

**Assignment 3**

**English as an Additional Language:  
*Is the UK doing enough?***

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*“Subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the world.”*

(Freire)

**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

DCSF	<i>Department for Children, Schools and Families</i>
EAL	<i>English as an Additional Language</i>
EMA	<i>Ethnic Minority Attainment</i>
ESL	<i>English as a Second Language</i>
ESOL	<i>English for Speakers of Other Languages</i>
G&T	<i>Gifted and Talented</i>
KS	<i>Key Stage</i>
NC	<i>National Curriculum</i>
SEN	<i>Special Educational Needs</i>

In 2006, Tony Blair addressed the Runnymede trust, an educational charity that promotes multi-ethnicity, and openly admitted that in securing “our nation’s future”<sup>1</sup> a balance between integration and diversity must be sought in order to maintain and protect the multicultural heritage of Britain. It cannot be denied that in terms of linguistic diversity, an integral sociological feature when defining cultural identity, the multiplicity of dialects and languages heard throughout the nation are testament to the fact that Britain is a multilinguistic society. A recent study showed that in Inner London alone there are over three hundred different languages spoken by children of school age (Baker and Eversley, 2000:14). This compares significantly with the results of the previous Language Census conducted by the Inner London Education Authority where 184 different languages were recorded before its abolition in 1989 (Sherman Swing *et al.*, 2000:235). However, whether *de facto* multilingualism, particularly in terms of sociolinguistic equality between languages, is truly in existence in Britain is a separate and highly controversial issue. Moreover, it could be argued that the provision for students designated as having English as an Additional Language (henceforth, EAL) is inextricably linked to the sociolinguistic value attached to those varieties spoken other than English.

If the aforementioned suppositions linked to the issue of EAL are to be considered, then it would seem that the arguments surrounding the provision for students designated as EAL are not simply imbedded in educational policy: indeed, this issue is as much political and sociolinguistic as it is educational. Therefore, it seems appropriate that a reasonable amount of discussion, reflection and evaluation is afforded to not only the educational issues – including those of pedagogy, pupil learning, sharing of good practise, assessment and support – but also wider sociological issues such as assimilation, integration, multilingualism (subsumed into multiculturalism) and cultural plurism (Cummins, 1986:18-36).

These sociological descriptors, which demonstrate the macro- and micro-societal structures that constitute a single social system, are often employed as the foundations to any debate surrounding EAL provision and multilingualism. In the theoretical developments of sociolinguistic study during the twentieth century links were explicitly drawn between the conscious and unconscious linguistic choices made by individuals and the social group with which they were identified. This link was first quantified by Schumann (2003:517) who claimed that the social status of any language can be determined by the *domains* (family, friendship, religion, employment and education) in which it is used: that is, the occasions when a language is spoken. However, it is inaccurate to claim that a language is of a higher status if it occupies more domains than another in a multilingual environment. Evidently, certain domains such as ‘employment’ are of higher socioeconomic value (and consequently linguistic value) than that of ‘family’. Therefore, in terms of students with EAL, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from a speech given by Tony Blair (6/12/06) at 10 Downing Street accessible through [www.pm.gov.uk/speeches](http://www.pm.gov.uk/speeches) (last search: 01/04/08)

likely that they will use English throughout their education (and consequently employment) as well as in the development of friendships at school thus lessening the status attached to their mother tongue and perhaps even the culture with which it is associated.

Despite the fact that very little can be done officially to equalise the politico-linguistic status between languages spoken by a student with EAL, due to the fact that Britain has no constitutional recognition of the official state languages (not even English!) unlike the majority of our European counterparts, there are a number of terminological changes that have occurred locally and nationally in an attempt to dissuade bilingual students from ever considering their mother tongue or cultural heritage to be of a lower status than that of English (Lamb, 2001:6): an example of this is the relatively new introduction of the term EAL.

