

Policy, Pedagogy and Pupil Perceptions: EAL in Scotland and England

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There are increasing numbers of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) in schools in the United Kingdom. In excess of a million pupils in UK schools currently speak one or more languages in addition to English. This number has more than doubled since 1997 (PLASC, DfE, 1997-2012). It is therefore not surprising that researchers are paying increasing attention to the teaching and learning of English as an Additional Language, focusing, for instance, on policy (e.g. Leung, 2001; Edwards, 2009); literacy (e.g. Edwards, 2009; Wallace, 2003; Gregory, 1996; 2008); integration (e.g. Leung and Creese, 2010; Creese, 2005; Colombi and Schleppegrell, 2002; Bourne and McPake, 1991); linguistic diversity (e.g. Creese and Blackledge, 2015; Edwards, 2009, Conteh, 2012); teacher and learner identities (e.g. Norton, 2003; Bernstein, 1996; Conteh, 2007; Franson, 1999); contexts for learning (e.g. Gibbons, 2009; Mohan et al, 2001); and initial teacher education programmes (e.g. Conteh and Meier, 2014; Foley, Sangster and Anderson, 2012).

It is possible, however, to identify a number of important gaps in research to date. Most studies focus on primary rather than secondary schooling (Andrews, 2009); and, most strikingly, EAL students' accounts of their experiences are conspicuously absent. Their voices remain silent. This study therefore sets out to begin to address these gaps. The investigation can also be seen to be timely, given that the current political climate has led to a dismantling of EAL specialist support and provision across England and parts of Scotland. It is important to listen to the experiences of students who have been on the receiving end of such decisions.

This report describes a small-scale study in which interviews were conducted in a school in an English city and a school in a Scottish city. Both of these schools had a high proportion of students for whom English was an additional language. The project was taken ahead by a team based in the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh and in the Institute of Education, University of Reading. It was commissioned by The Bell Foundation as part of an ongoing programme of research and development activities concerning Children with English as an additional language.

1.2 Aims of the study

The project set out to foreground EAL learners' own voices and to discover how they represented their school experiences and their learning within an English-medium environment in their own terms. This in turn enabled us to identify ways in which their perceptions could be used to improve their learning experiences within UK schooling.

In addition, as a secondary focus of attention, we investigated how teaching staff perceived the current situation and the needs of EAL learners and, in addition, what they viewed as appropriate responses to these needs.

These aims were encapsulated in the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of EAL learners of their language learning experiences?
2. How do these perceptions differ from those of their teachers?

Initially, we had also intended to investigate how the differing national EAL policies in England and Scotland were enacted at the level of the secondary school, the department and the classroom in relation to individual learners and whether the different emphases in national policy were reflected at these various levels. It soon became apparent, however, that this potentially very interesting line of inquiry would have required considerably more time and resources than were available in this small-scale study.

1.3 Demographics

Official statistics in England show that there are currently 1,171,101 pupils in schools who are at different stages of learning and using English as an additional language. This number has more than doubled since 1997 (for further details see <http://www.naldic.org.uk/research-and-information/eal-statistics/eal-pupils>). Although the total number of pupils identified as learning EAL in Scotland is much smaller, there has been a significant increase since numbers first were recorded in 2007 from 741 to 32,509 in 2014. The relevant demographic data for the whole of the UK shows clearly that ethnolinguistic diversity in society is increasing. 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).

1.4 Terminology

Nationally and internationally, a variety of terms is used to refer to EAL pupils and their teachers. For pupils we have, for example: bilingual pupils/learners; English language learners (ELLs); English as an additional language (EAL); English as a second language (ESL); and limited English proficiency (LEP). For teachers, terms include: bilingual support assistants/teachers; EAL teachers; bilingual teachers; and bilingual teaching assistants. 'Moreover, different policy trajectories have created a whole range of policy acronyms particular to national contexts' (Leung and Creese, 2010:xviii). A number of these terms can be seen to act not just as descriptive labels but to carry with them particular ideologies (Leung and Creese, 2010).

It is important to recognise that EAL pupils cannot be described as a homogeneous group, but comprise a diverse population of learners who come from a variety of social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This diversity is captured within Gibbons' (2009:8) descriptions of English language learners (ELLs) in UK schools:

- some pupils are literate in their home language, while others may have limited literacy or are considered to have no literacy in any language;
- some have developed oral fluency in English but are less competent in reading and writing, while others have developed some literacies associated with reading and writing, but have no conversational ability.

As the discussion in the literature on migration (see chapter 2.2) and our own findings will detail, there are distinct differences also in pupils' migration experiences. For example, some pupils are refugees, while others are the children of migrants who have moved to the UK to improve their economic situation. EAL pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are diverse, as are the educational backgrounds of their families. Some pupils' parents have experienced tertiary education, while others are the first in their families to attend school (Gibbons, 2009:8). Within this report, we have used the term EAL pupils to describe this wide population. We use this term in a way that is comparable to Meltzer and Hamman's inclusive definition of English language learners, i.e., pupils who use two or more languages in their everyday lives 'and whose opportunities to fully develop English language literacy to grade level have not yet been fully realised' (2005:5). Choosing in this report to use the term 'EAL pupils' allows us to talk about a commonality of issues that are linked to such a diverse group of pupils.

We do, however, recognise a danger here. The term *English* as an additional language tends to foreground the learning of English as an end in itself. We need to focus in schools on the fact that pupils are also learning English as a *means* to access subject content knowledge that is being delivered through the medium of English. Accordingly, in our use of the term 'EAL students', we are alert to the fact that such learners not only face the task of developing fluency in the different modes of English but also, concurrently, have to engage with the content and specific literacies of individual school subjects through the medium of English, a language that they have not yet fully mastered. EAL pedagogy thus needs to address not only the learning of English as an object in itself, but also how EAL learners can be assisted to engage with the content, language and literacies of individual subjects within the curriculum.

1.5 Organisation of the report

Following this introduction, the literature review in chapter two situates our study within the body of EAL literature by drawing on key findings and insights that are particularly pertinent to the purposes and focus of our research. Staying true to our research focus, the core of the report is the extended presentation of the findings from the student interviews. This is then complemented by a consideration of the main themes that emerged from the interviews with teaching staff. The final part of the report draws together the *main themes* from both of these findings chapters and presents recommendations that flow from the study's findings.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In reviewing the literature which serves as a point of departure for the research reported in this report, we look first at the Scottish and English policy contexts in relation to EAL and describe how national assessment policies and arrangements impact on EAL learners. Attention then moves to a range of topics in the literature that illuminate the situation of EAL learners, including migration and issues experienced during transitions to UK schooling.

2.2 Policy contexts

Policy documents in both Scotland and England foreground the importance of equality and inclusion and send a clear message that all pupils should have equal access to the mainstream curriculum. In the discussion below, we consider the different policy contexts within the study.

2.2.1 Scotland

Following the Education Scotland Act (1981) the key principle that guides the education of EAL pupils is that they should be educated in the mainstream classroom alongside their peers to avoid segregated provision and to guarantee equal access to the curriculum (Harris and Leung, 2011: 251).

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (Scottish Executive Education Department [SEED] 2000) requires local authorities to ensure that schools meet the needs of all pupils, and that these pupils achieve their full potential. Legislation specifies that it is the right of children and young people to receive additional support, if necessary; and a number of additional curricular guidelines and arrangements have been designed to meet this requirement.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning – hereafter ASN) (Scotland) Act (HMSO 2004) provides a broad definition of pupils who require additional support. The ASN policy (2004) requires that for each child or young person with additional support needs, every local authority must make adequate and efficient provision for additional support as is necessary. The Act further states that 'schools have a key role to play in maximising the potential of bilingual learners... and should be proactive in addressing the learning needs, and raising the achievement of bilingual learners' (2004: 27). The Scottish Executive's *Supporting Children's Learning: Code of Practice* (SEED, 2005) provides specific guidelines for implementing the Act. At the same time as the ASN Act became legislation, a number of curricular reforms took place within Scotland known as *Curriculum for Excellence* (hereafter CfE). CfE is based on the premise that 'the curriculum should enable all young people in Scotland to develop as: successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors' (SEED, 2004). Guidelines were drawn up in the report '*Learning in 2(+) Languages*' (Learning and Teaching Scotland [LTScotland], 2005) to support the implementation of CfE for pupils learning EAL. The '*Learning in 2(+) Languages*' report recognises that in order to promote achievement:

Schools should build on pupils' learning and achievements, within and beyond school. Bilingual learners have a number of particular strengths including their experience of different languages. However, some will require additional support if they are to maximise their progress in school and achieve to their fullest potential.

(LTScotland, 2005:8).

A number of key principles are highlighted within this report in relation to working with pupils learning EAL. They should be provided with 'effective teaching and learning, communication with parents, valuing and promoting home language and staff support and development' (LTScotland, 2005:8). There is some recognition of the links between the development of literacy in a first/home language and the development of literacy in English.

2.2.2 England

Parallel developments have also been evident in England following recommendations from the Swann Report, *Education for All* (1985) and the Calderdale Education Authority review of EAL provision (1986). In 2002, the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) (RRAA) came into force, making it a legal duty for all public institutions, including schools, to have policies in place to promote race equality. Under the Act, all maintained schools must have a race equality policy and must act upon it, taking steps to narrow the gap between the levels of attainment of different ethnic groups. However, in 2010 the Equality Act replaced all previously existing equality legislation e.g. Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act, and is considered to be a single consolidated resource that addresses discrimination and provides key changes that schools need to take into account. This means that by law, schools cannot discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

A summary of government policy (DfE, 2012:1) states that local authorities have a legal duty to ensure that education is available for all children of compulsory school age, regardless of their age, ability, aptitudes and any special educational needs. This duty applies irrespective of a child's immigration status, country of origin or rights of residence in a particular area (DfE, 2012:1). For students learning EAL the goal is to promote rapid language acquisition and to include them in mainstream education as quickly as possible,

where they will be taught alongside their peers (ibid:1). The DfE (2012) also states that the responsibility for maintenance of the home language of students learning EAL lies with the ethnic minority community themselves (DfE, 2012:5).

Across the UK, policies for integrating students learning EAL into mainstream classrooms have been established since the 1980s. These policies have been designed to provide equal opportunities and non-discriminatory practices across educational contexts. Within these policies, mainstreaming is considered to be the most valued approach for promoting educational inclusion and achievement.

In this mainstreaming approach, classroom teachers are given responsibility for making sure that students learning EAL can participate in lessons. Policy guidelines in both Scotland and England recognise that children and young people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds benefit from the maintenance of their home languages and cultures. Policy documents in both England and Scotland place value on minority languages and celebrate them as worthwhile. Although there is this recognition of the importance of maintaining a child's first/home language, (outside of Welsh and Gaelic medium schools), in practice English almost always *remains* the medium of instruction for all pupils and academic attainment is principally achieved through the medium of English. Commenting on this situation in the past, Lo Bianco (1990) has stated that educational policy in the United Kingdom has planned for, and is comfortable with, English monolingualism.

While it appears that educational policies in both Scotland and England are committed to enabling students learning EAL to have access to a common curriculum, Leung (2014) has observed that these policies and practices seem to be much less focused on the importance of integrating the specialist pedagogic knowledge and concerns of EAL-minded language teaching into the mainstream curriculum. Pedagogical practices can therefore be seen to be out of step with the multilingual and multicultural nature of British classrooms. More effective pedagogical practices would also seem to require a move beyond a mere recognition and tolerance of linguistic and cultural diversity to a cultivation of languages and cultures 'through their use for teaching and learning' (Creese and Blackledge, 2010:103).

2.2.3 Funding

In 1966, 'Section 11' of the Local Government Act directed funds to meet the various needs of pupils of commonwealth origin. This funding supported the education of EAL and bilingual learners. Later developments saw this support replaced by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) which was intended to narrow achievement gaps for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those learning English as an additional language. This ring-fenced grant was distributed to local authorities and enabled them to provide a service that centrally-employs teachers to support such pupils. However, in 2011, a significant change in resources for EAL in England saw the loss of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). Spending revisions during this time saw this grant mainstreamed into the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) where schools were given decision-making power in terms of how this money was used. Local authorities were permitted to retain a proportion of the funding to continue a more centralized Ethnic Minority Achievement service that could support schools. Despite the possibility for the reallocation of resources, there were no assurances that these services would continue to be bought-in.

The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) outlines guidance for schools in England that reports:

From April 2013, an 'EAL' factor could be included in local funding formulae to enable schools in England to meet the needs of bilingual pupils. This factor is limited to bilingual pupils who have been enrolled in English schools for a maximum of three years. The local schools forum can decide:

- whether to include an EAL factor in their formula;
- whether this factor will 'count' bilingual pupils who have been enrolled in a school in England for one, two or three years
- the cash value of this factor for primary aged pupils and for secondary aged pupils.

(NALDIC, 2015).

A report from the NASUWT states that reductions in EAL and ethnic minority funding are occurring at a time when demand for such services is increasing' (NASUWT, 2012:6).

In 2011 the Pupil Premium was introduced. In 2012-13 schools were allocated £1.25 billion in funding for children meeting certain criteria, e.g. children from low-income families who were eligible for free school meals (FSM), looked after children and children with parents in the armed forces. A survey by Ofsted showed that some schools used this money as a replacement for other funding that had been withdrawn. In certain cases where pupils learning EAL were eligible for the pupil premium, schools were using these funds to ensure language learning needs were met. NALDIC reports that it is reassured that such funding is being used to meet the needs of some pupils learning EAL, but raises the question about where it leaves EAL learners who are not eligible for such funding (NALDIC, 2015). A related concern is that monies that are in the system to support EAL learners are no longer ring-fenced and therefore unlike the pupil premium, schools are not currently accountable at school level for how funding for EAL learners is actually used.

2.2.4 Assessment

It has been noted above that current EAL policy in both England and Scotland is shaped and motivated by principles of inclusion and equality of access to mainstream educational provision. However, the revised National Curriculum in England and the new Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) framework do not provide a distinct EAL assessment framework. Rather than taking into account

the English language competence of the students, similar curricular specifications and assessment criteria are used for students learning EAL and mother-tongue English-speaking students.

In England the development of EAL assessment within the mainstream curriculum has not been recognised as a priority. The National Curriculum is a standards-based framework with detailed guidelines, programmes of study and stages and levels of attainment in all key subject areas, for example, Science, Maths, History. In summer 2015, however, the Department for Education moved to abolish National Curriculum levels, with the vast majority of schools now operating without these levels of assessment. Even before these developments there was little scope for EAL assessment within the framework; given that the National Curriculum is subject-based and that English as an additional/second language is not recognised as a 'subject', programmes of study do not have any detailed specifications on what tailoring of content, learning, teaching and assessment is required for EAL learners. The lack of detailed guidance and of an assessment framework in England presents challenges to teachers, particularly as teachers are still expected to:

...take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Monitoring of progress should take account of the pupils' age, length of time in this country, previous educational experience and abilities in other languages ...Teachers should plan teaching opportunities to help pupils develop their English and should aim to provide the support pupils need to take part in all subjects.

(DfE, 2013: 8).

In Scotland a slightly different approach in terms of assessment is available for students with EAL. While all pupils must follow the statutory curricular assessments in all subject areas, there are optional, additional national tests and school leaving qualifications for students learning EAL. They can, if they wish, (and where there is local provision), take English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications (National 2, National 3, National 4, National 5 and Higher). However, few schools offer these qualifications. There is also difficulty in finding appropriately qualified staff to teach and prepare students for such exams. While these difficulties exist, there have been efforts to address issues of equality by giving these qualifications 'status' as entry qualifications to Scottish higher education. ESOL Highers are now recognised as an alternative qualification for students learning EAL for entry into most Scottish universities.

In terms of classroom-based, formative assessment, a number of schools in both England and Scotland draw on locally devised EAL scales/schemes to chart the progress and language development of students learning EAL. A large EAL service in one local authority in Scotland has taken the lead in developing '*Profiles of Competence*'. These provide bands to monitor and record the progress of students learning EAL and have been shared and implemented across a range of settings. Some EAL services have encouraged schools to use EAL *Profiles of Competence* to allow teachers to track the development of language at each age band and stage of English. Schools are encouraged to update student *Profiles* twice a year at liaison meetings between the EAL teacher and class teacher. While this is not mandatory, and is not implemented nationally, it is encouraged as good practice across many regions.

In a similar way, teachers in England have drawn on locally-designed schemes to assess the proficiencies in English of students learning EAL (Arnot *et al.*, 2014:4). However, the schemes are not uniform across the country which has presented difficulty in establishing comparisons of EAL learners' progress against a standard. A limited response to such challenges by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) resulted in the production of *A Language in Common: Assessing English as an additional language* (QCA, 2000). This led to minor amendments to the National Curriculum statements for English (as a subject), Level 1, to take into account novice learners of English (NALDIC, 2005; Menken, Hudson and Leung, 2014).

In response to the current situation, The Bell Foundation is currently funding an EAL assessment project to enhance the overall quality of educational provision for students learning EAL (Arnot *et al.*, 2014:4). It will produce a research-based and practice-informed assessment framework for both primary and secondary levels in England.

2.3 Migration

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) in recent decades, together with an increase in global movement, has brought about rapid growth in the number of migrants coming to the United Kingdom (UK). This 'has attracted a considerable amount of public attention' and has become increasingly politicised (Tereshchenko and Archer, 2014: 3). This recent demographic change has resulted in more complex social patterns across the UK, with an increasing number of 'new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants' (Vertovec, 2007:1024). British urban contexts can now be classified as 'superdiverse' communities, where people from a range of different countries of origin, languages, cultures, histories and religions live and work side by side (Conteh and Meier, 2014).

Accordingly, there is a need to conceptualise diversity more broadly to encompass interconnected variables such as 'differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents' (Vertovec, 2007: 1025). Such contemporary diversity, therefore, forces our understanding to move beyond notions of ethnicity or country of origin as the only units of analysis (Vertovec, 2007). Reynolds [2008] argues that recognition of Vertovec's (2007) 'interplay of variables' in conceptualising super-diversity would enhance the experiences of, and promote inclusion for, students from diverse backgrounds.

King (2012:6) observes that the complexity and diversity associated with migration are important because of the ways in which they shape and re-shape societies. Within the broader society, opinions are divided concerning this 're-shaping'. There are those who welcome and understand the different cultural and economic contributions that migrants bring to society and those who don't. King (2012) suggests that politically-motivated anti-migration discourses make exaggerated claims about the number of migrants, their impact on the labour market, and their legal status. It is important to recognise that schools are often operating within social and political climates that are opposed to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Anderson and Williamson, 2004).

King's conceptual analysis of the complexity of migration underpins his call for a more interdisciplinary approach to research in the area (2012:7). He highlights the bounded thinking that is often associated with migration research which is usually linked to a specific social science discipline, such as geography, sociology and economics (King, 2012). He argues that interdisciplinary research would provide a clearer understanding of the global forces that are at work in the movement of people and how these forces either enable or constrain the ways that people integrate into their new localities and develop new identities. Such interdisciplinary research would be relevant to educational contexts as contemporary migration trends have brought increasing linguistic and cultural heterogeneity to UK schools and have presented important challenges for educational policies, classroom practices and research.

2.3.1 Impact of migration patterns on school contexts

Gillborn recognises that children from migrant backgrounds experience school differently to their non-migrant peers, 'often in ways that disadvantage them and reinforce the message that 'Britain' and 'The British' are categories that can never truly include them' (Gillborn, 1995:2). However, he argues that an education system does have the potential to challenge such inequalities and claims that this will have a lasting impact on school pupils of all ages and backgrounds and the communities of which they are a part (Gillborn, 1995:2). Following his argument, 'difference' and its associated complexities must be a vital part of schooling. This involves alertness and sensitivity to the variety of experiences and backgrounds of migrant children, whose identity can be complex and subject to considerable change. Gillborn's (1995) messages continue to be relevant to understanding the situation and needs of students in contemporary classrooms who have linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Reynolds (2008:5) notes that 'being new in a school raises challenges for any child, but the added element of being new in a country magnifies these challenges manifold. The need to learn English is a focus'. In addition to the challenge of learning English, Reynolds reports on a number of different problems that migrant children may face in schools, such as:

Finding new friends, dealing with loss and loneliness; adjusting to a new teacher and new school system (some children may never have been to school before); adjusting to a new cultural environment; trauma that may have occurred preceding, during and after migration; and racism or anti-immigration sentiments.

(Reynolds, 2008:5).

Various educational policies have been crafted over recent decades to 'offer learners who are palpably different from each other something ('an education') that is palpably the same for all' (Clark et al, 1999:171). Critics argue that a common curriculum flattens difference and promotes the politics of universalism, where individual or group differences are not recognised (e.g. Leung, 2015; Reeves, 2004).

2.4 Transitions

To understand diversity and the challenges that students face as they enter unfamiliar countries and school systems, it is helpful to draw on literature on migration and cross-cultural encounters. This focus allows us to gain a more differentiated picture of the transitions that EAL students experience as they enter new academic, social, cultural and linguistic environments.

Studies in psychology, together with other disciplines in the social sciences, have begun to expand our understanding of the consequences of migration in terms of acculturation, cultural identities and the emergence of linguistically and culturally plural societies. It has been established that the transitions involved in moving between countries and school systems have an impact on a student's sense of well-being, identity and the social skills needed to operate within a culturally and linguistically complex setting (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). McCarthy (2003:3) states that current research on such matters indicates that migration results in enormous stress for children, and that this can be even more intense for adolescents because of the pressure to balance different worlds, ethnic cultures and languages and the need to move fluidly between them. Experts agree that 'young people in general who do not connect in meaningful ways with their peers, family or schools are at an increased risk of school failure, school drop-out and health problems' (McCarthy, 2003:3). This has implications for students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds who may be alienated from school and 'rejected by their native-born peers because of their language fluency in English or their different cultural practices' (McCarthy, 2003:3). However, it is important to note that many schools recognise this and, among other actions, have arranged for 'buddies' or 'mentors' for new arrivals. The buddy or mentor may be another pupil who speaks the same language as the student and can therefore act as a translator, or it may be a student who is a mother-tongue English speaker.

Research shows that migrant children learning EAL have unique needs and that schools need to address these appropriately (Reynolds, 2008; McCarthy, 2003; Grant and Wong, 2003). While it is recognised internationally that efforts have been made to enable such students to acquire English and ensure educational opportunities, research shows that these initiatives have had a limited impact (e.g. Lucas, 2011; Lucas and Villegas, 2011; Reeves, 2004). McCarthy argues that they 'have not comprehensively supported

these children as they undergo not only the usual stresses of childhood, but also the additional burden of major family transition and life change as a result of immigration' (McCarthy, 2003:5). Garcia and Cuellar (2006) suggest that migrant students learning EAL continue to be *at risk* in today's social institutions. Such considerations have implications for teacher education as we take into account the rich cultural and linguistic variation these students bring to school settings.

In the discussion which follows we consider a number of issues of potential importance for academic and personal development in children's transition to life post-migration, including the role of language diversity and literacies, the relationship between students' languages and identities; the practice of translanguaging; and the language of school subjects.

2.4.1 Language diversity and literacies

In an exploration of literacy teaching in the context of a globalised society, Cope and Kalantzis (2000) assert that 'literacy is at the heart of education's promise' (Kalantzis and Cope, 2000:121). Accordingly, a fundamental priority for teachers in Anglophone countries concerns the development of the language and literacy skills that are needed to participate in a range of textual practices in the English language (Molyneux, 2009:97). The acquisition and development of such skills are key to academic success in schools. Current influential perspectives view literacy not simply as a set of technical skills that needs to be acquired by an individual but rather in terms of socially and culturally-situated practices (e.g., Gee, 1990). These perspectives: highlight the plural nature of *literacies*; have a broad understanding of what constitutes a text; include the modes of speaking, listening, reading and writing; and encompass ways of *being and doing* in the world (Luke, 1995; Gee, 2005).

Studies show that, in some contexts at least, school and classroom practices have drawn on such expanded definitions of literacy, such as that of multiliteracies (e.g. Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Wray, 2006). (The concept of multiliteracies has been developed to encompass the new forms of literacy that have come with technological change). Kern (2000) asserts that it is essential to recognise too that literacy is more than a set of academic skills. He notes that literacy is culturally constructed and linked to the sociocultural practices that feature in language use in a particular society (Kern, 2000:23). His perspective recognises that literacy involves an 'awareness of how acts of reading, writing and conversation *mediate and transform meanings*' (Kern, 2000:23). However, even these expanded definitions of the scope of literacy, seem to have been monolingually conceptualised in many school and classroom contexts.

In reaction to this situation, some writers have called for these wider conceptions of literacy and for literacy pedagogies to move to being *multilingual* in nature (e.g. Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Garcia and Wei, 2014). Lo Bianco argues that 'a multiliteracies pedagogy cannot but be multilingual' and suggests that multiliteracies are able to address the diversity of culture and language, while at the same time, accommodate 'diversity of modality such as, email and visual literacy alongside the book and the letter' (2000:92, 105).

At the same time it is important to recognise some of the challenges that arise when literacy practices attempt to value and utilise a student's first language (L1) by embracing a multilingual approach. Not all students learning EAL have had the opportunity to develop literacy, in the more narrow definition of reading and writing, in their first language. In addition, some students may not have the understanding that rules and conventions vary between languages, comprehend the concept of academic literacy, or be able to transfer any underlying proficiency in this area (Cummins, 2000).

These considerations have important implications for classroom practices, initial teacher education and CPD programmes. Teachers could be assisted to engage in literacy practices that intentionally draw on L1 resources (speaking, reading, writing) and explore a variety of viewpoints and experiences that are represented within the class. This would challenge the monocultural and monolingual assumptions and perspectives that are often dominant within English-only classroom contexts (Grant and Sleeter, 2011).

2.4.2 Languages and identities

As noted above, the experiences of individual pupils within contemporary society are complex as they engage in 'multi-layered communities' (Conteh and Meier, 2014:1). This suggests the need to foreground linguistic and cultural diversity when considering how young people construct their identities within school settings.

In this vein, more recent studies have explored the relationship between the learner and the social context (e.g. Norton 2006; Miller, 2009). Gardner's (2001) work foregrounds the idea that learning a second or additional language can be classified as a social identification process, internalised within an individual's psychological identity. These social identification processes are rooted in a context; and identity itself can be conceptualised as fluid and in continual flux (Giroux, 1979; Hall, 1996; Gee, 2005).

Making these points more specific to identity formation in schools, Miller states that thinking, knowing, believing and doing are enacted in classroom contexts in a way that cannot be separated from identity construction (2009:175). Kenner and Ruby raise concerns about a student's sense of self and identity formation as they consider the social and linguistic practices within school contexts and state: 'If English is treated as the only significant language in school, children will try to construct monolingual identities' (Kenner and Ruby, 2012:23). They thus draw attention to how the implicit language ideology of a school may act to constrain the identities that students learning EAL are able to construct and perform.

Within mainstream school settings, English language is an essential tool for learning. Conteh and Meier (2014:33) argue that it is also

an inextricable part of a student's personal and social life and of the cultures they live in; they recognise that, for students learning EAL, language is imbricated in the ways they develop a sense of belonging and learn to *fit into* the social worlds that surround them. Students' home languages and English will form a large part of their thought processes and how they make sense of themselves and the world in which they live (Conteh and Meier, 2014:35). For this reason, they consider that explicitly recognising, and providing opportunities for the use of, EAL students' home languages is crucial to the development of a healthy sense of self and identity.

2.4.3 Translanguaging

In parallel with the increased movement of people across international boundaries, there is a shift towards seeing the boundaries between languages themselves as more porous than has previously been recognised. Historically, languages have been viewed as separate 'monolingualisms' and language practices in schools have continued to keep them compartmentalised. These ways of thinking and practices have been challenged by recent scholarship in *translanguaging* (e.g. Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Garcia, 2009; Canagarajah, 2011; Lewis et al, 2009) which views languages as intersecting, complex and fluid, selectively deployed to make meaning, rather than as discrete entities. Translanguaging foregrounds the 'complex language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities, as well as the pedagogical approaches that use those complex practices' (Garcia and Wei, 2014:20). It draws attention to the ways in which individuals and communities can possibly move seamlessly across the languages that they know and use for different communicative purposes. The use of translanguaging in everyday communication allows us to view this practice as a social accomplishment, which maximises 'understanding and performance in the home, street and school' (Lewis et al, 2009:643; Canagarajah, 2011:2). May (2013) has called this the 'multilingual turn'.

Garcia (2009) argues that the concept of translanguaging can be of value in exploring the link between languages and identities and suggests that multilingual speakers 'decide who they want to be and choose their language practices accordingly' (Garcia, 2010:524). However, Creese and Blackledge (2015:25) recognise that not all language resources are equally available to all speakers at all times. Their pertinent observation raises questions about how classroom practices accommodate and make space for multilingual students.

It also needs to be acknowledged that a pedagogy that would make space for multilingual students is currently underdeveloped. A number of studies (e.g. Lin and Martin, 2005; Creese and Blackledge, 2010) have shown that teachers do not deploy translanguaging practices. Canagarajah suggests that 'we haven't figured out how to develop proficiency among students in classrooms' and that this is important if we are to move multilingual language acquisition forward (2011:7).

It is important to recognise though that translation and translanguaging often occur 'naturally' in multilingual societies (Laviosa, 2015); and that globally 'many contemporary learners do not learn English to become monolingual English speakers, but rather to create a bilingual identity' (Cook, 2007:399). This has implications for initial teacher education and continuing professional development. Developing ways of bringing these translanguaging practices into the classroom would allow students learning EAL to perform bi/multilingually across different activities, e.g. reading, writing, speaking, note-taking (Canagarajah, 2011). At the same time, Canagarajah recognises that the 'proactive teaching of translanguaging raises a difficult set of theoretical and practical questions that have not received adequate discussion so far' (Canagarajah, 2011:1).

2.4.4 Language of school subjects

Students learning EAL encounter English as the *medium* of instruction within UK schools. This entails understanding and deploying the language and literacy of individual school subjects. The literacies of secondary school subjects can be demanding. The language patterns within academic texts of secondary content areas are different to the ways language is used in every day communicative situations. Texts that students read in these subject areas deal with specialised topics and may be very different to the kind of texts they will have encountered in primary classrooms. The density of such texts often present challenges in comprehension. Such texts are not only dense, but often technical, abstract and complex in order to convey situated meaning and action (Fang and Schleppegrell, 2011). In addition, Schleppegrell notes that 'language serves as an often unconscious means of evaluating and differentiating students' (2004:2).

