

Integrating EAL Learners into the mainstream curriculum

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The concept of 'integrating EAL learners into the mainstream curriculum' has been the subject of debate amongst educationalists and policy makers in many parts of the English-speaking countries in the past thirty years. The issues relating to this are multi-dimensional - the label of EAL itself appears to be part linguistic, part educational, part social and part political. We hope this piece will give an account of this multidimensionality in terms of curriculum and practice.

We begin with developments in EAL curriculum and pedagogy within the mainstream education. This is followed by a discussion of the influences of wider concerns such as social integration, and rights and entitlements to equal opportunity in public provision; recent experiences in England will be drawn on to illustrate the multi-dimensional nature of EAL policy and practice. We close with some thoughts on the formulation of an analytical framework which may be used to critically examine any EAL curriculum and practice.

The central assumption throughout is that EAL in mainstream schooling can only be understood properly if we pay attention to its unique position at the crossroads of educational, social and ideological movements.

Introduction

The integration of EAL students into the 'mainstream' (which is, of course, a metaphor) is as much a pedagogic issue as a social and ideological one; beyond its basic reference to a 'common' curriculum and viewed in a long(er) term perspective, the idea of the 'mainstream' is actually a contestable and contested set of curriculum choices and pedagogic practices. EAL is in some sense an educational arena where various, sometimes competing and sometimes overlapping, expectations and demands meet one another. In other words, EAL is an ideologically charged discipline. A useful way of seeing the complex and 'loaded' nature of EAL is to compare it with other more 'insulated' school curriculum subjects such as mathematics and French (or indeed the more traditionally-minded varieties of English as a Foreign Language), which are generally less directly exposed to non-discipline-based pressure and influence.

Integration: curriculum level developments

Broadly speaking at the curriculum level the integration of EAL students into the mainstream can be seen to have developed in two directions: attempts at making the English-medium schooling environment inclusive and beneficial for language minority students; and attempts at making the curriculum accessible by actively using

students' first language (other than English) as a medium of learning and wider curriculum communication. The first is discussed as EAL pedagogy and the second as bilingual education.

EAL pedagogy

The past thirty years or so have seen a high level of initiatives and activities in places such as Australia, Canada and England in integrating EAL learners, who are either new to the education system or from an ethnic minority community background with a home language other than English, into the mainstream English-medium educational provision. The central idea behind the integration policies has been a concern with equal opportunities and entitlements in education. This invariably means an effort at accommodating or including EAL students into the mainstream across subject content classes and/or extending the time-tabling arrangements to provide access to mainstream curriculum-related but separate English language classes.

Many of the ideas and developments witnessed in the field can be seen as falling into one of the following four categories: language-content orientation, content-language orientation, trans-curriculum language orientation and student orientation. These categories should not be seen as mutually exclusive and, as it will be seen, they share some overlapping of concerns.

Language-content orientation

Much of the early attempts at developing specialist programmes for EAL students were based on a structural approach. For instance the Scope materials (1978) advised teachers that 'from the very beginning you have to see to it that your pupils learn correctly organised language, not a makeshift kind of pidgin ... They have to master the way words are put together and the correct form of those words.' In some sense under this kind of approach the content of learning is the language system itself. However, there is often a 'functional reality content' organized as themes in this kind of materials. For instance, the Scope beginners materials were organized around the themes of shopping, farm animals and farming. The conventional concerns of language teaching, e.g. grammar knowledge and the ability to use spoken and written language, are manifested through the content of topics such as the life cycle of an animal. The topic content terms (vocabulary) and language expressions (structure and discourse) are presented and rehearsed through a teaching sequence which includes visuals and group activities.

