

Book reviews

AN EAL/D HANDBOOK: TEACHING AND LEARNING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM WHEN ENGLISH IS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE OR DIALECT

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The social, cultural and linguistic landscape of our Australian society has become increasingly diverse. Recent census data shows that almost 30% of Australians were born overseas and that over 20% of the Australian population speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2022). In the education arena, based on data gathered by a former President of the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), it has been shown that Australian Government and Catholic schools host over 600,000 learners of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). While these students navigate a complex socio-cultural world of new knowledge, belief systems, norms, values, customs and behaviours, they also have to embark on adding Standard Australian English (SAE) to their existing cultural and linguistic repertoires. The scale of this task is colossal and requires much more time than that typically allocated in Intensive English support programmes. Similarly, not only do EAL/D language specialists but also all mainstream teachers find themselves busy with ‘Standards’ or lesson programming but, most importantly, with building linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills that allow them to design and implement supportive learning and teaching sequences for EAL/D learners’ needs. Harper and Feez’s edited collection, *An EAL/D Handbook: Teaching and learning across the curriculum when English is an additional language or dialect*, is a timely contribution that showcases a myriad of illustrations of pedagogical practice which focus particularly on how, through a text-based approach, language learning is embedded in the curriculum through

the study of geography, history, science, and literature.

The book contains eight chapters, seven of which (Chapters 2-8) follow an engaging and insightful structure featuring a reflection and an illustration of pedagogical practice which opens up with questions framed around the EAL/D learners and their needs. Focus is afforded to how meanings are cumulatively built across the curriculum to create inclusive learning environments and to support learners to develop explicit knowledge about language. Chapter 1, through the expertise of four scholars, provides a comprehensive overview of teaching, scaffolding and assessing EAL/D learners in mainstream classes. Feez and Harper take us through some fundamental questions that form the basis of EAL/D pedagogy. Some of these questions tap into the very distinct attributes of EAL/D learners addressing matters such as who they are and what they bring with them to the classroom. Drawing on Standard 4 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2017), the authors address the challenges that EAL/D learners need to overcome in a mainstream class, of which teachers need to take full account when preparing, creating, maintaining and sustaining learning environments that are inclusive of all students' needs.

In order to understand the development of EAL/D teaching in Australia, Feez and Harper conclude their section with a succinct historical snapshot of the grassroots of language teaching approaches around the world dating back to the 19th century. This account traces the transition from pedagogy with an impetus on the rules of formal grammar to more contemporary Australian-based approaches. A trend typified by a shift away from pedagogy focussed on de-contextualised discreet units of language towards a focus on the ways in which language is used communicatively for meaning-making purposes in different social contexts. In the same chapter, Jenny Hammond addresses the centrality of scaffolding in effective EAL/D teaching. Besides revisiting the concept, Jenny stresses the need for teachers to develop the adequate knowledge, skills and dispositions to be linguistically responsive to EAL/D learners. The bedrock for linguistic responsiveness is knowledge about language and knowledge about language learning. To conclude Chapter 1, Margaret Turnbull discusses assessment of EAL/D learners. Besides a definition and description of what it means to assess EAL/D learners, Turnbull provides a brief overview of some important considerations to be made when assessing learners' English language proficiency.

In Chapter 2, Dahlsen, Jones and Derewianka draw on the principles of ‘the teaching and learning cycle’ to explore how newly arrived EAL/D students from diverse backgrounds can be afforded ‘high-challenge’ content in the Australian context by way of high-support pedagogies. The illustration of pedagogical practice shows the developmental ways through which students gained cumulative knowledge, meanings, vocabulary and sufficient language structures to read and write about the chosen curriculum concepts from Science and Geography. As the students developed a wider range of vocabulary and language structures, significant improvements in their writing were observed. In Chapter 3, Cindy Valdez-Adams and Jenny Hammond focus on delivering high-challenge Geography content in a Year 4 class through high-support teaching to enable students to think and talk like geographers. Through high levels of collaboration between EAL/D and mainstream teachers and their shared understandings of ‘designed in’ and ‘contingent’ scaffolding, Valdez-Adams and Hammond present an illustration of pedagogical practice that demonstrates success in creating an inclusive environment in which all students could take part actively in a high-challenge Geography program. Further, they model how with the appropriate provision of high levels of support, students can be afforded opportunities to ‘talk to learn’ and ‘learn to talk’.

