Verb tenses / Complex sentences

Communicative features:

Expressions of feeling / Likes and dislikes / Comparison / Conjecture

Speaking - interviews

- Semi-structured interviews (approx. 30 mins)

- May/June 2014 and May/June 2015

Topic areas of questions:

1. Profile (background)

2. Language use in school

3. Attainment

4. Social integration

Analysis of progression in speaking

Formal features:

Length of turns / Verb tenses / Connectives / Complex utterances / Use of direct and indirect speech

Communicative features:

Expressions of feeling / Likes & dislikes / Conjecture

Interactional features:

Response indecipherable / Interpreter interventions / lack of comprehension of question

Main findings

- Improvement in **writing**:

  - Increase in word count / Elimination of L1 words

  - Increase in correct use of present tense / Increase in use of conjecture

- Improvement in **speaking**:

  - Comprehension of interviewer questioning

  - Length of response

  - Range and accuracy of present and past tenses

  - Expression of likes & dislikes

  - Reduction in need for interpreter intervention

Annike, School 1, May 2014 (8 months in school)

My school is very good, school is big and I like this shool. I have Lithuanian friends, my friends is very friendly and sometimes helps me (**jeigu aš nesuprantu.)**

My first shool in Lithuanian and this school (XXX) very different, because in this shool very much people from **įvairus** countries and in Lithuanian school peope go **tik lietuviai**.

3 question I not understand.

Sometime teacher come in my lesson and help me (like English, geography or maths lessons. In my lessons come Lithuanian theecher or polish.

5 question I not understand. Sorry.

My favourite lesson is science or geography because science lesson **padeda man pasiruostí mano narima darba** because I very like little childrens and I want work **(dirbti) pediatre** little childrens doctor.

When I finish this school I want go in **koledža and baigti mokslus**. When I finish **koledža** I want to go in University and finish **mokslus**.

I live in XXXX. This town is small and nice, in city centre you can found little fountains. Before I live in Lithuania in little village, where you can see cows and other animals. When I come in England I feel very lonely and sad because all my friends and relatives stay in Lithuania. When I start going to school I found Lithuanian friends and they helped me in lessons when I don't understand something.

Now I feel better than last year, because I can speak better in English language and I can have English friend and I can talk with teachers and ask them if I'm not understand something. I like science (biology and chemistry), geography, because I found interest. I don't like maths, because I'm in set 3 and I found very hard in there.

In future I want to live in London, (or maybe come back in Lithuania, I'm not sure yet about that) because I want to be children doctor (Pediatrician?) and I think in London I can found better University than in Lithuania. Also I want to finish school here because it's easyer here than in Lithuania. Mine ideal tows is maybe can be not very small but not very big as well. In city centre I want to found "Starbucks" because it's my favourite one.

Progression in speaking per pupil: example

Name	Annike 1	Annike 2	Difference
School	JH	JH	
Round	1	2	
Communication Features			
Speaks in L1 with interpreter before speaking in English	30	0	-30
Clarification of question requested by pupil in English	0	1	1
Interpreter replies on behalf of pupil	25	3	-22
Interpeter scaffolds in English	0	0	0
Interpreter translates question	16	0	-16
Interviewer asks pupil for clarification	0	0	0
Interviewer recast	21	0	-21
Interviewer recasts, pupil still does not understand	0	0	0
Interviewer repetition	1	0	-1
Repetition requested by pupil	0	0	0
Non-sequitur	1	1	0
Indecipherable	0	0	0
Pronunciation-based miscomprehension	0	0	0

	Annike 1	Annike 2	Difference
Language Features			
Present tense (attempted)	6	4	-2
Present tense (correct)	11	54	43
Past tense (attempted)	0	11	11
Past tense (correct)	1	11	10
Future tense (attempted)	0	0	0
Future tense (correct)	0	1	1
Conjecture (attempted)	0	1	1
Conjecture (correct)	0	3	3
Connectives	2	11	9
Comparison (attempted)	0	1	1
Comparison (correct)	0	3	3
Feeling (attempted)	0	0	0
Feeling (correct)	0	1	1
Like dislike (attempted)	0	0	0
Like dislike (correct)	1	5	4
Direct speech	0	1	1
Indirect speech	0	4	4
Longest Turns			
Total longest turn (sum of 3 longest)	28	137	109

The social context of language development

- No significant effect of home and peer L1 use on progress in speaking or writing (apart from accuracy of spelling).

- Mixed friendship groups (L1 and English speakers) had a more positive effect on EAL students' speaking and writing than monolingual-based groups.

  (KS4 survey: 30.2% of EAL students said they spoke L1 mainly with close friends; 52.3% said they mainly spoke L1 out of school).

- Students reported encountering problems with English mainly in listening (speed of delivery and NS accents).

- Students indicated that in the first few months following admission they mainly continued to think in their home language in lessons and elsewhere. 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.

- This corresponded to a similar shift over the year toward a strengthened sense of belonging in the school and community.

Teachers' professional knowledge base for EAL

The Importance of Professional Knowledge Base for EAL

- The impact of government policy on EAL

- Maintaining quality provision in challenging times and the need for a professional knowledge base for EAL

- The professional knowledge base for TESOL and MFL and what about EAL?

