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## **Catering for EAL/D Students' Language Needs in Mainstream Classes: Early Childhood Teachers' Perspectives and Practices in One Australian Setting.**

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*Abstract: This article aims to highlight the complexity of English language related experiences and interactions of a small group of teachers in an Australian, Early Childhood (EC), mainstream setting with children four to eight years old. It draws on data collected from a qualitative case study which investigated four teachers' perspectives and anxieties when it comes to 1) achieving a balance between use of home languages and the use of Standard Australian English in classrooms 2) mainstream teacher knowledge of, and confidence in, using appropriate practices to enhance English language learning experiences for EAL/D students in mainstream classes. Through data collected from teachers via semi-structured interviews, and observations of teaching practices, discussion focuses on the challenges and dilemmas that mainstream teachers can face in the absence of effective formalised English language teacher education. Recommendations for possible ways forward are made.*

### **Introduction**

Statistics obtained at the 2011 census revealed that more than a quarter (26%) of Australians had been born overseas and one in five (18%) spoke a language or languages other than English. Added to this is the indigenous population who speak English as an additional dialect (Aboriginal English). The term used in Australia to describe these learners collectively is EAL/D (English as an Additional Language/Dialect). The equivalent to this is English Language Learners (ELLs) in the US or English as a Second Language (ESL) learners elsewhere and previously in Australia.

Early Childhood (EC) educators often form the initial point of contact for additional language exposure. The first official policy (*National Policy on Languages*) to be developed in Australia (Lo Bianco, 1987) endorsed the multilingual nature of both Australian born and immigrant communities, recognising these communities as resources (Hannan, 2009). Later policies, however, have tended to undervalue multilingualism and retention of home languages for immigrants (Ives, 2008; Lo Bianco, 2000, 2001). The last decade especially has seen considerable changes made to the funding model for English language programmes in Australia (Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012). Programmes used to be the responsibility of the federal government and money was allocated to intensive English programs for new arrivals but currently all federal funding has been collapsed into new funding arrangements between the state and federal governments. This sees money now channelled into the broad areas of literacy and numeracy for all, teacher quality generally and low socio-economic communities (Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012). EAL/D learners have become invisible with these new reforms which are helped along by the introduction of mass standardised testing such as

NAPLAN and LBOTE. According to some, these students have been diluted in a set of pupil averages (Creagh, 2014) and the needs of EAL/D students are not being met (Lo Bianco, 2002; May & Wright, 2007). A government census document such as the Australian Early Development Census (2013) shows 93% of children from language backgrounds other than English as developmentally vulnerable in one or more school domains and 58% developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains including language and cognitive development.

In 2011, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) made it clear that all teachers would be required to adapt their pedagogy to the language learning needs of students whose first language is not English even without any formal language teacher education (Alford & Windeyer, 2014). The 2012 Australian Curriculum EAL/D Teacher Resource Overview pointed out that 'All teachers are responsible for teaching the language and literacy demands of their learning areas' (ACARA, 2012, p. 2). Moreover, according to the ACARA English as an Additional Language Teacher Resource: EAL/D Learning Progression Foundation to Year 10 Advice for teachers of EAL/D students (ACARA, 2014, p. 19), 'The maintenance of the home language of EAL/D students is important for their English language learning as well as for the preservation and development of their cultural identities and family relationships'.

In a social and political climate that talks about 'high equity' and 'high quality' (MCEETYA, 2008) mainstream teachers are often little more equipped to deal with the language needs of EAL/D students than when they first graduated, however (Alford & Jetnikoff, 2011). Despite Australian publications, such as the *Supporting Children Learning English as a Second Language in the Early Years (birth to six years)* (Clarke, 2009), changes in policy have de-emphasised the need to prioritise information available to teachers on how to teach students who speak English as an additional language or dialect or even diagnose their needs (Miller, Mitchell & Brown, 2005; Lucas & Villegas, 2010). In the past, information in the EAL/D documentation accompanying the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011b) was mostly disconnected from the presentation of English language within the curriculum. It gave no advice to teachers about how to use the students' first language to support their additional language development and defaulted to an 'English only' rule. It reinforced monolingual assumptions noticeable throughout the curriculum and expected EAL/D students to somehow just 'fit in' (Cross, 2012). The more recent development of the English as an Additional Language/Dialect teacher resource (ACARA, 2014), however, has given renewed emphasis to the need for all mainstream teachers to be able to cater for the language needs of their EAL/D students and provides some degree of support for this. Despite this, mainstream teachers are still expected to teach students whose level of English is sometimes inadequate for the tasks set. They are charged with providing linguistic input while also maintaining connections and visibility of the students' home languages.