Content-language orientation

The work of Crandall and her colleagues can be seen as an example of curriculum content-oriented ESL, sometimes referred to as content-based language

instruction. This approach is built on the observation that if school-aged EAL students are to participate in mainstream classroom learning, then it makes sense to focus 'on the ways in which the language is used to convey or represent particular thoughts or ideas' (Crandall, 1987:4). Subject specific uses of vocabulary and discourse expressions are identified and classroom strategies are built around these in order to promote both understanding of the subject content and learning of English at the same time. For example, it is pointed out that mathematics uses English language vocabulary and structures in particular ways, e.g. the notion of subtraction can be expressed by 'subtract from', 'decreased by', 'less', 'take away' and so on, and language expressions such as 'If a is a positive number, then $-a$ is a negative number ...' to represent the axioms of opposites (Dale & Cuevas, 1987:17). Classroom activities designed to promote EAL development are built around the identified content-language. Mohan (1986; 1990; 2001; also see Mohan & Slater, this issue) proposes a content-language integration approach which ties language expressions and curriculum content together via a set of underlying knowledge structures. These knowledge structures, such as description and sequence, are argued to be cross-curricular. So one may find sequence in narratives, in ordering historical events, and when analysing the key knowledge structures in different subject areas and tasks, and identifying appropriate language expressions for teaching and learning for students at different stages of EAL development. Mohan also suggests that knowledge structures can be visually represented in graphic forms such as charts and diagrams. Thus the use of visual representations and other forms of graphics such as flow charts can be used to assist understanding of the key language and content meaning by students.

Trans-curriculum language orientation

EAL pedagogy has also been discussed as a trans-curriculum issue. We will look at two examples. The first is the work of Cummins (e.g. Cummins, 1992; 1996; 2000; Cummins & Swain, 1986). Cummins suggests that language proficiency can be analysed in terms of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS is understood to mean 'the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts'; CALP is conceptualised as 'manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations' (Cummins, 1992:17). BICS tends to occur in situations where the meanings communicated are broadly familiar to the participants and/or the immediate context or action provides supportive clues for understanding; greeting friends and getting food in a school canteen for example; a class discussion on the merits and demerits of the use of pesticide in farming, without any supporting print, visual or video materials, is an example of context-impoverished CALP. These two conceptual categories do not yield precise linguistic descriptions nor do they map on to any specific area of the curriculum directly. But they can be used to estimate the language and cognitive demands of a variety of

communicative situations in school. In general, EAL students tend to acquire BICS relatively easily whereas the development of CALP used in decontextualised situations is a more complex and long term process. Pedagogically it is suggested that EAL students, particularly those in the beginning stages, would benefit from context-embedded communication, e.g. learning new information and language expression through hands-on activities and/or with the support of visuals or realia, whenever the curriculum language is inaccessible.

The second is the conceptual framework proposed by Snow, Met, & Genesee (1989; 1992). This framework has been formulated specifically to enable EAL and content teachers to share a common teaching agenda. It is assumed that in a content-based approach to second language development the language learning objectives are derived from '(a) the EAL curriculum, (b) the content-area curriculum, and (c) assessment of the learners' academic and communicative needs and ongoing evaluation of their developing language skills' (op.cit.:30). Working with these three concerns, Snow et al propose two types of language objectives: content-obligatory objectives and content-compatible objectives. Content-obligatory objectives specify the language, both structural elements as well as other features of discourse, that must be taught and learned as an integral part of any specific content topic, e.g. technical vocabulary such as 'vibration' and 'frequency' when studying the properties of sound and the associated discourse features of a formal scientific definition. Content-compatible language objectives are language knowledge and skills which can be taught opportunistically, in a strategic sense, in the context of a particular topic or subject. For instance, if it is felt by teachers that some students would benefit from more guidance on the use of the past tense, then a history or humanities project on, say, Victorian clothing may provide the appropriate content environment. (Also see the article by Manny Vazquez, this issue.)

The ideas proposed by Cummins and Snow et al are pedagogically relevant to second language development within the mainstream curriculum but they are not tied to any specific areas of language and content. Cummins' BICS and CALP can be used to map out classroom strategies and the conceptual framework proposed by Snow et al lends itself to both language and subject content analysis and planning. Perhaps we should mention a specific aspect of one other relevant development which is also trans-curricular in nature: the cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). The CALLA was designed to be used for students in the transitional stage between attending separate EAL classes and mainstream schooling. Both language and subject content are addressed; it explicitly incorporates elements of Cummins' and

Mohan's work. A distinguishing feature of this approach is that it pays attention to learning strategies. Chamot and O'Malley (1987:240) argue that

- '1. Mentally active learners are better learners ...
2. Strategies can be taught ...
3. Learning strategies transfer to new tasks ...
4. Academic language learning is more effective with learning strategies ...'

