Pre-service teachers' experiences of learning grammar to support EAL/D learners

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Abstract

In South Australia, pre-service teachers require a sound knowledge of grammar to deploy the Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency (LEAP) Levels, an assessment, monitoring and reporting tool designed to inform programming and planning for English as an Additional Language and Dialect (EAL/D) students. However, research shows that many pre-service teachers do not have strong Metalinguistic Awareness (MA). In response, a series of five videos was produced to explicitly teach pre-service teachers the grammar needed to deploy LEAP, titled: *A beginner's guide to functional grammar*. This article reports on the experiences of those pre-service teachers working with these instructional videos. Quantitative data were gleaned from pre- and post- quizzes that sought to test pre-service teachers' (n=28) knowledge of grammar. Overall, the scores on the pre- and post-quiz results demonstrate a statistically significant difference, with a marked increase of five-point-five points on a 28-point scale following their engagement with the videos. Ultimately, this article reports on the success of teaching strategies used to increase pre-service teachers' knowledge of certain areas of grammar, and points to future directions for working with and supporting EAL/D students through LEAP.

Keywords: *Pre-service teachers; EAL/D learners; Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency (LEAP) Levels; grammar; Metalinguistic Awareness.*

Introduction

The LEAP assessment tool

The Learning English: Achievement and Proficiency (LEAP) levels were developed in 2020 by the Department for Education (South Australia) in collaboration with literacy consultant Bronwyn Custance and the University of South Australia (Caldwell & Custance, 2019a, 2019b). LEAP is a revised version of the previous *Language and Literacy Levels*, which itself was a revised version of the original *South Australian Curriculum, Standards, and Accountability (SACSA) English as a Second Language (ESL) Scales* (see Dare & Polias, 2022 for a brief historical recount). LEAP is essentially a tool for teachers that outlines the English language expectations of the Australian Curriculum from Foundation (Reception) to Year 10. As outlined by the Department for Education (SA): "This development of Standard Australian English (SAE) is twofold. It involves developing knowledge about the English language and how it works to make meaning; knowledge about how to use language appropriately and effectively in varied contexts" (Department for Education, 2020, p. 4).

As an assessment, monitoring and reporting tool, LEAP has four key aims:

- assess, monitor and report the language development (predominantly focusing on the development of academic language) of any student, in particular high needs students such as EAL/D students;
- determine the level of student language learning need;
- identify the appropriate support category to inform and direct allocations of EAL/D funding;
- inform learning design through the identification of key teaching points in formative and summative assessments, to enable setting of learning goals and language level targets. (Department for Education, 2020, p. 4)

LEAP is especially broad in its scope, applicable to both spoken and written language, as well as describing the kinds of language development needed for all major learning areas outlined by the Australian Curriculum: English, mathematics, science, history and geography. The theoretical foundations of LEAP are based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): a socially-oriented, functional and contextual model of language, whereby success in schooling is understood as a mastery of a range of text types and a developmental shift towards more technical, abstract and specialized language (Caldwell et al., 2022; Derewianka & Jones, 2022; Halliday & Hasan, 1985, Martin & Rose, 2008). In contrast with the previous versions cited above, LEAP was not developed solely for EAL/D learners; it is applicable to all students. However, in line with this journal's special issue, this paper will specifically focus on LEAP in relation to EAL/D learners.

Structurally, there are 14 levels of LEAP, which correspond to three year-level groups from the Australian Curriculum: Levels 1–6: Reception to Year 2; Levels 7–10: Years 3–6; and

Levels 11–14: Years 7–10. Drawing on the Australian National Literacy Learning Progression, LEAP has five key sub-elements: listening, interacting, speaking, creating texts and grammar. It does not include reading and viewing, handwriting/keyboarding, spelling or punctuation. Moreover, listening and interacting are captured only in Levels 1-6. And speaking is subsumed under creating texts and grammar. Creating texts involves reporting on general descriptors and text types (as noted above), e.g. narratives, information reports, and so on. Grammar is more detailed and comprises much of the LEAP content. The grammar in LEAP is informed by both formal and functional categories of grammar (see e.g. Derewianka, 2023) and is organized into three levels of language: whole text, sentence level and group/word level. As noted above, LEAP is informed by a Hallidayan approach to grammar, which links functional elements to their grammatical forms. In this paper, however, we will place greater emphasis on grammatical form as this is an area of particular challenge for EAL/D learners (see e.g., Hinkel 2016 for further discussion and debates on teaching grammar to EAL/D students). For those interested in accessing examples of the LEAP levels, they have been made freely available by the Department for Education (SA) (2023).

