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‘If I could not make a difference why would I be a teacher?’ Teaching English as an Additional Language and the quest for social justice

Introduction

This chapter is about the education of children and young people who find themselves in places where learning English is an absolute necessity. Without this, their hope for a better future is at risk. Their inclusion is not possible without the pivotal role played by teachers who can make a real difference, and whose values can be seen as social justice in action (Griffiths, 2003). The chapter is in two parts; the first considers policy and practice in relation to English as an Additional Language (EAL)¹ mostly from a British perspective, with reference to some policy and research findings in the United States (US). The second part is based on a research project conducted in 2014 involving Bath Spa University (BSU) in the United Kingdom (UK) and the College of William and Mary (WM) in the US. Data was collected by student researchers in schools in both countries where EAL students’ educational needs are quite similar, even though the schools they attended are guided by different national and local policies. Full details of the project are reported in McEachron and Bhatti et al (2015). This chapter sheds further light on what transpires within the classroom by focusing on naturally occurring incidents. Elaborating on the pedagogical process and building on earlier findings, it shows how reflexivity can lead to a deeper understanding of the teaching process, thus enhancing the learning experience of students for whom English is an additional language. Reflexivity is the process of becoming self-aware. According to Mills et al. (2010) it is a ‘researcher’s ongoing critique and critical reflection of his or her own biases and assumptions and how these have influenced all stages of the research process. The

researcher... critiques impressions and hunches, locates meanings, and relates these to specific contexts and experiences' (p.789).

Impact of the Global on the Local

English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching and learning is important for all English speaking countries. Recent events in European ports and cities have shown how far families will go to secure their children's future. The Syrian crisis has highlighted the number of people on the move and the level of risk this fleeing segment of humanity is prepared to undertake to escape war, persecution and poverty. This century will continue to face serious questions about human rights and social justice, as it witnesses a further rise in the number of school age children searching for new horizons, some of which will be located in affluent English speaking countries. Refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, while relieved to land safely in an unfamiliar territory, continue to face an uncertain future. Their difficult journeys fade into the past as they try to find brave new beginnings and establish new foundations.

Children and young people seek better futures, reassuring routines and good results at school. Schools are responsible for meeting all manner of needs - educational, psychological, social and cultural. Whether they find themselves in Australia or US, refugees and asylum seekers must learn to manage educational opportunities alongside second and third generation of once-migrants- now-settlers/citizens. Depending on where they attend school, inclusive education can become unattainable for young people who face exclusion because of learning disabilities, or ethnicity –such as gypsy, Roma and travellers (Gobbo, 2015). This raises fundamental questions about the importance of inclusion and the kind of society people wish to create and live in (Clough & Corbett,

2000). Better facilities in EAL teaching can optimize learning opportunities and make a significant difference to students' educational trajectories.

At present schools in the UK enrol children from the new EU accession countries such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, who are in the early stages of learning English. Schools are tasked with educating *everyone*. Indeed, the UK Department for Education (2012, p. 1) stipulated that local authorities 'have a legal duty to ensure that education is available for all children of compulsory age...irrespective of a child's immigration status, country of origin or rights of residence in a particular area'. This sounds just and egalitarian, but there is an implicit question - are all schools equipped to handle this diversity and 'super diversity'?

Vertovec (2007) defined super diversity as 'a term intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything previously experienced in a particular society' (p. 1024). Are all teachers and those who educate them, fully aware and prepared for these global challenges? Teachers are expected to be well-informed, innovative and culturally responsive. The reality is that most of the teachers in countries such as UK and US are monolingual, while an increasing percentage of the student population is bilingual or multilingual. Many young people want to make a positive contribution and not become a burden on their parents or on society. In order to do so effectively they must be able to manage well in English. Our research in schools in UK and US looked at how schools teach EAL /ESL (English as a second language) ² to children in Henrico County in the US and Bristol in the UK.

English as an Additional Language and the role of policy

It is useful to consider the role of EAL policy and practice in the US and UK before focusing on classroom based observations. According to Demie (2013) it takes between five to seven years for English language learners to become fully fluent. This implies a long term commitment to EAL in order for learners to acquire English beyond a very basic understanding of the language. Researchers have reported how EAL is treated as a special educational need (SEN) by some schools. However, there is sensitivity and greater awareness of this continuing injustice to children in those states in US that have a high percentage of EAL /ESL students. In Virginia, where the research reported here was conducted, students speak many languages. There is provision for intensive EAL/ESL support. This might not be typical of every state in the US, but these experiences are relevant for other English speaking countries as well. Linn and Hammer (2011) express unease over placing students with EAL with students who have SEN. They report that an

Awareness of the representational patterns of ELLs (English Language Learners) at the national, state, regional, district, and campus levels continues to be the first step in providing students who are ELLs an education that meets their academic needs...

Changing demographics in our nation have brought with them increased diversity in public schools. With increased diversity comes the concern of disproportionate representation of students of colour in special education programs.

(Linn & Hammer 2011, p. 70).