Early childhood educators can find themselves inadequately prepared for cross-cultural and linguistic encounters with children from many culturally diverse backgrounds. These students may display a wide range of abilities in the new language. That is not to suggest that EAL/D learners are necessarily at a disadvantage just because they speak another language, or that they will be difficult to teach as a result, but there may be links between cultural/linguistic difference and potential disadvantage at school (Creagh, 2014). This article offers perspectives from four EC practitioners. It attempts to prompt discussion and offers recommendations on a very complex situation which has at its core the best interests of the EAL/D child.

## **Related Literature**

Literature providing the backdrop to any discussion about teachers' linguistic experiences with EAL/D learners in mainstream Australian settings falls into four main categories: The needs of the EAL/D students; second language acquisition theories; appropriate pedagogies for mainstream teachers of EAL/D students; and mainstream teacher attitudes to EAL/D learners in their classes.

### **The Needs of EAL/D Students**

Understanding the level of second language proficiency that students need in order to operate effectively in mainstream classrooms goes back as far as 1981 with Cummins theory of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1981). This theory refers to basic spoken English which is usually acquired through the child's need to survive, is embedded in routine social activities and can be acquired through frequent exposure to the new language. EAL/D students need BICS in English in order to communicate and interact in the school setting. This, however, is not enough. Cummins argues that, in order to keep up with school age English speaking children norms, EAL/D students need another kind of English. His theory of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) suggests that the process of acquiring academic language of the kind to which school children are exposed is much more demanding and slow, as this language is both written and spoken. By implication, children will need some guidance with this, particularly if they are unable to rely on their parents for help, have not reached a sufficient education level in their first language or have had lives disrupted by war or trauma (Creagh, 2014). In line with this, the West Australian government's Student-centred Funding Model (The Government of Western Australia Department of Education, 2015) claims it will link funding more closely with student need. Proving a balance between implicit learning and explicit instruction is one of the challenges of student-centred funding and issues related to this are discussed in the following section: Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories.

### **Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories**

Second language acquisition theories range between those theories which suggest that input needs to be made explicit to learners in order for acquisition to take place and those which propose a more implicit approach. Krashen's seminal non-interface position (Krashen, 1982) suggested that explicit formal language learning had only one role, to monitor the accuracy of language already acquired through immersion in the additional language and to provide exposure to comprehensible input in that language. The most ideal scenario for children to 'pick up' language, therefore, according to him, is one in which they are merely immersed in comprehensible input. Other researchers (e.g. Bialystok, 1978) subscribe to an interface position in which they believe that learned language can become acquired language. Key to this is some form of 'noticing' of language by learners (Schmidt, 1990). Access to comprehensible input is not enough, they suggest, because input may not become uptake unless a teacher is there to facilitate this in some way. Moreover, output also has a role in language acquisition, according to some researchers (Swain, 1985). Swain argues that this output is useful to learning if it is 'pushed' or scaffolded by the teacher. Cummins (2000) pointed out that, in reality, most applied linguists would suggest that both implicit and explicit input were essential if BICS and CALP were to be achieved (Cummins, 1981; Van Patten & Williams, 2015):

*Virtually all applied linguists agree that access to sufficient comprehensible input in the target language is a necessary condition for language acquisition; most applied linguists, however, also assign a role to (1) a focus on formal features of the target language, (2) development of effective learning strategies, and (3) actual use of the target language (Cummins, 2000, p. 273)*

Input will only become ‘comprehensible’ if learners have texts in which only one word in 50 is new, according to Schmitt (2010). Propositions such as this highlight the importance of explicit vocabulary teaching to EAL/D learners in mainstream classes and, in turn, what Lucas and Villegas (2010) have referred to as the need for ‘linguistically responsive teachers’. While natural interaction promoted in mainstream classes is important for learning (Allwright, 1984), EAL/D students will not necessarily benefit from exposure to speakers of English as a first language. Academic language, and the language of schools, often requires explicit attention and instructional focus (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2004; Ellis, 2002). As Gibbons (2002) pointed out, there needs to be structured opportunities for EAL/D students to engage in the learning of academic language and these opportunities need to be sustained over time, especially as English language learners may take up to seven years to achieve native like proficiency and this may only be possible if students have been well educated in their first language before they arrive in the new context (Cummins, 1981; Thomas & Collier, 1997). All of this has implications for the mainstream EC teacher exposed to linguistic diversity in the classroom and expected to adopt appropriate teaching strategies. As Dörnyei (2009), Godfroid (2015), Williams (2015) and many others have suggested, teachers working with EAL/D learners need to complement implicit learning with explicit learning which may also mean a whole class approach to explicit English language teaching.