Metalinguistic Awareness, metalanguage and LEAP

Metalinguistic Awareness (MA) refers to a person's "conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Alderson et al., 1997, p. 95). It involves the accurate and contextually relevant production of metalanguage (language about language) for the purpose of knowledge building, typically in the context of literacy production. As Myhill et al. (2012) argue in relation to teachers' knowledge about language, MA involves "explaining grammatical concepts clearly and knowing when [and how] to draw attention to them" (Myhill et al., 2012, p. 142). From a pedagogical perspective, MA is the capacity to explain the language choices made from an available repertoire when a learner reads, engages with, deconstructs, and critiques texts, as well as when they compose their own texts. It includes asking questions about language choices, for example, what would be a more effective choice of sentence type here? Why did I use this language feature instead of another? What is the impact of my linguistic choices on how I express and connect my ideas. How will my linguistic choices be interpreted by my audience in this particular context? In the current context, it also includes the ability to identify and teach the grammatical forms relevant to the needs of EAL/D students.

MA is therefore central to LEAP. In fact, MA is central to all initial teacher education in Australia, as pre-service teachers need to acquire a certain level of knowledge of language and how it works, as prescribed by the Australian Curriculum:

> students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works. They discover the patterns and purposes of English usage, including spelling, grammar and punctuation at the levels of the word, sentence and extended text, and they study the connections between these levels. By developing a body of knowledge about these patterns and their connections, students learn to

> communicate effectively through coherent, well-structured sentences and texts. They gain a consistent way of understanding and talking about language, language in use and language as system, so they can reflect on their own speaking and writing and discuss these productively with others. (ACARA, 2024)

Like the Australian Curriculum, LEAP specifically draws on a range of metalanguage from a functional model of language, especially at the level of grammar. As such, the analysis and evaluation of EAL/D learners' written texts through LEAP requires pre-service teachers in a tertiary context to have a sound understanding of metalanguage, including fundamental formal grammatical categories of verb, noun, adjective, adverb and conjunction. Without this foundational linguistic knowledge, and its expression through language, LEAP would be challenging, if not impossible, to implement in a classroom context effectively and accurately.

MA, metalanguage and teacher education

Pre-service teachers who undertake teacher training programs have generally been found to exhibit low levels of MA. Purvis et al. (2016) explain that despite the formalized expectations of the Australian Curriculum, as well as other educational initiatives, pre-service teachers in training continue to present with "relatively low levels of language structure knowledge" (Purvis et al. 2016, p. 56). Thwaite (2015) for example argues that whilst pre-service teachers may have some knowledge about language forms and text structures, their knowledge tends to be based on traditional grammar, rather than functional grammar. And as such, is more difficult to apply to authentic texts, and is often less meaningful and functional as feedback or instruction to their learners.

Other studies support the finding that many pre-service teachers exhibit relatively low levels of MA. Moon (2014) for example conducted general literacy testing on three cohorts of pre-service teachers enrolled in a Bachelor of Education course at an Australian multi-campus metropolitan university. 203 'pre-service teachers' in their second year of study were tested on spelling, vocabulary word building, sentence construction and grammar. Notwithstanding the limitations of the study (language skills were not tested in authentic contexts, and did not consider functional grammar), Moon was able to show that many of the 203 pre-service teachers lacked the necessary literacy competence to perform as a professional teacher:

> …many undergraduates in this course lack the personal literacy competence to perform those tasks to a professional standard. This is a concern, given the importance of language and literacy competence in ensuring effective teaching. (Moon, 2014, p. 126)