Resourcing EAL/ESL classes adequately requires political and financial commitment which a state or a country would have to consider seriously if it wishes to offer good educational opportunities for everyone. In Virginia the need for the provision for EAL

exceeds that for SEN. There is an awareness of the entitlement of EAL/ESL for new migrants and refugee students in mainstream schools and in special Reception Centres. This creates a demand for well qualified EAL teachers who can ensure that students with EAL are not over-represented in SEN classes. This need for training is met by universities which provide EAL/ESL programmes and degrees for teachers and pre-service teachers in the US. ³

When it comes to language policy in Virginia, the schools are expected to: navigate federal, state and local policies...any student identified as limited English proficient (LEP) must have a Home Language Survey that identifies the student as bilingual and a score showing limited proficiency in one or all (of) listening, speaking, reading , writing (McEachron & Bhatti, 2015, p. 67).

What happens in the classroom depends on national and local policy with regard to EAL. In the post- 1990s UK there has been no consistent focus or clarity about EAL policy, though Wales enjoys a bilingual status. There have been several changes which affect local schools. These are described briefly here as they have an impact on EAL teaching. There is competition between schools which are inspected to see how well they teach. League Tables depict the ‘good’ and ‘failing’ schools. The latter are then put under ‘special measures’. Well-resourced schools in affluent neighbourhoods are not likely to be in ‘special measures’. In the state sector, power for decision making and resource allocation has been devolved to schools. Parents can ‘choose’ the best schools, or as some researchers (Gewirtz et al., 1995) have discovered schools can ‘choose’ parents and children. In short, the educational landscape has changed considerably since the 90s. This has influenced curriculum content for initial teacher education, in which at present

there is no place for learning to teach EAL in England. The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) attempts to do all it can including providing short courses on EAL, but at government level EAL is not the focus for targeted policy and additional resources. Interestingly, it is possible to study this subject at Masters and Doctoral level in universities in UK, which also offer Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). These programmes are not accessed by all teachers who teach EAL, as there is no requirement for them to study at the Masters level in order to teach in schools.

EAL in England

In England there is no pre-service teacher education provision for EAL (Costley, 2014; Leung, 2016; British Council EAL Nexus undated). NALDIC, the UK subject association for EAL, campaigns on behalf of bilingual students and their teachers to promote effective teaching and learning of EAL. Reviewing EAL provision over the past 40 years Leung (2016) cites official figures which have recorded over a million children in England who do not speak English as a first language. However, in the National Curriculum even as late as 2013:

Unlike the other subjects, such as English and Science, there is no content specification at all for EAL; EAL is deeply and invisibly enmeshed in classroom communication. (p. 164)

The onus to figure out how to differentiate instruction is on the teachers.

The brevity and the hortative tone of the statements on EAL in the 2013 National Curriculum signals an assumption that learning English through participation in

the school curriculum is by now a universal principle, and that teacher diligence in its application is the main issue. (p.164)

Leung (2016) draws attention to long-standing ideological and pedagogic foundations which have defined how 'equality of opportunity' holds the individual responsible for learning EAL.

The conceptual melding of first and additional language development removed the need for differentiated pedagogy and curriculum provision. In other words, the responsibility of society is to ensure equality of access. Beyond that, it is up to individuals to avail themselves of the opportunities available. (p. 166)

Leung describes how EAL was 'mainstreamed' in policy documents so that the main focus is teaching English to everyone. EAL is 'currently conceptualised as a 'mainstreamed' area of the school curriculum'. In other words there is no specific curriculum for EAL.

As expected the data we collected in schools did not produce a set of prescribed national EAL curriculum specifically for UK schools, whereas the schools in US were following the Virginia Standards of Learning, which provides curriculum guidelines accompanied by resources and teaching materials such as the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), ESL standards which have been interfaced with the Virginia Standards. These resources are available to all teachers, not just those who have licensure in EAL/ESL. Reviewing 60 years of research in English language teaching in England, Costley (2014) explains how withdrawing children from mainstream classes in the 60's and 70's for EAL instruction was abandoned. The Swann Report (1985) took account of ideological and political concerns about equal opportunities and anti-racism in

schools. As a consequence withdrawal policy was equated with unequal treatment. Everyone was seen to be entitled to the same language provision. This influential idea has remained embedded in language teaching policy to this day. However, in practice this does not help to meet the needs of English language learners.

Although at the heart of National Curriculum ideology is the belief in the ‘one-size

fits (and is appropriate for) all’ perspective, large numbers of EAL learners have for some time been identified as underachieving in schools across the country.

(Costley, 2014, p. 287)

Teachers are taught to teach Standard English and not EAL during teacher training in England. There is no guaranteed funding from central government which can be reserved specially for EAL. Previously from 1966 to the mid-1990’s there were some allocated funds available under the Section 11 of Local Government Act that schools could have used for EAL education. If immigrants are expected to adapt to the English education system and blend in with all the other students, then ongoing financial support for EAL is not considered necessary. More resources and clear policy based on research evidence collected in schools can help schools cope with what Costley (2014) refers to as ‘one size fit all’ approach in EAL teaching and learning. At present teachers are expected to cope well with or without extra support and they are held accountable for their students’ academic achievements.