The acknowledgement, although not explicitly defined until the 1980s, of a need for a supplementary provision for students who did not possess English as their first language has existed since the 1960s; however, Beaumont *et al.* (2000:158) argue that although linguistic diversity needed to be catered for in the short term, it was the impending second generation immigrants that solidified a permanent existence and influence of foreign languages and cultures within the education system. Consequently, this had wider curricular implications that would affect all children. Originally termed as students with *English as a Second Language* (ESL), this was superseded in the 1980s by the 'label' *English for Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL). Before long, however, schools and local authorities soon realised that many pupils spoke more than one 'other' language and concluded that there was a need to acknowledge the importance of their existing language repertoires in order to promote their continuing development alongside English. Consequently, this necessitated a further adaption of terminology; bilingual pupils were, henceforth, referred to as those with *English as an Additional Language*. The adjustment signified more a change in semantics. It finally recognised pupil bilingualism as 'additive' rather than 'subtractive' and, according to Cummins (1986), contributed to the empowerment of minority groups.

This latter point is directly linked to further terminological development in the history of EAL provision and the additional languages that such students speak. The term 'minority', freely employed by sociolinguistic specialists and political figureheads alike, perpetuates throughout political dialogue on a global scale when discussing related topics such as immigration. Although the term is often perceived as being applied 'fittingly', it should not be considered appropriate for the discussion of EAL because of the negative connotations that abound when it is applied in certain contexts. For example, the native tongue of many ESL students was often referred to as a 'minority language' thus demoting its linguistic status and value below that of English and, consequently, not promoting the perpetual inclusive ideology. Moreover, the term was often inaccurate in large urban areas where, in

fact, the 'minority language' was often used by the majority. In the 1980s-90s the terms 'heritage language' and 'community language' were conceived as politically correct alternatives. Nevertheless, the latter is preferred for two reasons; firstly, unlike the former it does not imply that these languages belong to the past; secondly, it underlines the inclusiveness that non-English speaking pupils and their parents should feel within the school community.

The sociolinguistic and politico-linguistic discussion has clearly demonstrated that the wider context into which EAL provision finds itself is vitally important if a clear understanding is to be obtained of the position of pupils, parents, schools and the government in this issue. It appears from this discussion of status, value and inclusion that if a pupil can reconcile their own cultural heritage with that of the host, the disempowered with the empowered, then this is the first positive step towards success and achievement. The issue of 'how' students can ultimately reach this goal lies in the discussion of more educational and pedagogical issues.

Prior to examining these issues in detail, however, it is important to provide a description of the current EAL landscape in its existing form for twenty-first century Britain. According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) there were around 653,800 pupils that were designated as EAL in 2003 constituting 9.6% of the maintained school population. In 2007, this figure rose to 787,790 pupils constituting 12% of the school population. This increase of almost a fifth is set to rise when the next Annual Schools Census is published, especially with the estimations of the Home Office that predict by 2009 one in seven European citizens will reside in the United Kingdom. These figures seem to suggest that the provision for EAL is set to become increasingly more prevalent: especially in the short term.

Incontrovertibly, the extra influx of students with EAL into the education system is stretching not only monetary and human resources but also the key principles of the National Curriculum. Guidance published for primary and secondary schools presented by the DCSF and in light of *The Children's Act (2004)*, which promotes a more holistic approach to help children overcome barriers to learning and achievement, states that "every child has entitlement to fulfil their potential through access to the National Curriculum" (DCSF, 2007a:3). Furthermore, this is best achieved in a whole-school context where pupils are educated with their peers, which simultaneously, promotes integration and race equality.

Based on these aims, Bentley (1999:151) describes the model adopted in the UK as a system of initially partial immersion leading to total immersion in mainstream education. In such a model, EAL children do the vast majority of their learning within the English-speaking classroom; however, during the initial stages of their arrival, some students may be withdrawn for a few hours per week to

focus on their linguistic development in English. This is wildly different from the transitional model, which was commonplace during the 1970s when EAL pupils were initially placed in separate language centres to learn elementary English in order to assimilate with other pupils. However, the Swann Report (1985) entitled *Education for All* recommended that such pupils should enter mainstream as soon as possible despite the fact that the current level of support was inadequate.