In a similar but more expansive study, Washburn et al. (2016) investigated the linguistic knowledge of pre-service teachers from Canada, England, New Zealand, and the USA, whereby all participants completed the Survey of Basic Language Constructs. One key finding

was that all participants scored below 70% on knowledge of language items. In particular, the scores of pre-service teachers from the United States were as low as 40%. The authors concluded that explicit language knowledge, vital to teaching English literacy practices, was clearly not a focus in the initial teacher education programs. The implication then of these and similar studies for teacher education is that "future teachers [may be] unprepared to effectively teach reading [and literacy practices] to their…students, as one cannot teach what one does not know" (Binks-Cantrell et al., 2012, p. 527). Similarly, from an instructional perspective in the context of literacy education, "low metalinguistic knowledge of pre-service and in-service teachers is likely to restrict the provision of evidence-based literacy instruction in the classroom" (Purvis et al., 2016, p. 56). This perspective highlights the crucial importance of supporting MA of pre-service teachers through initial teacher education; otherwise, the "MA deficit" associated with these teachers-in-the-making would carry over into the in-service teaching force.

In response, some research has attempted to document what happens when pre-service teachers are indeed taught metalanguage, and MA more generally, in their teacher training programs. Banegas (2021) for example examined Argentinian pre-service teachers' perceptions of their MA after taking a course with a focus on functional grammar. The study found that preservice teachers perceived a positive influence of this course on their MA. Similarly, Carey et al. (2015) used My Writing Lab Global – an online program including language exercises and written assignments – in tertiary workshops and lectures with pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers perceived an improvement in their knowledge about language, and this was supported by an improvement from pre to post tests. The authors conclude that there are clear benefits to explicitly teaching knowledge about language to pre-service teachers.

Despite these studies, and despite the broader research evidence indicating low MA amongst pre-service teachers, there is scope to examine the impact of explicit teaching of grammar in initial teacher education programs. In fact, Purvis et al. (2016) argue more broadly that: "relatively few studies have examined the effects of teacher preparation coursework in building pre-service teachers' language structure knowledge" (Purvis et al., 2016, p. 55). As such, and in the specific context of LEAP, the motivation for this teaching intervention, and the motivating research question for study is as follows:

- How do pre-service teachers respond to training in metalanguage that aims to build their knowledge of language and how it works for the ultimate purpose of deploying LEAP for EAL/D learners?

Context of study

The context of this study is a 12-week course titled – *TESOL in Practice* – taught in 2023, and located within a Bachelor of Primary Education (Honours) program. The general aim of this course is to enable pre-service teachers to examine the English language development and learning needs of EAL/D students, including how they learn, their prior learning and life

experiences and how this impacts their current and future learning. In the first module, pre-service teachers in this course are taught to assess, plan sequences of scaffolded learning and design teaching resources and learning activities in order to meet the needs of EAL/D learners. The course also focuses on teacher differentiation strategies to meet the needs of EAL/D learners as they develop their proficiency in Standard Australian English (SAE).

In the second module, the course turns to LEAP, as well as related training. Specifically, the course culminates in the pre-service teachers completing a LEAP assessment (comprising a significant assessment weighting for the total grade of the course). After completing three weeks of training in grammar (outlined in detail in the next section), the students viewed an instructional video titled – *How to assign a LEAP level* – designed in collaboration with a key external partner from the Department for Education, South Australia. The pre-service teachers then participated in two practice LEAP levelling workshops (across two weeks) where they were provided with two writing samples, completed an independent analysis, and assigned a LEAP level to that analysis. The pre-service teachers were then tasked with assessing whether the LEAP level assigned to an EAL/D student's writing sample was justified. They were then required to state whether they agreed or disagreed (suggest an appropriate level if they disagree) with the assigned level and to justify their position using evidence from LEAP. In the final weeks of the course, the pre-service teachers viewed another instructional video titled – *Focal points and strategies* – to understand the process of how to identify a teaching focal point and targeted strategies to support EAL/D learners.