Latest research in UK

Strand et al. (2015) sought to help schools and policy-makers target policy interventions and funding to address achievement gaps. In-depth statistical analyses of

National Pupil Database (NPD) and the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) from 2013, focused on an analysis of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 results.

Strand et al. asked two questions:

- Who are the most at-risk groups of learners with EAL and what are the predictors of low attainment for these learners?
- What are the most promising programmes and interventions to address EAL achievement gaps on the basis of causal evidence?

Relevant search terms were used to identify EAL learners who were most at risk of under achievement. Key findings from the research emphasised that at the age of five only 44% children achieved a good level of English. There was no evidence that a 'high proportion of EAL students impacted negatively on the attainment of students who spoke English as their first language' (p. 6). This countered the fear that having EAL students in class negatively affects the achievements of the students who speak English as a first language. Studies about EAL were located which would help address the questions above. Of the 29 studies that demonstrated an impact, 27 were conducted in the US and only one in the UK. More research is needed in UK which can look critically at what interventions can help English language acquisition.

Murphy and Unthiah's (2015) systematic review is a significant contribution to the field as this specific focus has not been given to EAL before in England. The researchers considered two main questions:

- What intervention research has been carried out since the year 2000 which has aimed at improving English language and/or literacy skills in children with EAL?
- What is the strength of evidence of this research?

The researchers looked for interventions which are ‘most appropriate to implement in the UK context to better support developing language, literacy, and in turn academic performance, of children with EAL’ (p. 2). The initial search was reduced from 975 reports to 29 which were analysed further. Of the 29 in-depth review studies, only two were carried out outside the US (one in the UK and one in Canada). Most of the studies were aimed at primary school pupils, with fewer directed towards secondary pupils. Interventions that were developed to support struggling readers aimed to improve alphabetic knowledge through phonics training. ‘None of the interventions received uniformly high ratings on methodological criteria. Some interventions for enhancing vocabulary knowledge could be implemented in UK’ (Murphy and Unthiah, 2015, pp. iii-iv). They recommend that there should be further research into developing English vocabulary, word-level skills and alphabetic knowledge. They also suggest that ‘further carefully conducted intervention studies in these areas are likely to yield useful results which... can equip teachers and schools with credible evidence upon which to develop effective support for children with EAL’ (Murphy & Unthiah, 2015, p. 34-39).

Arnot et al. (2014) conducted a twelve month research project involving two case study schools. They looked at children from new EU accession countries in the English school system to:

- Identify the contribution that primary and secondary schools make to address the language development, social integration and academic achievement of EAL students.

- Understand school practice regarding the above three factors from the perspective of school management, teachers, children and parents to address diversity in a constructive way.

The schools had a high proportion of migrant children from the new EU Accession countries. There was no written language policy in either school, both of which were multilingual. In the primary school, children were encouraged to speak English quickly. In the secondary school EAL students were trying to achieve learning targets for different subjects. There was no consensus among teachers on the use and value of the students' first language. Some thought only English should be spoken in class, whereas others thought that multilingualism helped all students. Both schools used 'immersion strategy' or 'mainstreaming approach' where students were placed in mainstream classes irrespective of their language skills. Some extra tuition was provided when students were withdrawn from mainstream classes. The schools did not have useful and detailed records which could be used to help students, and there was no formal system of gathering data about students' prior learning. The teachers were not well informed about social backgrounds or about parents' pre-migration social position. Arnot et al. concluded that 'All teachers should receive training in the second language acquisition process in order to discern the sometimes subtle differences between typical language development and the presence of concomitant learning difficulties' (p. 112). The executive summary of this report recommends a nuanced understanding of EAL and a deeper engagement with what is in the students' best interest. It also recommends that schools should acknowledge the need for developing school-wide language policy including the use of home languages in the school and classroom.

The policies in the US and UK should help to address pedagogical issues with regard to EAL. The question arises as to which policy is most useful and effective. In US guidelines are provided to teachers to help their students become proficient in English. They have to work towards state and federal testing guidelines (McEachron & Bhatti 2015). In UK the previously cited research demonstrates the need to do more than 'mainstreaming'.

All of the above points can be seen as confirming what Costley (2014) and Leung (2016) indicate in their analysis of policy and curriculum vacuum for EAL students in UK. These points are also related to what our research schools were experiencing. In Henrico County there was clear EAL/ESL policy which the teachers were following. They had a syllabus and curricular priorities which guided their work. This was not exactly the same for the schools in Bristol. We were interested in discovering what was happening in classrooms and how that information could be used to make sense of the daily reality of EAL teaching in two totally different locations- both of which were dealing with EAL. The common factor was the focus on EAL students and their teaching and learning experiences. The impact of policy on practice was implicit in the data gathered in schools.

Impact on Schools

It can be argued that schools which are working without critical self-awareness or knowledge of research based evidence will struggle to recognize bilingualism and multilingualism as strengths. The reason may be that such schools are under-resourced or not interested in finding out how bilingual or multilingual children acquire English. Safford and Drury (2013, p. 70) refer to teachers' 'monolingual mind set' and ask why

bilingualism is a ‘problem’. They looked at policies and practices that placed ‘bilingual learners in a monolingual curriculum and assessment structure’ in England in ways which were not always helpful.