A case study that is indicative of this practise is that of a large secondary school in north-west London with an expanding sixth form. All pupils come from diverse social and economic backgrounds with over half learning EAL. Although they were congratulated by OFSTED for their 'diverse and harmonious school community' (DCSF, 2007b:17) the school felt they could facilitate more effectively the integration of EAL students at KS 3. The Ethnic Minority Attainment (EMA) coordinator, a position funded by the local authority and often based in those schools with a high proportion of bilingual pupils, identifies and assesses all newly arrived pupils using the National Curriculum QCA Language in Common Steps. Those students who are deemed to be under Level 2 are offered a 4 month introduction course with the consent of parents. Pupils are offered a 'taster' for two hours per week of subject specific material (principally vocabulary) provided by subject leaders to help them a head start before entering mainstream classes. This provision is clearly effective because it provides the students with a simplified way into the language of the curriculum but remains intellectually challenging.

Although the above provision has proved to be successful it is based on the assumption that all students, whatever their native tongue might be, learn together on the induction course. However, figures show that in smaller unitary and shire authorities the numbers of EAL students are increasing but diversity is falling. For example, in the unitary authority of Essex, the number of EAL students has risen from 2,500 to 2,700 in one year. Although these figures, in real terms, only represent a small proportion of the student population in Essex (around 1.2%) over half of these students are from of Polish and Rumanian origins (DCSF Statistics Gateway). A Catholic school in the authority has tackled this issue by adopting a model of medium term partial immersion leading to total immersion with dual language support. The model follows the same course as the aforementioned case but differs in that the school employs learning support assistants with Polish as their mother tongue to support pupils with EAL in the classroom. In addition, class teachers are supplied with appropriate vocabulary lists to display on the interactive whiteboard that translate principle concepts. Furthermore, pupils are supplied with a bilingual dictionary and are permitted to write in a mixture of English and Polish in their exercise books. Also, the school also supports a local Saturday school for Polish pupils where they can learn English through their Polish mother tongue. It would appear that two of the most successful outcomes of this school's approach to EAL are that, in sociolinguistic terms, the Polish is afforded equal linguistic recognition and value as that of English and parents are deeply involved in

this process thus strengthening community links. Although the ultimate aim for these students is fluency in English, the efforts of this school combat the opinions of academics like Rutler and Jones (1998:8-9) who believe that the entire English education system is "...wedded to the view that the insistence of monolingual education reflects the power of the globalisation dominance of the English language."

Although these particular models appear to function sufficiently at the present time for new arrivals, Bourne *et al.* (2004:63) has questioned whether the UK should adapt its approach to EAL and focus less on the individual or group and more on developing a whole-school curriculum that benefits from the specialist knowledge of professionals from an entire authority in order to promote the ultimate in inclusive teaching. Although the *partnership teaching model* (Bentley, 1999:150) would require vast financial investment and organisation it has not proved to be impossible. The Multilingual City Project in Sheffield launched in 1994 is an umbrella initiative that has established a city-wide partnership of teachers, researchers, volunteers, local government workers and business people:

*"...to promote languages and bilingualism at every level of education [ensuring that] different languages become part the organic development of the community as a whole."*

Whilst promoting the advantages of learning a second language – for instance, increased knowledge, cultural engagement and extension of thinking – it has simultaneously attacked traditional anti-foreign language attitudes as well as claiming that every child in Sheffield would be bilingual in English and one other language. Although this was a rather ambitious aim the whole project has served to empower the linguistic minorities, place them on a par with native English speaking pupils who are also encouraged to learn an 'additional' language as well as celebrate the linguistic heterogeneity of the City of Sheffield. Furthermore, it appears to have shown how the sharing of resources and good practice is possible in certain contexts and should be encouraged as a method for ensuring the best quality education for all pupils of every race and creed.

This discussion of the current curriculum models for students with EAL demonstrates the foresight and ingenuity of many schools and local authorities to aid the arrival of foreign students to the education system and language. Nonetheless, certain aspects of current policy and practice are problematic or, in many cases, vague and must be tackled promptly to ensure that the English education system can cope with the increasing numbers of students with EAL.