Grammar training in the course

Before the pre-service teachers engaged with LEAP, the second module of the course commenced with an introduction to the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the concepts of genre, field, tenor, mode, drawing on, for example, Derewianka & Jones (2022) and Troyan et al. (2019). In that first week, the pre-service teachers were also tasked with independently engaging with some of the fundamentals of grammar (see Table 1). Specifically, the students were provided with a set of online training materials, titled: *A beginner's guide to grammar.* This series comprised five videos in total, each presented as a monological explanation by the course coordinator, and again, was designed in collaboration with a key external partner from the Department for Education. Specifically, the students were introduced to five key formal grammatical categories (or metalanguage) over a two-week period: sentence structure, verb groups, adverbials (adverbs, adverb groups and prepositional phrases), noun groups, and cohesive devices. This sequence was designed to begin with the largest unit – the clause (and potential combinations of clauses that comprise a sentence) – then move to the 'heart of a clause' – verb groups – followed by the grammatical categories closely related to the verb group – adverbials – then noun groups, concluding with cohesion that can operate across sentences.

Table 1. Grammar training in the course *TESOL in Practice.*

Course Week	Workshop content	Online/independent content

Week 7	SFL theory: genre, field, tenor and mode	***Pre-quiz** Videos: 1, 2 and 3
Week 8	Follow-up: 1, 2 and 3	Videos: 4 and 5 ***Post-quiz**
Week 9	Follow-up: 4 and 5	NA

Video 1, titled Sentence Structure, was approximately 14 minutes in duration and focussed on the grammar of sentence types. Specifically, the video explained and compared simple, compound and complex sentences. After viewing Video 1, pre-service teachers were prompted to take a multiple-choice practice exercise in which they applied their knowledge of sentence structure and classified sentences as simple, compound, or complex. They received auto-generated answers to their responses and could redo the exercise as many times as required. Practice exercises were provided after all five videos.

Video 2 (approx. five minutes), titled verb groups, built on the pre-service teachers' knowledge from Video 1, and introduced the different types of verbs based on functional grammar (e.g. Derewianka 2023): action, mental, relating, saying and existing. After viewing this video, pre-service teachers completed two exercises; one which required them to identify if the verb was action, saying, mental, relating or existing, and a second which required students to highlight the verbs or verb groups in the sentences provided.

Video 3 (approx. six minutes), titled adverbials, taught question probes to identify such details as 'where', 'when', 'how' and 'why'. In other words, the circumstances surrounding an activity or process, realised by such formal grammar categories as adverbs, adverb groups and prepositional phrases. In the exercise that followed, pre-service teachers were required to highlight the adverbial in the sentences provided.

Video 4 (approx. nine minutes), titled noun groups, used several examples to demonstrate how a noun can be expanded by adding pre and post modifiers. The parts of a noun group were presented as a chart highlighting their respective functions: the Pointer, Describer, Classifier, Qualifier. In the subsequent practice exercise, pre-service teachers were required to highlight the noun groups in the text provided.

Video 5 (approx. nine minutes), titled cohesive devices, was broad in its scope and examined the use of reference pronouns and text connectives. Several examples were used to demonstrate how reference pronouns either refer forward or back to another section of text, or perhaps outside the text to a shared context. Further examples were used to demonstrate how text connectives create logical development of ideas and to organize a text. This video also briefly explained the difference between active and passive voice. For the exercise pre-service teachers were required to highlight all cohesive devices in the text provided.

In addition to the five videos, and their respective practice exercises, a survey was administered to the students at the end of each video (outlined in more detail in Section 2.2 below). The students also participated in follow-up workshops in weeks 8 and 9 of the course (see Table 1).

In those workshops, the pre-service teachers were asked what they had learned, understood or found confusing and if they had any questions about the videos on sentence structure, verb groups, adverbials, noun groups and cohesive devices. These were discussed and explicitly taught as required.