#### **Appropriate Pedagogies for Mainstream Teachers of EAL/D Students**

Studies conducted in the US, UK and Ireland have highlighted teacher difficulties in early childhood, primary and secondary settings (de Jong, 2013; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Gillanders, 2007; Guilfoyle & Mistry, 2013; Skinner, 2010) due to perceived lack of teacher education in working with EAL/D students in mainstream classrooms. Studies on teacher management of EAL/D students in Australian mainstream classrooms are few but some work has been done by Cross, Gibbons, Miller, Premier and Windle (Cross, 2009a; 2010; 2011; Gibbons, 2002, 2008; Miller & Windle, 2010; Premier & Miller, 2010). Mirroring comments made by de Jong in the US (2013), Cross has suggested that mainstream literacy education in Australia is ‘essentially monolingual in orientation’ (Cross, 2011, p. 2). Others have pointed out that English-only specialist language programs and intensive courses can also contribute to this monolingual view of schooling (de Jong, 2013).

Attention in the US and Australia has shifted from an emphasis on bilingual and second language education to preparation of mainstream teachers to work with EAL/D students. This emphasis, however, is at the human relations level rather than at the level where teachers are shown how to utilise students’ cultural experiences as resources for teaching (de Jong, 2013). Allison (2011, p. 181) has suggested that ‘the diverse needs of English as another language/dialect (EAL/D) students have been conceived of in ways that are often tokenistic and reliant on “motherhood statements” in various subject English curricula in Australia’. Although home languages are acknowledged as influential for additional language learners, mainstream teachers are rarely instructed in how to use home languages as a resource (de Jong, 2013). There is a notion that ‘just good teaching (JGT) will be enough’ (de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 102). In a recent article, de Jong (2013, p. 44)

described how teachers, who only have limited proficiency in a language other than English, can offer their students an additive experience. She drew on the work of Cummins (2005, 2006), de Jong and Freeman (2010), Irujo (2005) and Schwarzer, Hayward and Lorenzen (2003) when she suggested that teachers 'use cognates in vocabulary teaching, group strategies by native language, use cross-age tutoring with students from the same language background, create bilingual books and build metalinguistic awareness through cross-linguistic analysis'. Of course, there are other considerations here. The parents of the learners may not see the necessity for home language instruction or incorporation into lessons and, on a more practical note, such incorporation may not always be possible in a school of 50 nationalities and 30 language groups (Miller & Windle, 2010).

In terms of appropriate pedagogy for EAL/D learners in mainstream classes, many researchers (de Jong & Mescua-Derrick, 2003; Kinsella, 2000) point out that the lack of understanding of the complex relationship between cognition and language proficiency may mean that, as a result, mainstream teachers come to rely on low-level recall or knowledge questions when working with additional language learners who have limited speaking skills. Teachers may avoid asking questions at all, thinking that their EAL/D students will not be able to answer them (Schinke-Llano, 1983; Verplaetse, 2000). They may overlook the need that EAL/D students have for explicit scaffolding in tasks. As Dörnyei (2009) points out, students must get enough repetitive practice to enable automatization and this does not necessarily have to be drill-like. Woods (2009), however, has argued that a focus on mainstream literacies is preferable to a focus on additional language teaching because the latter is failing EAL/D students. Miller and Windle (2010) refute this. They suggest that distinctions between the two are pointless when considering refugee students especially as additional language strategies are also central to literacy teaching.

#### **Mainstream Teacher Attitudes to EAL/D Students in their classes**

Most of the research conducted on teacher attitudes to EAL/D students in mainstream classrooms has been in primary or secondary school contexts in the US. Very little, in comparison, has been reported in Australia. Some of the US research has reported less than favourable experiences of teachers attempting to manage students from diverse language backgrounds. US teachers have reported feeling professionally inadequate and overwhelmed with the extra workload that English language learners (ELLs) (as they refer to them there) can bring (Gitlin, Buenda, Crosland, & Doumbia, 2003). They say they lack the time to deal with these students and their unique needs, that these students slow class progression and that extra attention given to EAL/D students creates inequities in educational opportunities for all students (Platt, Harper & Mendoza, 2003; Reeves, 2004). According to Reeves (2004) and Bunch (2013), many of these teachers also hold misconceptions about how second languages are learned.

A case study conducted in Australia (Coleman, 2010) with two Year 3 teachers described participants' appreciation of the challenges that EAL/D children confront when learning a language while learning through it. Teachers held deficit perspectives of these students, however, for taking up so much of their time. They put much of the responsibility for learning the new language onto the children themselves and claimed they could not meet the language learning needs of the EAL/D children in their classrooms. In Coleman's own words, 'They "configured" or positioned themselves as teachers of content. In this way they were able to place the responsibility for meeting their refugee ELLs, language needs outside the realm of their own pedagogical practices in their mainstream classes' (Coleman, 2010, p. 254).

These teachers also had the assistance of an ESL specialist, who took the children from the room for extra tuition, a situation that is not always the norm. Such views, practices and beliefs about language learning form the backdrop to the present study which is outlined below.