To develop subject-specific literacy skills, students learning EAL (and indeed all students) need to understand how 'knowledge is presented in characteristic patterns of language in each subject' (Schleppegrell, 2008:8). These 'characteristic patterns' can vary significantly across subjects. Allowing all students to access the registers, genres and social practices (EUCIM-TE, 2010) of individual school subjects can be seen to require a whole school approach to 'literacy across the curriculum' where all teachers employ pedagogies that integrate language, literacy and content knowledge (Leung, 2005, 2010).

2.4.4.1 BICS/CALP

On the topic of the challenges posed by the language of school subject, Cummins (1981) has provided a very influential framework that distinguishes between different 'dimensions' of language learning and use. The first dimension is that of everyday communication skills known as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and the other is that of higher order skills for academic purposes termed as CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). BICS refers to the everyday, social use of language. It develops when there is contextual support. CALP refers to the cognitively-demanding language used in academic situations and is more difficult to acquire. Carrasquillo and Rodriguez highlight that 'the primary distinction between the two concepts rests in the extent to which the communicative act is 'context-reduced' or 'context-embedded' (1996:27). Studies (Cummins, 1984; Collier, 1995) indicate that pupils learning EAL acquire conversational fluency in the everyday language of the society within one to two years. However, academic language needs a longer period of time to develop. Indeed, studies show that between five to eleven years is required for pupils

learning English as an additional language to catch up with peers who have English as a first language (Thomas and Collier, 1997; Cummins, 1984, 2000).

It needs to be noted that a number of concerns have been raised about this simple dichotomy (e.g. Genesee, 1984; MacSwan and Rolstad, 2003). A principal concern is that Cummins' (1981, 1984) theory of BICS/CALP tends to accord academic language and subject literacies a higher value than the language used in everyday contexts. MacSwan and Rolstad (2003, p.7) strongly challenge the distinctions made by Cummins and argue that schooling is not unique and that all of life's experiences lead to new and 'specialized vocabulary, new speech styles, and even structural changes'.

These criticisms can be seen as less pertinent to Cummins' later work (2001), in which he considers BICS and CALP to be on a continuum, rather than as dichotomous types of language proficiencies. He reports that bilingual students move seamlessly across the continuum depending on what they are trying to achieve. Conteh and Meier (2014) demonstrate the relevance of the BICS/CALP continuum for multilingual learners, but suggest that the process of moving back and forth across it is not automatic for such learners. Accordingly, these learners need support as they 'move from learning through context-embedded activities to the more context-disembedded tasks they are expected to perform as they move through schooling' (Conteh and Meier, 2014:66).

2.5 Implications for teacher education

Issues of migration, student identity and cultural and linguistic diversity have significant implications for initial teacher education and continuing professional development. Lucas and Villegas (2011:56) foreground the ways teacher education programmes can prepare 'diverse teachers' for 'diverse learners' and outline the linguistic knowledge that teachers need to develop, as follows:

I. Orientations of linguistically responsive teachers

1. Sociolinguistic consciousness:
 - a. understanding of the connections between language, culture and identity; and
 - b. awareness of the socio-political dimensions of language use and language education.
2. Valuing linguistic diversity
3. Advocating for diverse learners

II. Knowledge and skills of linguistically responsive teachers

1. Learning about languages, diverse learners and language proficiencies.
2. Identifying the language demands of classroom tasks.
3. Applying key principles of second language learning:
 - a. conversational language proficiency is fundamentally different from academic language proficiency;
 - b. learners need comprehensible input just beyond their current level of proficiency;
 - c. social interaction for authentic communicative purposes fosters language learning;
 - d. skills and concepts learned in the first language transfer to a second language; and
 - e. anxiety about performing in a second or additional language can interfere with learning.
4. Scaffolding instruction to promote language learning.

(Adapted from Lucas and Villegas, (2011:57)

In addition, Villegas and Lucas (2002:21) present this set of requirements for culturally-responsive teachers:

Culturally responsive teachers: (a) are socioculturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar.

2.6 Conclusion

This brief review has summarised key elements of areas of literature that are pertinent to this study, including the policy contexts, migration and a range of issues related to students' transition to life and schooling in the UK. We turn next in chapter three to a discussion of the methodological decisions that were taken within the study.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 set out the principal aim of this study which was to discover how EAL learners represented in their own terms their school experiences and learning within an English-medium environment, thereby foregrounding their voices. In addition, as a secondary concern, we investigated how teaching staff perceived the current situation and needs of EAL learners and what they viewed as appropriate responses to these needs. The following research questions were formulated to capture these aims:

- What are the perceptions of EAL learners of their language learning experiences?
- How do these perceptions differ from those of their teachers?

3.2 Research design

There were five researchers involved in the project, three from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and two from the University of Reading in England. Several face-to-face meetings took place between these researchers during the design phase of the study and, as the data collection phase proceeded, regular contact was maintained through Skype meetings and e-mail communication. There was a further full day face-to-face meeting during the data analysis phase of the project.

A case study approach, based within two secondary schools (one in Scotland and one in England) was used. The schools were selected because of the substantial numbers in each school in the student body speaking English as an additional language. The first of these schools, designated here as Albion Academy, is a Scottish state school. It is a six-year, comprehensive, community school, with almost 1000 students (aged 11-18) and over 2800 (part-time) adults enrolled. Whilst academic achievement is important, the school also emphasises extra-curricular activity and offers a wide-ranging programme of sport, drama and music. The second school, designated here as Anglia Academy, situated in the south of England, is a large community academy for boys and girls (aged 11-18) with arts (including performing arts) and business and enterprise specialisms. It currently has 1,800 students and, at the school's last Ofsted inspection, was graded 'Good'.

Given the study's focus on representing the voices of EAL students themselves, interactive interviews formed the method of investigation. Both focus group and individual interviews were employed because these were seen to have complementary strengths and limitations which, in combination, were believed to have the potential to capture a fuller picture of EAL students' thoughts, feelings and experiences. Data were gathered in each school in the following ways:

- four focus group interviews with EAL students: two groups aged 11-13, and two aged 14-16;
- ten individual interviews with students;
- an individual interview with an English teacher; and
- interviews with an EAL teacher and with two teaching assistants.

3.2.1 Procedure

Initial contact was made with a senior manager at both schools to explain the aims of the study. Following ethical clearance from the University of Edinburgh, briefing meetings were held first with teaching staff and then with students during which information sheets (see Appendices 2-5) and consent forms were distributed.

3.2.1.1 Sampling: teacher sample

A total of four members of staff were interviewed. In Albion Academy the Head of the English department and an EAL teacher participated, and in Anglia Academy two EAL teaching assistants were included. It was not possible to interview the Head of EAL in Anglia Academy who, by the time the research was undertaken was on long-term leave. Nor was it possible to interview an English teacher.

3.2.1.2 Sampling: student sample for focus group and individual interviews

We set out to gain a purposive sample of between 10 and 12 students with approximately equal numbers of girls and boys. To achieve this end, the schools were offered criteria for the selection of EAL students for the study (see Appendix 1). They were to be divided into two age bands (younger, 11-13; and older groups, 14-16) as there may be a relationship between age and perceptions of transition to the new country. We sought students from a range of countries in order to give an indication of the extent to which their experiences were influenced by the country of origin. Ultimately, however, sample sizes were too small and experiences so diverse that it was not possible to note meaningful patterns that might be attributable either to age on arrival or country of origin. We also aimed to include students who had arrived in the UK within the last two years both to ensure that their levels of English would allow them to express themselves adequately (without requiring an interpreter) and that their memories of important events would be fresh. Schools did not always, however, have precise information about the length of time that children had been in the country and, in some cases, it emerged that they had arrived more than two years before the interviews took place.

Table 3.1 below sets out the numbers of students and teacher participants in the study. In Albion Academy, the younger student group discussion comprised four students, and the older group two students. In the subsequent individual interviews all of the students were interviewed individually. In addition, an 'older' student who was not able to attend the focus group because of a timetabling clash, took part in an individual interview. In Anglia Academy six younger students and five older students participated in the focus group discussion but lack of availability reduced the numbers who took part in individual interviews to one and two respectively from the younger and older groups.

Table 3.1: numbers of focus group and individual (student and staff) interviews

		No. of focus group interviews	No. of students interviewed	No. of staff interviewed	Total of participants
Albion Academy	Younger students	1 (4 students)	4	2	
	Older students	1 (2 students)	3		
Anglia Academy	Younger students	1 (6 students)	1	2	
	Older students	1 (5 students)	2		
		4	10	4	18

3.2.1.3 Student background information

Tables 3.2–3.5 below summarize the main background information of older and younger students at both Albion Academy and Anglia Academy provided in interviews and focus group discussions.

Table 3.2: Younger group Albion Academy

Gender	Age at interview	Age on arrival	Language(s) spoken on arrival	Arrived from	Parents' countries of origin
M	12	9	Nepalese	Glasgow, Nepal	Nepal
M	13	6	Polish	Poland	Poland
F	13	9	Urdu	Pakistan	Pakistan
M	13	11	Malayalam	Malaya	India

Table 3.3: Older group at Albion Academy

Gender	Age at interview	Age on arrival	Language(s) spoken on arrival	Arrived from	Parents' countries of origin
M	15	12	Romanian, Polish, English	Romania	Romania
M	14	11	Slovakian, Hungarian	Slovakia	Slovakia
M	14	11	Nepali	Nepal	Nepal

Table 3.4: Younger group Anglia Academy

Gender	Age at interview	Age on arrival	Language(s) spoken on arrival	Arrived from	Parents' countries of origin
F	12	10	Italian, (some Akan)	Italy	Ghana
F	12	Not known	Russian	Not known	Russia/UK
M	12	11	Cantonese	Hong Kong	Hong Kong
M	12	6	Polish	Poland	Poland
M	13	10	Arabic	Sudan	Sudan
F	13	10	Italian	Italy	India/Italy

Table 3.5: Older group Anglia Academy

Gender	Age at interview	Age on arrival	Language(s) spoken on arrival	Arrived from	Parents' countries of origin
F	14	12	Nepali	Hong Kong	Nepal
F	14	13	Czech	Czech Republic	Czech Republic
F	15	5	Farsi, Dutch	Netherlands	Afghanistan
F	15	13	Afrikaans	South Africa	South Africa
F	15	13	German	Germany	Ghana

The information summarised in the preceding tables gives an outline view of student trajectories prior to arrival, which, in some cases, involved multiple migrations. For instance, at Anglia Academy, one student's family had come to the UK via the Netherlands with some children born in Afghanistan and some in the Netherlands; another student's family had arrived from Ghana via Italy and, in a third case, had also come originally from Ghana, via Germany. These multiple migrations highlight the need for initial assessments of students' knowledge of English and linguistic backgrounds to take a very careful 'case history' of language experience, rather than straightforwardly categorising them under a single 'home' language.

3.2.2 Interviews

The focus group and individual student and teacher interviews were arranged for a time that was convenient for the teachers and the students, and took place within school during the school day. They were audio recorded and then fully transcribed. Each focus group interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, the individual student interviews lasted between 20-35 minutes, and the staff interviews between 30-60 minutes.

3.2.2.1 Topic set: student focus group interviews

For the focus group discussions, we decided to select from the following list of five or six statements/questions. These statements/questions were devised to help the students to reflect on their experiences of learning English as an additional language in UK classrooms.

Statements

My teacher made me feel...
 My teacher didn't help me to ...
 You learn better when you feel...
 You don't learn well when you don't have...
 Some teachers are more helpful than others because...
 If I were a teacher and I had a new person come into the class I would...

Questions

What would I tell someone new coming into the school?
 Does your teacher allow you to use your first language in school?
 Are there times when you find using your first language more useful?
 What subject is easier/harder?

3.2.2.2 Topic set: individual student interviews

Each individual interview began by first welcoming and thanking the student, and then gathered the following demographic information: length of time in UK; length of time at this secondary school; attendance at primary school in UK; where he/she lived before coming to the UK; nationality; languages spoken at home; and other languages that he/she could use. The interviewer then asked questions about the student's perceptions and experiences of schooling and language learning, covering the following topic areas:

- earliest memories of arriving in school in the UK;
- most helpful things that teachers did;
- memories of school in other countries (main differences between these schools and UK schools; medium of instruction; differences in how they were taught English in those countries as opposed to being taught English in the UK);
- how they felt in school when they could not understand what teachers and other students were saying (difficulties/challenges encountered; strategies they employed to help them understand: what was helpful/unhelpful);
- most helpful things that teachers did to help them learn English (did they get the same help in different subject areas; did they need the same help in different subjects; what could have been done that would have been helpful);
- what did they expect to happen in a UK classroom that did not;
- what happened in a [Polish] classroom that was different to what happened in a Scottish/English classroom;
- whether they were taught to speak/listen/ read and write in the same way in a UK classroom as in a [Polish] one (did that

- surprise them; why; did teachers expect different things from them; did they teach differently);
- how was their first language taught;
- how do they feel about using their other languages;
- are they able to watch/read things in their own language in the UK;
- what kinds of lessons do they feel they benefit from most;
- how does the EAL/English teacher help them to integrate into the school/classroom/different groups.

3.2.2.3 *Topic set: individual teacher/EAL teacher/EAL support assistant interviews*

The teacher interviews also began by collecting demographic information: length of time as a teacher/support assistant; how many years' experience they had working in a secondary school; qualifications; EAL, or other specialist training; nationality; and their first/home language. A set of topics was then covered concerning their perceptions and experiences in working with EAL learners. These included:

- the main challenges encountered when working with students for whom English is an additional language;
- the main opportunities that they see when working with such young people;
- their perceptions of the main difficulties that EAL learners encounter (emotional; social; with listening, speaking, reading, writing);
- which approaches in their opinion work best;
- to what extent it is possible to have a whole school approach to EAL;
- to what extent the curriculum supports ways of dealing with the needs (language, social, cultural) of students learning EAL in the school;
- how assessment affects what they do;
- the main constraints and enablers/affordances in meeting EAL students' needs (resources; parental support; home language use; timetabling; curriculum);
- what in their view would make things better;
- their views on the use of the students' home languages in the classroom;
- their experiences of communicating with parents.

3.2.2.4 *Analysis of interviews*

Each researcher first worked independently to begin to identify patterns, themes, sub-themes, consistencies and exceptions emerging from the data, before coming together to share, justify and, in some instances, revise their initial coding. In this way our initial codings were expanded to accommodate the emerging themes and sub-themes. There was also a concern to ensure coherence and overall clarity and to remain alert to the connections between the different themes and sub-themes that were identified. While we were aware that by crafting our interview questions in particular ways we were identifying key themes and topics that we hoped to explore with participants, we also remained alert to additional, and perhaps unexpected, themes that could – and indeed did – emerge from the data. This careful process continued as we identified themes and began to interpret findings within individual transcripts, across transcripts within each school, and between schools.

3.2.3 *Generalisability*

Given that this is a small-scale exploratory qualitative study, very considerable caution needs to be exercised in generalising from the views and experiences of the sample of teachers and students in the two schools which comprised our case studies. However, our interviews have alerted us to central issues and challenges that all mainstream teachers, EAL teachers, EAL Assistants and EAL learners are likely to encounter and which therefore have some generality. The issues raised by the pattern of findings suggest, even on a conservative interpretation, that it would be valuable and worthwhile to pursue a similar exercise in a considerably wider range of urban and rural secondary schools across the UK to establish more clearly whether these issues are a matter of concern across the wider teacher and EAL student population.

3.2.4 *Ethical issues*

Close attention was given to issues of anonymity and confidentiality at the stages of analysis and reporting and to ensuring that participants and individual schools could not be identified. Given the relatively small number of student participants, this entailed avoiding the use of unique identifiers for individual students, such as the use of pseudonyms or numbers (e.g. student 12). At the beginning of each interview participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time, and that complete confidentiality and anonymity were assured throughout the study and in any subsequent publications. While we made every effort to ensure that all interview participants were made to feel as relaxed as possible, that our questions were clear and unambiguous, and particular care and attention were given to the preparation and conduct of the interviews, we at all times remained alert to the fact that the students were not being interviewed in their first language(s). Simple – though in no way simplistic – language was used to frame questions during the students' interviews; and when misunderstandings did occur we took responsibility for them and reworded/rephrased our questions and offered prompts and examples. Great care was taken to establish a welcoming atmosphere and to be continuously alert to the relationship between the researchers and the participants. Throughout the data-gathering phase we were mindful of the qualities that the ethical researcher should seek to exhibit.

Ethical approval for the design and implementation of this study was obtained from The University of Edinburgh's School of Education Ethics Committee, and data collection and reporting followed the guidelines published by the British Educational Research

Association (BERA) and the British Psychological Society (BPS). A Headteacher Information Sheet and a Headteacher Consent Form; a Parent Information Sheet and a Parental Consent Form; a Teacher Information Sheet and a Teacher Consent Form; and a Student Information Sheet and a Student Consent Form were prepared and distributed and informed consent was sought and received in advance from each participant.

3.3. Conclusion

Having set out the methods we employed in gathering data for the study, we turn next to the key issues that emerged from the analysis: first, student perceptions (in chapter four): and then teacher perceptions (in chapter five).

Chapter 4 Findings: EAL learners' perceptions

4.1 Introduction

We have stressed in chapter 3 that addressing the key research question, 'What are the perceptions of EAL learners of their language learning experiences?', required us to consider how students' views of their language learning experiences in UK schools may have been directly or indirectly shaped by their preceding life histories. Accordingly, the presentation of findings begins by examining aspects of the student participants' *backgrounds and life histories* that may be pertinent to their language learning and use of English within and outside of UK schools. We begin by looking at the students' diverse backgrounds and prior learning experiences. We move first to an exploration of their transitions to UK schooling and then to examine the extent and nature of the support in the use of English that they had received in UK schools, before finally considering the data on how these EAL students viewed their identity and talked about their presentation of self in a UK school.

4.2 No blank slates: backgrounds and prior learning experiences of the EAL students

4.2.1 Diversity in migration experience

A main theme in the recent EAL literature, [e.g., Conteh and Meier, 2014; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Leung, 2014; Gibbons, 2009] has been the need to move away from homogenizing stereotypes of 'the EAL learner' and to recognise the intersecting diversity in national origins, religion, class, and gender roles that is readily apparent when one takes a close look at the students in the UK who are categorised as EAL learners. This diversity was very much evident in our own sample of student interview participants. As indicated in chapter three, the students came from a wide range of geographical areas, including South Africa, West Africa, China, the Indian sub-continent and the Balkans. These widespread points of origin mapped on to distinct differences in culture, religion and types of language.

While, as we have just noted, such contrasts in background and their potential effects on schooling and integration are now given due attention in the literature, less consideration has been given to differences in the experience of migration to the UK. Even within our comparatively small sample, there was not a uniform pattern of migration. Some students, such as a female student from Pakistan, clearly belonged in the category of permanent migrants and had come to join an existing extended network of relatives. Other permanent migrants from outside Europe, such as a male student from Nepal, did not have such an extended network of family, and very few peers from his language community.

Although most of the students who came from the countries that have recently acceded to the EU¹ saw themselves as securely settled in the UK, for others it was not wholly clear to us, or indeed to the students themselves, whether they would be based permanently in the UK or could be classed as 'transient' migrants. As the following quotation reveals one student was maintaining a foothold within the Slovak education system, although the tone of his talk on this matter suggests not with any great enthusiasm:

Student: I still have to do exams in Slovakia every summer so I can be here. I have study for two schools, one here.

Interviewer: So do you have any support to help you with that, or-?

Student: No!

Interviewer: No! Okay.

Student: They send me stuff that I need to learn, small test or exam, then the class teacher in Slovakia sends me the stuff they did so I can practise and get ready for the exams every summer. But – not really I've got text books but my mum said you don't have to – you have to – I have to go to that school so I can – if I want to go back to Slovakia I can continue where I left so I can go to high school; but I don't want to go back.

For students from the A8 and A2 countries it appeared to be easier for contact to be regularly maintained with family and friends in their country of origin, for example, by visits and by Skype, than for students from further afield for whom contact could not be as continuously maintained. For example, here is a student from Poland, who came to the UK when he was 'like six or seven' describing how strong links have been kept with friends and family there:

Interviewer: So tell me what you remember about going to school in Poland.

Student: Well, basically I remember that I had fun down there and I was in the first class ... And basically I had my toys

1 A8 citizens – i.e. citizens from the eight countries that joined the EU in May 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) and A2 citizens from the two countries that joined the EU in January 2007 (Bulgaria, Romania).

and everything, so I played with my friends. They really enjoyed playing with me so we became friends forever and on Skype I can see them.

Interviewer: You still Skype them?

Student: I still Skype them. And I am going to Poland for, I think, it's three Sundays, yeah, and I am going to see my friends down there and my grandma.

Students from countries that currently have a considerable migration to the UK, such as Poland, had more ready access to a group of same language-speaking peers than those from countries which are less strongly represented in the migration figures. This is a point to which we will return.

Some students, such as one from Hong Kong, were already city dwellers before they came to the UK, but for certain others the move to the UK also represented a shift from a rural to an urban life:

Interviewer: So when you came to England did you come to Reading first of all?

Student 1: Yes, because London was the biggest city for us. Because in Poland we live not in the city we just live on a farm basically.

Student 2: When I came here it was cold and my Dad got here before us like a month or two and it was very different from Sudan because we had like lots of dirt roads and stuff and here they have like pavements and stuff.

4.2.1.1 Global travellers

In the preceding paragraphs the term 'country of origin' has been used in an unproblematised fashion. It is now appropriate to introduce cautionary notes concerning the use of this term, as for some of the participants in this study, the UK was only the latest destination in a traversing of the planet, and their parents themselves sometimes came from different national backgrounds, as the following interview extracts exemplify. The first two extracts also highlight an instance where in the transit between countries the student has facility in the language of the parents' country of origin, and one where this has been wholly lost.

Interviewer: And where did you live before you came to the UK?

Student A: Italy.

Interviewer: So were your parents born in Italy, or did they move?

Student A: No, they were born in Ghana but they moved to Italy.

Interviewer: So what languages do you speak at home?

Student A: I speak Ghanaian², English and Italian.

Interviewer: And where were you born? In Germany?

Student B: Yeah.

Interviewer: So what language do you speak at home?

Student B: German.

Interviewer: You speak German. Where do your parents come from?

Student B: Ghana.

Interviewer: So you don't speak Akan?

Student B: No, not really, my parents speak to each other in Ghana but – [she doesn't speak a Ghanaian language]

Student C: Well, my dad came here [UK] to get a passport and a visa for us and everything. And he started working here earning the money and we first we were in the Netherlands. We were born and raised there but then like my older sister she was born in Pakistan because that is where we were originally. Then my parents stayed there for two years and then we had my other sister and then we went to Holland, the Netherlands, and my older brother was born there. We stayed there for two, three years. I think we went back to Pakistan and my other sister was born. So half of the girls was born in Pakistan and half of them were born in the Netherlands. Then after my older sister was me who was born, which was in the Netherlands. Then after two years my little brother was born. Then we went back to Pakistan where my little sister was born. So we were all born and raised in different countries between Pakistan and the Netherlands.

Interviewer: Where did you live before you came to the UK?

Student D: Italy ... my dad was born in Italy and my mum was born in India so they came in Italy when I was born.

Interviewer: And what language or languages do you speak at home?

Student D: Italian and English.

2 As is often the case (see, for instance Baker & Eversley, 2000), this student identifies the home language by the name of the country where it is spoken rather than its actual name (e.g. Twi, Akan), presumably because they consider that the interviewer will be unfamiliar with the language name.

4.2.1.2 Transitions and family break-up

Even in this small-scale study it was clear that there is a need for caution in making generalisations about 'the family' of an EAL student. Distinct differences in family type were apparent, with, (as we have noted earlier), some EAL students living in families which appeared to be embedded in a quite extensive network of relatives, others in nuclear families without such an extensive network and a few living with a single parent. For a student living in a single parent family, the move to the UK could be very intertwined with the decision of which parent to live with:

Interviewer: and where did you live before you came to the UK?

Student: Um – well my mum was here for uh, 7, 8 years and I was living with my father because my parents were separated and my mum just asked me one day if I wanted to see how the school is here and I agreed and that's how I came here.

For at least one of the students living in a single parent family, it was proving difficult to settle in the UK amidst conflicting loyalties.

In our discussion of migration, we have brought out contrasts in the experience of the students in our study. We will return in chapter six to draw out implications for research into, and theorising concerning, the experience of EAL students that would seem to flow from a recognition of this diversity in migration experience. In reviewing this experience of migration, we have touched on the languages that these students brought with them when they arrived in the UK. We now turn to take a more focused look at their language background.

4.2.2 Languages

Chapter three has detailed the languages that our student participants spoke in addition to English; they come from a range of language families including Slavic, Romance, Semitic and Sino-Tibetan. These languages vary in their points of consonance and dissonance with English in terms of writing systems, grammar, representation of concepts, and conventions for structuring written texts.

While the common pattern across the student participants was that their first language was that of their parents' 'country of origin', the quotations above (4.2.1.1) have highlighted instances where this was not necessarily the case, as in the example of the student of Ghanaian parents who grew up speaking German.

While most of the students came to the UK speaking only one language other than English, some were already bilingual on arrival, or at least with considerable facility in more than one language. For example, here is a student from Slovakia recounting his early language learning experiences:

Student: We just speak Slovakian but it depends ... speaking Slovakian but if you can find the word – say it in Hungarian, it's like switching between two languages.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. Yeah, so, so when you were at primary school in Slovakia were you learning Slovakian and Hungarian?

Student: English!

Interviewer: And English, yeah, so Hungarian, um, just from your background Hungarian, not the school?

Student: Yeah. I think I learnt it when I was around five because I was at the nursery at that time and there are more Hungarian kids than Slovakian.... So I learnt it from nursery, also from cartoons.

A student whose first language was Nepalese described how he came to learn other languages through everyday exposure to them, with the media having a prominent role here:

Interviewer: Do you have any other languages that you can use?

Student: I can speak Hindi and a bit of Urdu, I guess; but I don't use them as often?

Interviewer: So what was, how come you have learned to speak those languages?

Student: Well, in a sense India is like just on the border of Nepal. It's like they share borders – just kind of learn it, I guess, because you see in movie. You see like in Nepal, the TV is like Indian movies coming up, you kind of catch some words from there and since you're like brought up in a community where like Hindi is so common that most of the people can speak it, you kind of learn it from other people as well. You kind of get used to people speaking and it's on TVs as well, it's so like very popular, it's by the media, you just learn it, I guess.

Moves between countries could mean that students arrived in the UK having already experienced learning the language of a new host country. The student mentioned earlier (3.2.1.2), whose family had moved between Pakistan, the Netherlands and the UK, talked about her transitions between languages in the following terms:

Interviewer: So you were five. First of all you had learnt Dutch and then when you came here you were faced with English. Tell me about that.

Student: I just recently started learning Dutch, like just recently, and I knew a few stuff and then we had to move to England. So we made the decision to move to England so I pretty much have forgotten Dutch because I knew the basics. I was speaking quite well with the teachers and everything, but then we had to move. So I made English my first language that we had to speak here. And it was my friend who taught me English so I am here now because of her now, to be honest....The teachers were very supportive and it wasn't too hard, but like I said Pashtu was always mixed with my English. So I kind of knew different languages can get mixed up and everything; but I am alright in all of them now.

Research shows that young people who grow up in multilingual homes and communities are aware that they can switch between languages, as they experiment with them during the process of learning English (e.g. Kenner and Ruby, 2012; Conteh and Meier, 2014). However, studies also show that mainstream schooling rarely recognises such resources or learning processes (e.g. Cruikshank, 2004).

4.2.2.1 *Parents' facility in English*

There were distinct differences between the students in their reports of their parents' facility in English. Some indicated that both parents spoke English, while others stated that at least one parent did not speak English, or struggled when required to communicate in English. For example, two students, both from Nepal, gave contrasting descriptions of their parents' English speaking capacities:

Student 1: Both speak English and Nepalese.

Interviewer: And when you're at home what languages do you speak?

Student 2: With my mum I speak Nepalese because she's, can't speak English.

Some of the students revealed how their parents' difficulties with English constrained communication with the school:

Interviewer: ...have they [your parents] found it easy to communicate with the school and to know what is going on?

Student: No, because my parents do not really speak that much English, like my Mum doesn't know, she can understand it but she can't really speak it fluently and same with my Dad. My Dad can speak a bit but it is kind of like a bit – it is not really that good. So he can communicate with the school if it is really necessary but other than that I don't think he really can that much.

This same student went on in her interview to describe the role that she played as a translator and interpreter for her parents:

...when I have had to book appointments for my Mum in the surgery or anything like that she asks me to fill out some forms for my little sister when it is like a leaver's assembly or something like that; and just have to fill out the forms and stuff like that.

...I do the same for my dad as well because when we go out my dad's not really good at English, so if we go out to the pharmacy or shops or anything and he wants to ask for something I have to ask for him; and then translate back what the person said.

Another student noted the role she played as interpreter between teachers and her father:

In parents' evenings, my Dad's English isn't that good so sometimes I translate what they say.

4.2.2.2 *Parents' positive views of learning English*

While some parents may have possessed limited English themselves, as far as we could ascertain the students whom we interviewed perceived their parents as having a positive, encouraging attitude towards their own acquisition of English. The acquisition of English could also be seen as a key means of widening their children's opportunities and an avenue to a professional career, as is revealed in the following extract:

Interviewer: What about your parents, what do they think about education in England?

Student: Well, they said that 'cause English is the most popular language in everywhere, so not really everywhere,

but so my Mum and my Dad decided that for my life because I wanted to be a computer man and going to make some computers and programs so my Mum and my Dad that we should learn English so he can have a better life, 'cause if I don't learn another language I might not go to that country and not speak that. So, as people say, when you are young you can learn more.

Such issues are relatively unexplored areas within the literature and would benefit from further investigation.

4.2.2.3 *Languages spoken at home*

Clearly for those students whose parents did not have any great facility in English, their first language was the medium of communication at home. Other students, whose parents had more English, reported the use of a first language and English at home, such as Italian and English; and we have noted the case of one student who reported that at home she spoke 'Ghanaian, English and Italian' (see 4.2.1.1). One participant indicated that she would sometimes use English at home to help her brother master the language:

Well, home we speak Romanian but sometimes I'm trying to help my brother with English – have wee conversations in English.

While the very general perception among our student participants was that it was perfectly 'natural' to be speaking in their first language or languages at home, for one participant this was not the case. His enculturation into an English-speaking environment had led him to see speaking his first language, even at home, as now a somewhat alien activity:

Student: Like the only time I speak Nepalese is at home with my Mum and Dad but sometimes I speak to my Mum and Dad in English because like every time my mum would say, 'I'm speaking English, English, English', it's just: and it just feels much more natural now since I've come like three years, three years is a long [time]; and then I just, it just feels more natural to speak English now than Nepalese. Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you feel about using Nepalese, using your other language, how do you feel about that?