The CALLA encourages students to use meta-cognitive strategies such as selective attention and self-monitoring, cognitive strategies such as grouping and classifying words according to their attributes and visual imaging to understand and remember new information, and social-affective strategies such as cooperating with peers to solve problems and asking teachers or peers to provide additional explanation or rephrasing. Quite clearly these learning strategies are neither language nor curriculum oriented in any direct way, but it is argued that they assist both content and language learning.

Student orientation

The liberal humanistic perspective on language development has also had an influence on EAL pedagogic development, particularly in the development of a particular kind of student oriented EAL pedagogy. An early proponent of this perspective was Levine (published posthumously, edited by Meek, 1996; also see Reading List section, this issue) who saw mixed ability teaching in mainstream classrooms as a potentially effective response to meeting the language learning needs of EAL pupils. Levine (Meek, 1996:15) emphasises the importance of 'letting children have their own voice'. In the English (subject) classroom this means, inter alia, setting a teaching context whereby EAL students are encouraged to engage with ideas and projects which reflect their own interests as well as to work collaboratively in small groups with one another. In this perspective social interaction between students and between students and teachers is seen as pivotal to second language development. In contrast to the language and content oriented approaches mentioned earlier, the specific language to be learned is often not discussed explicitly.

The language teaching agenda for the teacher in this conceptualisation is essentially pupil-led in that the kind of teacher intervention made is dependent on the needs or problems shown in the active work of the EAL student. Classroom pedagogy is conceptualised in terms of learner active engagement. This perspective has been given further elaboration in the officially promoted Partnership Teaching model (Bourne, 1989; DES, 1991; DFEE, 2001) in Britain: 'Learning is best achieved through enquiry-based activities involving discussion ... To learn a language it is necessary to participate in its meaningful use ... The curriculum itself is therefore a useful vehicle for language learning ... A main strategy... for both curriculum learning and language learning is the flexible use of small group work ...' (Bourne, 1989:63)

Bilingual education

The use of language minority students' first language as a medium of learning and curriculum communication has played a significant, if small in terms of pupil numbers, part in the effort to provide effective mainstream response to linguistic diversity. The models of bilingual education tend to vary in different countries because of the different education policies, minority language situations and inter-ethnic relations. For instance, in the United States, where the use of pupils' first language in the curriculum has received some federal and state level legislative support, the concept of bilingual education is found to be expressed through three main programme models:

1. Transitional/early exit bilingual education – the use of students' first language is intended to help them keep up with curriculum subject learning; English is phased in as soon as possible; its primary goal is to mainstream students to all English classrooms.
2. Developmental/maintenance bilingual education – the use of students' first language is maintained through active curriculum-related use even after English has been introduced gradually and successfully learned; its aim is to produce fluent bilingualism and high level of academic success for language minority students.
3. Two-way bilingual education/dual language instruction – this type of programme is designed to cater for both language minority and English proficient students; the curriculum is taught in a community minority language, say, Spanish, for up to half of the subjects and in English for the rest. The claimed effect is language maintenance for language minority students and second/foreign language immersion for language majority students.

There is a lively debate on the merits of bilingual education in the U.S.A. The effectiveness of developmental and two-way bilingual education in producing high levels of bilingualism and cross-curricular achievement has been reported by Krashen (1996), Ramírez (1992) and Thomas & Collier (1997 & 2002) among others. There are dissenting voices who criticise bilingual education generally on grounds of social divisiveness and indifferent educational outcome (e.g. Arizona Education Dept, 2004). The only extensive example of this approach in the UK is the teaching of Welsh in Welsh-medium schools in Wales.

Curriculum orientations: knowledge base and pedagogic choices

The collective efforts of researchers and practitioners in the past thirty years or so have led to a corpus of organised information and documented experience in the field of EAL on the basis of which it might be

imagined that a reasoned choice of model might be made. However, current experience in different parts of the English speaking countries suggests that making pedagogic and curriculum decisions is neither a disinterested intellectual exercise nor a simple technical matter of choosing the most efficient means to achieve the desired ends. In linguistically and ethnically complex societies language education policy decisions reflect the intricate interplay between demographic shifts, social values, political processes and political power. The policy of educational integration of EAL students is arguably more exposed to these wider social and political developments than most other curriculum issues. We will now look at some key moments of recent experiences of integrating EAL students in England.