## Research Design

The study reported here could be described as a small case study. Case studies take “the case” as the central point of the investigation. Punch (2006, p. 145) identified case studies as having boundaries; as being a case of something; as an unequivocal attempt at keeping data whole, holistic, unified and full of integrity; and as utilising multiple sources of data and collection methods, typically in a naturalistic setting. The study described here investigated the perspectives and practices of a small group of early childhood teachers. The aim was to stay as close to participants’ original voices as possible by using extensive tracts of direct quotation. This allowed participants to remain merged with their socio-cultural context and data to be treated holistically in order to retain integrity.

Stake (1994) divided case studies into three main kinds: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. An intrinsic case study is one in which the researcher seeks to understand more about a particular case. The case itself may be important, unique, interesting or misunderstood. The aim is not to generalise from the case to other contexts or situations but to understand the case itself in all its complexity and entirety. An instrumental case study provides insights into a related issue or helps perfect a theory. A collective case study is an instrumental case study that incorporates multiple cases in an effort to understand more about a certain phenomenon or condition (Stake, 1994). The case described here was “bound” with intrinsic and instrumental aims. As Punch (2006) pointed out, every case is, in some respects, unique but every case is also similar to other cases.

In this study qualitative, ethnographic data were collected from four early childhood teachers (K-2) in an early childhood setting in Australia. According to Creswell (2008, p. 473), ‘Ethnographic designs are qualitative research procedures for describing, analysing and interpreting a culture-sharing group’s shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs and language that develop over time’ (Creswell, 2008, p. 473). Ethnography, it follows, seemed to be the ideal approach for this current study of a small culture-sharing group and would allow some insight into the larger issue or phenomenon. Ethnographic research emphasises the capture and documentation of everyday experiences of individuals and significant others through processes of interviews and observations (Creswell, 2008). The researcher, therefore, was both ethnographer and interviewer in the study; spending time in the school context as an Educator Assistant (EA) in mainstream classes of children aged five and eight, observing the interactions between teachers and students and speaking to the teachers of other classes. In spite of the possible fusion of roles, participant observation maintains the involvement of prolonged immersion in the life of a community or context in order to capture individual behaviours and perspectives (Punch, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher took on the role of participant as observer, an insider engaging in activities at the study site. The dual role of the researcher meant that the researcher was able to participate fully within the school context as a member of the group for approximately six months and collect data during this time.

The research questions for the larger study focused on how knowledge and perceptions of cultural diversity have been formed by EC mainstream teachers as well as their perceptions of cultural diversity or multiculturalism. Data used in this paper emerged from participant comments to a subset of these questions as follows:

1. What do culturally diverse students bring with them into your classroom?

2. What do you believe are some of the ‘issues’ you encounter teaching in a multicultural classroom?
3. How do you respond to these ‘issues’?

**Participants**

Teachers in the study were four early childhood teachers (two teaching K with children aged five to six, one teaching Year 1 with children aged six to seven and one teaching Year 2 with children aged seven to eight) from the same educational institution. This particular group was chosen because the teachers had experience of teaching multicultural groups from low socio-economic backgrounds in a school where 90% of the children were from cultural minorities and 40% were born outside of Australia. The teachers themselves were also from diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds in some instances. In this respect this school was fairly unique. It was decided, therefore, to focus only on one school and to gain in-depth data which might serve as a preliminary investigation into the area as a whole. The profile of the participants is provided below:

School Independent K-12	Teachers	Gender	Age	Ethnic Background	Time in Australia	Quals/Years of Teaching Experience
Kindergarten (children aged 5-6)	T1	Female	32	Indian Australian	Born in Australia	Bachelor of Primary Education/ 3 years
	T2	Female	35	Anglo-Saxon Australian	Born in Australia	Bachelor of Early Childhood Education/ 8 years
Year 1 (children aged 6-7)	T3	Female	26	Chinese Australian	24 years	Bachelor of Primary Education/ 3 years
Year 2 (children aged 7-8)	T4	Female	35	Bengali Australian	31 years	Bachelor of Primary Education/ 4 years

**Table 1: Profile of Participant Early Childhood Teachers**

**Data Collection**

Practices of the teachers in the study were documented in two ways: Interviews conducted by the researcher with the participants and observation of lessons by the researcher.

**Interviews**

Interviews are an effective way to access people’s perceptions, attitudes and constructions of reality (Creswell, 2008). Interviews were, therefore, well suited to this study and were designed to be semi-structured, in-depth and lasting 30-45 minutes. Teacher participants were interviewed only once with the understanding that further clarification of what they had said would be sought if necessary. They were given the interview questions a few days before the interview and recorded via researcher note-taking and use of a digital



recorder. The four teachers in the study were observed for two full days for four weeks. Field notes were written up during observations and were both descriptive and reflective.