Student: It feels weird now because you just don't use it as often and I'm probably only using it like an hour or two hours a day while I am speaking to my parents most of the time. Even when I am speaking to my friends it is English ... It's kind of weird and like it doesn't feel natural, I guess. It feels I am speaking a foreign language now because I am so used to speaking English.

We return below to consider the value that this student attached to his native language relative to English (see 4.2.2.5).

4.2.2.4 *Literacy in languages other than English*

While use of a first language or languages at home in everyday talk may have been the norm for our participants, large differences were apparent in the extent to which literacy, (here narrowly defined in terms of reading and writing), in a first language was being maintained or indeed had ever been acquired. To illustrate these differences, the following interview extracts present the experiences of two students who both came from Poland, where the first student was still reading material in Polish, (and went on later to indicate was also writing in Polish), in contrast to the second student who reported struggling to read in Polish:

Interviewer: ... do you still get a chance to read things in Polish?

Student 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you actually have books in Polish and –

Student 1: Yeah, like books and leaflets and stuff. Yeah.

Interviewer: ... And do you read anything in Polish?

Student 2: No.

Interviewer: Not really, no.

Student 2: I can't really read or write in Polish – I can read, but it sort of takes time. I can't really write.

For some students, as in the case of the following female student from Pakistan, basic literacy in their first language had never been achieved:

Student: I can't technically write or do that much, but I can write a few words like – I can write my name.

Interviewer: Yeah. Would you like to be able to write in Urdu, or does it not matter?

Student: I want to write in my – I want to learn how to write it.

Another participant reported that whatever literacy had been acquired in his first language appeared to be slipping away, despite a degree of parental encouragement to maintain it:

Interviewer: Now you said that you use Nepalese at home because your Mum doesn't speak English and [with] your brother you use both [Nepalese and English], okay. Tell me, when you speak to your Mum, and you're speaking Nepalese, do you just find that you slide back quite easily and happily into the language?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right ... Do you read and write in Nepalese?

Student: No, I forgot like how to read.

Interviewer: Oh, you've forgotten how to do it and she's not keeping that up with you?

Student: She does, like she tells me to write and sometimes I do do it.

A strong driver for the maintenance, and indeed development, of literacy in a first language was the use of this language in formal examinations in their own country. We have already noted the case of the student from Slovakia who was keeping a foothold in that country's schooling and examination system. Another participant had already taken a GCSE in Cantonese, while three others were planning to take GCSEs in their first languages of Italian, Polish and Russian.

While we share the mainstream view in the EAL literature of the value of bringing a first language into use in classrooms, the findings of our study do suggest that this use may need to be carefully tailored to the level of literacy that a particular student has achieved in her or his L1. In the final chapter we consider questions that arise for research, policy and practice when one takes account of the range of L1 literacy revealed by our interviews.

4.2.2.5 Value attached to a first language

In a study that featured comparatively short interviews with students, it was not possible to construct the kind of detailed picture of the extent to which participants saw their first language as being key, or not, to their identity. However, some of our interview data did give a sense of the degree to which certain students attached value to their first language and saw it as central, or not, to their sense of self. Here again contrasts were in evidence. A participant from Southern India displayed distinct pride in his first language; and the following extract conveys clearly his continuing emotional investment in this language:

Interviewer: So how do you feel about using Malayalam, how do you feel about using your other languages?

Student: It feels good, because it's your first language firstly and I was born there and I learnt it, it makes me really happy that I have another language. I could say to my friends I have another language, it's something nice. It's not like you only have one language, you study French, it's not like that, it's like you have a second language. It's something really nice.

A contrasting view of the value of his first language was taken by the student we have encountered talking of how he saw speaking his first language, even at home, as now a somewhat alien activity (4.2.2.3). Consonant with this view, he did not ascribe value to maintaining literacy in Nepalese and centred on the distinct advantage of having English as a lingua franca.

Interviewer: Would you like to get reading in Nepalese going more, or do you feel it doesn't really matter now?

Student: It doesn't matter, I guess, because I'm now having to – English is just a world-renowned language. Everyone speaks English in every country; and Nepalese they only speak it in one or two countries, so I think there's no point at the moment learning how to speak it now.

We will take up again questions related to language and identity when we look at first language use and *fitting in* within school and with friends outside of their language group.

4.2.2.5 Positive views of having more than one language

In addition to the *intrinsic* value attached to their first language and its relationship to a sense of self, a number of participants identified *extrinsic* advantages that came from the possession of more than one language. For example, two participants saw this as helpful to a future career:

Student 1: Knowing two languages is useful as well, maybe one day I will use both languages at the same time or something. But it is fine. I like it that I know two languages at least. ... When I am older I hope to

become a journalist which you have to be pretty good at languages, so I hope it will help me with that.

Student 2: Well, I want to be a doctor, so I think you will need more than one language, so I think it will be helpful

For another student knowing more than one language was seen as enabling possible future relocations: 'I might move back to Hong Kong or Nepal and finish my studies.' This student also highlighted that knowledge of two languages could have positive effects on the development of both languages: 'because it would help me with the other language.'

The following student perceived her possession of two languages as of some help in the acquisition of a third:

Student: I take French and I find that some of the words in French, only some of them, are closer to Afrikaans than they are to English. So I think that is good that I know two languages in order to understand French better.

Another student saw not only advantages for language learning but also general cognitive benefits as flowing from the fact that he now could move between three languages:

Student: Learning languages it actually helps you to think, um – I don't know, I can't say.

Interviewer: Say a bit more about what's really good about being able to think in different languages?

Student: You can talk to more people – I've got more choices to do, more options, and your brain is trained.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure. Yeah.

Student: It's helping it to learn faster because they say if you know one or more languages then you can learn another one more, much faster. ... Than you learn the second one.

His belief in the cumulative, reinforcing effect of acquiring different languages can be seen as a very helpful, performance-oriented view of language learning consistent with a growing body of research (see, for instance, Cummins, 2001); Bialystock, 2011). In his interview, he then went on to describe what he saw as the benefits for writing of being able to construct sentences and structure a text by moving between languages. For him, 'translating' between languages as he created a text in English appeared to be a conscious strategy, rather than a move that was forced on him by limitations in English. On this theme he talked about how:

Student: Sometimes if you think, for example, in another language then it could help you. For example, if you can make the sentence in English, then try and make it up in Hungarian, or Slovakian, then translate to English, another sentence to English.

There can be a tendency in some writing about EAL school students to think about first language use predominantly in terms of how it can be deployed to assist in the acquisition of English. The students' perceptions of the benefits of being able to move between two or more languages, that we have reviewed above, can remind us of the wider advantages that can flow from maintaining first language fluency and developing literacy in that language. Reinforcing the issues raised in the review of the literature on translanguaging in Chapter two (see 2.3.2), some students learning EAL appear to engage naturally in translanguaging practices, where the languages in their repertoires are fluid and influence each other. Their accounts would suggest that they not only value being bi/multilingual, but that they also move seamlessly across the languages that they know.

4.2.2.6 Experience of learning English before arriving in the UK

While all of the students whom we interviewed fully fitted the classification of EAL learners, they had arrived in the UK with differing levels of English language proficiency and there were distinct contrasts in the amount and level of English language teaching they had received within formal schooling. Some reported only the most minimal prior instruction in English: 'I didn't like learn a lot from my country because they always speak their language so they don't teach English'. Some individuals reported that they had come to the UK in their early or mid-primary years and that there had been very little teaching of English at that stage of schooling:

Interviewer: ... and when you came to Scotland did you have any English, or –?

Student: No.

Interviewer: No, not really any English, so you'd not learnt it at all in Pakistan, no?

Student: Like a few words, there was like the nice words like: thank you, welcome, like all the normal words. We only learnt that because I was in P3 when I left there and I never went to P4

A number of participants reported only receiving teaching in very basic, everyday communication vocabulary in their countries of origin. The internationalisation of English has meant that English is taught in many countries outside of the UK as a foreign language for one

period a day. Within these international contexts students learn English from a course book where the basics of English for everyday communicative purposes with 'native English speakers' is taught. This is evident in the following extract: 'Well, like the teachers in Poland only taught us like how you say "Hi!" and this ...'.

There were, however, participants who had had much more intensive exposure to, and teaching of, English, such as the following student from Russia:

Interviewer: And in Russia, X, did you have any English lessons?

Student: Well, yeah, my Dad is English and I went to an English Kindergarten because primary starts when we are seven not five. So I have known it since I was like four.

Interviewer: But after Kindergarten did you go to a Russian medium school?

Student: Yeah, and they did learn English there like three times a week.

A very few participants had been educated in schools where English was a medium of instruction for at least some subjects. One of these students offered this account:

Student: ... but the lucky thing is in India I was in an English school so were allowed to speak English, in my language if I have subject that's my language I would speak in my language, so I knew a little bit of English from there, so that's why I was OK, I wasn't like stuck all the time.

Interviewer: So X was your school – did your school use two languages? You said it did some subjects in your language and some subjects in English?

Student: Yeah, yeah. In India it's like, we speak French, we study French ... our main language is Malaylam so we study that in India also, so that was useful; and English, yeah, we study grammar especially in the English class, so I got most of the things from India and you'll get exam and stuff... It's much harder so – I learnt more from, in India.

A student, originally from Nepal, also described the situation where English had been a principal medium of instruction. The quotation from this participant also raises the question of which of the global 'Englishes' students have been exposed to before arriving in the UK.

In Nepal, the thing is every subject is in English except Nepalese, so you had to learn English from a small age, so I knew like, I knew how to speak English – it just wasn't like, if you think about it the way English is spoken in Nepal, you're kind of speaking like an American way, use American terms; and here it's like British, and you have trouble, and in Scotland their accent was the world's hardest thing to – it took me a while. [This student now speaks English with a slight, but quite discernible, Scottish accent.]

We will return in our discussion of day-to-day language and Popular Culture (see 4.2.2.7), to examine the challenge that this group of EAL learners faced in mastering local variants and accents of English.

4.2.2.6.1 Views on preceding English teaching

While we did explore with the students how they had been taught English before they arrived in the UK, understandably, (given that they could hardly be expected to be expert in the finer points of language teaching methodology), they tended only to give us very general descriptions that did not provide us with an exact sense of how English had been taught in their countries of origin. In a number of cases, however, accounts were given of language teaching in English, (and of the home language), that would seem to have been very text-based and focused on comprehension exercises. For example, the student from Southern India talked of how 'the English grammar is different [as taught in India], so you don't do it like fluent you do it a different way.' He then went on to characterise the English teaching he had received in India in the following fashion:

Interviewer: And what were the differences – like were your English lessons different in India to the way that you're taught English here?

Student: Yeah. It's different.

Interviewer: How is it different?

Student: Um, you have a book and you read it ... We have an exam, like a big paragraph we read it and do the questions and answers.

Interviewer: Right, so that would be in India that you did the question and answer and read the one book and then do work on it?

Student: [We had a] reading book, a story. ... And the question and answers and the next one we did a paragraph.

Interviewer: So it was all about comprehension and understanding the story, and you think it's quite different here?

Student: Yeah. A lot different, here you do topics ... You do writing but in India we don't do writing, like a story or something you don't do that. In my language like Malayalam we do writing.

This extract can be seen to raise questions about what 'balance' of activities in listening, speaking, reading and writing EAL school students may have encountered in their preceding learning of English – a balance or imbalance that may have had a distinct effect on the profile of English capacities that they bring with them to the UK. As already noted, many international contexts use an EFL (English as a foreign language) approach to developing English, even in English medium schools. Teaching often takes place in large classes and classroom practices are usually tied to set course books for developing English language. A grammar translation approach is often followed, where the focus is on learning grammatical rules and applying those rules to translate texts.

Some students made critical comments on their earlier instruction in English, as in the following extract which can be viewed as pointing up the constraints on differentiation and individual progress imposed by large class sizes, and a very tightly defined curriculum and assessment system:

Interviewer: OK, so thinking back to Hong Kong and comparing Hong Kong with here what subjects do you find most difficult here?

Student: I think probably English because in China the English is not really good.

Interviewer: Why isn't it really good?

Student: Because it is not their first language. I learnt languages in there – I learn my Cantonese there, I learn Mandarin there, I learn English. They do tend to focus in English but is just hard because you have got the, 'Like, how do you say that word?' There are a lot of people in the class; you have to make them all understand, so you can't make it really difficult. And the whole school have to learn, the whole year have to learn a thing in a term, I guess. Yeah, so you have to learn in a term so you don't miss out the things when you do the exam. And you don't normally get extra thing to learn when you get extra time they just make you revise.

A few participants highlighted the limitations that came from learning English outside of a context of everyday use and where the English that was learned might not be readily deployed in everyday communication:

Student: It was totally different when I came. I did learn some English in Slovakia for one or two years but when I came I never used it because it was totally different. The stuff you learn in Slovakia and – it's like you've been brainwashed because you know like: 'Hi! How are you!', you learn these basics but most of the stuff you don't need, you just learn them but you never use them.

In a similar vein, the following student noted how the correct usage of tenses, that had been an intellectual challenge when learning English in her country of origin, was enabled by the corrective feedback that came from everyday interaction in an English-speaking environment:

Student: It was different because we were doing translations and we were learning words and we were trying to make sentences sound correct; but the thing that confused me in school, and it didn't only confuse me, my friends as well, because we are like talking about it all the time – you know, the past tense –

Interviewer: Yes, past tenses.

Student: Yeah, the tenses because it was so confusing but when I came here I could just pick up words from people – like from Scottish people because the English is the main language here. And when I was saying something and it was wrong I could see that I was getting asked like to repeat it again. I was like [thinking] I'm making a mistake and I was trying again. I don't know it's quite hard to describe because like I picked up English in a different way.

4.2.2.7 Learning day-to-day language and popular culture

Even those students who had experienced considerable exposure to English before their arrival in the UK, still faced the challenge of coming to understand local variants and accents of English. We have already encountered the student who had experienced English as a medium of instruction in his school in Nepal who still found that 'in Scotland their accent was the world's hardest thing to – it took me a while.' As the following exchanges reveal, some students identified learning the variety of English used in their locality as a particularly problematic aspect of their transition to life in the UK:

Interviewer: So when you think about your time here what would you say was the most difficult thing that you had to cope with?

Student 1: Definitely learning the slang they use here. I did not understand a word they said when they were speaking slang. It was so different.

Student 2: Yeah, I agree with Michele. The slang is totally different. Because you just learn like how do you speak it, like the basic ones, like hello, how are you and stuff. But here it is like they use slang as well.

Student 2's statement here reminds us that to survive and begin to thrive in a new UK environment EAL learners require not only generic, 'decontextualised' Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (see 2.3.3.1) but also a sufficient command of the specific forms or localised varieties of English in their new neighbourhood. This is a matter that does not seem to have been given sufficient attention in preceding EAL literature, and we return to consider how it might be addressed in the final chapter of this report.

Difficulties in understanding dialects and local accents could have a distinctly inhibiting effect on forming friendships with 'local' students, for a time at least, as in the following account:

Student: ... she [a teacher] was like, 'Oh, you're good with English', and everyone said I was good with English. The only problem I had was understanding the Scottish accent.

Interviewer: So how did that affect kind of making friends at first at school and things? Did it –

Student: On my first day I was in drama and I met a guy and I'm still best friends with him, he's been my friend since the first day; and I didn't really make Scottish friends much until fourth year because I like had like big problems catching their words and like I had problems communicating with them for like the first year until I was in fourth year and then I got more people and had like classes with much more people and then I stated speaking to them and now I'm friends with most of the Scottish people.

While not at all of the same order of difficulty as that of mastering day-to-day language, these EAL learners' everyday communications could be inhibited to a degree by their lack of exposure to British popular culture:

Interviewer: Have any of you had experiences of a teacher telling you something or anybody telling you something you don't quite understand?

Student 1: For me, mostly it is not really, to me when people tell me things here sometimes it's not really the language, it is more like things they do in England which is different here from South Africa. So maybe I do understand the language but not so much what they are talking about.

Interviewer: Can you think of an example of that?

Student 1: OK, when I came over I had no idea when people started talking about celebrities, for example. I had absolutely no idea who they were talking about, like British celebrities. And actually I learned in time but I had no idea what they were talking about when I first came over.

Interviewer: Can anybody else think of an example like that when they really didn't know what was going on?

Student 2: When I came here, like three years ago, my friends were like talking about programmes which were on TV. I was also quite lost because in Germany there are different types of programmes. So I was also like a little confused.

The theme of transitions, and their challenges, is pursued in greater detail below (4.2.3) but with a close focus on the transition to UK schooling. To gain a fuller sense of what this transition to UK schooling entailed, however, there is a need first to consider how this group of students represented points of contrast between schooling in the UK and their previous school experience.

4.2.2.8 Comparing Schooling in the UK with their previous experience

When asked to talk about the schools that they went to in other countries, (as one might anticipate), a considerable number of participants described both curricula and an organisation of the school day/week that were quite different from what they now experienced in the UK:

Student 1: They gave us lots of homework and we had a lot of different lessons compared to here. Like there we learn Arabic and English and Maths, here we learn English, Maths and Science. So it is really different.

Student 2: Well, we used to have five lessons a day and we used to always every day have Maths and Russian and then other lessons apart from that and here we have different lessons on different days and it is a bit confusing.

Student 3: A lot of things are different actually, well, first of all in the English school whereas my other school was Afrikaans and we have different subjects here. In my old school we had like eight different subjects each day, where here we only have four. Everything is very different.

Secondary schools in the UK could also be much larger, initially confusing, environments compared to the schools they had been used to in their country of origin:

Student: And, uh, the school is just, just big, like the first time I remember it was quite hard to find my class because I was like 'where am I'? Which way should I go?

While the move to a different schooling system and curriculum may initially have been somewhat disorienting, the participants in our study did not represent this change in negative terms. Indeed for some individuals the move to what they perceived as a less pressured UK educational system was distinctly welcomed, as is revealed by the following comments from a student from Romania and a student from Hong Kong:

Interviewer: What were the nicest parts [of the transition to UK schooling], do you remember any nice things or anything funny?

Student 1: I was happy because, uh, the educational system here is different so I got the choice to pick up subjects because in my country back then I was still in a Romanian school, I had to do every single subject. There was no choice.

Interviewer: No choice?

Student 1: Yeah. And it was quite hard to keep up with the work for every single subject. That's why I was happy, it's not that stressful.

Student 2: Hong Kong is a city which has a really big pressure for students because they try and get them work really hard. ... everyone really wants to go to University, so they work really hard. And the school gives them long days and more homework. ... it is just lots of pressure. So my uncle live in here, so last year I come to England to visit my uncle then I soon found out there was really less pressure in here and the learning is sort of better and we decide to move to here the next year ...I think it is pretty good and kind of relaxed because I got my own time to do things and I can spend some times in the weekend and I have got early leaving from school so I can do my homework and have a break. I can do extra things.

In a similar vein, some other participants commented on how they had experienced greater, and more continuous, pressure from exams than they did in the UK; and it was commonly reported that the demands for homework were considerably greater in their country of origin, as the following extract illustrates:

Student: In Slovakia you got a break after every period, school ends up one every day; and you've got homework like from every subject that you've got and you have to do it for the next day, so it's much more difficult than here.

A few participants noted appreciatively how schools were better resourced in the UK in comparison to their country of origin, where, say, there could be very limited provision of computers. The following extract brings out how greater resourcing could both allow for, and be associated with, more active, investigative forms of learning:

Student: ... comparing it to Nepal again, it's completely different because you don't get practical, practical stuff as much, you see science, people tell science is much to do with hands-on stuff rather than just learning from a text; and they actually do that here by doing experiments; and in Nepal you only get that once every month or something to do the practical, but here you are in a lab studying so you don't have to go anywhere else. You just turn round and then just do the work, do the practical work; and I think that's really good – the way they teach, yeah, I think it's quite good the hands-on stuff here.

Another student from Nepal commented on the benefits of the presence in the classroom of staff with a supportive role, and his comments are echoed by a student from Pakistan:

Student 1: I didn't know there would be like two or three teachers. In Nepal they used to just have one teacher so I wasn't expecting that.

Interviewer: And is it a good thing, do you think, that there was an additional teacher?

Student 1: Yeah, so like they can help everybody, yeah.

Student 2: I think that they teach really good from here because Pakistan we don't have like a support teacher to help us speak English, there's always one teacher, always one teacher and it was like hard.

4.2.2.8.1 'Strictness' / school discipline

Turning to the topic of how the participants viewed the degree of formality and control exercised by teachers in the UK in comparison to teachers in other countries, there was some division in opinion, as is illustrated by the following extract from a focus group interview:

Interviewer: So what about the teachers? Are the teachers in the UK, are they stricter?

Student 1: Stricter.

Student 2: Yeah, they are strict.

Student 3: I don't think the teachers are stricter. I think they are pretty relaxed.

Interviewer: Compared with Hong Kong?

Student 3: Yeah.

Student 4: In Russia were always strict, well they were nice but they were strict but here everyone seems really relaxed.

These clear contrasts in judgements on the 'strictness' of teachers in the UK as opposed to teachers in other countries do not really require any commentary. However, it is important to note that a considerable proportion of participants in responding to questions on this topic would be making a comparison between preceding primary education and current secondary schooling.

A few participants highlighted that a marked difference in discipline and in the relationships between teachers and students was the fact that there was no corporal punishment in the UK:

Interviewer: So thinking back a little bit to when you first came to primary school here, different from being in Pakistan, anything that really surprised you, or -?

Student: The teacher doesn't hit you! ... no teacher does that here.

Another matter that was highlighted in the interviews was that UK students' attitudes towards their teachers contrasted with cultural expectations for respectful behaviour that prevailed in certain home countries:

Interviewer: When you were at school, how did you refer to your teacher?

Student: You would give them way more respect than the people that... Like the people here, some of the people do not give like *any* respect to their teachers, kind of thing, because some of the students – I am not saying all of them like, some of them are like, they're just rude to their teachers.

It is interesting to note that, when making comparisons between their relationships with teachers in the UK and previous relationships with teachers, a few students avoided making a stock characterisation of teachers in their country of origin. Rather they noted variation in how they had found teachers:

Some teachers [in my country of origin] are nice, some teachers are really mean, so much meaner, maybe some teachers are really nice ... Some teachers are really mean, so they will do anything to you. So every teacher is not the same.

A student represented the teachers she had encountered in Romania as 'more strict' than those in the UK, but went on to indicate, a little later in her interview, that such differences in formality and control were not at all the whole story. For her, teachers in both Romania and the UK had displayed a strong commitment to their students and an encouraging belief in their capacities:

Interviewer: Do you think that your teachers in Romania and your teachers here expect different things from you? Are their expectations different?

Student: Well, it's hard to say because even if the teachers in Romania were strict they still had faith in every, in almost every pupil but uh, even here, when it's hard for me to do something, or I find a piece of work difficult to do and I'm like, 'Oh, I can't do this' or – they're always, 'Come on. I know you can do it.' And it motivates me, like it motivates me in a way that – it just makes me think like 'Let me go the other way' and I just get over it. I do something, even if I don't know, at least I try, you know.

Interviewer: So your feeling is that the teachers both in Romania and here have very similar expectations of you and that they have faith in you?

Student: Yeah.

4.2.2.8.2 Summary

We have noted how for many of our participants the move to a UK school represented a distinct change in terms of curriculum, organisation of the school day, size of school, etc. At the same time the students in our study did not present a negative picture of the new curriculum and school systems that they had encountered in the UK. Indeed, for a considerable number, attending school in the UK represented a welcome change from a preceding system where they had experienced greater pressure of exams and homework. There were some contrasts in judgements on the 'strictness' of teachers in the UK as opposed to teachers in other countries. While at the time of interview they gave a generally favourable view of the nature of schooling in the UK, many also reported, as the discussion below of transitions to UK schools will reveal (see 4.2.3), that they had found the initial period of their education in England or Scotland distinctly challenging.

4.2.3 Transitions to UK schools

4.2.3.1 Facing multiple transitions

When looking at these students' accounts of their transitions to UK schools, it is necessary to keep in mind that while adjusting to a new school environment they were also faced, to varying degrees, with the loss of preceding friendships and the need to respond to a new culture, neighbourhood, language community, group of peers, etc. It has been noted in **Diversity of migration experience** (4.2.1) that in making the adjustment to living in the UK some students were embedded in a quite extensive network of relatives, while a few were being brought up by single parents. We will also see (4.2.4.2.1 below) how transition for some students was generally eased by the presence of peers who spoke their first language, while others did not have this support.

Some students' accounts of their arrival in the UK give the impression of an 'unsettling', rather disorienting experience:

Student: Well, when I came here I was quite upset because I came here one time then I went back to Italy, then I came here again and stayed here. But when I came here the second time it was like really different from the first time because when I went somewhere else. My family is really big so they live in different parts and I went to my other uncle and I have to stay there and the roads were different from my other uncle's house where he lived.

Other participants described a mixture of emotions at their time of arrival in the UK, both of loss and of eager anticipation:

Interviewer: So when your parents decided to come what did you think?

Student: It was kind of: 'Don't want to go because my friends were all there.' But I really wanted to get less homework, but it's half and half. I really want to see snow and lots of things that I haven't been doing, I guess. I haven't do before. But also I had to left my friend, all the people and yeah.

4.2.3.2 Linguistic and Social Isolation and their emotional impact

A key challenge that the participants faced on their arrival in the UK was that of coping with their new lives in a UK school. In the discussion that follows, we will set out these students' observations on the ways in which their schools had been welcoming and supportive. Notwithstanding these efforts by their schools, a common theme across most interviews was that the transition to UK education was a stressful or very stressful experience. Some participants described the difficulties they faced in not having even basic English phrases and communication skills:

Interviewer: So was there anything that was the nicest part or the hardest, or the scariest [in arrival in a UK school]?

Student: The scariest part was like saying 'Excuse me', 'Thank you'. I didn't know that ... 'Excuse me' and stuff like that. So that was the scariest part.

A considerable number of participants described how linguistic isolation brought social isolation in its wake, even, as in the following example, within what would appear to have been quite supportive environments:

Student: When I went to Glasgow I went to the school and it was a bit scary because I never knew English, so I just used to like stay in like one corner. People used to come up to me and say hello and all that, but I never knew what to say. I was like standing there.

Interviewer: So that was quite scary not knowing anybody?

Student: Yeah!

Interviewer: OK, anything else scary?

Student: Um, not really because in Glasgow they used to help me and all this, so they used to tell me where to go, so I would understand.

In addition to commenting on their own difficulties in coping with a new linguistic, social and learning environment, some participants described the social isolation experienced by their EAL learner peers:

Student: I've seen many people like who are new in school, they just like stand at the cafeteria bit or just sit in the library for like months and months until they find friends during lunch and break ...

A few participants were very open about the emotional distress that they felt at first in this new environment:

Interviewer: Tell me what you remember about starting in **X school** especially because I imagine you couldn't speak any English at that point.

Student: Basically when I first came to England and went to school I was crying because my mum, I was going home and I was crying, so my mum came back to me and, yeah, she give me a hug and I went back.

Interviewer: It is quite traumatic, isn't it?

Student: Yeah.

There was variation across participants' accounts in the length of time that they had experienced linguistic and social isolation as lasting, as the following two extracts illustrate:

Student 1: When I came here the first day it was quite scary because no one in my class, I didn't know anyone and everyone spoke English which was very hard for me to understand. I remember my friends talking about, it they asked me 'How are you?' and I said 'No.' Because I didn't understand what they are talking about. But then I learnt English, like it was quite quick – in four months I learnt English.

Interviewer: So when you first came here to primary school, how did you find actually being outside and breaks and things?

Student2: It was hard.

...

Interviewer: Yeah. Uh, huh. So did it take a wee bit of time before you felt you could talk with other folks?

Student 2: Yeah. It took like a year.

Interviewer: a year?

Student 2: Yeah.

The minority of participants who presented more positive accounts of their initial period in a UK school still noted its stressful aspects:

Student: Oh when I first came – I think it was here in **X** as well – when I was about five years old and I joined **X school** and the teachers there were really, really nice and we had lots of fun. And I think I learned English within a year so it wasn't that hard for me to adjust in the UK but it was still pretty nerve wracking.

While those participants who arrived with a greater store of English did not suffer the same degree of linguistic and social isolation, they still, as we have already mentioned (see 4.2.3.2), faced the challenge of 'day-to-day language.' In common with their peers who had much more limited English, they needed to 'read' a new social setting and its demands and to begin to fit in. One of these students described his initial difficulties in deciphering classroom activities, as follows:

Interviewer: So I want you to cast your minds back to the first day that you came to school in the UK. What was it like?

Student: So I came to school and I didn't really know where to go, so my Mum dropped me to reception and there is a teacher. Then she bring us to the year seven area to wait. Then I have no one to talk to, I just walk around.

Interviewer: How did you feel?

Student: I feel shy and not scared but shy to talk to. After we got the teacher the teacher say we are going to do a mingle. I am not sure, but we got to go around the classroom and there is a couple of things, are they vegetarian? And we got to write down their names and I don't really get it. And the teacher send the guy who is called Charles and he worked with me.

This reference to Charles signals the theme of peer support, a topic to which we will return in looking at the role of buddies/supportive friends below, see (4.2.4.2), which considers how strongly participants appreciated the assistance and support they received from an assigned 'buddy' or a friend they had made themselves.

4.2.3.3 *Lacking the confidence to speak*

The interviews gave us glimpses into how language-related constraints on communication in school, including interaction with peers, could be more than simply the effects of a lack of: vocabulary, basic communication skills and knowledge of a local variant of English. Individuals could be inhibited from communicating from a fear that they would make mistakes which would lead to them being ridiculed. These concerns relating to the presentation of self in a new linguistic context are very evident in the following extended extract. The extract can be read as showing how this particular EAL learner found himself in a double-bind; choosing not to communicate to protect his social standing but recognising that this failure to communicate could in itself be perceived negatively and lead to social exclusion.

Interviewer: ... staying with when you first got here, was there anything particularly difficult you found in learning English. I know it was all new but were there any very particular difficulties?

Student: Confidence. I was afraid to speak.

Interviewer: Afraid to speak, yeah.

Student: Even if I wanted to say something I was scared if I said it wrong.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Student: Everyone was just going to laugh at me.

Interviewer: Yes. So worried you'd get it wrong ...

Student: I've still got that problem now, but I'm getting more confident.

Interviewer: That's good. That's good. Yeah, so it's not just about getting what I could call technical confidence in English, it's feeling that you can confidently just interact socially with other people –

Student: And if you don't speak out, here I am, then you feel left out because they think you don't want to be friends with us or you just don't want to speak to us.