With a particular emphasis on dialogic teaching and learning, Chapter 4 explores the role of ‘talk for learning’ (or ‘talking to learn’) in building knowledge across curriculum areas. Drawing specifically on Alexander’s (2008, 2020) six principles that help guide “the conduct, preparation and planning for talk that promotes learning through sustained and in-depth exchanges” (Cozmescu & Sandiford, 2021, p. 168), Helen Cozmescu and Carmel Sandiford illustrate pedagogical practice geared towards helping Year 6 EAL/D students in a primary school in Melbourne. Despite possessing sufficient English for everyday spoken interactions, learners required more specialised knowledge and academic language that would enable them to participate fully in a Socratic Circle. This took place after a carefully designed teaching and learning sequence that sought to build meanings, knowledge and language cumulatively through a variety of reading, writing, listening and speaking experiences.

Entitled ‘Working with multilingual voices in the classroom’, Chapter 5 brings together the collective pedagogical efforts of the authors – Nathan Jeffrey, Vi Nguyen and Gill Pennington – and the

lived cultural and linguistic experiences and stories of EAL/D learners on the topic of 'journeys'. This culminates in the production of a digital story that would reflect their own personal journeys. Aimed specifically at achieving social, emotional and language outcomes, the authors accomplished their pedagogical goals through targeted support and use of a variety of multimodal resources which helped learners extend their vocabulary, knowledge of language structures and confidence to produce, and even act out, their digital narratives.

The topic of sustainability through the use of multimodal persuasive texts is addressed in Chapter 6 by Susan Allaou and Jon Callow. In his 'Reflection' section, Callow not only foregrounds the role and significance of multimodality in the classroom but also stresses the importance of multimodal texts, including visual resources, in creating opportunities for developing EAL/D learners' sense of confidence, inclusion and membership in their new community. The illustration of pedagogical practice highlights both the potential of multimodal texts to support EAL/D students' engagement, language and literacy development, and to serve as conduits for learners to communicate ideas persuasively on a scientific topic, that of our planet Earth. Similarly, Melita Godson and Bronwyn Parkin devote their attention in Chapter 7 to exploring how EAL/D children as young as five or six develop their scientific language through a series of hands-on orienting activities, explicit and intentional teaching of new vocabulary and grammatical structures required for children to think and talk scientifically. The illustration of practice, which centred around a focus text that also became the end goal of the teaching and learning sequence, demonstrates that children were able to use scientific language more flexibly in extended oral responses and through jointly constructed texts.

The final chapter in the book, Chapter 8, by Carmen Leahy and Brian Gray, has a particular focus on making argument and discussion genres accessible to marginalised students who, despite using social English effectively, needed significant support to master academic English to discuss literary texts. Centred around the selected text 'Animal Farm', which would also prepare students for a visit to the Parliament House in Canberra, the illustration of practice followed Parkin and Harper's (2019) teaching sequence model. The model was applied to frame the teaching and learning sequence that

resulted in students being able to move smoothly from ‘Close Reading’ to ‘Supported Writing’, and most importantly, to appropriate sufficient language for argument and discussion in order to produce their own original text.

In brief, this edited collection, which presents the critical and reflective voices of scholars, is nicely woven together with the descriptions of practitioners’ pedagogical practice which, all together, reveal that curriculum content is by no means inaccessible to EAL/D learners. Each of the chapters showcases dynamic and systematic pedagogical avenues, based primarily upon high levels of support, scaffolding, teacher collaboration, careful planning and explicit instruction, which can lead to significant development of EAL/D learners’ academic language to succeed across the curriculum. This volume would be a valuable companion to EAL/D teachers and researchers who operate in the Australian system.

References

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