The situation in England

The mainstreaming initiatives in England since the 1980s have been largely expressed through a student oriented pedagogy. EAL students are expected to be placed in mainstream age-appropriate classes as soon as possible upon joining school. Pedagogically (all) teachers are expected to provide EAL development opportunities through engagement with curriculum activities which allow active hands-on participation and small group based learning. EAL specialist teachers, have multiple roles which include offering mainstream/subject teachers advice and guidance on how to generate English language learning opportunities in content lessons (including the use of students' first language where possible and appropriate as a transitional facility into English), and doing collaborative 'support' teaching in classes where EAL students are present. There is relatively little second language-specific discussion on second language students learning English. For instance, there is currently no dedicated EAL curriculum; the mainstream English and literacy (mother tongue) curricula are presented as suitable for EAL development. Professionally EAL as a discipline is not offered as a main subject in pre-service teacher education; indeed there is no officially required credential for EAL teachers. Under these circumstances, EAL mainstreaming appears to have resulted in full structural integration for students, i.e. EAL students attending ordinary classes, and, at the same time, under-provisioning in terms of curriculum infrastructure (e.g. the absence of dedicated EAL curriculum specifications and mandatory specialist teacher education).

The current EAL policy and practice seem to be student-oriented but the mainstream curriculum itself is not EAL-oriented. This de-emphasising of EAL can arguably be traced back to a moment in the mid-1980s occasioned by the publication of two landmark documents. In 1986 the Commission for Racial Equality published a report on the practice of teaching English to EAL students in separate language centres in one local education authority and found this practice tantamount to racially discriminating in terms of outcome (CRE, 1986). The publication of this report led to the effective termination of the provision of separate

EAL centres in the state-funded sector. The impact of this report was a reflection of the gathering strength of an emergent view on social integration of ethnic and linguistic minorities captured in the report of an official committee of enquiry, generally referred to as the Swann Report (DES, 1985). 'We believe that a genuinely pluralist society cannot be achieved without the social integration of ethnic minority communities and the ethnic majority community within a common whole..' (op.cit.:8)

The call for social integration, articulated to an inclusive education as defined by the Swann Report, signals the need to end the 'compartmentalised' teaching of English to ethnic and linguistic minority pupils. By treating second/additional language learning as part of a broader communication issue, EAL can now be seen as an integral part of a generalised and common curriculum process, i.e. mainstreamed EAL. As Bourne (1989:64) observes, the Swann Report found a policy position that 'was able to return English language learners to the mainstream classroom'. Thus, in educational terms, this redefined vision of a pluralist society in a multiethnic and multilingual context has led to a view which favours social integration through common and undifferentiated membership in mainstream processes; conceptualising EAL as a part of the more general communication issue provides a perspective that allows a toning down of linguistic distinctiveness and difference. The prioritising of the social and socialising aspects of education in the rhetoric of this form of pluralism made it possible to downplay the significance of the different language and language learning needs of EAL students and to direct attention to the common communication needs. In other words, mainstreaming EAL students takes priority over the adapting and extending the mainstream curriculum for EAL students.

Integrating EAL students: clarifying policy goals and pedagogy

The integrating of EAL students into the mainstream curriculum has received public policy support in the past thirty years or so. In this same period we have also seen a number of highly innovative and practicable pedagogic and curriculum ideas designed to explore and exploit language development within a mainstream curriculum context. However, the policy and practice of integration of EAL students can be sometimes strongly shaped, some may even say determined, by wider social and ideological developments. In many ways it is difficult to imagine EAL as a totally autonomous area of schooling for as long as public education is part of democratic political processes. Educational policies and practices are multidimensional and the dimensions involved may or may not fit together as pieces of a puzzle at any one time. If we look at the configuration of policies, desired outcomes, underlying assumptions about language,

provision and pedagogy in three settings (England, Victoria and California) some of this complexity and potential will emerge.

The five dimensions and characterisations below by no means represent an exhaustive account of the complexities of EAL policies and practices even in just the three locations mentioned. No one would suggest that the relationship between policy and practice is a straightforward one. The key argument here though is that policy rhetoric and curriculum statements often conflate social aspiration, desired/possible outcomes, policy declarations, curriculum provision and classroom pedagogy as if they were one and the same thing. There is a need for greater conceptual and analytical clarity.