Interviewer: Yeah, so having a social place, and maybe not feeling totally safe to say things, how will people react: but at the same time if you don't say something you are going to be excluded, so that being a difficult sort of –

Student: Yeah, because they think you don't want to be part of the group.

We return to the topic of presentation of self when we consider the issue of fitting in (see 4.2.6); and it is a theme that we also take up in chapter six.

4.2.3.4 *Teachers' recognition of the emotional challenges faced by EAL learners*

We will look in the next chapter at how the teaching staff whom we interviewed represented the 'technical' challenges that EAL students faced in learning and deploying English in a school context. Here it is appropriate to note that these teachers were very much alert to the emotional and social difficulties faced by EAL learners that we have set out in the preceding pages. On this theme, the two teaching assistants talked of how their own language learning experiences had allowed them to have a felt sense of the emotional turmoil that may accompany being thrust into a wholly new language environment.

Interviewer: So you have that perspective of being a learner of a different language.

TA1: Yes, it really helps.

Interviewer: In which way do you think it helps you?

TA2: It just makes you realise it is not easy to grasp the grammar. Because sometimes when I observe a German teacher teaching German they might not understand why the people can't grasp the grammatical differences, whereas I can because I have struggled learning it myself, I can see the difficulties. And when you do the course they make you do a little module in learning a completely different foreign language. I did Russian for a few weeks; and they completely immersed us in it. And I was completely lost and struggling to try to write things off the board in a different script and I just got all panicky inside because I didn't know how to write it down. And they were doing that in purpose to make us feel like that.

Interviewer: So what have you learned from that experience to bring to your classroom experience now?

TA 1: How scary it is, especially if you are, say Arabic, like you have had Arabic boys haven't you who are learning a completely different script. When they write things down from the board, even that is going to be really different.

In the concluding chapter of this report we will take up again the question of the emotional challenges that EAL learners may often face when 'completely immersed' in English.

4.2.4 Transitions: what helped?

4.2.4.1 Supportive Teacher Attitudes

Our discussion of how best to support the use of English (4.2.5 below) details the specific teaching and learning activities the participants reported they had received to aid their acquisition of English. As a separate matter, a number of participants mentioned how teachers displaying a welcoming, encouraging attitude very much supported their adjustment to a new school environment:

Student 1: My experience was my teacher made me feel good so basically they were like welcoming and they were like giving a warm feeling; and they were quite helpful as well because they were helping me with catching up with stuff ... the teachers were quite good with me.

Student 2: Same here, the teachers made me feel good. They helped me in primary when I came, they were helpful. There was a Polish guy that helped me as well. Polish and Slovakian are a bit similar, so.

As is evident in the following extract, this felt sense of support could also make an EAL learner more willing to seek out help with a difficulty:

Interviewer: And what about the teachers, what sorts of things in general, before we talk about English, what sorts of things did the teachers do that you thought were helpful?

Student: Well, because I was new back then most of the teachers were making jokes or they made me feel like, they made me feel good, good inside so I never had the feeling to be shy, or keep something inside me. I could ask the teacher all the time in front of everyone, it gave me confidence. ... The way the teachers –

Interviewer: So they made you feel very welcome, gave you confidence?

Student: Yeah. ... usually if I had trouble with something I would go and ask – either one of my teachers or a different teacher, because they always helped me.

4.2.4.2 Buddy/supportive friend

Encountering supportive, welcoming teachers was clearly important in giving some of our participants a strong sense that they belonged in, and were valued within, this new school environment. However, their integration into the social life of the school could not happen until they began to make bonds with other students. Here, a large number of participants identified a single individual, either a 'buddy' assigned by the school or a friend they had found themselves, as a central initial source of support and connection. Commonly this supportive peer spoke the same language as the entrant EAL learner and had helped with the learning of English and acted as a channel of communication with teachers. The key role that such an individual could play as an emotional anchor and a guide to learning English comes through very clearly in the following extended extract:

Interviewer: Was there anything that people did that made it easier for you?

Student: Yeah, it was my friend. She made me learn English, she involved me in every activity. The teachers were supportive, they helped me throughout the whole way when I was in **X [primary] school**.

Interviewer: Tell me about her. What was she like and why was she your friend?

Student: She is here in this school as well. We met after eight years now and well when I first came she was – she used to just make me sit with her all the time and because I was really, really quiet and I didn't really speak much so she used to help me learn some English here. And sometimes when it was break-time and we used to just be really, really close. She used to plait my hair on break-time and I used to play with hers and we used to go everywhere together. She helped me by teaching me how to speak English and if I didn't understand anything she would sit next to me, she would always be with me and teachers knew that she was the only one I could talk to and that I was comfortable with, so we used to sit together in every lesson. That's how it got a bit easier.

The following participant described how initially his social contact was limited to a single individual who spoke his language:

Interviewer: Like what about at break time [in the period following his arrival in the UK] when you weren't in the class itself?

Student: well, I would play with my friend Casper.

Interviewer: Casper, yeah, so did you have any other folks you played with, or just sort of with Casper?

Student: No.

Interviewer: Yeah, so for a while that was it, yeah.

Student: And then when I learnt a wee bit more then I made more friends.

In two instances the key supporter was a relative:

Student 1: In primary school I had a cousin the same year as me so taught me stuff and –

Interviewer: Had she arrived at the same time as you?

Student 1: No, she lived in here.

Interviewer: Oh, ok, so she knew how things worked. That was helpful.

Student 2: Yeah, I also already had a cousin here and she helped me.

The following student described how he himself had encountered a same language-speaking peer with whom he then became friends:

Student: Well, I was scared [arriving in his English school]. And when teacher was talking to me something in English I didn't understand, so I was thinking about something else. I was like dreaming off. And when there was break time in **X school**, I went to break – I was like playing around by myself and then I saw someone eating sweets. I said in Polish, 'Don't eat sweets!' and he said in Polish, 'It is break time, you can eat sweets.'

Interviewer: So it was another Polish kid? Oh that was lucky.

Student: Yeah. And I said: 'Are you Polish?' and he said, 'Yes' and I said friend and he is a friend, so we started like, yeah, so.

Interviewer: Did it really help to have somebody who could speak Polish?

Student: Yes, so were helping each other.

A student who did not have a peer in school who spoke his language described the positive feelings that came (once he had mastered enough English) from developing a friendship:

Interviewer: ... do you remember any good parts [of your early period in a Scottish school]?

Student: The nicest part was like – once I knew a bit of English I had a friend, and he used to help me like about where is the classes and all that. Like at lunchtime we used to play together.

For those EAL learners who had developed a relationship with a peer who had English as a first language, this person could act as an important communication channel with the teacher, as in the following example:

Interviewer: ... people were talking away in English and you weren't quite following, anything she [the teacher] did that helped?

Student: Yeah, she told the girl to help me, like when she explained everything to the class then the girl explained everything to me in Polish.

A Slovak speaker described a less direct form of translation by a peer who spoke another Slavic language:

Student: If the student was saying something to me I couldn't understand she said it to the Polish person, he tried to translate it to me in his language and if I couldn't understand what he was saying it was really difficult but it helped me.

The dictionary helps too but it takes a long time to search out words and look up words.

While the dominant view in the interviews was of the distinct practical and affective value of having the support of a peer who had English as a first language, a student who lacked such support, did introduce a dissonant note. As the quotation reveals he felt that this lack was to his advantage as it encouraged him to be more self-reliant and spurred on his efforts to acquire English.

Student: I think it was – there was no one around who could speak my own language, my home language, so I had to try and speak English because if I had someone who could speak my language I would always rely on them. For example, some Polish people who come they just rely on those who are already here. Someone just says something, they always go, 'What did he say?' And then they just say it in Polish and he or she answers back so – I was like thrown into deep water.

Interviewer: So do you think compared to the Polish people that's a good thing or a bad thing, how do you view that?

Student: It's like they are not going to learn English that fast if they're not helping – you have to help them but not like every time, they have to try and speak English for themselves. ... Not rely on others doing it for them.

4.2.4.2.1 *Buddying systems and being a buddy*

While some participants themselves found and made a key friend, often contact with a supportive peer was engineered by a teacher, as in the following instance, or organised as part of the school's established buddying system:

Student: I would say that the first time I came to **X School** I still remember the first day. Every one I saw, a lot of people I didn't even know and I just no clue who they were or what they were talking about. And Miss put me next to a group of people who are now my friends and I think I have chosen the right people to be with as well. They were very supportive and made me feel better in **X School**.

Students' comments on the buddying system in their school were distinctly positive in character. For example, the following participant talked of how:

Student: I think we do that in our school, we've got a buddy system. I think like every school should do that because it would make it a lot easier for like new people if they know somebody or have somebody who speaks the same language as them.

One student, who had acted herself as a buddy, used her own experience of not having a buddy to highlight the value of a buddying system:

Interviewer: So did you find that quite a useful thing to do, to be the buddy?

Student: It definitely helps according to my experience because I had like no one. If I hadn't found my first friend like I would probably have been like stranded, it probably would have taken me like weeks or months, even a year to find good friends. You need someone I think when you're starting school at first if you don't speak English, or English isn't your first language, you should find someone. I think it would be really helpful if someone was there to guide you and like help you make friends and that.

The interviews revealed how a buddy could, on occasion anyway, be not simply a source of friendship and a route in to wider social connections but also play an important role in supporting an EAL entrant's learning:

Interviewer: So if you think about when you arrived what were the most – I mean your first week or two in school, what were the most helpful things that your teachers did for you to help you to settle?

Student: Hmm. The most helpful thing I had another like, another person helping me all the time.

Interviewer: Right, the buddy system?

Student: Yeah...I have to say it was quite good because if the teacher was explaining to everyone something I couldn't just disturb the teacher and ask my question, but the person that was helping me was able to help me like all the time and I think it was quite helpful.

Quite a number of participants described how they themselves had gone on to play a buddying role, as in the following account of acting as a buddy in primary school:

Student: [my buddy], yeah, he told me everything where it is. I was so thankful to him, and, yeah, we were playing ... there was a Polish guy in year 1 and he didn't know English so I did the same thing. ... I saw him crying and things and he

was asking to teachers and he couldn't really talk really in English. So I came up to him and in primary I was like helper because people chose me to help people. So I said, 'Fine', and I helped him and he was my friend until I came to **X School**.

One participant described how being a buddy to someone with whom you did not share a language could bring some challenges in communication:

Interviewer: Have either of you been in the situation that you've buddied somebody younger, somebody who 's come –?

Student: Uh, huh.

Interviewer: And what was that experience like?

Student: It was pretty difficult communicating with her because she had like very limited English vocabulary and I had to like, sort of like use hand gestures for her to understand but it got easier after like a week or something and now I'm good friends with her and she's got a brother so I had to buddy like two people which is pretty hard around about classes. And, yeah, it is sort of hard to communicate with someone who doesn't speak your language; and she was Greek and then like she didn't speak my language and it was hard communicating with her. Like it gets easier after a while.

Across the student interviews there was some division evident on the question of whether or not to be an effective buddy one needed to speak the same language as the person being buddied. For example, one participant observed that:

Student: ...it doesn't have to be the same person who speaks your language, it could be anybody. Like if it's a Polish student you could help them by showing stuff and like helping them with the writing and stuff like that. So, uh, that's a good thing to do for someone.

In contrast, another participant did see the possession of a common L1 (and possibly also shared points of cultural reference) as key to being a competent buddy:

Student: I guess it depends where they come from because ages back there was a girl that came from Afghanistan and a teacher knew my language, Pashtu, so she told me to help her and I don't mind that, I didn't mind helping her. It was quite fun. We kind of got to know each other from the places we came, we compared how our families were like and everything. But if someone came from like Poland or something I wouldn't know what to say to them, like how to even talk to them. But if they asked me for a direction or something I would probably help them with that; but I wouldn't be able to help them with school work and everything and translate what the teacher is saying because I wouldn't know Polish myself. So it depends I think where they come from.

4.2.4.3 Negative reactions from peers

While the main thrust across the student interviews tended to be on ways in which teachers and fellow students had been 'helpful' there was a small number of reports of negative reactions from peers or of outright bullying. For the student quoted beneath this took the form of some pupils latching on and ridiculing his initial struggles with English:

Interviewer: So thinking about when you first arrived at school here and how you felt when you really couldn't understand people, tell me a bit about the difficulties you had, what were the problems?

Student: The problem was like they used to tease me like one, two, three but in my language they used to be like – like nine in my language is one so I used to think nine was one because I never knew, so I was struggling to know what number it was.

Another participant described both the hostility that he received in entering school as a less competent speaker of English *and* the friendship that he established with other schoolmates:

Student: The bad points were, ehm, well, some people were quite bad to me because my, my English wasn't like very good and I couldn't make – I made a couple of friends on my first day, I'm still friends with them, the people; but some people were quite nasty to me, but I just never cared so it just kind of stopped, I guess.

One student revealed that she had entered a UK school fearing that, as an immigrant, she would be bullied. However, this had only happened to a very limited extent:

Student: ... the first time I came I was expecting to get bullied somehow.

Interviewer: To be bullied?

Student: Yeah, because obviously I'm from a different country and that's why I was like why would people pick on me –

'You're from this country.'

Interviewer: And that didn't happen?

Student: Yeah. No, it didn't, it happened one time but – it was just – I got over it.

She went on to describe how her brother had been less fortunate: 'Yeah, the only problem that's quite annoying in a way, I have to say because my brother's in S2³ now, he gets bullied. Bullying is a problem.'

There was only one direct report of serious bullying across our interviews, where one participant had been subjected to very hurtful verbal abuse by his peers. This bullying behaviour had been addressed by the school. As interviewers we gained a sense that this bullying had been extremely upsetting for this student, and were also impressed by the calm courage he displayed in his response to it. This particular instance of bullying also brings into sharp relief the difficulties that students, and staff, may experience in multi-cultural schools when national rivalries and religious divisions are 'imported' from migrants' countries of origin. As the following extended extracts show this student of Indian origin had encountered prejudice not only from 'home' students related, in part at least, to his linguistic difference but also from students of Pakistani origin:

Student: People think I have a different accent so some people don't like me sometimes, I don't know why, some Pakistani people and like other people they don't like me because – they think I'm annoying because of the way I speak sometimes. I don't know why but I told the head-teacher stuff like that but it made me really sad; it's really sad but it's life, we cannot say what's going to happen.

Interviewer: There's not one correct accent for English, there are so many different accents to speak English.

Student: Yeah, and how I speak they're like [unclear] stuff like that. That hurts my feelings, but they don't know because they don't know how it feels because they don't have a first language.

Interviewer: That's right.

Student: And they're born here, it's their first language, they're born here but they're studying English first, it's not like me and, uh, it's really hard for me; and it's life, we can't do anything about it.

Interviewer: So they don't see the value of having two languages?

Student: Yeah. Yeah. If I tell them to stop they don't care, Abdul's [pseudonym] the one. He thinks, we are mean to Pakistan, like war and stuff, it's life, I told him it's not my fault. I'm Indian, it's not my fault I was born there, it doesn't mean I do war. I'm fine, I don't mind him. My mum said 'Don't mind it, what's the big thing? You have a lot of friends' just if I don't say anything they'll just get tired and they just walk away. That trick helps me.

He went on to describe how, faced by this hostility, he had felt supported by his friends, and, in particular by his best friend who was from Poland and who himself had experienced bullying 'because he was a bit smarter than some people.' In his own words:

Student: ... he [his Polish friend] told me 'don't worry. I'll be your friend, don't worry.' That helped me so much I'm happy about it and other friends also but really my Polish friend.

4.2.4.4 Summary

We have noted how at the time of entering a UK school, EAL students were also facing other, often unsettling, transitions. For the most part, our participants described their transition to UK schooling as a stressful, or very stressful experience; and one where linguistic and social isolation had a distinct emotional impact. There was variation in the length of time that they presented this initial period of linguistic and emotional isolation as lasting. Isolation could be the result not simply of a lack of basic communication skills in English, but also derive from concerns that their faltering communications might lead them to be ridiculed. Our teacher participants had an acute awareness of the emotional and social difficulties faced by EAL learners at this time of transition; and for their part, the student participants identified welcoming, encouraging attitudes on the part of teachers as easing their adjustment to their new UK school. Key to these students' integration into the life of the school was the presence of a supportive friend they had encountered, or a 'buddy' assigned to them by the school, with our participants highlighting the value of a school buddying system. There were only a limited number of reports of negative reactions from, and bullying by, school-mates. However, the account we have given of the bullying experienced by a student from India gives an acute sense of how harrowing such hostility could be for an individual at a time when he was coping with many changes in his life.

3 In Scotland S2 is Secondary 2, the second year of secondary education, P7 is the abbreviation for Primary 7 etc.

4.2.5 Supporting the use of English

Having looked at the emotional and social challenges that EAL students faced as they entered a UK school, and at how teachers and supportive friends could act to ease these challenges, we move now from this wider social viewpoint on transition, to focus specifically on these EAL students' experience of learning English in school. This section looks at the sources of teaching support and at the English learning activities they identified as helpful, as well as the strategies that they themselves had deployed to cope with the demands of English-medium classes. Their perceptions of teachers' 'helpfulness' to their learning are then considered.

Attention then turns to the students' reflections on what they had found to be the more challenging aspects of learning English, and to accounts of their use of 'conscious translation' (4.2.5.5.4) and then to participants' reports of the limited use of their first language in school – a topic which sets up the discussion of issues concerning language, 'fitting in' and identity in 4.2.6. Given that success in secondary school education depends not simply on general competence in English but also on the mastery of the literacies associated with individual subjects, participants' reports of their encounters with the language of particular school subjects will also be considered (4.2.5.5).

Before we set out on this account of these EAL students' learning of English at school, it is appropriate to repeat our earlier words of caution. It would be unwise to take these students' reports of the input they received as providing a veridical picture of the resources devoted to EAL and of the approaches employed in these two schools. However, their observations on their English language learning experiences can give us a good sense of the degree to which they *felt* supported and the learning activities that they found to be salient.

4.2.5.1 Presence, or absence, of additional support

Looking first then at the matter of whether, or not, participants reported receiving any additional teaching support in acquiring English, there was variation. A few stated that they had not received any support of this kind, a few recounted learning with a support person who spoke their own language and a considerable number indicated that they had received input from an EAL teacher or from another member of staff in a support role.

Here is one student stating that he had not had any specialist input:

Interviewer:...in primary – I know you had your friend X [a peer speaking his language] but was there anything aside from that to help you, or –?

Student: No. The teacher and that was just it.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, and the school here?

Student: No.

Interviewer: Kind of just because you've been in X for a while –

Student: Yeah, like I know quite a lot now.

In the following instance, only fitful additional support was received from someone who was not an EAL specialist:

Interviewer: so at that point in primary school did you just have the class teacher helping you, or did you get anyone else helping?

Student: Yeah, just the class teacher...But there was like the dyslexia person, yeah, another teacher came in to help him but not me.

Interviewer: Yes, so it wasn't – someone gave a bit of help but not really someone whose main job like here is helping people who don't have English as their first language?

Student: She would sometimes help me ...But she mostly helped the dyslexic person.

Interviewer: Yep, yep. And when you got help – was that in different subjects that you did in primary school here or just –

Student: It was mostly English.

By contrast the following two students had received teaching from a support person who spoke their own language:

Interviewer:...what other things did teachers do when you just arrived in P6 that maybe helped?

Student 1: They got this Polish learning assistant to come in like a few times a week and help me and like they were

giving me dictionaries and stuff, so, yeah.

Student 2: I remember they gave me like a personal teacher that could speak Italian and she helped me learn English, so I learnt English really quickly. I learnt it like the first year I came.

In the following instance it was seen as a distinct bonus that an EAL teacher in the student's school could also speak her language:

Student: ... she always came on Thursdays in English and tried to help me with grammar...It's not like I can't speak but she's like – to improve your English, to be more professional...And the good thing is that she's Hungarian so we can speak to each other!

Interviewer: Oh, that's very good. So do you find that really helpful then, yeah?

Student: Uh, huh.

Interviewer: Yep, okay. So you both have the input on English, but this extra layer...

Those students who had received teaching from an EAL teacher were distinctly appreciative of this input as the following two extracts illustrate:

Student 1: I have to say everything was good with the EAL teacher

Student 2: The EAL teacher, yeah, she helped me so much. She had her own lesson with me so I could learn more; but she knows how it feels because I studied most from her, so with her help I studied English.

Other participants described how teaching assistants and other support personnel also provided support in coping with English:

Student 1: In my primary school my teacher was very helpful [in developing my English] and my TA (teaching assistant) was very helpful as well.

Student 2: Sometimes teacher assistants do read with me so sometimes. If I don't know the words they would help me.

One of the schools in our study had an after-school *EAL club*, which was regarded as a valuable source of support, as the following quotation reveals:

...they make clubs. That really help because they talk about – like it is special for us...Yeah, it is helpful.

The participants from this school were able to articulate a wide range of activities that featured in this EAL club. The student whom we have just quoted noted that:

Student: ... it makes me learn a lot of stuff. They help me with vocabulary. They tell me about the conjunctions, lots of things.

Interviewer: So what things do they do in EAL club, that you found most useful?

Student: I think they do reading. Sometimes they give stories, part the story [in] long stories so then I'll read them also understanding – if you know the words how to read it and what does that mean?

In a focus group, the activities in this EAL club were described in the following terms:

Interviewer: So tell me about the EAL club, what kinds of things do you do there?

Student 1: We do grammar, we do phrases.

Student 2: Suffix, prefix.

Interviewer: You were saying before the others came, Student 1, about vocabulary. What is helpful for learning vocabulary?

Student 1: It helps your vocabulary if you have some exercise to do and you don't know it you are asked them. And they have got spelling tests so you can spell it as well. And you can read the essay out so it is very good, it helps you all in English.

These extracts give a clear sense not only of the range of activities covered in this EAL club and of its attention to different language modalities, but also that these pupils had received direct instruction in English grammar and appeared to have acquired a meta-

language in which to think and talk about language. In the next chapter we will present the aims that the teaching assistants who ran this club were pursuing and their account of how its activities were reshaped over time to respond to school policy.

4.2.5.2 Language-learning activities/specific support provided

Pursuing this theme of the language-learning activities that our participants reported in their interviews, a number of them gave glimpses into both the considerable variety of language work that they had undertaken with EAL teachers and the direct teaching about aspects of English language that these teachers provided. As an illustration of the kind of teaching about language that was described, here is one student describing his one-to-work with his EAL teacher:

Interviewer: So she took you out of class and you had lessons on your own with her?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what kind of stuff did she do with you?

Student: Um, like, how to say stuff ... know my language and nouns – like maybe, let me see, got went, stuff like that.

Interviewer: Tenses.

Student: Yeah, tenses; and nouns, pronouns – that helped me so much – with my pronunciation and stuff like that.

For another participant what stuck in her mind as a particularly helpful action on the part of her EAL teacher was the provision of text summaries:

Interviewer: And did you have anyone coming into class to give you any individual support?

Student: Yeah, it was Mrs. Y that helped me, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you found that was useful, so what kinds of things did you do with her that –

Student: In English we done this like – we were reading this book and then like she gave me this papers and it said – it had like stuff written, like for me to understand what the book is about. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so kind of summaries that then made it easier to read so, so you found that actually was quite useful?

Student: Uh huh. [assent]

An EAL teacher's assistance with note-taking and explanation of the context of a text *and* her modelling of note-taking was highlighted by the following student as of distinct value:

Student: For example, we were doing an essay on *Romeo and Juliet* and we had to take down notes. I tried to take notes that I could – she was doing the same. At the end she gave me notes and they were much more in detail – so I had, so I could do the essay after. She helped with the context and notes so I could do the essay. ... Which was helpful.

Interviewer: So you both had the help from the notes but you also saw how she made the notes that might help you another time, I take it, yeah?

Student: Uh huh.

In addition to the learning and teaching activities provided by EAL teachers and other specialist support staff, participants reported general language-learning activities and support that they had received in their everyday classes, including the use of 'word search' and 'like question – word games so that's how I learnt a wee bit of English as well from there.' In the following example a student, while at primary school, was aided in a matching exercise by a supportive peer:

Student: ... the teacher gave me like a book to read and the girl [a supportive peer] told me – it was a book but you had to find the person and the word, there were so many people and you had to find the person in it. I done that.

Another participant described how he had found computer-assisted learning activities to be helpful:

Student: They like put me on the computer and like taught me the words. I thought that was good for me.

Interviewer: Right, so you found the computer work helpful?

Student: Yeah.

One student had benefited earlier in her secondary school career from some class teachers using on-line translation engines to translate materials into her first language. As the following quotation reveals these translations may have lacked accuracy but were still of value:

Student: Sometimes, well this was back in S2 when I was having tests or when we were handed some sheet papers with the work some of the teachers translated everything into Romanian.

Interviewer: Gosh, that's good, so how did they do that?

Student: With the internet, yeah, and I had a paper in English and a paper in Romanian and I could see what every word meant.

Interviewer: And were the translations accurate, because there's quite a lot of criticism that they're not very accurate sometimes?

Student: Yeah, it was not very accurate but um –

Interviewer: But it was enough?

I knew, I knew what it means because the problem was not with the English, the problem was with the Romanian translation, yeah, but I could understand because my Romanian is good.

When learners without any, or with very little, English enter a UK school, they need not only language development activities and specific forms of support to cope with learning in an English-medium classroom but also targeted assistance to negotiate a new social environment. On this theme, one student noted how her first school had given her a simple, but very helpful means of accessing basic vocabulary and communication skills:

Student: because in Glasgow they used to tell me where to go so I would understand. And I used to have this clip thing that used to say lunchtime, toilet, and stuff like that so it told me what one – if I needed something I just had to [gestures].

Interviewer: Right, was that quite helpful having the cards – cards on a clip thing then?

Student: Yeah.

Participants, then, described a range of learning activities and specific forms of support in their interviews as assisting their language learning. Some also made observations that suggested that it was the coupling of these focused language development activities with supportive backing from teachers to *voice* their thoughts in English that had been key to their progress. The following student, for example, talked of how:

My teacher made me feel more confident at speaking English so I had help in my primary ...she lets us like speak – like study it like I was going and that made me confident more, so without her, I couldn't speak that much English. Now, so, so teachers helped make me more like confident speaking English, so it is more comfortable. Without that help, I would be a bit more stuck in English.

This quotation reminds us that if EAL students are to make good progress inside and outside of school, they need not only to be assisted to gain 'technical' competence in English but also the confidence to *perform fluently* a new identity as a speaker of English. This is a matter that we will return to in the final chapter.

4.2.5.3 EAL students' own efforts and initiative in language learning

One of the participants in our study, who perceived his teachers as distinctly helpful, noted that teachers had in fact assisted him to progress by not always giving an answer, but rather by sometimes encouraging his own efforts to explore and understand:

Student: With the teachers' help I got better so maybe I'm stuck on like a word, they say, 'I always helped you, try using the dictionary now, so you could move up'

Interviewer: That's fine and if they say they're not going to help you they're explaining why?

Student: Yeah. Yeah.

Student: Maybe they say you have to find it by yourself and stuff like that but they're just trying to help you, if they always helped you like then that's like showing they're doing the work for you so you need to do some work. It's like if I pray to God, God can't do everything for me. I have to do half of the work, so he's helping me by learning stuff but I have to learn also.

So the same like that, teachers can't do all the work, you have to do half of it so, uh – you have to do like team work, yeah.

Other participants did not make such a clear declaration of their own need to display agency in developing their English and their understanding of school subjects. However, a number of students' accounts did reveal that they themselves had actively sought to make sense of their new language environment. Simply, but crucially, these efforts could centre on active observation and listening, as in the following example:

Interviewer:...anything you did, any strategies that helped you to understand what was happening?

Student: Like I would listen and try to figure out – because like they pointed as well –

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, so just from the actions to try and make sense of what was happening, yeah.

In the next extract one can see a confluence of active observation on the part of the student and teacher support which brings to mind Rogoff's (1990, p.8) concept of '*guided participation*' which suggests 'that both guidance and participation in culturally valued activities are essential to children's apprenticeship in thinking.'

Student: I let [my peers do] everything first so I can look at what they're doing, then I started doing it by myself – what they're doing so then I would get it: and the teacher tried to help me so the teacher knows the way I want to speak and so when she speaks I was OK.

A few students recounted how they might work round the limitations of a dictionary as a guide to word meaning, with one student talking of how he might 'use a thesaurus ... Or ask your friend they might be – they're from here so they might know more.' Another student talked of how he worked between an English dictionary and a Slovakian dictionary: 'So I just look up the definition so I try to understand it and like look it up in Slovakian. It's much more helpful to look up the definition of it.'

One participant described a sophisticated blend of strategies that she had devised to learn new vocabulary – a description which can also be seen to reveal a systematic and committed approach to learning English:

Student: Well, when I was hearing some new words, for example, and I didn't know them, maybe I was shy to ask in the classroom, 'Excuse me, what does that mean?' I was just memorising the words and after the period finished asking the teacher so he did explain to me, then I was writing the definition down and I was using it at home. I was making – maybe for half an hour some conversations in my mind using the words that I didn't know, like I got help with.

4.2.5.4 Perceptions of teachers' 'helpfulness'

It will be seen from the preceding quotation that although this student had concerns about losing face through revealing a lack of understanding in class, she was happy to approach teachers for guidance. Consonant with the views expressed earlier of how welcoming, supportive teacher attitudes had eased the transition to UK schooling, the participants by and large characterised their teachers as 'helpful'. The following comments are representative of how most students talked about their teachers when asked to comment on any limitations they had found in teachers' assistance:

Interviewer: But was there anything that you felt your teacher didn't help you to do? That you would have liked some help with?

Student 1: Not as far as I can remember. I think every teacher was very supportive and everything.

Interviewer: OK, one last question now. What things are not helpful?

Student 2: I think all the stuff they do is helpful. Yeah, but they didn't do things that weren't helpful.

One participant noted the gains that came from teachers who were continuously strategically alert to how students were coping with a task and responsive to those they perceived as having difficulties:

Interviewer: So what sorts of things did the teachers do to help you across the other subjects?

Student: Um, what's given me confidence is that obviously you can't tell when someone's confused about something but because the teachers are paying attention they – so every single pupil can understand they look around and everything and if I was confused always I could see the teacher coming to me and asking me, 'Do you need help?' ...

Interviewer: And that's teachers in all the subject areas?

Student: Yeah.

A few participants, however, gave a more differentiated, rather than generally positive, picture of teachers' 'helpfulness', as the following quotation indicates:

Student: Some teachers help me and some don't. English teacher and science [help] and some other teachers they just like tell everybody what to do, but they don't help. ...My teacher didn't help me to spell a word or like I don't know a word and like if I asked for the word they would just say another word that I don't know. I have to like get a dictionary.