### *Observations*

Qualitative approaches to observation are less structured than those in quantitative approaches and are often conducted in an open-ended way allowing concepts and themes for analysis to emerge rather than be introduced or imposed by the researcher (Punch, 2006). In this study observations were conducted approximately one week after each participant had been interviewed. Data collected from the interviews were used to direct the researcher's observations of participants' teaching practices.

### **Data analysis**

Data were analysed using a Miles and Huberman (1994) thematic approach and an interpretivist paradigm. Analysis was authenticated by extensive participant quotation and the use of chunks of narrative. Trustworthiness and authenticity of the data relied upon credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the data. This was ensured by the employment of two forms of data collection, namely interview and observation, member checking, transparent analysis and procedure documents and an independent audit by an expert in the field. The personal biases and "lenses" of the researcher were recognised and acknowledged in the independent audit.

In this study responses to the interview questions did not tend to fit neatly with the questions as participants strayed into related areas and interpreted the questions in their own ways. On the whole responses reported here tended to focus on the second interview question which asks about issues more than the first one which asks for participants to reflect on what EAL/D students bring to the classroom. This could have been because of the way the question was worded or because participants found it difficult to focus on the benefits of multilingual classrooms. The main themes running through comments made during interview are outlined and exemplified in the sections to follow.

### **Limitations**

The study only focuses on the experiences of four teachers and thus generalisations cannot be made to other schools. Teachers were observed for two full days each week for four weeks in the interests of time and convenience for them. This is a very small cross sectional snapshot of what can take place in a classroom over an entire year. None the less, this small case study provides a jumping off point for further investigation with a larger cohort.

## **Mainstream Teachers' Perspectives and Anxieties in Multilingual EC Classrooms**

Perspectives and anxieties expressed during interviews fell into two main discussions: Teachers achieving a balance between the use/maintenance of Australian Standard English (ASE) alongside home languages in lessons; and teachers providing adequate linguistic provision for EAL/D students in mainstream lessons.

### Home Language Provision and ASE

Responses to the interview questions focused on the need for students to speak English in the classroom at every opportunity. This was seen as an issue by all four teachers (T1-4) in the study and reinforces the notion put forward by Cross (2011) and de Jong (2013, p. 42) that current policies and ways of thinking, both in the US and Australia, favour an 'English-only', monolingual approach to teaching EAL/D students. The lack of home language focus in the classroom was not commented on by teachers. They insisted that the children in their care verbalise their wants and needs in English. They expressed concern for some students' limited English language ability. They believed that the children would suffer socially and academically if they could not speak Australian Standard English, feelings in line with those expressed by teachers in other studies (Hannan, 2009; Sellwood & Angelo, 2013; Wielgosz & Molyneux, 2012). Such beliefs seemed to have stemmed, in T3's case, from the teachers' own personal experiences as seen in the following quote:

*That's just how it is. When my parents came to this country they didn't know a single word of English, they pretty much were winging their way through life and they suffered because of it...dad couldn't hold down a good job and my mum couldn't apply for one at all because they couldn't speak the language (T3)*

T3 went on to suggest that to achieve in a society in which very few of those in the dominant culture speak a second language, one must speak the majority language and T1 confirmed this. This need for an English only stance is shared by supporters of multicultural and intercultural education in Australia (Leeman & Reid, 2006; Pickering & Gandlgruber, 2010) as well as teachers in the study. However, some of the participants believed it was not their duty to explicitly teach children the English language, but the duty of the parents at home or specialised EAL/D teachers; a view in line with data collected in many studies in the field (Coleman, 2010; Fu, 1995; Olsen, 1997; Schmidt, 2000; Valdes, 1998, 2001; Walker, Shafer and Liams, 2004). Although children entering the school in this study are not expected to be equipped with the English language, it is anticipated that children in the first and second grade will take part in mainstream activities where English is the language of instruction. This can place them at a disadvantage as they are learning a new language and new understandings at the same time (Banks, 2007; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Bilingual children can be underestimated and dismissed as having cognitive or language difficulties (Arthur, 2001) as seen in T1's story:

*I was assessing this young girl from Pakistan. She had only come to Australia a few months earlier with her family... I started assessing her by showing her different coloured blocks and asked her to label the colours... she gave me this blank look ... I explained that I wanted her to label the colours and gave her examples of colours like blue, green, black, yellow. She repeated what I had said; she said "blue, green, black, yellow." I was so close to marking her as not knowing her colours... Her dad came in to pick her up in the afternoon and I explained to him what had happened... He suggested we quickly sit down and do the assessment again but this time his daughter would label the colours in their own language and he would translate... she knew her colours (T1).*

When it came to fostering language differences and maintaining the children's first language (as recommended by Clarke, 2009) T1 explained:

*We try as best we can to encourage children to be proud of who they are and the language they speak. If I hear a child speak Arabic, for example, then I will ask them what the word is in English but I also do it the other way around. If I hear one of our EAL kids start to pick up the English language then I will often ask them what the word is in their own language...It's a small step but hopefully it helps (T1).*

During observations it became obvious that T1 was attempting to incorporate an Arabic speaking child's home language and identity into her lessons even if this was unsystematic as seen below:

Ali: (*holding up toy cucumber from home corner*) Look, cucumber!  
T1: Oh yes that's right. How do you say cucumber in Arabic?  
(Ali responds in a different language)  
(*T1 picks up a toy tomato*) What is this?  
Ali: Tomato!  
T1: How do you say tomato in Arabic?