Ten Grounded Principles for EAL

Principle 1: Making professional judgement based on professional expertise

Principle 2: Using bilingual resources and strategies for specific teaching purposes

Principle 3: Employing multimodal aids to reduce the language demands in learning

Principle 4: Simplifying tasks to cater to individual needs and contexts

Principle 5: Using home language for academic and social purposes

Ten Grounded Principles for EAL

Principle 5: Using home language for academic and social purposes

Principle 6: Making cultural and contextual reference to create resonance and rapport

Principle 7: Combining mainstreaming with individual focused support

Principle 8 'Buddying' to provide peer support for learning and social integration

Principle 9: Using dialogic tasks for effective content and language integration

Principle 10: Using flexible and continuous assessment to promote learning

Principle 1: Making professional judgement based on professional expertise

- I think having something that's in black and white limits professionalism and I think as long as the training and the capabilities are there and people know that there's a route to go and get advice, I think that's a much better way than having a policy. […] For myself, being able to look at the child in a classroom, assessing their needs and putting a programme in place that meets that and supporting people who need it I think is a much better approach because how can you have one policy which is dealing with children from Nigeria, Afghanistan, Asia, the Philippines, America, Germany, Portugal, Italy? (History teacher, Parkland School)

Principle 5: Using home language for academic and social purposes

- Sometimes it's extremely important because sometimes it works better if they write what they're thinking in their own language and then they can read it again and try and process it into English. Because sometimes that doesn't naturally come and we do have EAL students that can think it, hear it in English, think it in their own language and put it down in English, and they seem to be able to make that transition. (Science teacher, Parkland School)

- We try to encourage students to read in their home language as well as in English to try and keep them bilingual, increase the vocabulary in both languages but having just had year 8 parents evening and tried that and brought that up with parents, parents are a little bit surprised that we were encouraging home language reading as well, and that's really important actually. (English teacher, Parkland School)

Principle 7: Combining mainstreaming with individual focused support

- I'm not agreeing with some literature that says you have to keep them out from class for one month, two months, no, even if their English is very basic. From my personal experience, … you keep them one week the most, then gradually introduce to the school system. Even taking year 10 and 11, if they don't know English, if you are keeping them as long as you think, oh this is right and teaching them grammar. But when they are going in class, they are getting lost because they don't know what is this coursework, they're missing a lot and I think the quicker the better. But at the same time they should have some intervention one to one and basic grammar but gradually what they're learning in the class such as formulas or coursework, and say look you are going to learn in the class this coursework, let's read a bit, I'll explain. You have to combine the language. (EAL co-ordinator, Kirkwood Academy)

The Key Principle Child-Centred Differentiated Education for All

- A learner is a learner

- Child-centred approach vs programme deliver

- Differentiated diversity in pedagogy

- A systemic response approach

- Teacher professionalism

Interest in their children's education by parents of EAL students

- Parents of EAL students have considerable **interest in their children's education** (reflected in the interviews and survey both with parents and EAL pupils).

Importance of knowing how child is doing at school (N=61; parental survey)	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
Very important	95 %	78 %
Important	5 %	22 %

Wider conceptualisation of engagement

- **Staff** mainly understood engagement as the **attendance of parents' evenings** and often **deduced parental engagement from students' achievement**.

- A **wider conceptualisation of parental engagement** needs to be applied to capture parental engagement (see Goodall and Vorhaus 2010, p.14):

  - learning at home, including discussions about school, aspirations and careers;

  - school-home and home-school communication;

  - in-school activities, such as parents' evenings and meetings with class teachers;

  - involvement in decision-making (e.g. role of school governor); and

  - collaboration with the community

Lack of knowledge (survey of EAL parents, N = 61)

Limited and very limited understanding of …	Parkland School	Kirkwood Academy
School tests	32 %	58 %
School reports	27 %	54 %
Grouping into sets of ability	35 %	46 %
GCSE choices	35 %	42 %
Vocational training	49 %	46 %
A-Level system	32 %	42 %
School subjects	16 %	33 %
Topics within subjects	38 %	58 %
Exam topics	41 %	54 %
When exams are	24 %	33 %
Tasks set for homework	24 %	54 %

Barriers to engagement for parents of EAL students

- difficulties communicating in **English**

- difficulties in **organising translators** for school meetings

- problems regarding the **reliance on children to translate**

- **lack of understanding** the workings of the English school system

- **low levels of confidence** to engage with the school

- **difficult employment conditions** (especially for migrant workers in the care and agriculture sector)

- **Inconsistency amongst staff** regarding communication, information and translation strategies

- Inconsistency **amongst staff regarding awareness** of parental (lack of) knowledge and barriers

Recommendations: opportunities

- **Parents should be seen as a resource** for EAL learners' progression (e.g. Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti 2013)

- **Wider conceptualisation** of parental engagement.

- Ensuring that **all parents understand the school system.**

- More effective, consistent and targeted **communication, information and translation strategies**.

- **Using technology** to facilitate home/school communication (podcasts, skype meetings, online translation tools),

Recommendations: school ⇔ home communication

- Relying on **EAL students for translations is potentially problematic** (see report by Cline & Crafter, 2014).

- **Local, regional and school-based resources** should be made available for the bilingual support of school ⇔ home communication.

- **Having a representative voice**: Parents of EAL students are significantly underrepresented in school structures (e.g. in parent teacher associations etc.).

References

- Cline, T. & Crafter, S. (2014). *Child language brokering in school: Final research report – advantages and disadvantages of using children as translators and interpreters*. London: Nuffield Foundation.

- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C. & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. London: Routledge.

- Goodall J. & Vorhaus J. (2010). *Review of best practice in parental engagement.* Department for Education. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/ system/uploads/attachment data/file/182508/DFE-RR156.pdf (accessed on 15 April 2016).

Thank you!

The **Final Report** and **Executive Summary**

are available for downloading from

http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/ealead/

and from the Bell Foundation website

https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/Work/EAL/