Different models of teaching and support for bilingual pupils

Over time, different models of support teaching have been developed. Some focus on the individual child, others focus on the whole curriculum (Creese 2001). Bourne (1989) presented four models of the role of the EAL teacher:

- EAL specialist teachers provide individualised support for EAL so that the pupil may complete the mainstream task
- EAL specialist teachers use expertise to intervene in a pupil's language development and/or the language teaching environment of the class
- EAL specialist teachers try to effect change in policy and curriculum planning to enhance overall language development
- The EAL specialist teacher is an effective mainstream teacher who works towards promoting the language development of all pupils in the classroom

In reality, however, a range of teaching models have developed. As policy contexts change, there has also been a blurring of the differences between, and expectations of, the role of EAL specialist teachers, bilingual assistants, other support staff and mainstream teachers. The focus, for example, of the DfES/Primary National Strategy materials (2006) is to equip mainstream teachers to promote the English language development of bilingual pupils. Creese (2005) identified ten modes of collaboration varying from observational and advisory support (Fig 3.1) to permanent withdrawal (Fig 3.6).
Two models of classroom practice which trainees may encounter are outlined in more detail below - support and partnership teaching.

**Teaching support**

When supporting individuals, the curriculum is planned and delivered by the class teacher and the specialist language support teacher (or sometimes other adults) makes amendments to the presentation of the curriculum content and the tasks the pupils are required to complete. In this way the specialist language teacher supports bilingual pupils’ access to the curriculum and contributes to improving their levels of achievement by providing finely tuned teaching support appropriate to pupils' individual needs.

The class teacher and the specialist EAL teacher liaise to agree the support activities and materials needed for each bilingual pupil. These include:

- teaching support for the target pupil within a whole class or group context to enable bilingual pupils to carry out and understand the learning tasks set and to develop English language skills in that context
- consideration of a range of pupil groupings so that the target pupil is enabled to work with peers who share a first language or with good role models of EAL appropriate to needs identified
- provision of additional teaching and learning materials to support pupils eg visuals, alternative texts, glossaries and differentiated worksheets to address pupils' specific needs.

Within this first model, some withdrawal support for English as an additional language (EAL) may take place. The target pupil or a group of pupils are withdrawn from the classroom to address a particular language and learning focus. These may include:

- preparation sessions with the pupil before the teaching input, for example before the whole class session in the literacy hour
- sessions following up a whole class or group session to reinforce key language and concepts
- sessions to enable the pupil to complete homework tasks with understanding
- intensive support for older bilingual pupils at a very early stage of learning English.

Good practice requires that both the class teacher and the specialist teacher of EAL liaise to agree the focus of withdrawal support, which takes place for a defined period of time. The support is clearly related to the National Curriculum and is reviewed regularly. In most cases withdrawal teaching by specialist teachers of EAL is
complemented by in-class support so that the knowledge and skills acquired in a withdrawal context can be applied in the whole class context.

**Partnership teaching**

Partnership teaching in which EAL and class or subject teachers work together is often regarded as best practice. The class or subject teacher and the specialist EAL teacher plan together to teach the whole class collaboratively, taking account of the language and learning needs in the class, to raise the achievement of bilingual pupils. In class they lead different parts of the lesson or take the lead in different lessons. Both teachers have equal status. Both teachers learn from each other. Both teachers collaborate to develop English for academic purposes and to raise the achievement of bilingual pupils by:

- considering the make-up of groups to provide good language and conceptual role models
- ensuring opportunities for discussion in either English or pupils’ first languages
- setting up tasks, which involve a discursive, problem solving approach
- providing clear visual support materials and equipment
- designing writing frames and other scaffolding for writing.

Successive recent reports on raising achievement of ethnic minority pupils, including EAL learners and making the most effective use of EMAG promote partnership teaching as the most effective classroom-based model for raising achievement. However, partnership teaching is not unproblematic. For example, in a study carried out by Creese (2001), subject knowledge was more highly valued by teachers and pupils than the knowledge about language brought by specialist EAL teachers. Many subject teachers regarded language issues as a problem impeding curriculum learning aims. However, she also found that when teachers worked in partnership, the language required for learning is more likely to be regarded as a concern for the whole class. Creese considered that instead of the restricted view of language as a servant of more important curriculum aims, partnership teaching promoted the inclusive view that language and cultural diversity are as important as learning aims.

However partnership teaching is not universally applied. It is variously interpreted and there is limited critical perspective on what partnership teaching requires, nor how it is differentiated from team teaching or in-class support. No national guidance is given in terms of formally allocated liaison time, shared assessment schemes or admission and induction work in mainstream classrooms. Trainees may encounter some of these issues in their placement schools. As the number of pupils learning EAL increases and the number of specialist teachers of EAL declines, trainees are increasingly less likely to see models of partnership teaching during their placements.

**Other considerations**

Whatever the model, EAL specialist staff often work with class teachers, influencing mainstream teaching and learning strategies, providing additional resources, and targeting individuals at early stages of English who need focused support. In secondary schools there may be induction arrangements involving limited withdrawal work for pupils recently arrived in the country or specific options for pupils who arrive during Key Stage 4 with little English and who might otherwise receive no accredited qualifications. In schools with few bilingual pupils, a specialist EAL teacher might only be on site for part of one day, so limiting the impact that they can make on the school, and limiting the access of student teachers to these specialists.

EAL teachers are also often involved in:

- the development of whole school policies eg teaching and learning policies which recognise the importance of pupils’ first language in learning as well as the development of English for academic purposes
- supporting the school to track the achievement of different minority ethnic groups and agreeing their teaching deployment according to the needs of underachieving groups
- working with one department in the secondary context for a defined period to review the effectiveness of teaching strategies and learning resources of that department. Bourne (1989) referred to this role as a catalyst for change within schools
- contributing to individual learning assessments and target setting

In Appendix 2 Coordinating the provision for children learning EAL Introductory Guide - Supporting School Improvement (DfES, 2006) some of these activities have been highlighted as part of the co-ordinators role. In reality, most EAL teachers are likely to be involved with these to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the school context.

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Last updated 25th February 2008
References


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