Another student portrayed teachers as willing to help but as somewhat constrained by other demands on their attention. At the same time she can be seen to mount a defence of her teachers in the face of the interviewer's criticism:

Interviewer: Do you think that the teachers in the different subject areas could be doing more to help you, that would help your English develop better or quicker?

Student: No, they always help me, they try to help me, they can't really because the class – it's, disturbs them and she needs to look after the class.

Interviewer: They can't help you because it disturbs the class, right. Okay, but then it's their job to teach everybody in the class so they *have* to help also –

Student: She does help me say when I need help, she tells me like the meaning and what – so I know what to do.

Two participants, while not critical of the support given them in their current secondary school, made criticisms of teaching at their primary schools. In one case the support given at primary school for language development was seen as wholly inadequate, and in the other the student reported being told off for using his first language in class. For the moment, however, we turn to look at how participants described their encounters with the language of particular school subjects.

4.2.5.5 *The language of secondary school subjects*

We have noted the shift away from narrow definitions of literacy, which focused simply on an individual's ability to read and write, to wider sociocultural perspectives on literacy as a set of literacy practices rather than simply as skills to be acquired (see 2.3.1). These literacy practices vary according to social purposes, social context and, crucially for school settings, the subject being studied (Sangster, Stone and Anderson, 2013). Accordingly, it was important in our study not simply to ask participants how they had found the general linguistic demands they faced at school, but also how they had found the language of specific school subjects.

Students' responses to questions concerning the language of secondary school subjects focused on three areas. There was some talk on how they had found the language of mathematics and a larger body of commentary on their experience of learning a second language, (most commonly French), in a UK school. A number of students also made observations on how they had found English as an academic subject. We will look at each of these areas in turn, but before we focus in on the language of these subjects, it is worth quoting the following student who saw drama as having particular affordances for the development of her English and revealed how interest and the acquisition of new vocabulary could go hand-in-hand:

Interviewer: Think about language but more generally. What lessons do you find most helpful?

Student: I find like drama, English and maths and like RME [Religious and Moral Education] – and that's it, really, yeah.

Interviewer: So any special things that makes them quite helpful?

Student: Because like drama you interact and speak, yeah, and like it just helps me.

Interviewer: Lots of practice, yeah?

Student: And RME I found out new religions and all the words for it.

Interviewer: So maybe interesting in itself is that right, [assent], and getting the vocabulary, yeah, yeah, I can see that, yeah.

4.2.5.5.1 *Mathematics*

This particular sample of EAL students did not report difficulties with the language of mathematics and, for some, their previous school experience of maths instruction had prepared them well to cope with the content of the maths curricula in the UK, as the following extract illustrates:

Interviewer: So in **X school** which subjects do you find are easiest?

Student: I think it's maths because I have covered it in ... when I was in year five in China.

Another participant felt that there was broad comparability between the teaching and curriculum of maths in his home country and the UK: 'maths was basically the same.'

For one student, the language used in the maths classroom was not seen as at all problematic, 'because maths is more about numbers rather than the language'. This observation does, however, need to be read against his account of how he came with a good foundation to tackle the maths he encountered in the UK:

Student: Basically when I was in my country, like three years before I came here I studied something in [Maths] and when I came here I was doing – I got moved to [Intermediate] 1 and then I was doing the thing that I'd done three years ago back in my country so it was like really easy for me.

A lack of difficulty with mathematical content or communication in the maths classroom also featured in the following account:

Student: I get different help in different subjects.

Interviewer: Yes. Say a wee bit more about that, how that differs? Just think of individual subjects and what happens in them, so maths, say, what would happen there?

Student: Maths because you can easily do maths, I feel I understand the questions, I just put my hand up and teacher just helps me do it.

For another participant maths presented something of a challenge, but the language of mathematics was not presented as being the source of the difficulty:

Interviewer: So is it the language that's hard in maths or is it trying to figure out all the ways of thinking about the word problem, or the calculations?

Student: It's the calculations a bit. ... It's a bit hard.

4.2.5.5.2 Learning another language as a school subject

While this set of interview participants may not have identified the language of mathematics as a source of difficulty, there was less consensus on the matter of learning a 'modern language' as a school subject. Some had engaged readily with acquiring yet another language, while for quite a number of others studying another language in tandem with developing their mastery of English was seen as challenging.

In the earlier discussion of positive views of learning more than one language (4.2.2.5) we set out the views of those students who identified the practical advantages of possessing more than one language, and quoted there one participant who identified a cumulative, reinforcing effect of acquiring different languages. A similarly positive view of language learning was expressed by the student who is quoted below. As the quotation reveals, she identified perceived similarities to her first language of Romanian as key to her ready acquisition of Spanish:

Interviewer:...If you think about the different subjects...were there any subjects that you found easier, others more difficult?

Student: Yeah, well I was doing French in Romania and I think I didn't like it because of my teacher but when I came here I picked Spanish and it's really similar to my language because it's – just because of the Latin roots. Yeah. Spanish is the easier subject for me.

Interviewer: And you found learning Spanish easier because you had already learnt English, you had done a bit of French?

Student: I can say, yeah.

Interviewer: Or was it the teaching, the teaching approach that was used?

Student: The teaching was good also and I think it's just because of the connection, like – they talk real similar like we Romanians do and real similar words, even though they're still different I can still understand them.

The following student was not choosing to pursue languages as subjects but had not found learning French at school at all problematic:

Interviewer: Have you been learning other [languages] –

Student: Yeah, I've learnt French in S1 and S3 but I've dropped it this year.

Interviewer: OK, so how did you find learning French?

Student: It was okay. I learnt a lot.

For other students by contrast learning another language in addition to English was seen as challenging, and a common theme here was the 'cognitive load' of simultaneously developing their English and studying another language:

Interviewer: ... so when you think about all the subjects that you do in school which one do you think is easier, or which one is harder especially when you're thinking of using English to do the subject?

Student: I'd say it's French because I'm learning another language as I'm learning this language.

Interviewer: Right. So what are some of the difficulties you find with that, why is that harder?

Student: It's just like some words are pretty hard to remember them, and English.

This theme of the burden of learning two languages at once appears also in the next extract which also highlights how this individual was in any case more interested anyway in pursuing science subjects rather than languages. This quotation can also be read as a corrective to any facile assumptions that EAL learners will, as a result of their linguistic positioning, have an interest in learning languages.

Student: French it was quite hard for me. All I knew was how to say bonjour. [laughter] I think I just learnt that for the whole year. I just learnt bonjour, I guess because I didn't learn much from French because I was already bad in English when I first came – I wasn't that bad, but I was quite bad and like French, learning another language it was quite hard for me.

Interviewer: So are you doing more science subjects or?

Student: I do, I'm doing like science, yeah, and mathematical stuff. I do Advanced Higher Physics and Advanced Higher Maths.

Interviewer: So that's kind of what interests you most, [assent], yeah?

In a somewhat similar vein, the student quoted beneath, highlights the difficulty of learning another language through the medium of English that has not yet been fully mastered. It is possible that a wholly, or largely, target-language approach to the teaching of a modern language might have obviated the difficulties that are described; and we will return to consider this point in the chapter six.

Interviewer: What about you, how did you find learning French?

Student: It was harder because if I didn't know the words in English then I couldn't translate them into French and it was hard: I had a Slovak/French dictionary and then an English/Slovak dictionary.

By contrast the following account appears to describe a situation that involved more engaging use of the target-language and efforts by the teacher to give initial scaffolding to students' efforts:

Interviewer: ... And what about in French? You talked about French.

Student: Oh, French I learnt – I think I learnt French like when we played games and like play games in there and we have to use words and I think that's how I learnt French, that's good for me to learn it.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, does that sometimes help the English too or...?

Student: Yeah it helps a lot because first the teacher tells the meaning of it and then ... And then you practise it.

One student highlighted an area of difficulty in learning French other than the challenges of cognitive load and learning it through the medium of English, i.e., that of 'accent':

Student: I find French hard because I have a different accent so it's really hard to say a French accent but I already have another accent and plus English but it's really hard to say – I say it, but not really in a French way, but trying to say it.

As far as we are aware there has been a lack of research that closely examines how EAL learners fare when learning a language or languages in addition to English. The observations made by participants in our study that we have presented above would seem to highlight the value of further studies of this type.

4.2.5.5.3 Engaging with textual practices in the English classroom

Turning to look at how our participants reported their experience of studying English as a school subject, a number identified English as the most challenging of the school subjects. Talk on the topic of English as a school subject drew attention to the challenges of mastering the practices of analysing texts and of writing in English. Some students highlighted that the demands for close analysis of texts and for more extended pieces of writing had not featured at all in their preceding learning of English:

Interviewer: ... are there particular subjects that you find easier or harder, maybe for different reasons?

Student: Um, I find English quite a bit hard – it's not because of like I can't understand English it's because of like – because previously when I was in my country like the way they teach English is completely different because we used to have like a book and then read that throughout the year and give answers from the course; but here it's like you have to do like critical essays and like writing and that so it's completely different. I found that quite hard to catch up but now I'm catching up. But other subjects it's like, it's like similar so – I find maths quite a lot easier than back in my home country.

In a similar vein, the student quoted below talks about the demanding, novel task of learning the practices of analysing literary texts and reveals his appreciation for the considerable support he had received as he tackled this new task:

Interviewer: ... so thinking of speaking, listening, reading and writing, any particular one of these that was a bit more challenging, or were they all about the same?

Student: The challenging bit was the reading. It was the close reading because – you've got techniques like similes, metaphors and that; and we never got taught that, we got taught grammar – and so, it was kind of hard to get used to those but once you get used to it – the teacher really helpful – they'll provide you with all the materials, give you extra support and you kind of like learn, learn it and then it's easier after a while; but in the beginning poetry was really challenging, I think.

Interviewer: So if I've got this right, it wasn't just maybe learning some new language but there's something in there about learning a particular way of *thinking* about language as well.

Student: Yes.

The following extended extract indicates how these challenges could be surmounted when intensive teaching and well-targeted resources were provided:

Student: ... Like my English teacher provided me with extra resources and materials; and my EAL teacher actually came for the first few months to actually help me with my English which was really, really helpful.

Interviewer: So what kind of things did they do with you? Do you remember some of the resources they might have used or...?

Student: My English teacher, we were doing the Scottish literature and there were some words that I couldn't understand. It was like poetic words and it was like long words, like, like I was never taught those words and they provided me with a glossary of words and what they meant, and it was really helpful. Extra resources like that. Ehm, it's kind of if you were doing a story ... he would probably like give me one-to-one session and then he would explain me what the story was and that, so it was really, really helpful.

Interviewer: Do like a summary of the story?

Student: Yeah.

Some of the students' talk about English as a school subject reminds us that learning to write in English does not simply entail the acquisition of a set of generic skills but rather involves gaining a sense of the forms of common genres of English texts. The next quotation illustrates this point very clearly.

Interviewer: ... so when might it be more tricky, when might it be more difficult?

Student: Like especially in English because if the teacher tells you have to write a letter in English we had to write a letter about a person, a soldier that we created, but I'm like – I don't know how to start the letter, or end it, end the letter because I just don't know to start the letter.

The discussion above underlines the difficulties that some of these EAL learners experienced in writing within the English classroom. At the same time, it is important to note the observation from one student who foregrounded the gains she had made in acquiring English from being asked to write in class:

Interviewer: [In what subjects do you] come out thinking that was really good, I learnt a lot about English there?

Student: Uh like, like, she gives me stories so like – so I know how to spell.

Interviewer: Is that your English teacher?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: Right, so you like – you think you learn from stories?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: OK. So why stories, why do you think stories are so good to help you learn?

Student: Because when you write like sometimes you write new words so you think like – you're just like I wrote a new word so you know what means.

4.2.5.5.3.1 More challenging aspects of English

We see, then, how, for a number of participants, the most challenging aspects of English were the analytical reading of literary texts and the types of writing required in English as a school subject, providing further confirmation for the well-established finding that gaining competence in English for academic purposes has a much more extended trajectory than that of gaining facility in the everyday use of English (see 2.3.3.1). Some of the observations made by the students on the challenges of reading and writing in academic subjects can be read as very clearly illustrating this finding. For example, here is a student talking of the contrast between his fluency in speaking English and his faltering efforts in writing:

Interviewer: ... And what about you, **X**, do you find some subjects harder or easier?

Student: I think the hardest subjects are English because if you're writing essays then I always have to make up sentences in my mind and it's harder to make them up because when I've learn something it looks on a level of a P7. When I speak it's totally different...probably it's got a different level. As I said before it's got a level of S1 or P7 because it's different when you write and when you speak to someone.

Interviewer: Yeah, they're different things.

Student: It could be more complex, harder. I'm getting there.

For another student, recalling his early experiences in a UK school, writing was also identified as the most difficult language mode:

Interviewer: Okay and the absolute hardest bit?

Student: The hardest bit is like – when we used to write I never knew what to do so I just used to sit –

Interviewer: So the writing was hard?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was the writing harder than the talking or the listening?

Student: Yeah. The writing was harder.

The following quotation brings out the difficulties that can arise in 'integrating' actions across different language modes, in this case between listening and writing. In addition, it shows how this participant had developed what would appear to be effective coping strategies for reading in his second language, English.

Interviewer: What was most difficult for you when you started? Was it understanding people or speaking or reading or writing? What was the hardest?

Student: The hardest was writing and kind of listening. It's not, because I listen to something and I have to write it down 'cause I can't manage to spell them and I don't get it and I'm stuck in there and it keep on saying thing so I'm stuck on one point. So that is hard. And reading is not really hard because I just read it. Sometimes words not important so I just skip it and I will know the meaning later.

Unlike the student whom we have just quoted, another participant was not as confident about her reading abilities, as the brief extract beneath reveals:

Student: Sometimes reading is hard because like I can't read the bigger words or sometimes small ones I can't read, but in writing I can't – I'm not very good at spelling yet. ... I can't spell bigger words.

Other participants also raised some concerns about limitations in their abilities in English spelling, such as: 'Yeah, it's just that sometimes I like make a lot of spelling mistakes and it's not like a lot.' In the following example, a negative view of spelling ability in English appeared to colour this individual's perception of his capacities in English:

Student: ... I'm not that good at English ...

Interviewer: OK. I think your English is very good.

Student: Yeah, but like I can't really spell stuff that much so – I need help with spelling.

It is possible that teachers of EAL learners may not always see spelling as a key matter in the overall development of a student's competence in English. However, a number of the participants in our research perceived the limitations in their ability to spell in English as a matter of some, or considerable, concern. If a wider study were to find that such concerns are indeed fairly prevalent among EAL learners, there would seem to be a need to address these concerns more directly than may sometimes currently be the case.

4.2.5.5.4 'Conscious' translation between L1 and L2

Staying on the theme of challenges, some participants reported the difficulties they had experienced in their initial acquisition of English in translating from their first language that, at that stage, was their 'natural' medium of thought into English. Here is one student describing her experience of this type of translation:

Student: When I came here, um, obviously when you learn a language you think in that language that you know; but when I came here I was thinking in Romanian but it was English around me, do you know what I mean? Two languages and, um, I was going slow with translations. I was like, I was just thinking how to translate words ... that was the hardest thing to do.

Interviewer: Right. And do you think in English now?

Student: Yeah.

Interviewer: So you don't have the big effort of trying to think in Romanian and then translate?

Student: Not any more.

While EAL teachers may be well aware of the difficulties revealed in this quotation, it would seem important to highlight for all teachers the effortful nature of these processes of translation and how they can make it difficult for an EAL learner to keep up with the flow of activities in a lesson. We will return to this point in our summary of recommendations in chapter six.

It is also important to be alert to the fact that the move from conscious translation from an L1 to 'thinking in English' may vary, possibly considerably, across EAL learners, as the following two quotations illustrate:

Interviewer: So when, uh, you maybe have to write something in English, do you tend to think in your head in English or in Polish?

Student 1: I've started to get more into English instead of Polish so now I start thinking in English.

Interviewer: In English, so is that just quite recent, or -?

Student 1: Like about a year ago or something.

Interviewer: A year ago. So just from starting in secondary school, yeah, yeah, OK.

Student 2: Like basically during my first – I don't know like three to six months in the school I used to think about – in my head I used to use my first language; but after that I used to speak to like all people from our school in English so basically it was stuck in my head. Like even now, even when I'm at home with my parents I basically tend to use like, use English in my mind when I'm thinking so basically 99% of the time I'm basically speaking English rather than other languages.

Focusing on their *current* habits of language use, certain students, (such as the individual we have just quoted), reported that they now thought wholly, or almost wholly in English, as the following exchanges from a group interview illustrate:

Interviewer: Do you think about – when you're composing the sentences do you think in your home language and translate in your head, or do you think in English?

Student 1: I think in English.

Student 2: English.

Interviewer: Right. Is that because you then feel you write a better sentence, or is that just what you instinctively do?

Student 1: It's just easier.

However, for some participants L1 might still be drawn on to a degree as they engaged with the demands of school work, as can be seen from the next extract:

Interviewer: So tell me how you use Nepalese in your mind to help you with your learning?

Student: Like if I'm doing maths and all that if it's like add – in my language I add the number and get the answer.

Interviewer: Right and then you translate it into English.

Student: Yeah.

He went on to reveal that his use of his first language for school tasks was not limited to calculation routines that had been firmly laid down in his earlier L1 schooling:

Interviewer: Do you, do – when you're thinking about learning in the classroom, do you think in English, or do you think in Nepalese, or does it depend?

Student: Yeah, it depends.

Interviewer: What does it depend on?

Student: Like if it's a bit hard I think in Nepalese – if I'm not sure ... if I don't know it in English ...

Interviewer: You go back and try it in Nepalese and see if that helps.

The preceding paragraphs have given a sense of the cognitive demands associated with translating between languages but have not considered the difficulties inherent in any act of translation, whether at novice or expert level. Any 'translator' experiences the challenges that arise from the fact that translation is never a simple matter of transferring packets of information between languages. How these challenges in translation may impact on EAL learners is revealed by the following interactive exchange between one of the interviewers and a participant:

Interviewer: ... you were talking about translation and where it doesn't translate, that the word just doesn't have the same meaning?

Student: That's happened to me so many times. [Interviewer: Yeah?] Some words I can't even get from my language, so it's much harder then. [Interviewer: Yeah] So then I'm really stuck. Sometimes, I think, yeah, it's easier maybe I'll translate in my language [and if I don't] find it then I'll be like stuck. I have to try to find it in my dictionary.

Interviewer: But there may not be an exact word in English anyway. It's not that there's any problem on your part, but that there isn't an exact word?

Student: Yeah.

This exchange can be read as raising important questions for EAL research and EAL teaching practice. It will be very interesting to see a study that examines closely how EAL learners understand translation between their first language(s) and English and their conceptions of the nature of language and differences between languages. It would then be possible to explore whether contrasting conceptions led to significant differences in language learning. In EAL teaching practice there would seem to be scope for thinking through further how EAL learners, and indeed teachers, could be presented in an accessible manner with a clear sense of how language works at the different levels of semantics, grammar, syntax, etc., and of key differences between languages. We will return to this matter in our summary of recommendations in chapter six.

In gathering our data we have been mindful of taking account of the cognitive demands placed on EAL learners by the need to engage in acts of mental translation. At the same time, it would not be appropriate to characterise these acts of mental translation straightforwardly as a necessary, but taxing process. In our discussion of positive views of having more than one language (see 4.2.2.5), we noted the case of a student who perceived advantages in writing by being able to move between languages; and observed that 'for him, 'translating' between languages as he created a text in English appeared to be a conscious strategy, rather than a move that was forced on him by limitations in English'. Rather than being the effortful necessity experienced by novice learners, the ability of more advanced language learners to move between languages can be seen as a source of strength and flexibility in thinking.

Advocacy of the use of L1 is a refrain that recurs throughout the EAL literature. The observations on 'mental translation' from our participants that we have reviewed above remind us that most of the use of L1 in the classroom will be invisible to teachers and classmates as EAL learners think in their own language and 'translate' between that language and English. This is likely to be particularly the case in the early stages of EAL learners' schooling career in the UK. Accordingly, one aspect of encouraging the effective use of L1 in the classroom is thinking through how best to support these learners' movements between languages and how to alert them to the advantages and the pitfalls of translation.

4.2.5.5.5 Limited use of L1 in schools

Turning to look at the 'visible' use of EAL learners' first language or languages in school, we have noted how some of our participants had received tuition from support personnel who spoke their language and instances where materials had been translated into a first language. The key role that could be played by a same language-speaking peer has also been described. For a few students taking, or preparing to take, examinations in their first language meant that the development of literacy in that language was in effect being formally recognised within their schooling.

The uses of L1 that we have recapped on in the preceding paragraph can be seen as valuable supports to learning. The general picture that emerged from our participants' interviews, however, was of quite limited use of L1 in the classroom and school, at least at the stage of facility in English that they had now reached, where they were no longer dependent on the support of a language-speaking peer. Some accounts were given of how schools had given EAL learners opportunities to share aspects of their culture and their language with their fellow students:

Student: Yeah we had a talk and something about – I chose cricket. We play that and stuff like this. It was great, it was great talking about it to somebody, about my language.

However, no clear sense was given of L1 use featuring more routinely in the classroom. At the same time, it needs to be recognised that the participants did not identify any instances in their current schools of L1 use being actively discouraged by teachers. The only reported case of teacher prejudice against L1 use came from a student describing his transition experience in primary school:

Interviewer: So what again, what did you find was the most difficult thing when you came?

Student: In school? ... I only know Y [same language-speaking peer] and I was speaking to him in Polish, so teacher nearly gave me a detention because I was speaking in a different language than English.

Quite a number of participants attributed their lack of use of their home language in school to their lack of language-speaking compatriots, as in the following examples:

Student 1: I don't have anybody that's my language, so I am like from the south part of India ... so I've never said my language in school before.

Student 2: If there was a Slovakian person, yeah, I could use it in school but there's no one.

For one participant who had at least one peer who spoke her home language, her use of English rather than Romanian can be seen as a decision to 'integrate' into an English-speaking world. Her words here resonate with those of the Nepalese student whom we quoted in a discussion of the value attached to a first language (see 4.2.2.5).

Interviewer: ... how do you feel in school, in the school context, do you use Romanian, and if so how do you feel about it.

Student: You mean in this school? I don't really use Romanian, I have a friend, she's in the year below, she's Romanian, that's when I use Romania and at home. [Interviewer: Right.] So I talk with her in Romanian at home.

Interviewer: And do you deliberately choose not to use it, or it just doesn't come up?

Student: Well, usually I – more, so speak more English than Romanian because I'm just hanging out with my friends, and going on the Internet ...

Interviewer: So you don't use it because your friends don't speak Romanian, they wouldn't understand you, or is there any other reason you don't use the language?

Student: Well, to be honest because I'm here like people don't talk Romanian and I've just chose to go more for English because if I'm here obviously I need English.

For other students the decision not to use their first language in school, can be interpreted as having been driven by concerns relating to how they present themselves to their peers, by a desire not to mark themselves out as different, as in the following example:

Interviewer: Right, so first of all tell me how you feel when you're using your own language here?

Student: Uh, I use it in my mind, I don't like speaking it out because I don't want anybody to like hear –

Interviewer: So why do you not like speaking out?

Student: Just, I don't, I just don't like it.

Interviewer: Does it make you feel different?

Student: Yeah.

Some participants indicated how similar concerns relating to self-presentation led them to avoid communicating at school in their first language with first-language-speaking peers, as is illustrated, in the following exchanges:

Student: I have friends that speak my language but I just – they don't want to speak in their language either so that's why I just don't speak.

Interviewer: OK, so that's more just – to some extent you yourselves choosing that rather than the teachers saying, 'No, you can't do it.' OK.

Student: I can speak my language but I don't really want to do it in school. [Interviewer: OK] I like doing English.

Interviewer: So why particularly do you like using English in school?

Student: Just, just shy.

A defensive avoidance of the use of his first language in school by an individual who was proud of his first language is also evident in the next extract which centres on the fear of how use of his own language might be interpreted by others as a mask for hostile thoughts and intentions:

Interviewer: ... So are you able to use your home language in school at all in your classes?

Student: No, it's not used. I just use it in my home ... I don't use it at school at all. What's the use if I have somebody I could have used it by helping them but I don't have anybody. And they'll think I'm saying about them in the language, so I don't want them to think like that so I don't use the language.

The preceding paragraphs have established how the avoidance of the use of a first language in school was linked to particular tactics of self-presentation in these school contexts, by a wish not to mark oneself out as different. However, it is important to note that not all participants shared these face concerns, as is illustrated by the following two contributions to a focus group interview. Here a level of confidence in the use of L1 in school is evident – a confidence that was lacking in many other interview exchanges on this topic.

Student 1: I just sometimes use my own language because some friends ask me what is something in my own language.

Student 2: And I think I have been asked as well many times and I don't mind speaking it because I feel comfortable speaking in my own language sometimes. But I have spoken to a few girls that have come from my country and I have spoken to them normally in my own language and I think just recently one of the teachers asked me to say something to a parent in my own language. So I can translate for them as they came new as well. So that is an opportunity where I can use my language as well.

We continue to explore this theme of how L1 use related to a more cautious or a more confident presentation of self in fitting in (see 4.2.6), where we examine how our participants viewed the identity that they wanted to construct for themselves in their UK schools.

4.2.5.5.6 Summary

There is variation in student reports of whether or not they had received additional support. A considerable number stated that they had received assistance from an EAL teacher or other member of support staff. In one of the sites in our study, an after-school EAL club was seen as a valuable source of support. A fairly wide range of language work was described across the student interviews which also

offered insights into the direct teaching EAL teachers had provided on aspects of English language. A number of students' accounts of their language learning at school appeared to indicate that 'it was the coupling of focused language development activities with supportive backing from teachers to *voice* their thoughts in English that had been key to their progress'.

Attention was also given to *EAL students' own efforts and initiative in language-learning*, a topic which we will argue in chapter six could be given greater prominence in the EAL literature. This discussion brought out how, for some students, these efforts centred on active observation and listening.

In general, participants characterised their teachers as 'helpful', albeit with some critical provisos. We noted, for instance, how one student highlighted 'the gains that came from teachers who were continuously strategically alert to how students were coping with a task and responsive to those they perceived as having difficulties' (see 4.2.5.4).

In their talk about their encounter with the language of individual school subjects, this particular sample of students did not report problems with the language of mathematics. Some had in fact received instruction in mathematics before coming to the UK which had prepared them well to cope with the curricula in the UK. A more divided picture emerged, however, when participants described learning another language as a school subject, with some appearing to take the acquisition of yet another language in their stride but others experiencing difficulties in studying another language while they were developing their competence in English. Questions arise here, that we will consider in chapter six, concerning whether communicating wholly, or largely, within a modern language, (unmediated by the use of English), might ameliorate such difficulties. For a number of the participants English was seen to be the most challenging of the school subjects. In English they faced the demanding, new task of learning the practices involved in analysing literary texts and the challenge of producing more extended pieces of writing in different genres. The discussion of engaging with textual practices in the English classroom also highlighted how these challenges could be overcome 'when intensive teaching and well-targeted resources were provided' (4.2.5.5.3).

Students' accounts of what they had found to be the more challenging aspects of English (4.2.5.5.3.1) brought out the challenges of reading, and in particular, writing in academic subjects, accounts which were very much in line with the literature delineating the steeper, longer trajectory of learning English for academic purposes as opposed to that for gaining competence in the everyday use of English. We also presented in this discussion the concerns that some participants raised about their limitations in English spelling – an area of concern that possibly has not been sufficiently addressed in the EAL literature, particularly when students are learning a new orthographic script.

When considering the participants' reports of thinking in their L1 and of translating between English and their L1, we stressed the need for teachers to be alert to the effort involved in these processes of translation and to appreciate how these processes could make it difficult for EAL learners to keep up with the pace of a lesson. At the same time though, we observed that for learners with a secure grasp of English, the ability to move between languages could be viewed as a source of strength. Within the discussion of 'conscious' translation between L1 and L2 (4.2.5.5.4) we highlighted a number of issues for EAL research and practice that we return to in our summary of recommendations in chapter six.

The description of the limited use of L1 in schools (4.2.5.5.5) noted both the range of ways in which participants stated that their L1 had featured in school and the fact that the interviews gave no clear sense of any more routine use of L1 in the classroom. Interview extracts presented here revealed how the participants use, or more commonly avoid use, of L1 in school related to their tactics of self-presentation – a topic that we take up again in a discussion of fitting in (4.2.6 below).

4.2.6 Fitting in

A theme running throughout this chapter has been the social as well as the linguistic adjustments that these EAL students had to make as they forged a new life for themselves in UK schools, at the same time highlighting the ways in which linguistic and social challenges could be intertwined. We have also detailed the emotional impact of the linguistic and social isolation experienced by many of the participants in our study at the time of their entry into a UK school. The constraints on communication in school imposed by limited, or very limited, facility in English could be compounded by a wish to avoid presenting oneself as inept in this new linguistic environment. To function effectively in a UK school, an EAL student needed not only to develop knowledge of, and communication skills in, English but also the confidence to speak, to express her or his 'voice' in this setting.

Our participants described how their adjustment to a new school environment had been eased by teachers displaying welcoming, encouraging attitudes and by the support and sense of connection provided by an assigned 'buddy' or a friend they had found themselves. It is also important to note that in the two very linguistically and culturally diverse schools we studied, migrants who had English as a second language formed a significant proportion of the school roll. Accordingly, EAL students entering these schools did not 'stand out' as distinctly different in the way that they might have done in schools where EAL learners formed a much smaller proportion of the school population. Some of our participants found the presence of other 'international people' in their classes gave an encouraging sense that they were not alone in this new environment:

Interviewer: What about the next statement there? 'You learn better when you feel ...'

Student 1: Maybe not alone. I mean when I came over I thought I was going to be alone, like I thought I was going to be the only person in my classes which was like not from England. And there were many people who were not from here. So I felt more confident because, yeah, I wasn't alone.

Student 2: I agree with **Student 1**, like that other people are also not from here, just like they are international people in your classes.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the presence of other 'international' students in a school may assist a newly arrived EAL learner to feel that there is a place for her or him in this new school environment. At the same time a note of caution needs to be sounded. While the presence of other EAL students may at least diminish a sense of isolation and possibly even foster a sense of belonging in a new school environment, it cannot be assumed that EAL learners themselves will always act towards each other in a supportive, co-operative manner. EAL learners may bring with them from their countries of origin national enmities and religious and cultural divisions that may make them ill-disposed to individuals who are perceived to come from a 'rival' group. This was illustrated in our study by the case of the student from India who was bullied, in part at least, on such grounds of national origin. Schools face the task of creating an inclusive social space where mutual toleration is expected. Our impression from the interviews with the pupils and from the time we have spent in the two schools in our study is that they were working very actively to create such an ethos.

