



‘Diversity without access to powerful forms of language ghettoises students...the more linguistic capital one has, the greater one’s social and economic mobility’ (Janks, 2010)

Aims and Themes

Aim:

- Across a number of different studies, we talked to teachers, specialists, Head/Depute Teachers and student teachers about the language and literacy needs of pupils learning EAL.

Themes:

- Cultural Isolation
- Language and Literacy Needs
- Shifting Identities & Teacher Confidence

Demographics

Pupils learning English as an additional language in Scottish schools:

- 741 (2007)
- 41,524 (2017)
- Some schools in Edinburgh have seen a large increase this year where some classes in P1 & P2 are 90% bilingual.
- 149 languages are represented in Scottish schools.
- Since 1997, the total number of pupils with EAL in England has grown to over 1 million (Official Statistics, 2017).
- In many areas of the UK 'ethnolinguistic diversity and EAL can now be fairly regarded as *ordinary* and *permanent* features of schooling education (Leung, 2014).

Cultural Isolation

- ‘He’s not really aware of the trouble in Northern Ireland. So I think sometimes it’s really cultural background information...’ (Mainstream Teacher).
- ‘Car boot sales...they’ve probably never seen one, so there are challenges there in terms of cultural differences’ (Mainstream Teacher).
- ‘He couldn’t understand about racism. “They were Japanese...why did they think they were Chinese?” I said, “because we’re too thick to tell the difference”. He said, “Who flung dung, that’s not Chinese”’ (EAL Teacher).
- ‘We’ve continued to support a Saudi evening school. So we have the confidence of the Arab speaking community’ (Head Teacher).

Cultural Isolation

Mainstream Teacher: We did First World War poetry and for most of the class, you know, they'd all heard about the First World War but I suppose a lot of it's cultural as well, so he [EAL pupil] didn't know anything about it really and China's involvement.

Also we studied capital punishment and obviously China have got a really poor human rights record, so that was a bit of a kind of ... a bit of a touchy subject. And then we looked at some work by Bernard McClaverty and he's [EAL pupil] not really aware of the trouble in Northern Ireland. So I think sometimes it's really the kind of cultural background information and that ties in, I suppose with the vocabulary

Cultural Isolation

- 'Modern studies is very much a study of the political, social, economic and cultural world. Some concepts and themes are particularly difficult to understand for students who have English as their 1st language never mind EAL learners. For example, they may not understand the political processes in the UK or US as it could be very different from their country. There may also be a clash in cultures and backgrounds in the classrooms.'

(Student Teacher)

Language and Literacy Needs

- ‘It’s the learning of the vocabulary essentially that they need to build up’ (Mainstream Teacher).
- ‘To be general, just simple comprehension and a lack of vocabulary, generally speaking. I’m not sure what other challenges there could be’ (Mainstream Teacher).
- ‘Yes, understand the associations, the connotations of words, the affects they could have’ (Mainstream Teacher).
- ‘English requires a very wide descriptive vocabulary for distinct nuances in expression – I feel this would be a difficult challenge. I also feel that they would be challenged in writing extended pieces of writing’ (Teacher Educator).

Language and Literacy Needs

- ‘...making sure that they are aware of how to pick up inferences within the text and you know the kind of level to which they can guess in a question. If, for example, they’re asked ... I remember one recently that was about the significance of describing a bear that had been shot with arrows as bristling like a porcupine and of course they didn’t know what a porcupine was’ (Mainstream Teacher).
- ‘In Science, the subject-specific language may be difficult to teach in parallel with every day language. Writing and achieving success criteria in literacies will be a challenge’ (Teacher Educator).

Language and Literacy Needs

- ‘...I think a lot of our understanding of the language is so subconscious or inbuilt, or taken for granted that you find it quite difficult to actually then look at a piece of their writing and work out what it is I actually need to teach you in order to make that next step

(Mainstream Teacher).

Shifting Identities and Teacher Confidence

- I feel very kind of inexperienced there, clueless at times (Mainstream Teacher).
- I think we need more specific training and resources...we just do! We are naive in this (Mainstream Teacher).
- Yeah, we're getting a bit desperate...I'm trying and I'm probably doing it wrong and floundering and all the rest of it. But...[sigh] (Mainstream Teacher).
- How can you be meeting the needs of learners if you don't firstly understand those needs; and secondly you don't have any strategies to go about it, even if you've got an understanding of them, you don't know how to bloody tackle them' (Mainstream Teacher).

Shifting Identities and Teacher Confidence

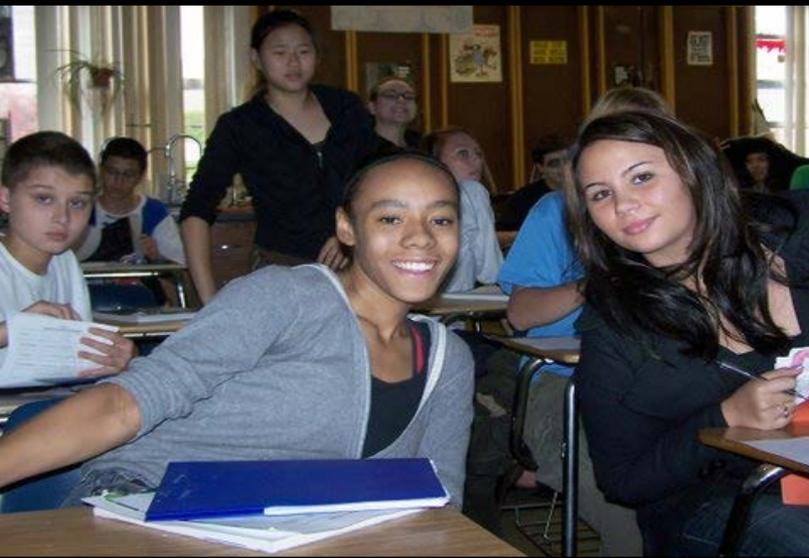
- I have no knowledge of how to address this matter yet. I would act like a British person abroad, just repeating what I would be saying and not helping anyone (Student Teacher 1).
- ‘I am uncertain where to start and how to build them up to an acceptable level of English’ (Student Teacher 2).
- ‘I have had no training on this at all so the list is huge’ (Student Teacher 3).

Shifting Identities and Teacher Confidence

- **Interviewer:** if you think yourselves back to when you were in schools yourselves. At that point did you have much experience of teaching pupils who had English as an additional language, or not? How was that experience for you, yourselves?
- **Teacher Educator:** I had virtually none. Partly because, you know, it was a while ago, although it's not that long ago, it's 13 years since I was teaching in school. But also the nature of the schools I was working in at that time, they just didn't have a significant population of pupils in that category at that point.

Implications

- Current literacy practices mean that EAL pupils are often positioned as *cultural and linguistic outsiders* – or as *overhearers of the curriculum*.
- The *invisibility of difference* contributes to inequitable classroom literacy practices which impact on language and learning opportunities for pupils learning EAL.
- The content of current pre-service and in-service education programmes mean that there are no available ways of thinking about classroom practices for pupils learning EAL within many schools and local authorities.



Thank you for Listening

Do you have any
questions/comments?