By conceptually separating the social from the pedagogic, and the desired outcome from the curriculum provision and so on, there is a better chance of achieving some clarity in the way policy and practice are discussed and understood. For instance, in England there is a frequently rehearsed pro-multilingualism public rhetoric in local and national educational documents which suggests that both English and minority community languages are or should be considered languages of the mainstream curriculum. One example of this is a statement in the English (subject) National Curriculum document: teachers are advised that, in relation to the development of spoken and written English, they should be ‘building on pupils’ experiences of language at home and in the wider community, so that their developing uses of English and other languages support one

another’ (DfEE and QCA, 1999:49). A closer examination of the current policy and curriculum infrastructure would show that students’ first language can only be used opportunistically in the classroom because the mainstream curriculum is mediated through English the use of students’ first language is seen as at best an aid for transition to English when teachers and students (co-incidentally) share common language backgrounds; bi-/multilingualism in English and minority languages is rarely recognised in any systematic way beyond recognition of individual efforts and/or talent; and curriculum achievement is measured only in terms of English mediated attainments except in language subjects such as French.

The value of paying attention to the multidimensional nature of policy and practice can also be demonstrated by, for instance, examining the use of economic rationalism, i.e. efficiency in producing a productive work force, as a key argument against bilingual education in California. The rhetoric of the need to produce an English-proficient work force is best served by an exclusively English-medium curriculum is premised on a common sense argument of ‘the more time on learning English, the better the English proficiency’. But the long term research evidence suggests that two-way bilingual education actually produces the best academic and scholarly achievements. By paying attention to the multidimensionality of policy and practice policy makers can be shown the kinds of examination of

A. Public social and educational policy stance	B. Desired/ possible outcome	C. Underlying language education assumption	D. Mainstream curriculum provision	E. Pedagogic approach to language in classroom
1. Equal access and equal opportunities for all, with English as the preferred school language for minority students	1. Monolingualism in English; minority bi/multilingualism not encouraged	1. Priority on developing English (minority L2); minority L1 not addressed	1. English-medium universal curriculum, with no dedicated L2 English extension for minorities; student-oriented EAL (England)	1. English L2 focussed; minority L1 not addressed
2. Equal access and equal opportunities for all, with promotion of English (minority L2) and community language/s (minority L1s)	2. Monolingualism in English; <i>laissez faire</i> position on minority bi/multilingualism	2. Priority on developing English; minority L1 useful as transitional aid to English (L2) development	2. English- dedicated L2 English extension for minorities; language content, content-language and/or trans-curriculum oriented EAL (parts of California before and after Proposition 227; Victoria)	2. English L2 focussed; minority L1 may be used opportunistically
	3. Monolingualism in English, recognising minority bi/ multilingualism as worthwhile	3. Priority on developing English (L2) and minority L1; both important as part of overall intellectual development for individuals	3. Bilingual (minority L1-L2) medium curriculum (parts of California before Proposition 227; and post Proposition 227 where special local dispensation is granted)	3. English L2 focussed; minority L1 used as transitional aid in a structured way (e.g. early-exit bilingual programmes)
	4. Minority bi/multilingualism in English and minority community languages			4. Both minority L1 and L2 addressed in a systematic way (e.g. two-way bilingual programmes)

issues and actions they should be engaged with if their social and educational goals are to be translated into curriculum provision and classroom practice. The carrying over of policy positioning into ideologically comfortable curriculum options will be made to look less 'natural' or common-sensical.

Concluding remarks

Historically, the integration of EAL students into the mainstream curriculum is an ideologically laden process. Over the past three decades or so there have been a large number of developments in language curriculum and pedagogy which have attempted to address some of the teaching and learning issues concerned with ethnic and linguistic minority students.

However, the curriculum options and approaches adopted by policy makers and education systems have not always been influenced by professional experience and research-based arguments. Recent experiences strongly indicate that arguments emanating from other spheres of society often hold sway and policy decisions on EAL can be made on non-language education grounds. This suggests that there is a need for analytical clarity in understanding the multidimensionality of EAL policy and practice. Such clarity, if nothing else, will serve to help identify what is being argued for and against.

For a full version of this paper, see <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/education/publications/ull/paper21.pdf>

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