*Good starting point!*  
The first area deals with the issue of achievement and equal opportunities. On the surface, allowing all students access and exposure to the mainstream curriculum has been successful in ensuring equal opportunity for every pupil by virtue of its own existence. However, the disparate levels of

achievement across different ethnic groups show that those students who are from low socio-economic backgrounds (predominantly, Bangladeshi and Pakistani) are being significantly outperformed by other ethnic groups with EAL (Leung 2001:12) . Leung (2001:13) believes that the imbalance is due to the current model of total immersion where the EAL curriculum diffuses into that of other students in order to promote inclusiveness. It is clear from the cases studies cited above that such a model does not have a deleterious impact on any student but clearly the current practice does require some adaption to ensure that all pupils with EAL are given equal opportunities to succeed.

The second issue is that of pedagogy. At present, EAL is still in its infancy as a specialist subject area in initial teacher education. Professional development is often left to schools or local authorities and, according to Creese (2004:190), "...many teachers are ill-equipped to take on the role of facilitator of language learning" because they often do not possess adequate knowledge of how additional languages are acquired. Furthermore, a lack of linguistic knowledge could also reveal a lack of cultural understanding. Therefore, the Anglo-centric viewpoint of the teacher may serve to undervalue or distort the viewpoint of a student with EAL whose culture is inherently different. The capability or talent of the teacher is not in question; it is simply a lack of training and professional development that the teacher has received.

The area of initial and on-going assessment is equally problematic. Although EAL assessment is not statutory, it is often the case that students are assessed on the same 8-Level scale and those who have English as a mother tongue with a few modifications at Level 1. Additionally, schools and local authorities often assess the progress of students with EAL using locally produced scales. Evidently, the lack of a centrally supported view of EAL development has engendered a great deal of variation and inconsistency between regions and the use of the 8-Level scale for English has revealed (unsurprisingly) that EAL students do not often reach the same levels commensurate with those of native speakers of a similar age and ability. In sum, a more reliable and realistic scale is required to measure and communicate effectively to teacher and student the real linguistic progress that they are making. In its current form, the use of the 8-Level scale only appears to overemphasise the difference between the student with EAL and their peers, which is not desirable when trying to promote inclusiveness.

Finally, a recent concern voiced by various local authorities that have a high proportion of students with EAL highlighted that those students who were potentially Gifted and Talented (G&T) were often unnoticed simply because their ability to communicate in English was not identical to that of a typical, 'English-speaking' G&T student. The London Borough of Hounslow has attempted to rectify this by producing an initial indicator checklist. The purpose of this document was to identify generic learning abilities and aptitudes of students with EAL. The process has had many positive outcomes including



the provision of additional twilight English tutoring sessions for G&T students to help them achieve their potential. Despite the salient success of the scheme, Hounslow remains the only authority in the UK to officially assess the G&T potential of its students with EAL: the conclusion is how many more are going unnoticed. *I totally agree ✓*

It is patently clear from this discussion that the pluralist vision of society held in this country has led to a preference for an immersive approach to educating students with EAL. As a consequence, this has led to a reassessment of terminology in order to appear more inclusive and, simultaneously, has highlighted the fact that EAL is not simply an educational issue; there are additional far-reaching sociolinguistic and political factors at play which, when taken into account, contribute to a more sympathetic and considerate understanding of the viewpoints of both the student with EAL and the community within which they reside. Nevertheless, this discussion has highlighted that there are areas which still need to be addressed in order to ensure that students with EAL can benefit from the 'inclusivity' that the English education system professes to provide. Thus far, the national provision for EAL in England cannot claim to have wholly embraced the 'one city-one curriculum' ideal promoted in Sheffield; nonetheless, it is clear that a more centralised cooperative approach to all aspects of EAL provision, wherein good practice becomes national policy, would help both rural and urban areas of the UK to cope more effectively with the ever-increasing number of foreign pupils who arrive on a daily basis. *✓*

**Word Count: 3,086**

*essential!!*

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