Similarly, there were attempts by two other teachers to introduce linguistic diversity into their classrooms by incorporating greetings from different countries, bi-lingual wall displays, multi-lingual posters, story books written in different languages and translation exercises. The exact instructional or communicative purpose of this was not entirely evident, however.

Overall, there was not an obvious commitment to the incorporation of home languages into observed lessons. It was unclear whether this was due to teachers' lack of briefing on how to maintain community languages, lack of knowledge of other languages, lack of conviction about the importance of first language retention (many parents of EAL/D children would not be convinced of its worth) or new policies giving emphasis to monolingual views of literacy (Cross, 2011; de Jong, 2013).

### **Anxieties about Facilitating English Language Learning**

Naone & Au (2010) have stated that beyond expanding perspectives of cultural diversity, providing high quality and accessible education seems to be the stepping stone in bringing children up to "standard". The main priority for T4 and T2 was to encourage English language learning for children who speak a minority language but they felt ill equipped to do so because they had not been specifically shown how to, a difficulty mentioned by Miller, Mitchell & Brown (2005) and Lucas & Villegas (2010).

The anxiety and tensions experienced by teachers who have no background in teaching English as an additional language or dialect were observed in the following conversation about a new student from Saudi Arabia between T2 and her teacher assistant:

T2: (*Talking to teacher assistant.*) What are we going to do? She's come in the middle of the year and she can barely speak English.  
Teacher assistant: How about the parents?  
T2: Well they can't speak English either. Mum and Dad are both taking English classes at TAFE.  
Teacher assistant: Maybe we can try getting her into EAL classes?  
T2: Nah, EAL classes are only for students in Year 1 and up. I'm sure she'll pick it up slowly.  
Teacher assistant: (*laughs.*) Yeah ... slowly but surely.

T2: Well we'll have to work really hard to get her up to standard with the rest of the kids; I mean I bet she barely knows her ABC's.

Teacher assistant: Does that mean more work for you?

T2: Sure does mate!

The key response to note in the quote is T2's question: 'What are we going to do?' As noted by Verplaetse (1998) over seventeen years ago, and endorsed by others since (Gitlin, Buenda, Crosland, & Doumbia, 2003), teachers in ELL or EAL/D settings are still feeling professionally inadequate and overwhelmed with the extra workload that multilingual classrooms present, especially when they have few strategies available to them to streamline the process. This lack of repertoire for dealing effectively with EAL/D students' needs is discussed further in the following section.

### Teachers' Practices with EAL/D Students in EC Classrooms

Teaching in kindergarten, T1 and T2 said they found it much easier to avoid using pre-made worksheets in their multilingual classes, instead using activities which generally encompassed hands on and interactive experiences, thus acknowledging diverse ways of learning and acquiring knowledge. Teachers focused their attention on adjusting their teaching methods to accommodate all learners, particularly those of EAL/D backgrounds. T2 described her strategy:

*We provide opportunities for cooperative learning and group-problem solving and this helps the students become aware of diversity and what unfair looks like. We engage with the kids and as a classroom community we explore ideas and learn from each other and all the while they are learning the English language (T2).*

Both T1 and T2 believed it was important to model how to perform a task or how to use materials and resources before allowing children to put their own ideas into action as T1 explained:

*I guess that's what we're here for; to show and model how they can do something or how to use something...we need to encourage them to participate with whatever skills and knowledge they bring with them and let them learn one step at a time (T1).*

During observations, participants seemed to have adopted a teaching style that coincided with the expectation of significant others. T4's class was working on a short report which they were then required to read out to the class. The students were working on the second and final draft of their report. T4 said to a young Indonesian girl (F) who had come to Australia two months earlier:

T4: ... let's have a look at what you've written ... (*points to word 'Solar'*)... Can you say this word for me?

F: Soler ... ('er' said as /3:/ and stressed unnaturally)

T4: No ... So-lar (*emphasises ar /a:/ unnaturally*)

F: Solar (*emphasises ar /a:/ unnaturally*)

T4: (*laughs.*) Yes but you don't have to say it like that (*referring to the unnatural stress on ar /a:/*)

T4's approach highlights gaps in understandings of sound spelling relationships in English and the importance of modelling words with natural stress and pronunciation. Moreover, such an emphasis on micro-level accuracy might be damaging to T4's ability to focus on the larger picture at hand. The teacher may be in danger of focusing on low-level recall or knowledge questions exclusively (de Jong & Mescua-Derrick, 2003; Kinsella, 2000) thus demonstrating limited understanding of the complex relationship between cognition and language proficiency.