According to Driver and Ullmann (2011), some schools are unable to help students with EAL who happen to have SEN. In such instances all EAL learners are treated as *the same* with or without SEN, newly arrived or second or third generation EAL learners. It can be argued that knowledge of the students’ background, cultural responsiveness and acknowledgement of diversity by teachers is crucial for meeting students’ expectations and needs. Our interest in EAL led us to be mindful of the above issues while planning our study in UK and US.

Teaching EAL in the Global Classroom: A Transnational Study in the United States and United Kingdom

The authors’ commitment to intercultural education, social justice and work with pre-service teachers led to the design of a small scale project ‘Teaching EAL in the Global Classroom’ (McEachron & Bhatti et al., 2015). The comparative research conducted in April and May 2014 involved five UK teachers based in two UK schools, four UK university students, five US teachers based in two US schools and four US university students. The paper offers further reflections on data gathered during student researchers’ detailed observations of teaching and learning. Our universities are committed to broadening and deepening undergraduate and post graduate students’ understanding of global issues in the field of education. On this occasion we decided to share our research interests with our students by encouraging them to work with us as student researchers rather just as students. They were a team of 8 researchers, 7 of whom

were pre-service teachers for whom we acquired funding for two weeks' intensive data collection in each other's countries. The study provided students with the opportunity to gain first-hand, comparative knowledge about EAL in their own and another country.

The two main questions which guided our research were:

- According to databases, how does the academic performance of language minority groups compare to the academic performance of non-linguistic minority groups at the elementary and secondary levels of education?
- According to language support teachers and university students, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional practices for language minorities who are learning English in the United Kingdom (Bristol) and the United States (Henrico)?

(McEachron & Bhatti, 2015, pp. 59 & 62).

Ethical clearance was obtained from both universities' ethics committees. Student researchers were required to look at background information and the context of the research setting before commencing their field work. One primary/ elementary and one high school were selected in each location, where data was collected. The ethnic composition of students in both our universities is mostly white.

The modules our students study challenge them to engage with issues of ethnic diversity, linguistic diversity and the inclusion of vulnerable learners. In BSU, unless they choose to study inequality in their undergraduate modules and write dissertations on the topic, and unless they attend placements in multi-ethnic urban settings in North and North East Somerset in England, not all students will have come across diverse

classrooms. This is not the case everywhere in UK, and certainly not in London. It is possible for some BSU students to attend all white schools, then almost all white universities, to have studied 'diversity' but not to have had any first-hand experience in multi ethnic settings. In WM the foundations coursework includes topics on multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness. Students have access to diverse placements and they work with Asian-Americans, African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and with students from the Middle East. Each one of our student researchers had a different educational biography in terms of their own schooling and choice of elective modules studied at university. What brought them together was a curiosity about EAL and a commitment and willingness to learn more about inclusion and diverse classrooms. Prior to this study all of our students except one, had visited at least three countries outside their own country and had studied at least one foreign language at school. This influenced their interest in EAL.

It was envisioned that participation in this research would extend student researchers' experiences and challenge their thinking. The study was set up to ensure they would focus on significant aspects of social justice in school settings. During the preparation stage ethics and principles of research and were discussed and also how they would conduct themselves at schools in another country in our absence. They were encouraged to learn about qualitative research methods and particularly about participant and non-participant observation. This helped them to think critically about their own assumptions about EAL. They were expected to use observation protocols, prompts, fieldwork journals and have focus group discussions amongst themselves. They had never participated in research where they had to collaborate closely with seven other

peers. They were asked to keep a journal two weeks before, during and after travelling to the research sites. Detailed field notes were composed in response to the observation protocol and prompts which had been provided. They were also encouraged to use their own initiative and collect data which was relevant to EAL but not necessarily mentioned in the protocol, as it was impossible to predict exactly what they would find during data collection.

Each student researcher collected data individually. This was quite often followed by a conversation at an appropriate moment with the class teacher. Sometimes the notes from this meeting read like a conversation and sometimes like an interview, depending on how the student researcher interacted with the teacher. At the end of the day, in addition to the observation protocol our student researchers wrote individual field notes. Then every evening they met as a focus group of eight researchers to critique and share their cumulative experiences of each day in school. The daily notes from those meetings, chaired by a different student researcher each time, were emailed to us and shared via Google Doc⁴. At the end of the period of data collection the two principal researchers also met the teachers to thank them for hosting the students. Impressions and notes from those meetings and conversations about teaching and learning in EAL classrooms were also documented. This led to very rich data collection.