There were also schools in which these EAL students appeared, at least by the time of our interviews, to have made a niche for themselves. As already revealed, the individuals whom we interviewed appeared to have been able to establish friendships with fellow students; although the rate at which this happened and the extent of friendship networks did vary. For the following student it had taken some time to establish herself socially:

Student: I think that when I first came into this school I was really quiet and didn't have many friends but now I have more friends and they are more talking to me.

The way in which individuals respond to each other in educational settings is likely to be powerfully affected both by concerns about how they are presenting themselves and by the particular tactics of self-presentation which they employ. Preceding pages have established that some participants very definitely avoided using their L1 in school in front of their peers; and this avoidance can be readily interpreted as a tactic to ensure that they fitted in, that they did not mark themselves as different. It has been noted, however, that not all participants shared these face concerns; some seemed to display greater confidence in using their first language in school. Looking beyond the use of L1, some participants made observations about how they needed to present themselves to 'fit in' within a UK school. Here is one student on this theme:

Student: I would say not only the language but what I have learnt in the UK is that you need to fit in by also what you wear. You can't, if you come from a Pakistani background, you can't wear Pakistani clothes because then people will look at you different – some people wouldn't but some people would. And so you need to know what to wear. I mean don't wear something to please someone, that's what I believe but still you do need to fit in as well as the language. So it is good being different but if people are going to bully you about it then I would rather not.

One can readily see and feel in this extract the pressures this young person perceived to present herself in a way which would allow her to 'fit' in. These pressures can be seen to be in some tension with a wish for a more unfettered form of self-expression: 'I mean don't wear something to please someone.'

As the following group interview extract shows, some of the participants indicated how being 'different' in the setting of a UK school had been distinctly difficult at first but that these difficulties had eased over time as they accommodated to this new environment. The extract also includes the interviewer's extended question to give a sense of how discussion of this matter was framed.

Interviewer: ...I did a discussion like this with younger children and they talked about being different. Because if you arrive here and you don't speak the language and you don't know the slang and so on it marks you out as different. And some people liked feeling different and some people wanted not to stand out. How do you feel about that? Not so much, obviously, when you first came! But some people didn't like being singled out and some people felt comfortable that this is who they were and that they liked being a bit different.

Student 1: When I came over, people asked me loads of questions about my country they said, 'Oh I love your accent, I love that you are South African!' They were so interested and sometimes I felt the attention was a bit too much like I wanted to get rid of it because it was too much, it was too overwhelming because I was new and I didn't know anyone. So it was a bit too much for me but eventually it calmed down a bit. But I mean they were all very nice at the same time. I would say it was quite hard when I first came over being different but now I have got used to it so it is a bit better.

Interviewer: What do you think Student 2?

Student 2: I also think it is better being different. Like not at the beginning because you are shy and stuff but now that I am settled in to X School and have friends I think it is better being different.

In contrast to this student who thought it was 'better being different', some participants saw an identity marked by similarity with, rather than difference from, their new school peers as desirable, as the following laconic observation illustrates:

Interviewer: ... what do you think? Do you want to be the same or do you want to be different?

Student: The same.

The discussion with the younger focus group referred to by the interviewer, quoted in an earlier extract, revealed a range of views on the desirability of an identity and presentation of self, marked more by similarity with one's peers or more by difference. It also shows some of these EAL learners taking a quite nuanced position on this question.

A: But like my friends ask me to say different things and I guess, well I don't know – it might be stupid –but it kind of embarrassing to be different. It just gets a bit annoying.

Interviewer: Yeah, Do other people feel like that? **B** doesn't, **C** does.

B: I think the earlier you can do it the better you can do it.

Interviewer: There was an interesting comment that you made there **A** about feeling different, not wanting to feel different. Do other people feel like that?

D: I like to be different.

A: It is just sometimes people – I don't know – they treat you like you are different and it is just not very nice.

C: I kind of like to be different and kind of not to be different because some people like ask you questions. And it is like I like to answer questions you know, like we are doing it now but some people like they weren't there or they were already born in England and they want to learn another language and they ask you question: how do you say that in Polish? How do you say that, that and I like to help others.

Interviewer: What do you think **E**?

E: About what?

Interviewer: About being made to feel different.

E: Yes it is good to feel different. I like to be feeling different from everyone else.

To gain a rich, detailed sense of how EAL learners view their identity, and the identity they wish to construct and present within a UK school would require an in-depth interview, or even a series of such interviews. Accordingly, it is necessary to be tentative in interpreting the short exchanges in this focus group interview. However, it is possible to take from these exchanges a few simple, but important points. First of all, it would be very interesting to explore in greater depth what experiences and perceptions may lead EAL learners to take contrasting views on what is a desirable identity and presentation of self in a UK school. Secondly, these exchanges do bring out very clearly the crucial difference between being positioned by others as different, 'they treat you like you are different and it is just not very nice', as opposed to a positive, assertive characterisation of oneself as different, 'it is good to feel different.' Thirdly, for some of these EAL students 'similarity' and 'difference' were not seen at all as being binary opposite choices: 'I kind of like to be different and kind of not to be different'. Accordingly, it is important that both researchers and teachers avoid seeing the identity of EAL students in simplistic terms of similarity or difference.

Norton (2000) examines the many factors that impact on the construction of learners' identities. Her perspective on identity recognises that within diverse classroom settings, identity is a *site of struggle* and not a fixed category. She observes that it is only when the teacher understands the histories and lived experiences of learners that s/he is able to create conditions that makes these experiences a legitimate part of the curriculum. Such insights and actions enable the learner to claim the right to 'fit in' within the school community (Norton, 2000). As we have noted above, in-depth interview studies of how EAL students conceive of their identities, and further ethnographic study of how they perform their identities in schools, are required in order to gain a finely-delineated picture of the differing ways in which the cross-currents of assimilation and of distinctiveness may play out for them.

The focus of our study was on EAL learners' perceptions of their schooling, and specifically of their language learning experiences, rather than on considering more widely how they identified themselves in terms of belonging to a particular national or religious grouping. The study did, however, give us some glimpses into these wider acts of identification that are worth noting. Participants' talk on this topic can be seen to highlight how investigating EAL learners' sense of fitting in within UK schools may need to take account of these wider acts of identity. One participant very much identified himself with his country of origin:

Interviewer: And how do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as Polish or English or Polish English or English Polish?

Student: Polish.

Interviewer: You are definitely Polish, yeah? [X goes on to give distinct assent to this statement]

By contrast another participant's migrations experiences had led her away from a strongly rooted sense of identification to have a more shape-shifting sense of identity with which she was quite comfortable:

Interviewer: How do you see yourself in terms of language, nationality, who you are?

Student: I think I am kind of mixed because a lot of people think I don't even look Pakistani or Afghan or anything. They are confused about what I am and I am myself because I have come from different places and speak different languages and it is kind of all messed up. But I think I like how my life is because I can speak different languages. Well, it is hard to speak the other languages but I can speak them here and there and it is quite fun to come from different places and to get to know different people.

4.2.7 Conclusion

A cautionary note needs to be introduced concerning the findings presented above, in that an interview study of this type was only able to give us limited insights into the way that our participants construed and acted out their identities in UK schools. However, our study did allow us to foreground a number of key insights that we will return to highlight in chapter six, such as the fact that some of these students learning EAL did not appear to view being 'different from' or 'similar to' their school peers as binary opposite choices. Differences were evident in views on what made for a desirable presentation of self in a UK school, and it would be interesting to see such differences explored in fine-detail in future work. Importantly, as we have already noted, these interviews drew attention to the 'crucial difference between being positioned by others as different ... as opposed to a positive, assertive characterisation of oneself as different.

Chapter 5 Findings: teachers' perceptions

5.1 Introduction

The teacher, and teacher assistant, participants⁴ in our study gave quite detailed, thoughtful accounts of their perceptions of, and interactions with, EAL learners. We are very conscious that they were few in number, and in this chapter and in chapter six, we exercise appropriate caution concerning how representative their views may be within their local contexts, let alone within any wider arena. However, their observations did highlight a number of key matters that require deeper exploration in future research. Their interviews also gave a very direct sense of how these individual teachers framed their encounters with EAL students and of the ways in which these encounters were shaped by the affordances and constraints of school policies and structures. In other words, we were able to gain, at least a degree of, understanding of how these teachers' thinking and actions in relation to EAL students were mediated by the ethos, structures and policies of the schools where they worked. At the same time, their accounts revealed that they themselves had acted in an agentic fashion to facilitate EAL students' learning. In addition, the teachers' reflections on the situation of EAL learners allowed us to bring out points of comparison and contrast with the perceptions of EAL learners on their language learning experiences.

We begin, then, by sketching in the background of the teachers whom we interviewed, bringing out aspects of their professional formation that may have been key to the stance that they adopted in relation to EAL students and their learning. Attention turns next to how they represented the challenges that EAL learners may face in secondary schools before moving out to a wider focus on how interview participants perceived *curricular policy* as providing affordances or imposing constraints on EAL learning and teaching.

5.2 Background of the participants of relevance to EAL work

Looking first then at aspects of the educational and professional background of these participants that can be seen to be relevant to EAL work, both of the teaching assistants had studied languages at school and gone on to university studies in the area of language. One described her school language learning in the following terms: 'I did French and German at school. I did French up to A level so I can still manage reasonably well in French if I go to France.' This participant had then gone on to university where she studied English, but as part of her degree had also done two terms of linguistics. In linguistics she had had the experience of learning 'to study this African language' which had given her a felt sense of the emotional challenge of being introduced to a new language.

The other teaching assistant described herself as possessing 'quite fluent German, quite good French and very basic Spanish'. She had studied German at university and 'did French as a minor for a year'. In addition to acting as a classroom assistant, she was currently doing some teaching of French in the school: 'I am filling in for a teacher on maternity [leave] and I am actually teaching year seven French class here which has been interesting.'

Both of them had completed a 'higher-level TA course, which was specialising in modern foreign languages'; and the one who was currently teaching French had taken an evening class at college in teaching English to people of other languages. It has been noted that their experience of being completely immersed in a new foreign language on the higher-level TA course had given them a direct sense of how scary and challenging it could be to learn in the medium of a very different language. The teaching assistant who had a degree in English had also had experience in working 'in the Japanese college in X, Y College. So I was working with Japanese all the time there for ten years.'

In summary then, these two teaching assistants can be seen to have brought a considerable body of knowledge and experience to their work with EAL students; and we will see below (5.5.5) how this experience was deployed in running an EAL club. While their knowledge and experience could hardly be described as typical for teaching assistants, their biographies do remind us that there may well be a considerable resource of EAL-related knowledge and experience among the TA workforce that is currently insufficiently recognised and utilised.

Moving on to sketch in the background of the EAL teacher who featured in our study, at the time of interview she had been an EAL teacher for six years in secondary schools, preceded by close to four years in primary schools. It is important to note that she worked across a number of schools, in addition to the school in our study, and that accordingly the observations she made concerning EAL students and the teaching they received did not relate solely to the school in our study. Before taking up her EAL work, she had served as a history teacher for 13 years. While one of her parents was Italian, she did not speak Italian and described herself as possessing 'only school level French and German but I don't use any other language'. Although, in her own words, 'this was not a prerequisite for getting the job', she had studied on a part-time basis for a Diploma in Additional Support for Learning with a specialisation in bilingualism. She gave a very positive evaluation of this qualification which she saw as providing the foundation for her current EAL practice:

4 From this point they are simply referred to collectively as teacher participants, not primarily for brevity but because it would seem invidious to treat the two thoughtful classroom assistants as belonging in a different category from the teachers.

Interviewer: And you found it helpful?

Teacher: Absolutely! I think especially just for the sort of – we've got the challenge and the support – or the support and challenge and certainly for the challenge I felt a lot more equipped and I feel I know what I'm talking about.

Interviewer: So it kind of informed your practice?

Teacher: Absolutely. Yeah, it has.

Her talk about the gains she had made from undertaking this postgraduate-level qualification cut deeper than simply the acquisition of knowledge and skills. She described how undertaking this course of study had led her to take up a much more activist orientation, which had indeed led to a shift in her way of being as a teacher:

Teacher: Well, [the role of the EAL teacher is] support and challenge and I know when I first started the job I probably didn't challenge; and I think having done the Diploma I felt so empowered by the reading that I'd done it wasn't enough for my colleagues or for the head teacher to say: 'Oh, no, you're not meant to do that. Read this piece of paper.' I need to read it for myself to almost take it on board myself actually and integrate the myths and things that work out, that are intuitive. You know I'm not ashamed to say that, you know. So certainly the reading and the work that I did on that was really empowering; and I've said that to colleagues, you know, that that's helped a great deal.

Her words here then highlight how postgraduate education in EAL may, on occasion at least, serve not only to build requisite expertise but also to spur the development of a confident, activist stance on behalf of EAL students.

Our fourth participant was the head of a large English department. She had a degree in English and a PGDE teaching qualification in teaching English at secondary level. She had been a teacher for eight years, wholly in secondary schools, and had been a head of department for three years. She described her knowledge of languages other than English as limited to 'I speak minimal French'. While she had no specific training in EAL, her interview revealed that she felt that engaging with EAL students had led to a development in her understandings and actions as a teacher:

Teacher: I think it has informed my practice in every aspect in the sense that I have a much greater awareness now of language and language acquisition, not just for EAL but for all of the kids so it's actually even informed right down to my supported sets where there is much more of a focus there on individual language items and looking at them in context, and actually progressing kids in terms of individual words.

She then went on to highlight the benefits of working with EAL learners in the following terms:

Teacher:...as I say it's provided me with a real insight into the process of acquiring language and a large number of the pupils here, although not EAL, still need to acquire language so I think that it informs many aspects of my teaching.

It will be clear from the preceding paragraphs that our teacher participants had a knowledge of, and sensitivity to, matters related to language and its acquisition that could hardly be described as typical of secondary school teachers in the main. However, for our very small-scale study it can be seen as an advantage that they were well placed to act as *key informants* who could give us clearly articulated accounts of their own practice in relation to EAL and of how these practices were shaped by their immediate contexts and by wider policies.

5.3 Perceived challenges for EAL learners

5.3.1 Alertness to the emotional challenges faced by EAL learners

We have noted in the preceding chapter that our teacher participants were very conscious of the emotional and social challenges faced by EAL learners. There we illustrated how the teaching assistants' own language learning experiences had given them a direct experience of the anxieties and emotional uncertainties that can arise from being submersed in a wholly new language environment. The other two participants also had a very keen sense of the emotional stresses that can accompany the transition to an English speaking community and school. The English teacher introduced this theme by presenting a striking example of a student who was finding his new school environment very stressful and then went on to generalise about the difficulties faced by EAL learners in general:

Teacher:...one pupil in my classes... he's suffering from quite extreme anxiety, um, as a result of his move to Scotland which has manifested itself with being unable to communicate verbally at all. Although his language development has been consistently steady and good – we've got nothing – he just doesn't provide anything verbally. You can see from him the emotional strain and stress that the move from Spain to Scotland has made and he's still working through that at the moment; and I think for other pupils it's perhaps less obvious ... but I think it must be extremely stressful for all of them to be entering a world where 90 – 95 per cent of what they're hearing they can't actually decode. And I think some pupils respond by forming quite close networks with other EAL pupils and some are quite successful because they've actually been able to forge quite close relationships across the board with Scottish and EAL pupils.

Consonant with the accounts of the students whom we interviewed, she went on to describe distinct variability in the time that it took EAL learners to settle, and integrate, within their new school:

Teacher: I think they're all different [in the length of time they take to settle].

Interviewer: Very different?

Teacher: Very different! Um, some pupils settle remarkably quickly or appear to certainly in your class and others take a very, very long time. I've got a couple of pupils that are really struggling to settle and others who have been here for a matter of months and appear to have settled very well and integrated very well.

The EAL teacher framed her discussion of the emotional difficulties that may be faced by EAL learners in terms that were wider than simply the challenge of adjusting to an English-speaking school. She focused on the cultural differences that students faced and the emotional tensions that could result when students' identity and identification remained bound up with their country of origin:

Teacher: I think culturally, depending on the culture that the pupils have come from they feel quite torn some pupils – in fact a growing number of pupils that are coming here maybe aged fourteen, fifteen, we're finding, especially this year, don't actually want to be here. And we've set up a Polish girls' group and we're going to be setting up a Polish boys' group for them really just to voice that. ... so school is not the priority that we think it should be because they're carrying a lot of this ...

She went on to observe how the difficulties associated with this sense of cultural displacement could be accompanied and exacerbated by the disruption of family ties:

Teacher: Well, an increasing number of the pupils have a parent that is back in their, in the country that they've left and I think that's really challenging for them, especially a teenager –

Interviewer: That's very hard.

Teacher: It is and that's why I think a lot of our work is more steered towards the pastoral and we work quite closely here with the education and welfare officer who looks at attendance and she sort of flagged this up...We're starting to see a little bit of a pattern, some pupils – some of the pupils just take it in their stride but other pupils are truant[ing] and just generally unhappy and when you get to the bottom of it is that they don't really want to be here or that they're really missing their dad, or they've got a step-parent and of course that's challenging enough if both parents are in the same country. So, um, that's been a large part of our role, I think, in secondary certainly this year.

5.3.1 Facing a new learning-teaching environment

The EAL teacher also talked of the intellectual and social challenges some EAL learners might face in adjusting to a different 'culture' of learning and teaching:

Teacher: I would say I mean again culturally some of the pupils, say perhaps from some of the Asian countries, are not used to group work and again it's that transition and bridging the different teaching styles – and it's encouraging that you could have quite a high stage pupil in reading and writing but actually they're very quiet and I suppose it's trying to address that. And then other pupils they might have excellent literacy, so it's trying to bridge some of those skills; and also break some of the stereotypes, for example, all Polish pupils are good at maths. Chinese pupils [likewise]. So, so, yes, from that point of view it's quite interesting.

It is clear from this extract that this teacher, whether correct, or not, in her statement that some EAL learners 'were not used to group work', was not straightforwardly attributing a lack of contribution in class to linguistic limitations but was also recognising that reticence in class might be linked to different cultural patterns of interaction. She was also not seeing the responsibility of adjusting to UK patterns of learning, teaching and classroom communication as simply the responsibility of the EAL students but rather as requiring 'bridging' work by teachers. Her remarks can be read as highlighting the need for teachers and schools to respond appropriately to cultural differences, while at the same time not 'stereotyping', not essentialising these differences.

5.3.2 Linguistic challenges in the classroom

Focusing in now on these participants' perceptions of the linguistic challenges that EAL students faced in UK classrooms, we have quoted the English teacher's thoughts on how 'it must be extremely stressful for all of them to be entering a world where 90 – 95 per cent of what they're hearing they can't actually decode.' Later in her interview she expanded considerably on this statement and indicated that she saw listening as the most challenging language mode for EAL learners:

Teacher: I actually think that listening, the skill of listening is probably the most challenging for them in terms of making that accessible to them because I think that a lot of the, our practice in the classroom is delivered probably far too

quickly. And not standardised in terms of pronunciation, various other things, pace, etc. so I think listening is probably the hardest aspect of the curriculum for them....obviously use of colloquialisms. I think, I think just hearing the language spoken in context it doesn't matter what language it is, I think it's harder to keep pace with someone who is a natural speaker in that language regardless of any of the other factors that come into play.

She then went on to describe the listening skills development that she undertook with her classes and presented her analysis of the kind of activity that EAL students required if they were to make progress in listening. As the following extract reveals, she also acknowledged that the kind of scaffolding support for listening that she advocated was not what EAL students experienced in their everyday teaching and learning:

Teacher: I do quite a bit of sort of listening skill development with my classes and even taking the most – a very slow pace text that has markers and cues in the form of written text to break it and really chunk it down, that's what you really need in order to be able to actually progress and follow what's happening. Now you don't have that when I teach, so you know I recognise that if you take the same ability and translate it into the day-to-day sitting in a classroom it must be extremely difficult.

In terms that resonated with the face concerns that some of our student participants expressed concerning communicating in English in a classroom context, the English teacher saw gaining 'confidence' to express themselves in class as the key challenge that EAL learners faced in speaking. We will return shortly to consider what she viewed as a key point of good EAL practice in responding to EAL students' reluctance to speak.

Teacher: I think there's an initial confidence issue that a large number of EAL pupils take an extended period of time before they feel confident enough to actually verbalise and speak the language, so their understanding of the language in writing or reading is significantly higher than they would be able to demonstrate in speaking and it's purely from the confidence perspective. But once they make those initial steps onto the verbal pathway you see huge progress with them and the confidence really builds.

For this teacher at least reading was seen as a conduit, a means of accessing 'your learning and teaching', through which communication could flow between text in English and the student's first language. The implication here then was that this was a less challenging mode for EAL students. At the same time, she was aware of how this translating, communicative function of reading could be 'over used' and took care to hedge her claim for the relative ease of reading – 'would appear to be':

Teacher: Reading, I think is probably, in terms of the classroom, one of the more straightforward ones, in terms of it's something that can be over-used in the sense that you give them a piece of written text and the task is to identify a language that they're less familiar with and then translate it into their own language. So I think that reading can provide quite an easy, what would appear to be, an easy solution to perhaps learning and teaching in the classroom of helping them access your learning and teaching.

When discussing the difficulties that EAL learners may face in writing she, implicitly at least, recognised that learners of English as a second language lacked the extensive, differentiated network of knowledge concerning the structures of, and forms of expression in, English that an English speaker would customarily possess. She also saw it as a challenge for herself to make explicit for an EAL student this tacit, taken-for-granted knowledge:

Teacher: Well, I mean obviously there's the complexity of the language in itself [for EAL students writing in English]; but it's also, for example, as an English teacher having – 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.

There was no mention in her interview of encouraging EAL students to compose a text in their first language as well as in English nor, as the following response to an interview question indicates, of aiding their writing in English by undertaking an analysis of points of comparison and contrast between the structures of their first languages and those of English:

Interviewer: Right so writing in terms of vocabulary, ideas and things, but also the grammatical structures, yeah. And you know as a teacher of a range of EAL learners from different backgrounds, different languages do you have a look at the grammatical structures that they're bringing with them in their own language to help you understand the challenges that they might face?

Teacher: No, no, no.

Continuing on the subject of writing, it is well recognised in the EAL literature that facility in writing can be slower to develop than the other language modes (Colombo and Furbush, 2009). On this theme, one of the teaching assistants noted how demotivating it could be for some EAL learners to continue to get low grades in writing and to have no demonstrable signs of improvement:

TA1: With the teachers' assessments in class I think most of the EAL pupils are motivated and keen to improve and sometimes if they are not improving they do feel discouraged that they are still getting the same level, you know another D, another D, another D. This happened to a girl in my year 10 class and she kept bursting into tears every time she got a D. So it can be a bit demoralising because, as we were saying earlier, if your written language is taking time to come in you're not necessarily going to be improving these levels very rapidly, are you?

These reflections prompted her colleague to note how EAL learners were also likely simply to get much less practice in writing than in the other language modes, (an observation that can also be seen to hit the mark for native speakers of English).

Teacher: You are not getting as much practice as you are in speaking, listening, watching TV – you are speaking to people. You are not sitting and writing essays and writing all the time, so that is harder.

The teaching assistants were of the view that the teachers with whom they worked were not always sufficiently alert to the slower pace at which writing develops, compared to other language modes:

TA1: I think one thing that we thought of as a difficulty from the teacher's point of view is that sometimes people, because they can speak well, they expect the same level in the writing and that is obviously a lot slower to come than – the ability to communicate comes first and there is a discrepancy there and that is what they can struggle with.

TA2: I think there is some ignorance in teaching about how fast they would be expected to progress and I think they expect too much too soon.

5.4 Views on aspects of good EAL practice

We present below first a succinct discussion of a few aspects of practice that the English teacher and teaching assistant participants flagged up as making for effective work with EAL students and then a more extended account of the EAL teacher's conception of what makes for good EAL practice.

While the English teacher was concerned to support EAL students to speak in class, she saw it as being both instrumentally and morally important not to force these students to speak. Her thoughts on the need not to exert undue pressure on EAL learners to participate in class are captured in the following quotation:

Teacher: I think they [EAL learners] need to be given the freedom to make the choices and decisions about when they're ready to speak; and I think that's part of it that they feel that they're at the point where they have the confidence that they can actually speak and I don't think it's something that can be forced.

She also highlighted the importance of providing skilfully-tailored learning content and activities for EAL students; and we will return below to this topic of differentiation (see 5.5.2). For the teaching assistants a key matter in EAL practice was the desirability of giving focused, one-to-one instruction to EAL students outside of the classroom, as the following exchanges demonstrate. This was seen by them as a means to provide well-attuned input based on a close assessment of needs.

Interviewer: In your experience of working with children, EAL, what works best for them?

TA1: I think more one-to-one, a small group rather than a class. I think have one-to-one time and being able to tailor so you can assess what they need and it is tailor made to them. And it is more productive in the long run than try to do a general class for eight of them who all have different needs. If you have one hour, one person, once a week you can really hone in on what they need and it is more effective really.

TA2: Yeah, I think I agree; one-to-one or very small groups are really useful.

They also identified the use of EAL students' first language in schools as an aspect of good practice, and we will return below (see 5.5.1) to present their thoughts on this topic.

For the EAL teacher a key matter was that EAL students were very fully supported within their classroom setting with careful attention being given to their linguistic needs. Working across a number of schools, she did not see this carefully scaffolded learning as happening with at all sufficient frequency; but she saw teachers learning from exemplars of good practice by their colleagues as a clear way forward. In her own words:

Teacher: Immersion I know is about – it only really works when if you like pupils are supported in the classroom setting and I think we've got a long way to go with that with literacy across learning. It's quite disappointing not to see that but when you do see that it's fantastic to see that in operation and I think it's about where we do see that in schools sort of promoting that and getting other teachers to go in and seeing that model.

She went on to give a concrete example of such good, supportive practice occurring within a Geography lesson, an example where it seems reasonable to infer that there was a generally close attention to differentiation, not simply scaffolding given to the efforts of EAL students:

Teacher: I was in a school yesterday and I just happened to go into a lesson and the teacher didn't know I was coming in ... it was so visually well-supported and a boy who, he's Polish but he's also got other learning needs was able to tell me what they were doing because it was so well-supported and he was able to write independently, and yet I know in other areas of the curriculum he's not. So, I mean, I might even contact the head teacher and say, 'Look, you know, this is fantastic learning and teaching that's going on.'

...

this was all visual and she, the teacher used higher grade language for the more able pupils in the class but it was so accessible and it was – the cultural references would be very difficult for a lot of these pupils to make, but they were all engaged; and it was so well visually supported and she talked through the key words at the start of the lesson and I just added a little bit of advice about doing simple definitions in English for the two pupils I was in there for, just to sort of reinforce that, but it was great to see. I don't see a lot of that.

Although this EAL teacher may not have seen much practice of this type, she felt that much more could be achieved without teachers in the schools where she worked having to make a sea change in their practice. In particular, greater support for EAL students could, she felt, be achieved by teachers deploying more fully existing guidance and working with the grain of the current curricular emphasis on 'literacy across learning'.

Interviewer: If you were given a magic wand what would you do to make things better?

Teacher: I'd have every teacher teaching literacy across learning, using their smart boards, using visuals, stretching pupils, reading the pupil support bulletin that we put out with stage of English and language, and reading the strategies booklet that we've got, which is a very straightforward strategies booklet; because I think a lot of teachers are halfway there. A lot of teachers just need to tweak their practice. It's not mega changes, it's not creating new courses; and I think literacy across learning is the way forward because it's about teaching, you know, eight new words to the whole class and getting them to record it, and learn it, and use it. So I think it's all there, it's just seeing it implemented.

The use of the students' first language in schools was identified by this teacher as a central element of good EAL practice. As the following quotation reveals this was viewed as important for the emotional and social support of EAL students as well as in terms of learning. The quotation can also be seen as indicating a recognition of the value of maintaining or developing literacy in a student's first language.

Teacher: There are some pupils that have attended the Chinese school at X [state school], they have strong literacy. I think though just from a pastoral point of view just using the language it's really important, and I would say most teachers here [a school site in our study] are on board with that.

This participant conceived of her role as an EAL specialist quite broadly, seeing it as involving: individual work with EAL students; providing these students with pastoral support; working collaboratively with, and advising, teachers; creating materials and guidance documents; highlighting and attempting to disseminate good classroom practice; setting up a buddying scheme; leading CPD activities; etc. As the preceding discussion of the background of the teacher participants has revealed, she saw good practice in EAL as not only involving performance of this range of duties but also as requiring her to 'challenge' as well as support. In effect this meant acting as an advocate for EAL students when she felt that their interests were not being effectively addressed or they were not being treated in an appropriate manner. While she was someone who clearly preferred to work with colleagues in a consensual manner, she recounted how she had confronted a colleague on behalf of EAL students. The following extended extract from her interview displays her passionate commitment to act on behalf of EAL students and reminds us that implementing appropriate EAL policies may on occasion involve considerable friction. It also seems important to note here that her individual advocacy of the use of 'home language' would probably have had limited success if she had failed to get the backing from school management, which she achieved.

Teacher: And that's also one of my biggest challenges at one of my other schools where pupils – I've had to challenge a member of staff who said 'You're not speaking Polish in here.' She actually herself has felt threatened by that and it ended up as a –

Interviewer: How did you navigate that, that's tricky?

Teacher: Well, I was – well, it's a bit of a long story, the teacher had a little bit of a reputation anyway for these comments and I challenged her. She didn't like me challenging her. It went to – not arbitration, sorry, but where we had to sit down with the deputy [head teacher] and there were tears ... and I felt very passionate about it and I spoke to the pupils and I said: 'Don't you ever let anyone tell you you can't speak your language. I'm going to be dealing with this.' And it was all a bit tricky but actually it, the good thing about it was that an e-mail went out to all staff, it was brought up at the next CPD: home language: value of home language –

Interviewer: Oh, well done.

Teacher: Well it sort of had to be done but I didn't enjoy – I don't like conflict. I know no one likes conflict but I don't, but I just felt in this particular school there were so many issues with these pupils anyway, it was so damaging.

5.5 Aspects of EAL practice

We turn now to focus in on our participants' observations on specific areas of teaching practice relevant to work with EAL students: *the use of L1; differentiation and setting; perceived value of individual work with EAL learners; and running an EAL club.*

5.5.1 The use of L1

Starting then with the topic of L1 use, we have already described the EAL teacher's very firm belief in the value of using L1 in schools and her strong advocacy of the use of 'home languages' (see 5.4). The next quotation displays her sense that continuing work is required on her part to embed the use in schools of students' first languages. At the same time she was alert to the fact that students can find it problematic to use their first language in schools; and her observation here on students being 'self conscious' is very consonant with the concerns expressed by a number of our student participants that the use of their own language would mark them out as different. Her belief that, in the school we studied, students were 'very comfortable with using their first language' would seem, however, not to be well supported by the findings reported in the preceding chapter.