Research design and data collection

67 pre-service teachers were invited to complete two quizzes, one before (pre-quiz) and one after (post-quiz) their engagement with *A beginner's guide to grammar* composed of the five instructive videos explained above (see Table 1). In total, 28 pre-service teachers completed both the pre- and post-quiz, which consisted of 26 items. Their scores on the pre- and post-quiz were used as 'objective' measures to detect any changes in their knowledge of grammar before and after engaging with the five videos. The pre- and post-quiz respectively provided insights of the pre-service teachers' prior and subsequent knowledge of the grammar, their areas of strength, and areas for improvement, ahead of applying this knowledge in the LEAP assessment tool in the final weeks of the course.

The pre-service teachers were given unlimited time to complete the pre- and post- quiz. The 26 items were not sequenced according to the videos (i.e. starting with sentence, then verb groups, etc.) and instead, were deliberately presented in a random order. Overall, six items focused on sentence structure, seven items on verb groups, three on adverbials, six on noun groups, two on reference pronouns, and two on text connectives.

18 items on the quiz were multiple choice, for example:

>*Tom saw Martha but did not recognise her.*
>
>The pronoun in this sentence is:
>a) *saw*
>b) *Martha*
>c) *her*

The other eight items required students to independently identify and insert a grammar response into a contrived sentence, for example:

>Add an adverbial of place to this sentence.
>
>*The party was held ....*

In addition to the pre- and post-quizzes, all the 67 pre-service teachers were invited to complete a short survey following their engagement with each of the five videos. 45, 37, 34, 33, and 32 pre-service teachers completed the post-video survey respectively for sentence structure, verb groups, adverbials, noun groups, and cohesive devices. Each post-video survey asked about the

pre-service teachers' self-perceived knowledge of grammar in a particular domain before and after engaging with the videos. Each survey consisted of nine items, largely identical in wording, except for the specified grammar domains in the corresponding items.

For the purpose of our analysis, two items on each post-video survey were used as subjective measures to detect any changes in students' knowledge of grammar. The two items are: (1) "Prior to viewing this video, my understanding of sentence structure (verb groups/adverbials/ noun groups and cohesive devices) was…"; and (2) "I now have a clear understanding of sentence structure (verb groups/adverbials/ noun groups and cohesive devices) after viewing the video". Both items were measured via a four-point scale: "nil", "vague", "strong", and "very strong" for item (1); and "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", "strongly agree" for item (2).

To be clear, any results from both the quiz and the survey will be read and treated with caution. We do not have enough evidence to establish cause (pedagogy) – effect (student growth) as our study is not an experiment intervention study by design. Instead, this study represents a modest (though valuable) intervention to determine the extent to which pre-service teachers were able to develop a level of metalinguistic awareness through their engagement in a training course designed to provide them with foundational knowledge about English grammar.

Results

Overall, the scores on the pre- and post-quizzes demonstrate a statistically significant difference (t=-8.84, p<.001). While the mean score of the pre-quiz results is 17. 96 (SD=3.06), that of the post-quiz is 23.43 (SD=3.47), with a marked increase of 5.47 points on a 28-point scale following the pre-service teachers' engagement with the five videos. This indicates growth in pre-service teachers' grammar knowledge, as measured objectively through the pre- and post-quizzes.

To complement the objective performance test, we then compared pre-service teachers' subjective perceptions of their grammar knowledge in each of the five domains. Results from the post-video surveys consistently demonstrate a statistically significant growth in their self-perceived grammar knowledge following their engagement with the videos. The growth in all five domains demonstrates a medium to large effect size, ranging from .50 (verb and verb group) to .70 (adverbial). This also indicates a substantial positive change in students' subjective perceptions of their grammar knowledge across all domains following engagement with the videos.

Table 2. Grammar knowledge growth.