EAL in real classrooms

The remainder of this chapter draws on the data about the teaching of EAL in Bristol and Henrico County. It is a selection from a wider range of observation based data collected within nine days of full immersion in one classroom by each student researcher. It draws attention to the usefulness of reflexivity in enhancing a deeper understanding of

the pedagogical process in EAL classrooms, and illuminates the complex realities of everyday occurrences in the classroom. Student researchers' voices and perceptions as well as those of the teachers represent three different perspectives- the student researcher's, the teacher's, and the principal researcher's. A selection of quotations from students' fieldwork journals is presented below. Why were they teaching students with EAL? What were they trying to teach? How did they feel about the presence of student researchers? Teachers' words are in italics to distinguish them from those of the student researcher's and principal researcher's. The themes presented below were generated when the qualitative data was coded. BSU students had been to school in England and took English customs and norms for granted. WM students were more familiar with US and were not surprised by the routines which were new for BSU students, and vice versa. The following excerpts from qualitative data provide examples of these perceptions.

Ethnicity, language and allegiance

Lydia M (BSU student researcher in a high school in Henrico County, US)

During my observation I found that issues surrounding race and ethnicity were rarely discussed by teachers but it was expressed by the students via jokes and mocking of accents between Spanish/Nepali male students. This evidenced a kind of hierarchy between the ethnicities, as Spanish and Nepalese are the most common, spoken languages in the ESL classrooms at X High. I did observe that student/student interaction was predominantly between members of the same spoken language and ethnicity (e.g. there was minimal interaction between Nepali and Spanish speakers in the lower sets, yet the upper ESL level classes would often interact regardless of language spoken)

Moreover, religion was not discussed or evidenced during my observations, yet an emphasis on patriotism and unity was expressed by the ritual pledging allegiance to the flag, as well as the subtle reminders that the students are ‘American now’ (Mrs R). I did observe some resistance by the students as they had to be told to stand and pledge, whilst others simply stood and did not verbally pledge allegiance. This raised questions of how the students feel, with regards to culture and religion which do not appear to be inclusive or incorporated.

Teacher’s view: ‘We do allegiance. That is normal. It is about acceptance. About inclusion. The quicker we can move with school routines the easier it will be for all (students)’

In the first instance it seems that the researcher heard something which the teacher did not. If that is the case then there is a question of responsibility. Should LM have reported the ‘mocking of accents’ to the teacher? Did LM discuss this with the teacher? Was there was an opportunity to do so immediately after the class? Does the school have a policy about this, and did the students know what would happen if they departed from acceptable conduct? Also, the students who were more confident in English did not need to ‘mock accents’ and they conversed with each other.

It is difficult to know whether the students felt at ease during the allegiance ritual. They were being socialized into a new routine and it is impossible to ascertain through observation what the students actually felt. There could be a link between EAL proficiency and non-compliance. Incomprehension or lack of understanding of the English language could be the cause of the behaviour which is interpreted as student resistance by Lydia. Within the curriculum religion is discussed more often in UK than it

is in the US. LM noticed this. Some schools in UK teach comparative religion where all major religions are discussed. Allegiance to the flag, or overt patriotism is something that simply does not happen in schools in UK, though it is the norm in US schools. This raises questions about formal and informal ways in which values like loyalty and faith are taught at school in both countries. The situation is further complicated when teachers do not know whether English is an Additional Language (the children may know two or more languages besides English and have two or more identities) or they may be learning ESL (literally English as a Second Language). It could be the case that all students in the same class share the same first language, or there may be several different first languages. All of this will affect the linguistic environment in the class.

In the US, EAL/ESL is taught in inclusion classrooms by withdrawing students for specialized instruction, whereas in the UK the focus is expected to be on mainstreaming at the earliest opportunity. Lydia's observations are related to the presence of all EAL/ESL students being taught together.

Classroom environment and differentiation

Ben C. (BSU student researcher in a high school in Henrico County)

After my first three observations in this classroom TA (teacher) asked me what I felt were the main differences between hers and the EAL/ESL classrooms I had taught in UK. I mentioned the common theme in my experience of European EAL/ESL classrooms was language specific instructional EAL posters, such as those featuring a list of the main irregular verbs (listing the infinitive, past simple and past participle of each verb) or ones which explained how and when to verb

different tenses (such as past vs present perfect). Within a few days TA told me she had ordered an irregular verb poster, for her room, and in week 2 of my observations this had been placed on the wall to the left (when facing the teacher, opposite the maps and flags).

TA frequently interacted with a wide range of her pupils, across both the levels of classes she was teaching. Typically she would lead the class from the front, and use concept checking questions for grammar rules or vocabulary she was teaching (or to check students understood the task which she was setting). These questions would either be answered on a 'first to respond' basis (the strongest students in each class would be the ones to raise their hand and respond) or TA would direct the questions to a specific student. When she was directing the questions, she would often turn to a student who hadn't spoken aloud in English, that day. This came across as being a very inclusive strategy (although in some circumstances it was a challenge for the weaker students to respond: they may have lacked the confidence or ability to do so, or been nervous in front of their peers). TA showed no favouritism towards gender or ethnic background of student, during her frequent interactions, and treated all the students with the same amount of respect and attention. The nature of her interaction gave her classes a very relaxed, almost semi-formal feeling, and the students responded extremely positively towards this environment.

Teacher: 'Differentiation is my biggest challenge because of the mixed abilities in my classes. For example one girl can barely speak is having to learn phonetics,

and in the same class there is another girl who can already write detailed paragraphs. Meeting the needs of every child is my biggest challenge'.