Teacher: So I would like to do more home language. I did a home language project here in tutor groups where I got pupils to make signage and put it around the school; and I need to probably to do something like that again; but I would say pupils here are very comfortable with using their home language. Again in schools with smaller numbers they're a lot more self-conscious and there have been a lot more issues with that.

Elsewhere in the interview she expanded on this perception that in schools with smaller numbers of EAL students, and in disadvantaged areas, these students are more reluctant to use their first language. It is our view that research to test out the validity of this perception would not be altogether straightforward, but it is a question that it would be worthwhile pursuing as part of a general drive to gain a more differentiated picture of EAL students' schooling experience.

Teacher: I think it [willingness to use an L1] depends on the number of students in schools. Where there are very small numbers they have a different sort of profile in the school and they feel differently about who they are, I think, for example, socio-economically too. In one of my schools that's quite deprived, pupils are quite happy to be invisible and they are quite reluctant to talk about their bilingualism, they want to be seen to want to fit in, when we have done consultations with the [parents]. But in schools with larger groups of EAL pupils, there's a sort of greater confidence about using the home language in the corridors and in the classroom...it's quite difficult then to empower pupils where there are smaller numbers too, to talk about language of the month or to do anything like that with the – there's just a reluctance but when you do get through, you know, there is still a pride there and – but they're just a little bit lacking in confidence I think to do that.

The teaching assistants also saw distinct value in EAL students using their first language in schools, but as the following quotation shows, they did not perceive that this was currently happening to any significant extent in their school:

Teacher: ... something I'd like to see more of is more of the use of their first language in school. That doesn't really seem to happen in classes. You know we can do it in our little one-to-ones or groups, but in classes they are not really encouraged to use their first language, they are not ever encouraged to plan this in your first language and then put it [in English], it just doesn't seem to happen.

Interviewer: Do you think that would be a positive thing to do?

TA1 and TA2: Yeah.

The English teacher thought that an EAL student's first language could be profitably employed within a classroom. Rather than presenting its use of intrinsic value, she emphasised that the deployment of a first language needed to depend on its immediate fitness for purpose:

Interviewer:... [it] might be useful for us to know here whether you think it's useful to try and find ways to use the children's home languages?

Teacher: I think it's about striking a balance ... I think some people can be too dictatorial that that should not happen in the classroom at all; and I think it's about striking a balance and what the aim should be to help them access what you're doing, sometimes that can happen through English, sometimes it needs to happen through their own language depending

on where they're at and depending on what it is you're trying to achieve, so I think it's about what you're trying to achieve in that moment rather than necessarily a blanket approach to it.

She adopted a similar, pragmatic approach to the question of pairing up an EAL learner with another student with the same language, and her talk on this topic suggested an alert monitoring of, and responsiveness to, whether or not a particular pairing was working out:

Teacher: I think again it depends on the individual, I've worked with pupils where they've worked really well together and they've provided a really good support in terms of actually working together to decode what's going on around them – other times it doesn't have such a positive impact and that's not such a healthy relationship, so again it's about working out what works. It depends on the –

Interviewer: What would cause it not to have a positive impact; because the children just don't get on or?

Teacher: No. Well – various – they just don't interact with each other at all. It creates a segregation from the class and it isolates them.

This response needs to be read against the close attention that this teacher paid in general to the choreographing of student seating and interaction; and in the following exchange she notes how seating can be configured to encourage an EAL student to interact with a native English speaker while still having support from a first language speaking peer.

Interviewer: OK, when it works well [pairing with a first language speaking peer], do you feel it's a good thing to be doing?

Teacher: Yes, I do. And I, because I'm a control freak all my classes have seating plans, so the seating plan that I think works quite well is where you have an EAL pupil sitting with another pupil but ... perhaps that the other individual in the class [who] shares the same language with them actually sits directly behind them, so a proximity capacity, being able to turn and ask them the question, 'What did she just say?', or, 'What was that point that was made there?' I think that can work really well but also promotes the interaction with somebody next to you.

5.5.2 Differentiation

Consonant with this close attention to the placement of individual EAL students in class, this teacher's talk about differentiation revealed a concern for a finely-adjusted tuning of teaching and learning to respond to the needs of these learners. Preceding observation of her teaching by a member of our research team supported her reputation among her colleagues as someone who was seen as committed to, and skilled in, differentiation. The following quotation reveals her desire both to *include* and to *adapt* tasks and activities for EAL students.

Interviewer: What sorts of approaches [in working with EAL learners] do you think these are actually very good, I get a lot of success here?

Teacher: I think giving them an element of independence in the sense that they are included in the learning and teaching of everybody else in the classroom but you're able to provide them with tasks that they can at least approach independently. Um, and not just tokenistic worksheets, you know. I think that taking the same task for everybody but getting them to do something different with it – as in decoding the language, or actually, rather than actually doing the task, just being able to work out what the instruction is of that task, so their task is to work out the task if you like. I think that's been quite successful and I think in terms of promoting social aspects of the classroom as well I think is really important.

She observed that to achieve appropriate differentiation for EAL students, she had had not simply to draw on existing skills in differentiating in an English classroom with English speakers but also to acquire new skills. These new skills were seen also as informing her practice with all students⁵:

Teacher: I think I've had to add to my repertoire of skills but that's then informed other aspects, so it's kind of, it's worked in both directions, if that makes any sense?...So I think there are things that I've learnt from working with EAL pupils that have then informed the way I work with all pupils.

Responding to a question on whether schools see EAL as a separate issue 'rather than seeing the classroom as a diverse classroom', the EAL teacher viewed teachers in the schools where she worked as taking on board the policy directive that responding appropriately to, including differentiating for, EAL students was the responsibility of all, not simply a matter to be delegated to EAL specialists. However, she was not seeing this differentiation as actually occurring consistently across teachers' practice.

5 We have also noted in the discussion of teacher participants' backgrounds (5.2) how she felt that working with EAL students had informed her practice by giving her a greater understanding of language acquisition.

Teacher: I think most teachers see the class as a diverse classroom. I think since the ASN Act ⁶... I very seldom have to say, 'It's everyone's responsibility.' But I think they've got that message now, differentiation isn't just – it doesn't come from us. Saying that, in practice we're not always seeing it.

The perception of the teaching assistants was that not much at all in the way of differentiation of the curriculum for EAL students was evident in the school where they worked, and they viewed the teachers as too pressured to provide this differentiation:

TA1: But there isn't time for teachers to do a lot of differentiation and things like that really. So, for example, with this First World War poetry, there is no alternative, they are all doing First World War poetry and, you know, it is sort of sink or swim with it really...I think again the teachers are so busy that they don't have time to differentiate but some of them will try and give you key words.

One of the teaching assistants' observations in effect highlighted the need not simply for differentiation but for a more culturally inclusive curriculum to be provided in schools for EAL students:

TA2: Maybe they could have like poetry from that pupil's country, or if that pupil is African you could even say: let's have some African poetry there. Let's adapt, do different poetry maybe rather than imposing the First World War, which is not their background onto [them].

5.5.3 Setting

Given that the practice of setting is almost universal in UK classrooms; and that the particular set in which an EAL student is placed may have a significant effect on her or his development of English, and of subject knowledge, it was important to explore this topic with our teacher participants. The EAL teacher noted that as a matter of policy: 'of course we recommend the bilingual pupils to be in middle to upper sets'. She went on later in her interview to indicate that: 'I mean the schools I work at know that you do not by default put a bilingual pupil into a supported set. So, you know, the schools – they've got that message.'

At the same time her account suggested that one cannot automatically assume that being placed in an upper set will always be of advantage to an EAL learner. The key matter is rather the degree of support being provided to an EAL learner. This may not always be provided to a sufficient degree in an upper set:

Teacher: in a sort of classic English class you're not seeing a text visually supported in the same way because there's a lot of teacher talk and so the irony is, while we're recommending this, actually the visual support seems to go further up the ability groups, and you know the lower sets are actually very well visually supported, so I struggle a little bit with that sometimes.

While the default position would be to place an EAL student in a middle or upper set, she highlighted the need for setting decisions to take careful account of the needs of an individual EAL student and to be made in a deliberative manner with colleagues:

And occasionally, it's based on the teacher and the pupils in the class, but occasionally bilingual pupils do go for a short time into a supported set where you know we sort of feel that the peers are still quite good peers for learning English. But they don't stay there obviously ... And I know that goes against theory; but I do have the dialogue with the teacher as well and we discuss, well, why is the pupil in here? And it could be for a lot of other pastoral concerns ... they haven't just automatically by default been put into a supported set. ... We do it more individually ... and sometimes you've got an excellent teacher in the supported set that, you know, you make that decision because I feel that they will progress and they will be given more differentiated work.

In line with her emphasis on the need for well targeted differentiation, the English teacher saw the 'setting' of an EAL student as requiring careful, ongoing assessment, rather than being determined solely by a 'blanket' policy. She saw setting decisions as being based not solely on EAL students' level of English but on 'their ability level generally.' She talked of the need for the attentive attunement of the setting of EAL students in the following terms:

Teacher: ... we become better at it [the gauging of EAL students' general ability] the longer they're here. So initially when a pupil arrives, they've only been in the country maybe a couple of months we would middle set them to give us – to give them the opportunity to acquire language of a certain level. And to give us an opportunity to see how they start to progress and develop; and as we get to know the pupils and we get to see their ability and the rate at which they progress, etc., we will move them up or down, so there are pupils who after a period of time we identify have additional learning needs; and, for example, I've just referred one recently for assessment and potentially he will move into a supported set because the issues he has are not EAL issues. It's because there are additional learning needs there that need to be addressed in supported sets. And equally, a pupil who you can see has the ability, academic ability not language ability, would be better placed in a more challenging set in order to provide them with better models.

6 HMSO, Additional Support for Learning (ASN) Act, 2004.

5.5.5 EAL club

One way in which EAL students' language development can be fostered is to offer activities for them outwith regular school hours. The teaching assistants in one of the sites we studied had been running such activities for over five years, in what they termed an EAL club. Chapter four has noted the appreciative comments about this club made by the student participants in this site. The interview with the teaching assistants revealed their continuing commitment to this club, but also their need to manage the tension between their original conception of the club as a 'more fun' activity and the school's current drive to integrate it more formally into the curriculum and to assess its results. In their own words:

TA1: ... since I have been here every year we started off a little club that before it was much more of a fun club, so it was more like just chatting about different aspects of British culture, just talking, games and things like that. Whereas, I think it is moving now to a more formal structure where we have to plan more for it to be assessed more.

TA2: As you said, we started out trying to make it more fun but the brief we have got now is they want it more linked in with the curriculum and they want proof that they are making progress and are being able to access the curriculum so we have had to tighten up the structure more, haven't we?

Their account revealed that, in addition to communication games and media that would be likely to engage the students' interests, there also was also more direct teaching of English occurring in this club:

TA1: This is the sort of thing you did, **X**, like commas plus speech marks and I was trying to do more traditional EAL things like tenses, prepositions ...

They both could see some virtue in the monitoring of progress achieved through attending the EAL club: 'It is good they are monitoring it more (**TA1**)'; 'Obviously we don't want to waste time (**TA2**)'. However, they highlighted practical difficulties associated with assessing its effects and appeared to have reservations about the movement to a somewhat more formal, and assessed, set of activities:

TA1: But I still think making it more fun, making it more games but then it is much harder to assess. If they don't do a test at the beginning and a test at the end, it is much harder to monitor progress.

The EAL club in its current, more 'formalised' version was also seen as more geared to older students rather than the younger ones for whom the 'fun' element was seen as appropriate:

TA1: I think it is more successful for the older ones because they are very motivated, they are very keen to improve and so they want to get up to speed with everyone else. I think it is probably easier with the older ones in many ways.

The drawing of the EAL club into the school's general curriculum concerns and monitoring of progress could be viewed as a recognition of its importance and as placing it on a secure footing. However, at the same time, it had resulted in a considerable reshaping of these teaching assistants' own initiative. It can also be seen as oversimplifying the teaching and learning of EAL: to what extent, for instance, could improved outcomes be attributed to learning which had been achieved in the club and learning achieved in other settings both in and outside school. We will look below at the wider question of how our participants saw school policies as impacting on their work with EAL students (see 5.7). First though, we turn to examine how our participants saw the implementation of national curricular and assessment policies as affecting the teaching and learning of EAL students.

5.6 Curriculum policy and assessment

5.6.1 Curriculum policy

Chapter two provided an overview of how, and the degree to which, EAL is positioned within Scottish educational policies and the way in which it is framed within the current Scottish national curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence*. The EAL teacher and the English teacher in our Scottish site were able to give us a view of the ways in which this, still developing, curriculum is providing affordances or imposing constraints on EAL learning and teaching⁷. Their observations on how they saw this curriculum being enacted in schools in relation to EAL matters have given us a number of pointers to matters that it would be valuable to pursue in a wider study and which we will flag up in chapter six.

The EAL teacher saw the emphasis in this new curriculum on 'literacy across learning', i.e. in all school subjects, as helpful to, and a useful entry point for, getting staff thinking about the support of EAL learners. The structures set up by schools to take forward literacy across the curriculum also provided her with fora for discussion with teachers about EAL matters and a means to disseminate good practice. However, as the following extract from her interview reveals she was still not seeing literacy across the curriculum as leading to sufficient language support and teaching related to language. She saw a policy where there was much more explicit teaching of language as both desirable in itself and necessary to meet the needs of a growing number of EAL students:

7 The teaching assistants did not consider themselves to be in a position to comment on the effects of English curricular policies on EAL work.

Teacher: Well, literacy across learning I think should, in a perfect world, [be helpful to EAL work] but, I think – I mean one of my targets this August is to work with literacy across language, sort of coordinators, or working groups because I think that is the way in and , if we can get that going in classes that's part of our job done or a start anyway. And I'm seeing that in some places but not nearly enough and I think once again it's a time issue but I think personally, you know, if that was in place . I know there's a New Zealand model ... where language is explicitly taught and I think it would be great to see a lot more of that going on.

Interviewer: Would you like to see that kind of model, not the exact model, but something like that where language awareness is more –?

Teacher: I think it would be, yeah, I think it would be fantastic and I'm presuming that must be going on in some of the primary schools where there is a greater number of EAL pupils than Scottish born pupils and I can only think that they are having to teach in that way because otherwise you'd be mad not to, you know.

She also perceived that the introduction of the new curriculum which required change across a number of fronts meant that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) time for EAL-related matters was squeezed:

Teacher: CPD, which at the moment is quite difficult to set up with the new Curriculum for Excellence. Schools are not necessarily making EAL their priority for improvement plans.

The English teacher gave a somewhat mixed judgement of how *Curriculum for Excellence* supported 'ways of dealing with the needs of EAL learners', with her account shifting between its more positive and less helpful effects. She noted that:

Teacher: I think that, the recent developments I think, I would like to think have had a positive impact on the way in which we approach things like language and the social aspect. The cultural one I would say is probably – I put that in a very separate [category] because I think that's perhaps an area that still requires quite a lot of work.

She felt that, at least in the area of English teaching that she could comment on, the curriculum had confirmed and enhanced aspects of teaching and learning that had an enabling effect on language development:

Teacher: In terms of the language I think that again, you know, the *Curriculum for Excellence* has promoted a much more active and interactive methodology when it comes to teaching and I think that really helps in terms of sort of language acquisition. People's appreciation of the development of the text beyond the written word and the value of the visual in itself I think probably has had an impact there as well. So these small changes, I think.

Her summary evaluation of the curriculum's effects for her own department in relation to EAL highlighted both distinctly positive and restricting elements, as the following response shows:

Interviewer: ... do you find the curriculum constraining or enabling in what you're trying to do here as a department?

Teacher: I think there are elements of both. I think it would be too much of a generalisation to say that it's completely enabling. I think there are aspects of the curriculum which really are very supportive and other aspects of the curriculum which are really restrictive. Don't even get me started on National 4 ⁸[laughter]. So I think there are positives there but there are also restrictions there and the need to take, to force pupils through square holes, round holes is very – I think is probably the restrictive part.

5.6.2 Assessment

This teacher's reference to the curriculum forcing 'pupils through square holes' can be read as referring largely to the way in which the assessment processes in national awards were not appropriate for EAL students and did not give an accurate appraisal of their attainment. The depth of her feeling about this issue is evident in the extended interview extract beneath:

Teacher:... so for me, it's about how do we assess them in a way that we assess their ability and not where they are in terms of their language acquisition at that particular point in time because we have very able pupils with additional support needs coming and ... where they are in terms of their attainment is very much a reflection of where they are in terms of their language acquisition and I don't think that that's fair or reflective of their ability and that's what I find frustrating sometimes. I have a pupil sitting in front of me who is extremely hard-working and conscientious, is clearly very able, but will not attain National 5 and therefore I cannot secure a qualification that reflects their ability because of the barrier of language and while I appreciate English is about demonstrating your ability in that language, still I think that across the board, I don't think even just in my subject, across the board a reflection of that ability is not seen in the assessments that we give them.

8 With the implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* in Scotland came a new external examination system. Students are assessed at National 1 (previously Access 1), 2 (previously Access 2), 3 (previously Standard Grade Foundation level), 4 (previously Standard Grade General level), or 5 (previously Standard Grade Credit level), Higher, or Advanced Higher.

Her perception was that the forms of assessment that feature in the new awards associated with *Curriculum for Excellence*, in particular the listening assessment within the English awards, were not particularly attuned to the needs of EAL students:

Teacher: I don't know if the new Nationals are a great asset for bilingual pupils...in English, for example, you've got the listening assessment part of it and bilingual pupils find that so difficult, and Scottish born pupils do too. So I don't know, I mean I think again the ethos was about group work and although that is there, there's still that exam pressure at the end of the day that hasn't gone away.

It will be recalled that the teaching assistants highlighted the slower rate at which writing develops compared to other language modes; and the consequent demotivating effects on EAL students when they could not see any improvement in their performance on formal written tests. Like the English teacher, the teaching assistants were strongly of the opinion that the current system of formal assessment definitely disadvantaged EAL students:

TA1: I think sometimes they are at a disadvantage in exams and assessments because, you know, ... [they go] into the exam like everybody else. But I think there should be some dispensation in the, on the exam, to say this person has only been learning English for four years and this is the level they have got. You can't really expect them to have the same level of fluency as someone who has always been here....they can bring dictionaries into exams now but I still think you are not going to have the level of fluency and the background and the advantages. Making it harder for you to get the A L levels and to get to university.

The English teacher noted how EAL students could be further disadvantaged in relation to formal assessment when schools, under pressure to meet performance standards, entered these students for exams earlier than was fair and appropriate:

Teacher: There's been quite a lot of pressure on pupils to be put into exams not, not so much at this school but at other schools for 100% presentation, and we're seeing early stage learners being put into National 3 and given a lot of help with that; and I don't particularly agree with that, again it's moving away from the whole ethos of this new system. This school particularly is very good at accepting – you're not able to sit this exam, possibly next year; but other schools that have 100% pass rates are putting pressure on early stage learners in particular.

Chapter one described the ESOL qualifications which can now be taken by students in Scotland. The EAL teacher had observed a more considerable uptake of these qualifications which were offered 'to all our S4 /5 who are on the database and who have been here for less than eight years.' Pursuing this qualification route called for quite a commitment of time and effort from the EAL students given that 'it's twice a week at another school as a twilight class run by X college. The students who took these EAL qualifications were, in her opinion:

Teacher:...quite serious about it. I think they see the value of it and of course the ESL higher is now accepted by universities for a lot of subjects and I think that has been very useful to dangle in front of pupils.

While such qualifications were in general offered outside of the students' own schools, the EAL teacher did note some instances where individual schools had organised in-house provision, including within the site that we studied. As the following extract indicates, her account suggested that a favourable confluence of factors had to occur for such in-house provision to take place:

Teacher: But again it comes down to staffing and numbers, what this school – the Modern Languages department set up a Polish – it was 'Language for Work' and they set up a Polish qualification for S3s, and a lot of the pupils achieved that. It was taught by a Polish bilingual support assistant who worked for us, but she was employed outwith her hours to come and work here after school with a group; and so the languages department here is excellent on offering alternatives where possible.

5.7 School policies, structures and processes

5.7.1 Initial assessment of language and monitoring of progress

Pursuing the general theme introduced in the last quotation of how the policies and configurations of individual schools may impact on the teaching and learning of EAL students, we look first below at participants' views of how their schools approached the initial assessment of language and monitoring of progress. Here there was a distinct difference in reported practice between the two sites in our study. The English teacher stated that in her school 'everybody works to the school policy' which she summarised as follows:

Teacher: We work very closely with EAL [support] and there is a policy there in terms of, for example, when a new pupil arrives they're being assessed and then the communication of the information from that assessment and then the support they're going to be provided with in the classroom and then the EAL recording of progress and development of pupils within that environment – so, yes, there is a policy there.

In the other site it was considered that initial assessment was not securely in place: 'I think historically the problem has been that they

come in and they are not really assessed. Nobody knows how long they have been here [in the UK] because nobody has asked them.' However, the perception was that: 'it is getting better slowly. We have developed the initial assessment thing that we never used to have, so it is slowly improving.' While there may have been this improvement in initial assessment, the teaching assistants in this site were not able to highlight any scheme of continuing monitoring that applied specifically to EAL students, as opposed to the assessments these learners experienced 'all the time in lessons.'

5.7.2 Co-ordination of the efforts of class teachers and EAL specialists

It is well recognised in the EAL literature that the interests of EAL learners are best served when EAL specialists and class teachers are able to work closely together; but questions remain concerning the extent to which this is actually achieved in practice (Andrews, 2009; Bourne and McPake, 1991). Accordingly, it was important to explore with our staff participants the extent to which it was seen as possible in these school settings for EAL personnel to work collaboratively with class teachers to address the needs of EAL learners. For the English teacher close collaboration with EAL specialists and learning from them in CPD was viewed as the 'key' to progress:

Teacher: Support and resources in the sense of human resources, EAL support, EAL support is invaluable when it's good, when you can work collaboratively with someone from EAL in terms of looking at your own practice and making developments and resourcing. I actually think that that's the – it is that collaboration between the two so – and I think that bringing their expertise and knowledge in the form of CPD as well. So it's that whole relationship, it's not just the classroom, I think, it's the whole what they can bring to the whole relationship. I think that's the key to making some kind of progress.

As the following set of exchanges shows, she felt that a situation where where teachers' practice was informed by EAL specialists' expertise was not only desirable, but had actually been occurring in her school. However, this collaborative relationship was now seen to be under some threat as resources were reduced:

Interviewer: And you said you've got quite good relations with the EAL service so are they in here very regularly?

Teacher: Yes.

Interviewer: So they work closely with teachers?

Teacher: Yes. Yeah.

Interviewer: And do you feel that you have enough access to them?

Teacher: No. That's – I would say that over the last few years it has become less and less – the access I have to them.

The interview with the EAL teacher revealed the distinct value she placed on close collaboration with class teachers but also the time pressures that constrained this way of working.

Interviewer: So, as a teacher, what would the main constraints or enablers be in meeting their needs?

Teacher: I would say time, time to plan with class teachers and it's on both sides and it's not for – most teachers would be delighted to have that time to sit down and discuss some of these bilingual pupils and units of work. We do a lot of it in passing, a lot by e-mail, but I think like proper planning would be useful. ... Yes, I think probably, certainly time to plan and just sit with the staff; and I think they would probably agree as well.

The teaching assistants described a situation where the teachers were under too much pressure, 'the teachers are too busy', to allow joint planning to take place. They talked about how:

TA1: They are just so busy – the teachers – all the time, they are all run off their feet and really busy. The most we can really hope for is to fire off an e-mail saying 'What will you be doing this week?', and hopefully you will get a reply. Don't you think, X?

TA2: Yeah, yes, definitely?

Interviewer: Any other challenges you can think of?

TA2: Just the fact that the teachers are very busy and so where it would be helpful to get, for example, these key words in advance doesn't tend to happen.

Thus one can see, at least from the perspectives of our participants, a contrast between the two sites in our study in the degree to which there was co-ordination of the efforts of class teachers and EAL specialists/teaching assistants. Even in the site where this was taking place to some extent, it was felt that this co-ordination was now under pressure and could be considerably greater.

5.7.3 Reflections on school policies, processes and structures and their effects

In addition to commenting on specific areas of school practices, such as the co-ordination of the efforts of class teachers and EAL specialists, our staff participants provided us with general reflections on school policies, processes and structures and their effects on EAL learning and teaching. This following discussion focuses on these general reflections on school policies. The chapter concludes by presenting these individuals' thoughts concerning teacher development in the area of EAL.

The English teacher reflected not only on school policies and practices in relation to EAL but also made critical observations on the local authority's position in relation to EAL. She highlighted the importance of EAL students appearing more visibly in policies and the need for curricular, and in particular, assessment arrangements to be much more tailored to their needs. In turn, this tailoring of teaching, learning and support needed to be backed up by sufficient resource.

Interviewer: What about in terms of the authority, do you think the authority is doing enough to help?

Teacher: No, I don't actually.

Interviewer: So what could they be doing, do you think?

Teacher: I think there needs to be more acknowledgement and recognition that these pupils are actually here and that they're with us and that the system needs to be adapted and developed to integrate them and to recognise perhaps some of the differences in their needs and support that's required. So you know requesting everybody to complete the same reading assessment in second year – we were asking not just EAL pupils, we're asking pupils of very different ability levels to complete an assessment which for a large proportion they are just not able to do. I think, you know, it's just wrong! And it's pointless. So it's small things like that; and I think putting obviously the resourcing there as well in terms of EAL support.

In reflecting in general terms on what would make for an appropriate whole school policy on working with EAL learners, she saw it as necessary for such a policy to provide a 'toolbox' of ways of thinking and acting that could guide teachers' actions. At the same time though she stressed the importance of maintaining 'flexibility' within this policy, of enabling individual teachers to display initiative and exercise judgement over which elements of this toolbox they needed to deploy to make 'a difference'.

Interviewer: ... if you think about the school level policy to what extent do you think it's possible to have a whole school coherent, consistent approach to working with EAL learners?

Teacher: That's a really difficult question. Because I think, I don't know maybe I'm thinking of it wrongly but for me I think it's about creating a policy that provides flexibility and inspiration for teachers to be able to actually apply a practice in our rooms that makes a difference. So the policy needs to, I suppose, be in the form of a toolbox that teachers have access to that they can use to work with pupils in their classroom really rather than necessarily a blanket – everything has to be done this way. I think there needs to be much more flexibility there.

There were aspects of the policy concerning EAL in her school which this teacher saw as working well. For example, we have described her favourable view of the school's initial assessment and continuing monitoring of EAL students' performance. She also saw as a strength the collaborative approach to the support of EAL students between class teachers and EAL specialists, albeit with the cautionary note that access to EAL specialists had been diminishing. Her comments on this theme included the joint work that had been taken ahead in developing teaching resources:

Teacher: I think there are resources that have come in centrally, there are resources that – I would say predominantly it's resources that EAL have developed in collaboration with class teachers so if you go on to the server and you look at a particular text you will see EAL support sheets tagged in among that stuff. So as the EAL staff are working with the classroom teachers they are able to provide support sheets to kind of work in tandem with any teaching that's going on in the classroom. I think that's probably the more dominant method that's used.

The one area of school policy and practice that she flagged up as requiring further development was what was termed 'the cultural dimension'. As the following quotation reveals the main thrust of her observations on this theme was the value of viewing EAL students as a *resource* for education rather than simply as an *object* of education.

Teacher: I think that there are a lot of pupils in the school who have the potential to contribute a huge amount in terms of educating others in terms of their understanding of the whole world; and I think **X school** is probably better than most at actually drawing on that and building confidence in pupils by looking at cultures and, you know, the diversity work that we do. But I don't think that that's something that's across the board. I think that's because we have such a large percentage of EAL pupils here that, that opportunity is [not] being recognised and fully utilised and I don't think it has.

The teaching assistants noted how EAL policy in their school with regard to matters that we considered earlier such as initial assessment and monitoring of progress was 'evolving', rather than yet, in their view, having a more settled form. Some of their observations on how EAL work was structured in their school can be seen to raise general questions about how responsibilities for EAL are 'located' within a school:

Teacher: With English we don't really work enough with the English department as well. Because EAL is assigned as a special need to the achievement centre it is not really seen as the English department's responsibility. It is seen as another issue that our department has to deal with.

We will return in the next chapter to consider the question of how responsibilities for EAL may best be articulated within a whole school policy.

Whereas the English teacher, as we have seen, very much highlighted the benefits of working collaboratively with EAL specialists in the classroom, the teaching assistants presented a somewhat contrasting view concerning 'inclusive' working within the classroom. We have illustrated that for them, 'a key matter in EAL practice was the desirability of giving focused, one-to-one instruction to EAL students outside of the classroom' (see 5.4). This view of the benefits of individual tuition where close assessment and well-targeted instruction could be provided extended to them having reservations about the school's inclusion policy, as can be seen from the following extract:

TA1: There is an inclusion policy. They are trying not to take them out of normal lessons now.

Interviewer: So what do you think of the inclusion policy in that regard then?

TA1: We felt it was more effective taking them out. Obviously we don't take them out of every lesson but at least one or two slots a week. I think they make better progress than if they are in a lesson all the time just bombarded by curriculum.

TA2: Definitely, because they have, we have got, the confidence to build a relationship. You can get quite a lot out of them once you know them quite well. While in a classroom you can't really talk too much as the teacher's talking and there is a class going on. You can't do too much chatting, too much talking because then you are going to disrupt the lesson.

These observations need to be read against the background of a context where the teaching assistants did not perceive high levels of differentiation being provided in class for EAL students. They would also seem to highlight questions concerning how the role of an EAL specialist or TA engaged in supporting EAL students is understood and performed in a classroom. Ideally one would wish to see EAL support persons as viewing themselves and being treated as integral to the classroom rather than as a potential 'disruption'.

5.7.4 Relations with the parents of EAL students

An important part of any school's policy in relation to EAL is the relations that are established, or fail to be established, with the parents or principal carer(s) of EAL students. The teaching assistants whom we interviewed were not in a position to be able to comment on the degree to which their school established contact with the parents/guardians of EAL students, though they did observe that 'it would be interesting [for them personally] to have some feedback from the parents'. However, in the other site, the EAL teacher was able to provide a clear overview of initiatives that were taken to involve and support the parents of EAL students. One matter which she highlighted here was the way in which the school, in collaboration with another education service, had set up and run language classes for parents. Her own active role here as a 'boundary-crosser' in getting the parents involved in these classes also comes across clearly in the following account.