Whilst completing tasks, students were allowed to interact with their peers and sit wherever they liked. Presumably the teacher's intention was to make students feel comfortable, lower any anxiety that might be experienced during tasks and increase motivation to collaborate and work together. Recently arrived EAL/D students did not have this choice, however, and were grouped at a table together in an attempt to group linguistic abilities. This gave them minimal opportunity to interact with, and seek help from, more linguistically able English speakers. EAL/D students fell behind and failed to complete the activity. The researcher observed some EAL/D students causing disruption for other students or copying the work of more proficient peers. This vignette highlights the dilemma with which many mainstream teachers are faced; whether to separate EAL/D students out from the mainstream in order to focus on their needs or keep them in a situation where they can learn from their English speaking peers (Hannan, 2009; Premier & Miller, 2010). Students facing difficulties in their learning can slip into a cycle of "failure", impairing their motivation to learn, according to Keeffe and Carrington (2006) as they develop alternative means of gaining attention in class. Teachers may face challenging behaviour which impacts on class management (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010).

With few language learning techniques at their disposal (according to the teachers themselves) teachers often resorted to rote learning with their students. This is a phenomenon commented upon by many researchers (de Jong & Derrick-Mescua, 2003; Kinsella, 2000). Some EAL/D students found it difficult to read words aloud when instructed to do so as seen in the example below with A:

T3: ... you read the words on your own now.

A: (*a Somali student*): I don't know them.

T3: Yes you do, we just read them together.

A: I only know some of them (*reads the words on the board and misses a few*).

T3: ... read the words again but this time I want you to read all of them.

A: (*sighs and reads again ... he struggles at the third word that reads "bye"*).

Another student in the class: It says "bye"!

T3: Excuse me! Don't call out. He needs to do this by himself (*looks at A who is still struggling and then allows him to stop*)

In both of the previous examples the teachers were intent on matching students to defined standards. T3 disallowed collaborative help from his peer, despite the literature stating that much learning can take place from such interaction (Allwright, 1984). She later told him she would tell his mother if he did not make more progress with his English. Students who could not meet the standards were referred for "remedial" support and withdrawn from the mainstream classroom to work on the same activities with the educator assistant. The learners in the remedial program demonstrated only limited success in meeting the requirements of the curriculum. The need for a more systematic and scaffolded approach to teaching (Gibbons, 2002) was in evidence but teachers seemed to lack the skills, confidence or guidance to know how to do this.

## Discussion and Recommendations

In this multilingual EC setting which, as forecast by Cross (2011) and de Jong (2013), had been turned into a monolingual setting, children were provided with opportunities for additional language acquisition in terms of BICS (Cummins, 1981) through implicit language learning (Krashen 1982). The comprehensibility of the input to which they were exposed was unclear, however, because of students' varying levels of additional language proficiency. Moreover, they had few systematic opportunities to increase awareness of their own home languages or learn the new target language explicitly as recommended by Dörnyei (2009) and others. There was little evidence of explicit attention to academic language (CALP) (Cummins, 1981) which might be expected with children of four to eight years but there was also a lack of systematic instructional language focus (Echevarria et al, 2004) or structured opportunities for EAL/D children to engage in learning (Gibbons, 2002). There were still, however, significant expectations for students to meet mainstream curriculum standards. As discussed by Valdes (2001), classroom interaction could not facilitate English language acquisition because teachers often separated the EAL/D children from the others in order to be able to cope as best they could with the different linguistic abilities in the classroom and meet the required outcomes.

Teachers had no recourse but to remain focused on teaching EAL/D children within a curriculum which supports cooperative learning but which has no provision for specific EAL/D students' needs. The pressure that teachers felt was in line with studies carried out in the US and Australia (de Jong, 2013; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Gillanders, 2007; Guilfoyle & Mistry, 2013; Skinner, 2010). Their response to a lack of adequate knowledge of languages (including the English language) mirrored that reported by many in the field (de Jong & Derrick-Mescua, 2003; Kinsella, 2000). They resorted to drill and practice, low level recall type activities and did not provide sufficient scaffolding for learning for their EAL/D students (Gibbons, 2002) as a result.

The pressure that the teachers in this study felt to perform was in line with the findings of Verplaetse (1998) over 15 years ago. This pressure was sometimes transferred onto the children in their care. Anxieties were fuelled by their lack of access to strategies to provide adequate explicit English language instruction or knowledge about other languages and cultures. It was not clear from the data whether this was a result of their pre-service or in-service teacher development programs or other factors, however. Pre-service teacher education courses are now designed to make new teachers more "EAL/D aware" and there is a growing interest in ensuring that pre-service teachers receive at least minimal exposure to content designed for EAL/D specialists (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) but anxieties and emotions (as evidenced in this study) are still at large. There needs to be recognition of this 'emotion' and the experiences of teachers and students. However, the current climate endorses 'educational reforms' which tend to 'dehumanise education' and place emphasis on 'performance data, numbers and rational-calculative ways of acting' (Kostogriz & Cross, 2012, p. 395).