These excerpts show the level of researcher engagement with the pedagogical issues in class. Ben had taught EAL himself and was able to document minor details about the classroom environment which were geared towards helping students learn English. He was surprised to find that the teacher had ordered the irregular verb poster for the class. His observation of the style and quality of the teacher's interactions capture the atmosphere in the class, her informal and accessible manner and the underlying respect that the teacher had for her students. This teacher seems very open to new ideas. Her own appraisal of her biggest challenge – differentiating work for students of different ability levels shows how well she knew her students, their difficulties and capabilities. Ben noticed that the teacher wanted to get her students to speak in English and her method of teaching seems to have elicited responses from most students in class.

Teaching for tests

Amy L (BSU student researcher in an elementary school in Henrico County, USA)

After this lesson I sat with JR (teacher) again who had two fifth grade boys who were at level 1 English. JR told me that they are exempt from every test except for science, therefore, the lesson was spent going through a practice science test paper. JR knew it was a lost cause and struggled to keep one of the children engaged but there wasn't much he could do as the child knew very little English.

... he said 'it's just one of those things' and continued to teach as much as he could to the children, despite the fact he knew they couldn't understand much.

I felt so frustrated during this lesson as I felt that time spent was wasted on the science paper that could have been used to teach and learn English. The fact that they even have to sit the test in the first place is ridiculous.

I didn't realise testing in Virginia was a major thing. I always thought in England that testing was over the top but here in America it really is beyond anything I could have ever imagined. I do wonder how much pressure it puts on the children as I can see, particularly in the older children, how frustrating it is to go through a test in a completely different language and be expected to do well in it.

Teacher's view: 'It feels kind of strange trying to explain honestly why we must test kids who we know just can't do it! It doesn't help their self-esteem, but we have to play this test game.'

Formal testing is a stressful, labour intensive, time consuming activity for all concerned- not just the process of testing itself, but all the preparation and time leading up to tests. The observation period coincided with the testing period in US school. It is easy to see why AL was frustrated on behalf of the children who were clearly not ready for the test. Here AL values the children's entitlement to an appropriate education. However, depending on local policy on testing in school, this is something over which teachers quite often have no control. It does not seem fair that students are set up to fail in summative assessments- especially EAL/ESL. If they were tested when they knew the language it would make more sense to the students and they would feel encouraged by

the results. For these students it seems formative but not summative assessments are appropriate. As it stands, it seems that it is the teachers who are being tested on their teaching. Teachers feel the pressure to produce good results, even though they know that testing will not encourage learning for some of their students. Yet teachers are under scrutiny and might be blamed for not teaching well. This is simply not fair to children or their teachers in schools which lack expertise in EAL, or which are inadequately equipped for EAL. At the same time, it is important to have base line data on the proficiency levels of EALs so that they do not remain invisible and their needs and successes are documented. How to do this in a humane way remains a challenge for educators.

Literacy and library

Lexi H (WM student researcher in a secondary school in Bristol, UK)

Today, the students read from a PowerPoint that BJ had written. I was pleased to see that the simple sentences were designed to reflect the cultural backgrounds of the students. The sentences were along the lines of “My name is Nick. I am from Somalia and now I live in Bristol.” This class also uses a lot of manipulatives to support the literacy instruction that these students receive. BJ has the students match words with pictures and then they play a memory game.

In “Reading” class I noted that the library had a diverse selection of books. One student was reading about a girl moving to Ghana and another student had a book with a girl with a headscarf on it. The students were asked to go to the library and choose their own books. In there is a section of bilingual dictionaries from all the countries that the students represent. Underneath the dictionaries is a “countries”

section with books on at least thirty different countries. These were non-fiction books with facts and maps about the countries. I noticed the students in the Early Literacy class using Accelerated Reader books which are displayed. The books represent a wide range of language ability from beginner (something you might find in kindergarten) to fluent independent reader. After reading the books, the students take a quick quiz on a computerized program called Accelerated Reader.

Teacher: 'It is all about valuing children and working with what they bring. We have their languages in our library books, but really we could be doing more. We need more resources. I am not sure if the students make extra demands? Are we burdening them by expecting what we do from them? We must find new ways to teach...what are we teaching them? What do they learn?'

LH focused on the presence of diversity and cultural responsiveness. She notes that the books in class and the library are about different countries and that there are bilingual dictionaries for students. Somalia is used as an example by the teacher who wants to teach sentence construction to children. This was also about including the student, though LH does not comment on the point that actual details about Nick are used to help him make sentences, rather than using a fictional character to whom he might find it difficult to relate. This is an example of culturally and socially inclusive practice. Yet, when this is considered along with what the teacher says to the principal researcher there is self-doubt, ambiguity and uncertainty in the comments. This could almost be taken as a coded comment on the way the school is dealing with diversity in the teacher's opinion. The allusion to teaching and learning goes beyond EAL in the reference to 'what do they

learn?’ This is a secondary school and learning is more than what is learnt about EAL inside the classroom. .