Teacher: We've also offered ESOL to parents here and that was set up working with community education [service in the local authority]. They previously hadn't had a need and so we targeted all the parents who I knew needed an interpreter and as a result we had two classes running this year for ESOL for parents. And it was really lovely to see the parents come in during the school day...and it was run as an evening class and also a day class. And I think that's going to continue....they said the uptake was helped by us targeting the parents rather than just putting it up.

She went on to list other activities that the school engaged in to encourage the involvement of the parents/carers of EAL students:

Teacher: We get parents in the P7 transition community ed. X is there, you know, with her booklets on community classes, the depute [head of school] Y is fantastic at – we've got a model actually set up. It's a very informal model and it seems to work and so twice a year, if not three times a year, we get parents in for different things. They're not always well attended but we feel we're offering an opportunity.

On the question of communicating with parents she noted the resources that she could draw on in the authority's interpreting service but also the challenge of engaging parents who had been settled for a longer period of time in the locality:

Teacher: I use the ITS [Interpretation Service] quite a bit for phone calls home – certainly with parents probably that

have been here for a while they are less likely to come into our meetings. So, for example, one year we had a session on careers, and we had several interpreters but you tended to get the new parents that came into that. Trying to engage with parents that have been here a long time I find more difficult. But then I think maybe that's a sign that they feel quite confident with the system.

The English teacher also observed how a 'language barrier' could make it problematic to communicate with the parents of some EAL students, but here she could draw on the pool of linguistic knowledge within the school, rather than solely being dependent on the authority's interpreting service. Her observations here remind us of the resource of linguistic knowledge that exists within the current teaching force that can be drawn on – a resource that perhaps can be too readily overlooked.

Interviewer: How about parental support, children's parents?

Teacher: It varies from individual to individual, I think. Sometimes the language barrier of the parents is quite significant in terms of us being able to communicate with them; and I think we're very fortunate here that we have a number of staff who speak various languages. So I know, for example, that I can e-mail a certain member of staff and ask them to phone this parent and relay this information to them. I think that's part of the difficulty; and I think it's just reflective of – with any child some parents want to be more involved than others and I think it's the same with EAL pupils, some of their parents are very supportive and others are absent.

5.8 Teacher development in the area of EAL

Earlier in this chapter (see 5.2) we highlighted the relevant higher-level study and professional training and experience that our participants were bringing to their work with EAL students. They all, in different ways, had studied aspects of language at university. Clearly, however, this will not be the case for very many teachers. This point was brought out forcefully by the EAL teacher in her interview when she talked about how:

Teacher:...you also need to know the nuts 'n' bolts of language; and I think a lot of teachers don't know the nuts 'n' bolts and I only learnt the nuts 'n' bolts when I taught abroad for two years and that actually has set me up in terms of knowing the nuts 'n' bolts of grammar. And I can imagine for many teachers that's quite scary if you're going to touch on it.

In effect she is raising here the question of what elements of knowledge about language, and by extension what meta-language for communicating about knowledge, teachers need as an underpinning for their work with EAL students. We will return to consider this question in chapter six.

Besides the more formal study that can be seen to have informed their EAL practice, our participants described how they had learned from experience and flexibly trying out different approaches. For the teaching assistants, this was indeed the source of their CPD:

Interviewer: So you end up going into the classroom and discovering the kids?

TA1: Yeah, just on the job. All our job is us learning on the job which is exactly the situation. It is not really pre-training, pre-briefing – it is all just go in there, adapt to the situation.

The English teacher described, in the following terms, how she had gained and refined skills 'on the job' that were very apposite to teaching EAL students:

Teacher: I think just through a number of different developments, I suppose. Cooperative learning has had quite an impact on me in the sense of being confident to experiment with different ways, some ideas that have come from them, but also being able to think out of the box yourself and being a bit more creative yourself. I think cooperative learning has had quite an impact on me in that regard. And I think also working with my supported sets as well has helped me really understand just sometimes how you need to chunk down the most basic concept and how to be able to do that in a way that's accessible.

Looking at the more formal provision of CPD in EAL, the English teacher noted how, within the CPD programme of her local authority, 'there is EAL CPD within that, provision within that.' Working across a number of schools and having connections across this authority, the EAL teacher was able to comment on how, and the degree to which, CPD at school level was being taken ahead in this authority. She saw a chief current constraint on the school-level provision of EAL CPD as being the competing priorities that schools faced as they worked to create and implement a new curriculum:

Teacher:...as a whole school approach...I suppose it's really through CPD, which at the moment is quite difficult to set up with the new *Curriculum for Excellence*, schools are not necessarily making EAL their priority for improvement plans.

She also appreciated that individual teachers faced the challenge of meeting 'many different areas of need in the class', to develop their

practice along a number of fronts in addition to EAL work:

Teacher: Mainstream [teachers] do attend our CPDs and they find that useful. I've got one or two colleagues that want to go to a higher level and I've suggested the Diploma type courses. I don't know how to further get the message across when they've got so many different areas of need in the class.

Against the background of these competing pressures faced by schools and by individual teachers, she was of the view that the provision of CPD for EAL was not 'systematic' across schools. Rather she portrayed EAL-related CPD as depending, in part at least, on herself and her colleagues displaying initiative, and cultivating opportunities to take ahead such activities:

Teacher: I don't think it is systematic. I think it's – I think it's the sort of relationship that we build with DHTs [deputy head teachers] is very important. But I don't think it's systematic. I think they look at their improvement plan and it's – things are decided at meetings that we're not part of and – which is why then I offer the informal approach.

However, this 'informal approach' did appear to involve a considerable quantity and range of input. She described, for example how:

We offer CPD to the whole school and also on a sort of voluntary twilight basis – teachers can come along. And I do quite a lot of training with probationer teachers, or student teachers that come to the school. I give a period and I just go through the basics.

...

Here I'm offering three twilight sessions after school and it will all be very informal, sitting around discussing – it might be a more inclusive curriculum, or it might be teaching early stage learners; and although you don't have a big audience necessarily for that you're still reaching out to people that are interested and sometimes that's more useful.

The description above gives a strong sense of the development work that can be achieved by a committed EAL specialist; but at the same time her account raises concerns about how CPD for EAL may need to be placed on a more secure footing across schools if the policy aspirations we have outlined in the Literature Review are to be more fully achieved. We will return to this concern in the next chapter.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has looked closely at our teacher participants' observations on a wide range of matters related to EAL learning, teaching and assessment. As in chapter four, we have been at pains to be very careful not to make any undue claims about the generality of these observations, given that we only had four staff participants in two sites. At the same time, however, the teachers did raise a number of issues that would appear to be key in EAL work – issues that we flag up in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Key issues, insights and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Throughout this report we have clearly recognised the need for caution concerning the extent to which the pattern of findings that has emerged from this small-scale study, focused as it is principally on EAL students' accounts of their experiences, may be generalised to a wider population. What the study has allowed us to do, however, is to surface a considerable number of key issues and insights that merit: wider investigation; close consideration and analysis; and action at the levels of policy and practice.

In this chapter we set out these issues succinctly, drawing out points of comparison and contrast between the students' and teachers' perceptions where appropriate. These issues and insights are addressed under the following central themes that emerged from our research: diversity in migration experience, languages and preceding schooling; the emotional and social challenges of transition; the use of L1/literacy in L1; identity and fitting in; linguistic challenges in the classroom: how to respond; supporting the use of English; curriculum and assessment; school policies, structures and processes; teacher development.

6.2 Diversity in migration experience, languages and preceding schooling

6.2.1 Differences in backgrounds and migration patterns

We have noted how the students in our sample originated from a wide range of countries from across the planet, and brought with them distinctly different cultures, religions and language types. Some could be characterised as *global travellers* while others had only the experience of living in one country of origin and then the UK. For some, coming to the UK also involved a shift from a rural existence to a city life. While many of our participants could be seen as permanently settled in the UK, for others their sojourn in the UK may have been more transient.

6.2.2 Differences on arrival within the UK

There were differences also in the social settings that they found themselves in within the UK, with some finding a place within an existing extended family network, and a few being cared for by a single parent. Moving to the UK in a few instances was associated with a difficult family break-up. Some of our participants had arrived while of primary school age, and others at a later stage of their development, entering the larger world of a secondary school. Some students had parents who could communicate fluently, or at least adequately, in English, while others had parents who could not.

6.2.3 Differences in language types

We have noted the wide range of languages represented in our sample (see 4.2.2). The key point that we brought out there was that these languages differed markedly in form and structure, bringing with them different sets of challenges and affordances for the learning of English. As we have observed: 'These different language types can be seen to vary in their points of consonance and dissonance with English in terms of writing systems, grammar, representation of concepts, conventions for structuring written texts, etc.'

6.2.4 Preceding experience of learning English

Additionally, our participants arrived with varying levels of English. Quite a number had acquired only very basic vocabulary but there were some who had received more intensive exposure to, and teaching of, English. Where English had been encountered as a school subject, this seemed often to have been text-based, focused on comprehension exercises and underpinned by a grammar-based model of English teaching.

6.2.5 Learning the day-to-day language of social interactions

Students' accounts brought into sharp relief the need for researchers and teachers not to see a move to the UK simply in terms of some global adjustment to a British 'culture'. Our participants described how they were faced with the task of learning the language of the very specific locality in which they now lived. This meant that even those students who had received considerable instruction in 'standard' English before they arrived in the UK were not at all fluent in 'day-to-day language'. All EAL students have to come to understand dialects and accents of English, along with the colloquialisms and slang popular in a neighbourhood. This can be seen as key to their social as well as linguistic inclusion.

6.2.6 Recommendations

- In line with recent literature on how best to conceptualise migration there is a need for teachers, researchers and policy-makers to be alert to the diversity in EAL students' migration experience;
- Schools need to be able to access as much information as possible on students' preceding schooling, the student's exposure to English, current family circumstances, pattern of migration and home language(s) and this needs to be recorded and shared in line with existing information sharing protocols (with full regard to questions of confidentiality);
- More consideration can be given to assisting EAL students to gain 'survival' knowledge of the day-to-day needed to interact within specific local contexts.

6.3 The emotional and social challenges of transition

Arriving in the UK, EAL students faced a number of transitions, which could be quite unsettling. While they presented a generally favourable view of the nature of UK schooling, they described their transition to UK schooling as a stressful or very stressful experience. Entering a UK school they commonly faced linguistic and social isolation which could be emotionally challenging; and they could fear making mistakes in English which would lead to them being ridiculed. There was variation across our group of participants in the length of time that this period of linguistic and emotional isolation had lasted. Our teacher participants had a strong sense of how difficult this initial transition could be for EAL learners. Student participants in turn observed that teachers displaying encouragement and an attitude of hospitality had helped them to cope with this difficult transition; and how the presence of an assigned 'buddy' or a supportive friend they had made themselves was central to their entry into the social life of the school.

6.3.1 Recommendations

- **All school staff from the receptionist through to the Head Teacher can make a difference by displaying an inclusive and welcoming attitude to new arrivals and all EAL students. This can include assemblies, signage, use of language, an inclusive attitude and recognition of cultural and language differences. Above all, it is about creating an inclusive environment where mutual tolerance is expected as a foundation for the learning and integration of EAL students.**
- **The emotional and social challenges faced by EAL students sometimes persist over an extended period of time. It would be useful to commission large-scale research that explores the degree to which the longer-term challenges reported by some participants in this study are also found among the wider population of EAL students.**
- **As previous research has shown (e.g. Conteh and Meier, 2014), an effective school buddying system can be seen to be key to easing EAL students' integration into the social life of a school.**

6.4 The use of L1

Use of a first language at home was the norm for our participants. However, there were distinct differences in the degree to which L1 literacy was being maintained, or indeed ever had been achieved. It would be interesting to see this question of the extent of literacy in a first language or languages pursued in a larger-scale study. A minority of participants in our sample were taking examinations in their first language. For these students, schools were in effect acting to develop their literacy in that language. In common with other studies (e.g. Conteh and Meier, 2014), our study revealed quite limited use of L1 in the classroom and more generally in the school. Some student participants did display confidence in using their first language in schools, but more commonly these EAL learners did not wish to mark themselves out as different by using their first language. The EAL teacher in our study was very aware of the work that was required to embed the use of students' first languages in schools; but, at the same time, was alert to the face concerns that students could feel concerning using their own languages.

Although there may have been little 'overt' use of L1 in schools, clearly participants who arrived lacking any fluency in English were 'thinking' in and coping with a new school environment within the medium of their first language. Our interviews gave a clear sense of the effortful nature of the processes of 'mental translation' and of how these cognitive demands can make it difficult for an EAL student to keep pace with the flow of events in a lesson. (However, for more advanced language learners the ability to move flexibly between languages can be regarded as an aid to thought and expression.) We have also noted how the timescale of a move from this type of mental translation to 'thinking in English' may vary, possibly to a significant extent across EAL learners; and that this is a matter that would merit wider investigation.

6.4.1 Recommendations

- **This study, in common with other work in this area (e.g. Cummins, 2007), has found limited use of a student's first language in schools. Remedying this situation requires, in part at least, a move in EAL development activities away from general encouragement to use L1, to providing teachers with strategies, activities, and exemplars of good practice that will allow them to make effective use of L1.**
- **Relatively little attention has been paid to date to the question of EAL students' literacy in their first language. More research on this topic is desirable. This would give greater insights into the levels of literacy in L1 that students bring to the process of learning; and enable investigation into the ways differing levels of literacy in an L1 may impact on the learning of English. Furthermore, there is limited research capturing the voices of pupils themselves. Further research that explores EAL students' interactions in schools and their own wishes to identify themselves, or not, as linguistically different should be encouraged. This could include further ethnographic studies of EAL students' sense of identity, and enactment of self within schools should be supported.**
- **EAL learners in the early stages perform many acts of 'conscious translation' between their first language and English. Teachers need to be alerted to the effortful nature of these 'translanguaging' acts at this stage of development and the demands that they make on a student's cognitive resources.**
- **There is a clear need for research that examines these acts of translation more closely. In particular, it would be desirable to undertake studies that focus on how EAL students understand translation between their first language(s) and English and their conceptions of the nature of language and differences between languages.**

6.5 Identity and fitting in

It has been noted that a considerable number of our student participants did not wish to mark themselves out as different by using their first language (see 6.4). More generally, our findings suggested that many of these students had faced an *interwoven* set of linguistic, social and emotional challenges. A lack of fluency in English could lead to emotional and social isolation; while a wish not to present oneself as an inept speaker of English could reinforce this situation. We have observed that, in order to function effectively in a UK school, EAL students need not simply to develop knowledge of, and communication skills, in English but also the confidence to speak. Feelings of isolation were reduced when teachers were welcoming and encouraging, and students felt a sense of connection with an assigned 'buddy' or a friend that they had made themselves. We gained a strong sense from our research that the two schools in our study had worked very actively to create an inclusive, supportive ethos.

Some of our participants took encouragement from the presence of other 'international people' in their school. However, we have also observed that one cannot assume that EAL learners will always act towards each other in a helpful manner.

While this small-scale interview study could only give us a very partial sense of how our student participants viewed their identity, it did bring out the key distinction between being positioned by others as different as opposed to claiming a positive identity *for oneself* as different. It also revealed somewhat contrasting positions on what is a desirable identity and desirable presentation of self in a UK school. We found that some of our participants did not regard being 'similar' to or 'different' from others in their school as binary opposite choices. This suggests that it may be important to avoid over-simplistic schemes when researching and interpreting how EAL students view their identity inside and outside of school and negotiate a path between assimilation and distinctiveness.

6.6 Linguistic challenges in the classroom and school: how to respond?

Our student and teacher participants identified different linguistic challenges faced by EAL learners in the classroom. We have noted how translation between an L1 and English can take up students' cognitive resources, possibly making it difficult for them to 'keep up' with the pace of a lesson. *Listening* in class was seen as a demanding activity for EAL students, with the English teacher observing that the type of supportive scaffolding of listening that she advocated was not encountered by these students in their everyday classroom experience. On the topic of listening, we have described how some of our participants had displayed initiative themselves in coping with their new language environment by active observation and listening.

Speaking in the classroom could be inhibited by a lack of vocabulary and communication skills in English; and interaction with peers outside of classes by EAL learners' unfamiliarity with 'day-to-day language'. However, the difficulties faced in communication were not simply the result of a lack of knowledge and skills. Both students and teachers recognised that EAL learners could be reluctant to speak for fear of making mistakes that would cause them to be ridiculed. To make progress, these learners needed to gain *the confidence to speak*, and to feel that they did have a voice in this setting.

Participants' comments in relation to *reading* can be seen to highlight the fact that for secondary school students effective reading involves not simply the acquisition of general skills but also the ability to cope with different genres of texts in English and to understand the forms of writing that feature in different school subjects. Some of our student participants drew attention to the fact that reading within English as a school subject, which required close analysis of texts, in effect involved a qualitatively different kind of reading that they had not previously encountered.

In *writing* students were faced with a similar set of demands in terms of understanding and being able to construct different genres of texts in English. In addition, as the English teacher recognised, EAL students did not have the extensive, and differentiated body of knowledge of the forms and structures of English that a native speaker would customarily possess. It is very well recognised in the EAL literature that writing has a longer trajectory of development than other language modes. It was observed within our study that teachers may not always be sufficiently alert to this fact. On the topic of writing, it is worth noting that a number of our student participants expressed some, or considerable, concern over limitations that they perceived in their ability to spell in English.

It can be argued that if students are to meet fully the linguistic challenges that have been summarised in the preceding paragraphs, they need not only to develop their communication skills *in English* but also to have access to terminology that enables them to communicate *about English*. On this theme, we have noted how some at least of the participants in our study had not only received direct instruction in English grammar but also appeared to have acquired a metalanguage in which to think and talk about language.

Some of the student participants did not identify *learning another language as a school subject* as problematic; however, others did. For these students the key challenges were: the 'cognitive load' of simultaneously developing English and another language; and the difficulty of learning a language through the medium of English when English itself has not yet been fully mastered.

6.6.1 Recommendations

- The findings of this study highlight the need to support each of the language modes of: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teachers also need to be made aware of the longer development trajectory of writing, compared to the other language modes. Students' also need to understand the specific genre features, and underlying structures, of the texts they will encounter across the curriculum.
- It is helpful to EAL learners to be provided with a *metalanguage* (a set of terms that are used when language itself is being analysed or discussed) in which they can communicate about English. This will enable them to analyse texts that they read and to discuss their own language choices when writing.

6.7 Curriculum and assessment

Observations made by our teacher participants highlighted how the emphasis that is featuring across the UK, albeit in somewhat different forms, on literacy across learning' can provide a vehicle for alerting staff across all the different subject areas to thinking through how best to support EAL learners. This may have an enabling effect on language development. However, it was noted that in a period of considerable general change in curricula, less time might be allocated to CPD on EAL-related matters. On the topic of assessment, our participants echoed discontents that have featured prominently in the EAL literature. They strongly represented that both past and more recent arrangements for national, formal assessments were not equitable to EAL learners and did not therefore give an accurate appraisal of their attainment. These failings were apparent in listening and reading assessments as well as in written tests. On matters that were more fully within teachers' control, our findings drew attention to the key role that can be played by skilful *differentiation* of content, activities, and formative assessment to make the curriculum accessible to EAL learners.

6.7.1 Recommendations

- The policy of 'literacy across learning' is a useful means of unlocking access to the whole curriculum for all pupils and particularly those who have English as an additional language. Given the importance of learning how to use language within this approach, it would be helpful to see more emphasis of its benefits for EAL learners.
- Given that current formal assessments are not well attuned to EAL learners, there is a need for continuing research on this matter.
- 'Good practice' in classrooms is not enough. There is a need for highly differentiated classroom practices that are designed to take into account the distinctive learning and assessment needs of EAL students. Such finely-tuned pedagogic practices will provide access to the curriculum for EAL students and enable them to integrate fully into the life of the classroom. Activities that have a specific language focus and actively draw on the varied cultural and linguistic resources within the classroom foster an environment that gives voice to *difference* and deepens an awareness for students learning EAL about the ways that language is used to make meaning.

6.8 School policies, structures and processes

Turning to school policies, structures and processes, there was a marked difference in reported practice between the two sites in our study in the initial assessment of the language of EAL students and in the ongoing monitoring of their progress. In both sites, however, this was recognised as a matter that did need to be addressed. (As an important aside here, such careful initial assessment is also likely to flag up the fact that EAL students are a far from homogeneous group, and to lead to a more carefully differentiated response.) Our findings also drew attention to the degree to which co-ordination of the efforts of class teachers and EAL specialists could be achieved, with one of our participants describing collaboration with, and learning from, EAL specialists as the 'key' to progress. Clearly, the extent to which such collaboration can be achieved is dependent on the level at which EAL specialist input is resourced. The value of schools establishing connections with the parents of EAL students has been noted in preceding studies. Here it is worth highlighting a point of good practice that emerged from our research, i.e., the 'boundary-crossing' role that the EAL teacher in our study played in actively fostering parents' engagement in school language classes and other school activities.

Looking in more general terms at questions of policy, participant interviews, and our own analysis of policy documents, led us to make the central observation that EAL students' needs require to be addressed much more directly within policies. We have already noted how more attention needs to be given in national curricular documents and assessment arrangements to EAL students (see 6.7). A similar observation can be seen to apply to local authority and school policies, which can give greater consideration to how curricular and assessment arrangements can be tailored to the needs of these students. As the English teacher in our study suggested, prominence can also be given in a school's policy to providing teachers with a 'toolbox' of ways of thinking and acting that individual teachers can judiciously deploy to respond appropriately to EAL students.

6.8.1 Recommendations

- To allow for good practice that is consistent across schools in the *initial* assessment of language and monitoring of progress, it is recommended that clear national guidance on tests and testing processes is provided. This recommendation is particularly relevant to the Scottish context.
 - Policies need to be in place that recognise the value of effective collaboration between class teachers and EAL specialists; and which establish structures that allow this collaboration to take place.
 - Parental involvement and engagement can be particularly challenging for both schools and parents of EAL students.
-

Sending out information to parents/guardians of EAL students may have little impact. However, schemes which ‘draw in’ parents to school activities can foster meaningful engagement in children’s learning and with the wider community. An example of good practice can be seen in the Renaisi Bilingual advisors scheme. Recent research (Arnot et al., 2014) demonstrates the importance of developing parental engagement, where it is also recommended that there is a greater sharing of successful initiatives and models for parental engagement for this group of learners.

6.9 Teacher development

Across the UK, schools and teachers face the task of implementing considerable changes to curricula. Our findings brought into focus the fact that CPD in relation to EAL has to compete for time, resource and effort with other priorities in curricular development. At the same time, they also can be seen to highlight the importance of such activity. In addition to providing teachers with the ‘toolbox’ of ideas recommended in above to foster EAL students’ learning, social integration and sense of belonging (see 6.8), it can be argued that teachers have a more secure base for their work with EAL students when their knowledge about, and capacity to communicate about, language is strengthened.

6.9.1 Recommendations

- **At a time when teachers face pressure to develop their practice on a number of fronts, there is a need for effective, well-targeted Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) for all teachers.**
- **Given that EAL-related CLPL needs to cover a range of aspects of practice, it is best seen as requiring a sustained programme of development rather than a limited number of ‘one-off’ events. Providing teachers with systematic professional learning opportunities would help to inform their knowledge, beliefs and practices, thus resulting in the provision of better opportunities for EAL students in their development of the language and literacies of schooling.**

6.10 Representations of EAL students

We conclude by raising questions concerning how best to represent EAL students and their place within UK schools. It is worth taking a hard look at how not only participants in a research study but also all of us explicitly, and implicitly, represent EAL learners. On this issue, there would seem to be great value in the representation of EAL students put forward by one of our teacher participants who characterised them as a *resource for* education rather than simply as an *object* of education. A common thread running through much of this chapter is a need to look closely at the ‘fine print’ of interactions in the classroom if progress is to be achieved. In a recent presentation Leung (2015) has asked: ‘Why is there a gulf between rhetorical celebration of equality and inclusive education and paucity of appropriate provision for some students?’ We suggest that one, at least, of the answers to this question lies in the necessity to move from generic advice to drill down to specific areas of action that can be implemented within the realities of today’s schools and classrooms, while at the same time opening up new ways of thinking and being.

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Appendix 1

Guidelines for the Selection of Students Learning EAL

1. **Age:** 1 group of 12-14 years and one group of 14-16 years.
2. **How many:** each group should have between 4-5 students.
3. **Time in the UK:** minimum of 2 years (they must be recent migrants).
4. **Gender:** Mixed equally if possible.
5. **Language background:** a variety of language backgrounds if possible.

Procedure:

1. First, once the classroom/EAL teacher has selected students for both groups, we would ask that the teacher invites each student to complete a short activity that will help them to illustrate/record the most important events in his/her journey as a language learner.

This activity will provide opportunities for learners to think back over their lives and to track their own journey as a language learner. For example, this visual activity might include reflections or illustrations of the following things:

- the languages they have used in the past, or currently use on a daily basis.
- what was good or bad about their experiences as language learners.
- what has helped them to learn the languages they use.
- what has been difficult as they learned and used different languages.
- how language has helped learning or made learning in the classroom difficult.
- what experiences have helped them to *use* the languages they have learned.

The student is free to record/illustrate anything that represents the experiences and opportunities s/he has had.

2. Second, we will ask each group of students to take part in a group discussion about their experiences of learning English as an additional language in the UK.
3. Third, following the group discussion, we will select 3-4 learners from each group to take part in a short follow up interview on their own.

Appendix 2

Headteacher's Information Sheet

Dear Headteacher

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study on students learning English as an additional language.

Research Project: Policy, pedagogy and student perceptions: EAL in England and Scotland

Project Team Members:

Dr Yvonne Foley
Dr Pauline Sangster
Dr Charles Anderson
Prof Viv Edwards
Prof Naz Rassool

What is the study?

The study is being conducted by researchers at the Universities of Edinburgh and Reading. The aim is to understand teachers' and EAL students' perceptions of what makes for effective language learning experiences in the classroom. We would stress that we are not in any way attempting to evaluate the performance of the school, its teachers or its students.

Why has this school been chosen to take part?

This school was chosen because it is close to the University of Edinburgh and has significant numbers of children learning English as an additional language.

Does the school have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you give permission for the school to participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting me by telephone on 0131 651 6127, or by email at yfoley@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

What will happen if the school takes part?

If you consent to take part, we would like you to put us in contact with two members of your staff that you think would find this project interesting, an English teacher and an English language support teacher. We would then like to conduct an interview with these teachers (about 30 minutes) at a convenient time on the main challenges they face when working with EAL students. We will also ask them to identify 10 to 12 girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 14 who have received at least some of their schooling in another country and have been learning English as an additional language for at least two years. We would then like them to arrange for us to meet these students so we can explain what we are trying to achieve and distribute information and consent forms to them and their parents. Finally we would appreciate their help in making arrangements for us to conduct two focus groups and a small number of follow up interviews with these students.

Teachers will be given an information sheet and will be asked to consent to take part. We will also send a letter home to give parents and students the opportunity to opt out of the research, if they do not wish to take part.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the research team listed at the start of this letter. Neither you, the children or the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. We hope that the findings of the study will be useful in providing future support for teachers and students and in influencing the direction of policy. An electronic summary of the findings of the study can be made available to you by contacting Dr Yvonne Foley. We will make a donation of books to the schools as a token of thanks for your support.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications or presentations. No identifiers linking you, the children or the school to the study will be included. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely after five years, once the findings of the study are written up.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. All members of the research team possess an enhanced disclosure certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Director of Ceres, Dr Rowena Arshad by email at rowena.arshad@ed.ac.uk, or by phone on 0131 651 6167.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please me by telephone on 0131 651 6127, or by email at Yvonne.foley@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

What do I do next?

We do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form and return it to us as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Yvonne Foley (Dr)

Appendix 3

Head Teacher Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of Head Teacher: _____

Name of school: _____

Please delete as appropriate:

I consent to the involvement of my school in the project as outlined in the Information Sheet

Yes/No

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 4

Parents' Information Sheet

Research Project: Policy, pedagogy and student perceptions: EAL in England and Scotland

Project Team Members:

Dr Yvonne Foley
Dr Pauline Sangster
Dr Charles Anderson
Prof Viv Edwards
Prof Naz Rassool

Dear Parent/Carer

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study on students learning English as an additional language.

What is the study?

The study is being conducted at researchers at the Universities of Edinburgh and Reading. Our aim is to understand teachers' and EAL students' perceptions of what makes for effective language learning experiences in the classroom.

Why has my child been chosen to take part?

Your child has been invited to take part in the project because he or she is between the age of 11 and 16, has been to school in another country and has been learning English as an additional language for at least two years

Does my child have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether your child takes part. You may also withdraw your consent to at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you or your child, by contacting me by telephone on 0131-651-6127, or by email on yfoley@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

What will happen if my child takes part?

If you give your consent, your child will be asked to complete a short activity about the most important events in their journey as language learner and then to take part in a small group discussion with 4 or 5 other students about the things which they have found most and least helpful in learning English. They will also be asked if they are willing to take part in a short follow up interview on their own.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the research team listed at the start of this letter. Neither you, the children or the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Taking part will in no way influence the grades your child receives at school. Information about individual children will not be shared with the school.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting to take part. We hope that the findings of this study will be useful in providing support for teachers and students in the future. An electronic summary of the findings of the study can be made available to you by contacting Dr Yvonne Foley.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. No identifiers linking you, the children or the school to the study will be included. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. The data will be destroyed securely once the findings of the study are written up, after five years.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. I possess an enhanced disclosure certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact the Director of Ceres, Dr Rowena Arshad by email at rowena.arshad@ed.ac.uk, or by phone on 0131 651 6167.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please contact Dr Yvonne Foley by telephone on 0131-651-6127, or by email on yfoley@staffmail.ed.ac.uk

What do I do next?

We do hope that you will agree to your child's participation to the study. If you are happy for your child to take part you do not need to do anything. If, however, you do not wish for your child to take part you need to complete and return the consent form on the next page to the school office (reception) as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 5

Research Project: Learning English as an additional language

IF YOU ARE HAPPY FOR YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART THEN YOU DO NOT NEED TO TAKE ANY FURTHER ACTION

IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO BE INCLUDED THEN PLEASE FILL IN THE FORM BELOW AND RETURN IT TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE (RECEPTION)

Parent/Carer Consent Form

I **DO NOT** give consent for my child to take part in the research.

Name of child: _____

Name of school: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