Whether it is best to separate EAL/D students from mainstream students in order to better tailor the curriculum to their needs or mainstream them is hotly debated (Premier & Miller, 2010). This is because, whilst some would argue that EAL/D students need to be in differentiated educational programs in all EC settings (Hannan, 2009), many feel that they should be part of a whole school community, especially as cooperative learning, interaction and many EAL/D type activities are thought to be beneficial for all students. In terms of government policy the latter is likely to be the reality for the foreseeable future. Pre-service education needs to cover all bases as a result. Practical language teaching strategies, language awareness and curriculum content need to be addressed (Premier & Miller, 2010) but not to the exclusion of teacher attitudes, cross-cultural understanding (Giambo & Szecsi, 2005;

Youngs & Youngs, 2001), reflection on Self/ Other, meta-cultural awareness and teacher empathy (McAlinden, 2012; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Above all, mainstream teacher confidence can be enhanced by improved language awareness. Teacher knowledge of language needs to be a priority (Langman, 2003). This could be achieved by including elective language studies units in pre-service degree courses (some universities may already be doing this) or basic units in how to teach EAL/D (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Institutions such as that of the author have recognised the need to integrate greater awareness of the English language and knowledge of the way language works into the common first year language and literacy components of teacher education courses in line with the new Australian Curriculum (2014) but even more desirable would be pre-service units developed specifically to focus on strategies for mainstream teachers of EAL/D students.

Collaboration between mainstream teachers and EAL/D teachers has also been championed (Sim, 2010). Such collaboration has taken various forms. The United Kingdom developed the Partnership Teaching model in 1997 to formally encourage planning and teaching to support learning between two teachers or entire departments across school curriculum (Bourne, 1997). In this way, collaboration between EAL/D and mainstream teachers can be systematic and mutually beneficial (Davison & Williams, 2001; Leung, 2011; Percy & Martin-Beltran, 2011; Rushton, 2008). The idea of integrating content and language through teams of experts in schools where this expertise coexists is not new (Arkoudis, 2006; Davison, 2006; Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been popular for teaching languages other than English (LOTE) in universities in many parts of Europe for some years now, as is other forms of partnership teaching (Creese, 2002). Davison (2006) has suggested that ‘an ideal collaboration between ESL and content-area teachers requires the integration of content-based ESL teaching and ESL-conscious content teaching’ (p. 457). However, the literature attests to a rift in social practices between EAL/D teachers and mainstream teachers and the need for certain attitudes and practices to make the partnership effective (Alford & Windeyer, 2014). Miller et al (2005) reported that there may be some way to go in these collaborations. This is evidenced in Arkoudis’s (2006) study in which she examined planning conversations between in-service EAL/D teachers and Science teachers. She noted that mainstream science teachers tended to see EAL/D teachers as less powerful and lacking in status compared to the content teachers. She concluded that:

*EAL teachers have felt uneasy about working with mainstream teachers as the professional relationship is fraught with misunderstandings and misconceptions, where the subject specialist has the power to accept or reject suggestions and where EAL teachers feel increasingly frustrated in their work... (and that) negotiating pedagogic understandings is a profound journey of epistemological reconstruction’ (Arkoudis, 2006. p. 428).*

In-service professional development courses could go some way towards promoting these collaborations, however, providing they were not merely ‘one-stop’ i.e. one three hour session over the course of a year. Anecdotally, those in charge of professional development in schools are constantly seeking incursions from linguistic experts to help mainstream teachers manage linguistic diversity in their classrooms.

Before anything can happen, however, there may just need to be a cultural shift amongst mainstream teachers’ thinking, school culture or the system overall, with recognition that EAL/D students have distinct needs (Cross, 2012), as do their mainstream teachers. This cultural shift involves mainstream teachers rethinking their roles as teachers of monolingual children to whom they simply have to deliver content or literacy teachers focusing only on

first language literacy development and neglecting additional language development. It may also mean that there needs to be a change in the mindset of content teachers as they need to rely more and more upon input from EAL/D specialists. Decisions also need to be made about how linguistically aware mainstream teachers of all disciplines need to be and whether expectations that all teachers be experts in language are reasonable. Both teachers and children in EC and other educational settings will continue to experience the kind of negative 'emotion' and anxiety talked about by Kostogriz and Cross (2012) in their classrooms unless discussion focuses on highlighting these needs and issues and providing teachers with strategies to deal with them.

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