Teachers in US and UK recognize that they need to do more, but some teachers like the one in this case feel that their needs are not fully recognized. Committed teachers are obliged to find ways around this challenge as best as they can.

Lexi H: from research journal about this class:

The school has limited influence over the students’ life outside of the classroom. I spoke with one student from Iran who currently lives with a foster family. He says that his foster family does not have many books and they do not talk with him much. This tells me that he does not get a lot of English input outside of the three days that he attends secondary school each week. I also think that because of the variety of first languages among students here (I have heard a teacher quote 60), it is hard to attend to the development of students’ reading, writing, speaking, and listening in their first language.

Teacher’s view ‘ We do try our best to draw children out and connect them to each other, but there is just so much the school can do. Research has shown that keeping first language is very important; I wonder whose responsibility it is to deal with all of this?’

This teacher is knowledgeable and committed but is still not sure how the situation with regard to EAL might be resolved. This is a real challenge. If a child/ young person’s home does not or cannot support what is happening in school, then the responsibility for improvement weighs heavily on the child even though the teacher might be aware of the

pressure the child might be under. It is the child who has to deal with conflicting expectations from parents who might speak in one language and wish to maintain one cultural tradition and teachers who may speak another language and may belong to a different culture. The cultural and linguistic demands that such situations create have been recorded in school based ethnographies (Bhatti, 1999). Also, if different languages are being spoken in a class within small groups, it may be difficult for teachers to find a quick solution or give a similar level of attention to everyone. This can be very difficult if there is no clear policy and few additional resources for EAL.

EAL classes can open up opportunities to discuss what is happening outside the classroom. An important role that teachers play is to offer stepping stones from uncertain first steps to independent learning. Some of this can happen through collaborative work which can help to build confidence in students.

Collaborative writing

Aaron N (WM student researcher in a primary school in Bristol, UK)

The students began the writing by filling out a pre-writing graphic organizer. Then, in an effort to elicit more specific details, they acted out their story in the park to their classmates. Finally, they wrote a draft. Completing the writing process showed cultural responsiveness and sensitivity to diverse learners. Some diverse students might be culturally disposed to sharing stories orally, some students may have the natural gift of acting, some students may be more adept at writing (both academically and linguistically), some ELLs (English language learners) may be still developing their writing skills but can communicate well orally.

The teacher showed sensitivity to her students, differentiating instruction to support linguistic, academic, and character diverse students, in writing lessons...Students had to learn the phrases and practice them at home. Students who have the language as their first language serve as tutor to help with pronunciation. The teacher uses the phrases learned to greet parents in their first language. Although this language learning is not a part of national curriculum, it is a part of the teacher's curriculum for her classroom and evidence of instruction can be seen in the nature of application in the classroom...students are able to communicate with one another both in their first language and in subsequent languages they may already speak or have just learned (it is not uncommon for students to speak 3-5 languages in this classroom as indicated by the teacher).

Teacher: 'There are days when I wonder how I could have taught differently, more effectively... I wonder if Tim would have responded better to a book on helicopters rather (than on farm animals), if you see what I mean. It is good to teach for the sake of teaching.. if only we didn't have all the other boring stuff (record keeping, tests etc) ...It is amazing how having an enthusiastic university student in class can remind me about why I became a teacher. It is like a ray of sunshine.'

This teacher clearly enjoyed working with her students. She was focused on individuals like Tim for example who might respond better to learning English through discussing helicopters. She went on to say how she wanted to teach children to the best of her ability and it was not always easy. In the day to day life of the teacher, routines take on a life of

their own. Affirmation of past aspiration is acknowledged here in a conversation with one of the principal researchers, and how on days when tedious routines and form filling became part of her daily work, the enthusiasm of university students reminded her of her past unencumbered self. This teacher clearly values linguistic diversity and her own curriculum is holistic and wider than the national curriculum as noted by this observant student researcher.

Classroom climate and language learning

Rachel H (WM student researcher in a secondary school in Bristol, UK)

Before our arrival, the teacher had asked the students to come up with questions to ask us. We sat around the table and each student pulled a question from a bucket and asked it to us. Some students were shy, but overall the room felt very comfortable and they respond well to the instructor. I felt that having students develop the questions focused our time together as well as kept them more engaged and interested in the responses. One student asked What is the American dream? which I felt was quite a profound question and made me reflect a lot on the values that are expressed when we respond with things like ‘owning your own home, becoming self-sufficient, getting a university education.’

I observed two students who have been in Bristol for two months now. They are brother and sister from Somalia. When I was introducing myself, the teacher pulled out a map for me to point to Virginia. It was obvious that the students had never seen a map or had very little experience with one because they could not pinpoint Somalia on it (they pointed to China and Russia). The students had never been to school before and so there was a lot of emphasis on literacy skills. It

was also interesting to see students' reactions to words like "skip" and "cap" that they had no Somalian equivalent to. I wrote in the protocol that I worry how this might affect the language acquisition process.

Teacher: 'I have this dilemma- what to assume? There is a whole world in my little class. This is the first school after the refugee camp! BUT tell you what- If I could not make a difference why would I be a teacher?'