	N	Mean pre	Mean post	Mean difference	t	df	effect size
Pre- and post-quiz	28	17.96	23.43	-5.47	-8.84	27	3.27
Sentence structure	45	2.44	3.22	-.78	-8.71	44	.60

Verb groups	37	2.65	3.41	-.76	-9.31	36	.50
Adverbials	34	2.50	3.26	-.76	-6.38	33	.70
Noun groups	33	2.52	3.21	-.69	-6.84	32	.59
Cohesive devices	32	2.31	3.06	-.75	-6.82	31	.62

The results summarized in Table 2 show that statistically significant growth, both objectively (quiz scores) and subjectively ('agree', 'I now have a clearer understanding of <insert specific grammar>') occurred in response to the grammar training videos and the pre- and post-quiz. There are of course some slight differences in results across the grammar categories. For now, however, within the confines of this paper, and this small data set, we simply want to respond to the question of 'what' happened. And the answer is that growth occurred; the participating pre-service teachers had a better understanding of grammar following their engagement with the five videos.

Three additional survey prompts also provide some further insight into the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the videos, at least from the pre-service teachers' subjective position. The same three prompts were given to the students for each of five surveys (see below). The first required a yes/no response. The second and third were measured via a four-point scale: "strongly disagree" (SD), "disagree" (D), "agree" (A), "strongly agree" (SA).

1. This video has been useful to my understanding of <insert grammar, e.g. verb and verb groups> (yes or no).
2. I found that the explanations and examples presented in the video course were helpful to my learning (agreement cline).
3. The scaffolding of the material/content supported my learning (agreement cline).

Table 3 below summarises the responses from the pre-service teachers across the five video surveys, and the three prompts.

Table 3. Effectiveness of grammar training.

	Number of responses	1. video	2. explanations and examples	3. scaffolding
Sentence structure	45	44(yes) 1(no)	20(SA), 24(A) 1(D)	16(SA), 27(A) 1(D)
Verb groups	37	37(yes)	15(SA), 22(A)	15(SA), 22(A)
Adverbials	34	34(yes)	14(SA), 19(A) 1(D)	12(SA), 21(A) 1 (D)
Noun groups	33	31(yes) 2(no)	12(SA), 19(A) 2(D)	10(SA), 22(A) 1(D)
Cohesive devices	32	30(yes) 2(no)	4(SA), 27(A) 1(D)	6(SA), 25(A) 1(D)
Overall total:	**181**	**176(yes) 97%**	**176(SA or A) 97%**	**177(SA or A) 98%**

These results support the findings above in Table 2 in so far as the students were positive in their response to the grammar training, specifically: the video resources, the explanations and examples provided, and the scaffolding. In these terms, the pre-service teachers were overwhelmingly in agreement and supportive of the teaching opportunities provided to them. From the data above, we see very few instances where the students provided a negative response (less than three percent of the pre-service teachers), either as a 'no' or 'disagree' response to the first prompt referring to the usefulness of the video; the second prompt referring to the helpfulness of the explanations and examples; and the third prompt referring to the scaffolding provided (or otherwise). Put another way, in total, an average of 97 percent of the students agreed that the video was useful, the explanations and examples helpful, and the scaffolding supportive.

We do not take this finding for granted. It could of course have been the case that some, several, or many of the students were not appreciative of the training, and yet still showed growth in their understanding of grammar. In fact, it is not uncommon for students to be overtly negative and critical in their evaluation of their experiences of tertiary education, and their teachers specifically (see e.g. Heffernan, 2022). This was not the case for our study. Knowledge growth occurred, and the videos were deemed effective and supportive.

Conclusion and future directions

Drawing on the pre- and post- quiz results, as well as the survey data, we can conclude that the pre-service teachers in this study, over a three-week period of training, developed their understanding of key formal elements of grammar, and responded overwhelmingly positively to the training provided. Or in direct response to the research question: the pre-service teachers responded especially well to training in grammar (that aims to build their knowledge of language and how it works for the ultimate purpose of deploying LEAP for EAL/D learners). This finding is significant, and not to be glossed over. Given the limited research evidence in the field (noted in Section 1.3), we see this as a valuable contribution, supporting the work of Carey et al. (2015) and Benagus (2021), for example, who demonstrate that the explicit teaching of language categories (or metalanguage), can help develop pre-service teachers' awareness of language structures and how language works.

