



Testing, Evaluation and Assessment SIG

Assessing English as an Additional Language in Linguistically Diverse Schools: Challenges to Theory and Practice

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EAL assessment

National Curriculum (1991-)

English (subject) & EAL have been elided together (Leung, 2001, 2012, in press; Menken et al, 2014)

→ EAL is not a recognised NC subject area (no curriculum specifications)

→ assessment of EAL routed through mainstream English curriculum

e.g. A Language in Common (QCA, 2000, until Summer 2014)

A Language In Common

EAL developmental trajectories seen through the perspective of English as First Language, except at Level 1 (on a rating scale of 1-8)

Beyond Level 1 - EAL pupil performance judged against a single inclusive national scale

→ **see handout**

A Language in Common (QCA, 2000:55)

English (subject)

e.g. Attainment Target: Speaking & Listening (8 levels)

Level 1

Pupils talk about matters of immediate interest. They listen to others and usually respond appropriately. They convey simple meanings to a range of listeners, speaking audibly, and begin to extend their ideas or account by providing some detail.

► English as a First Language for all

Summative assessment for bilingual pupils [students from minority language backgrounds, including EAL learners], as for all pupils, should be based on national curriculum measures. . . It is not recommended that additional locally developed scales of fluency are used for summative purposes.

(Department for Education and Skills, 2005, p. 6)

2015- Assessment without levels

Revised 2014 National Curriculum, story so far:

Performance Descriptors will be published as criteria for statutory teacher assessment,

e.g. **KS1 Reading (DfE, 2014:19)**

Pupils working below national standard

A pupil is able to demonstrate sufficient evidence of the following:

Word Reading

- *Accurately reads aloud age appropriate texts consistent with phonic knowledge, in which additional strategies are not required.*
- *Demonstrates recognition of taught graphemes by speedily and correctly sounding out all 40+ corresponding phonemes, including those with alternative sounds, where applicable.*
- *Recognises and reads some common exception word.*
- *Exhibits fluency and confidence when re-reading known texts.*



Little regard for
EAL

What Construct?

- Who are EAL learners?
- What are their communication needs through English?

Who are EAL learners?



British young people from diverse backgrounds – familiar with local language & cultural practices, **most are English –dominant**, particularly in the spoken local community vernacular, may need further support in **written academic English**

Long term residents from diverse first language backgrounds with some sustained schooling experience in UK, have some working knowledge of local language & cultural practices, can use English in school & in community, **need further development in academic communication, both spoken and written**

Pupils

New arrivals (all ages), new to English, not necessarily permanent residents

Sojourners, various levels of English language

What communication needs through English?



Multilingualism



EAL ≠ English as 1st Language

EAL pupils ≠ English dominant ethnic minority pupils

EAL pupils:

- Start learning English at different ages (sudden impact of English, little transition time from home communication to school language)
- Have other language knowledge and skills
- Have different background knowledge, schooling & social experience in a different language environment
- Have different spoken & written language (learning) needs among themselves and from English as 1st Language peers

EAL national data

ONS - 'First language other than English' for EAL

'first language' defined as 'the language to which a child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community'

→ confusing and conflating several categories

EAL beginners, 'advanced bilinguals', low-key bilinguals who are English dominant ...

and the distortion builds up progressively through the school years

Who are EAL learners?



EAL?

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Young people from diverse first language backgrounds with **some sustained schooling** experience in UK, have some **working knowledge** of local language & cultural practices, can use English in school & in community, **need further development in academic communication, both spoken and written**

Pupils

New arrivals (all ages), new to English, not necessarily permanent residents

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What Educational Consequences?

EAL = English as 1st Language

- inappropriate assessment criteria (validity problem)
- misleading construal of pupils' English language performance (e.g. lexicogrammar, pragmatics ... spoken & written ...)
- inappropriate curriculum provision and pedagogic response (e.g. phonics for 'reading', EAL = ALN; little EAL specialist teaching)

English (subject) as reference point

- narrow perspective on curriculum-wide English language communication needs for EAL learners (e.g. writing in English = writing in science?)

EAL assessment: Multifaceted

Assessing Performance:

- Spoken everyday English language ≠ written academic language
- Spoken & written academic language is partly subject-driven, particularly in secondary phase
- Learning to use spoken & written English for academic purposes is a long term process; exposure is no guarantee for attainment (e.g. Cameron, 2003)

→ **pupil- & SLA-sensitive assessment framework & scales**

Formative Profiling:

- Pupils' own first language knowledge can be harnessed to help English language development; high-level bilinguals often show meta-linguistic awareness
- Promotion of pupils' own first language can increase capacity for learning English

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