The above views provide insight into the nature of the challenge – the moral and pedagogical responsibility of the teacher on the one hand, and the level of comprehension among the children on the other. From the teacher's perspective nothing could be taken for granted including something as simple as a map. The student researcher could not ascertain what the children understood. Can some lines and colours on piece of paper symbolize a real country they had left behind? They did not know enough English to wonder aloud or ask abstract questions. The researcher clearly sensed this in her 'worry' about language acquisition in relation to cultural context and has captured how ideas can be lost in translation or in silence. The teacher's dilemma is an admission of the daunting task which lies ahead. There is a 'whole world' of children from different cultural, linguistic and geographical locations in class, some of whom had never attended school before coming to UK. Yet remarkably in her very next sentence there is an uplifting optimistic assertion- the desire to 'make a difference'.

Concluding Remarks

The themes represented above provide a glimpse at the naturally occurring teaching and learning opportunities in the EAL classroom. They reflect how policy works in practice. Where there is no clear policy or guidance for effective pedagogical practices,

teachers are left to invent their own ways of dealing with the situation. It is interesting to note that in Bristol teachers were being guided by their own judgements and prior experience of teaching EAL without formal training on EAL. Aaron's apt observation captured this as the teacher's 'own curriculum'. The teacher was drawing on her own skills and resourcefulness. As a contrast, where there was a clear policy and even text books and work sheets to guide teacher's work such as in the class Amy observed, the teacher, despite being frustrated by the limitations of testing students who were newcomers, was encouraged by the support from her school division and the Virginia Department of Education, knowing that ESL pedagogy was sanctioned.

To summarize, all the teachers provided opportunities for student researchers to see their classrooms in all their complexity. Based on the data gathered for the comparative study, it can be seen that teachers have been academically and culturally responsive whether there is a formal EAL policy and curriculum or no set curriculum and no formal policy. Linn and Hemmer (2011) were mindful of conflating SEN and EAL. We did not come across evidence to confirm what was happening in the four schools with regard to SEN and EAL. More time would be needed to discover what happens in practice. The findings of the authors' US-UK comparative study support the research by Costley (2014), Leung (2016) and Arnot et al (2014) who argue that more targeted focus on policy and on collecting sufficiently detailed information about students' learning needs and achievements can improve their learning experiences.

Student researchers observed the challenges and multi-layered realities that unfolded inside the classroom. Witnessing the multiple educational issues ranging from identity to language acquisition and from teaching style to cultural expectations,

underline the rich texture of EAL classrooms. Student researchers saw classrooms through idealistic lenses. They saw the world from children's and young people's perspectives, as well as noting what the teachers were trying to achieve. However, they did not have full responsibility for making pedagogical decisions, nor of juggling competing claims on their time and attention within diverse classrooms. During these times of super diversity teachers have to maintain self-awareness and criticality, so that the judgements which guide their actions in class are infused with reflexivity and thoughtfulness. Teachers' ability to respond to the children was affected by how well resourced the school was and how helpful EAL policy was in each country, and most importantly, what they as individual teachers brought to their teaching.

In addition, student researchers' presence provided opportunities for teachers to share their experiences and plans, their hopes, regrets and doubts. 'Modelling' their skills for future teachers and student researchers from another country made the 'familiar unfamiliar' (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1983) and opened up creative spaces for real dialogue as the above data has demonstrated. Schools are places of transformation and hope. Teachers are responsible for the social, academic and linguistic needs of students. Their commitment to students is strongly influenced by the help they receive or fail to receive in the form of policy guidance, training opportunities and accompanying resources. Teaching EAL requires spontaneity, cultural responsiveness and optimism, but most importantly it requires pedagogical and curricular expertise. A teachers' commitment to social justice in action (Griffiths 1993), is mediated by this pedagogical and curricular expertise. Clearer EAL policy, better understanding of linguistic diversity

and better professional development opportunities for teaching EAL make a real difference to the lives of many children who are living in or will be migrating to English speaking countries. Greater diversity in the teaching force can enhance schools' capacity to empathize, understand and support more students. Leadership at government and school levels is crucial to ensure that *all* our young people are perceived as those who possess energy, potential and promise. This journey of hope and transformation begins in schools and in faculties of education in universities that prepare and inspire teachers of the future. With the decision Britain has taken to leave the European Union, there is heightened concern about the education of newcomers to the UK. One can only hope that the anti-immigration sentiment does not overshadow research that demonstrates the importance of the need to advance EAL policies.

Footnotes

1. For the purposes of this chapter EAL is used for consistency. EAL (English as an additional language) is used when English may be a third or fourth Language.

Terminology differs according to the number of languages students speak as well as the policy context in each country. For ease of reference we have used EAL /ESL interchangeably.

2. ESL is mostly used for bilingual speakers where English is the second language

3. At the College of William and Mary, ESL Dual Endorsement Program, students can earn licensure to teach ESL in one year by taking 5 courses and completing 150 hours of field experiences working with English Language Learners. This has to be in conjunction with another teacher preparation program in which they are enrolled (Elementary,

Secondary or Special Education). There is no equivalent programme in British Universities.

4. Google Docs are shared documents created by Google Inc.

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