In terms of the pre-service teachers' response to the training, the survey results have provided some insights into its effectiveness, at least within the limited criteria provided in the survey items. The pre-service teacher cohort overwhelmingly agreed that the videos were effective resources; they appreciated the explanations and examples provided; and they agreed that they were scaffolded sufficiently. As noted earlier in the paper, we acknowledge that our positive results should be read and treated with caution. We do not have enough evidence to establish cause (pedagogy) – effect (student growth) as our study is not an experiment intervention study by design. Also to note is that not every pre-service teacher enrolled in this course participated

in our study. It is likely that those who did participate might have already brought a positive disposition into the study, hence introducing bias, at least to a certain extent.

In terms of future directions, we have two key points. The first is that there is more data to be explored, which was unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper. In particular, some pre-service teachers provided short answer responses which elaborated on their experiences with the training. These may provide further insight into the grammar training: what worked and what did not work. Another direction would be focus group interviews with the pre-service teachers to help 'get at' why they think the pedagogy worked. For example, a working hypothesis of these authors is that the pre-service teachers are extrinsically motivated to learn grammar, in order to effectively deploy LEAP for the assessment of their course, as well as their future teaching practice. In terms of the latter, grammar training in initial teacher education is of course informed by the Australian Curriculum, and presumably pre-service teachers are motivated to learn grammar for this reason alone. However, we do speculate that grammar training for the purposes of a mandated learning and assessment tool, for pre-service teachers who are going to work with EAL/D learners specifically, adds another layer of motivation. In other words, the pre-service teachers need to know grammar urgently and accurately, in order to deploy LEAP. Another important future direction would be an examination of the overall training provided (Table 1). This paper has not considered the critical role of the teacher-student workshop content and follow-up sessions, where the pre-service teachers learnt about grammar, SFL theory, and most importantly, were able to dialogue and recap with their teacher and colleagues regarding the video content.

Our second key point relates to MA and the broader theme of this special issue: initial teacher education and EAL/D learners in the Australian educational context. We hope we have provided some insight into effective training of grammar, for the deployment of LEAP, for the ultimate purpose of assessing, reporting and supporting EAL/D learners in the classroom. In this way, we hope to have contributed to broader calls for teacher learning that supports EAL/D learners (see e.g., Ollerhead, 2016, also citing Hammond [2014]). And on this final point of EAL/D learners, we would like to briefly return to MA, and the work of Myhill (e.g., Myhill et al., 2012, Myhill, 2021). To be clear, this paper does not report on the pre-service teachers' acquisition of a comprehensive MA. It is specifically focused on the pre-service teachers' experience with and understandings of a small set of grammar basics, for the purposes of LEAP, designed especially for EAL/D learners. MA is more than successfully completing a grammar quiz. MA is the power to analyze, control, manipulate, make and justify decisions about language forms and structure. As Myhill (2021) explains: "at the heart of our pedagogic approach is the importance of making connections for learners between a grammatical choice and how it subtly shapes or shifts meaning in their own piece of writing" (Myhill 2021, p. 269). To this end, in terms of future directions for this research, we are not only interested in pre-service teachers' acquisition of a knowledge of grammatical forms, but in their ability to effectively deploy this knowledge (power, control, etc.) in the context of LEAP, and more generally, in the context of any classroom literacy event with EAL/D learners (where applicable and appropriate). To this end, we want to flag another two future directions of this research. The first is to consider the experiences of students in the final weeks of this course as

they attempt to deploy their knowledge of grammar in the context of their LEAP assessment, that is, grammar working in the context of whole texts for the purpose of supporting EAL/D learners (see Section 2). In other words, exploring the pre-service teachers' ability to go beyond recognizing and identifying a grammar category, to being able to do so with respect to the whole text, and even more specifically, in light of the context (genre and register). Second, we see practicum in initial teacher education (that is, field experience in the classroom) as the ultimate demonstration of pre-service teachers' acquisition of metalanguage, grammar and MA more generally. In other words, to what extent does their newly acquired knowledge of grammar transfer to classroom practice? Ultimately, it is hoped that the pre-service teachers in this course are able to apply this grammar learning to actual classroom contexts, in co-operative and supportive dialogue with EAL/D learners, and through LEAP.

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