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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. We acknowledge that the arrival of the English language to this continent impacted the traditional languages and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and celebrate the work to reclaim or maintain these languages. ACTA members teach English in addition to supporting the maintenance and development of First Languages, and encourage the acquisition and use of other languages – including First Nations Languages.

About**TESOL** *in* Context

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ACTA statement

TESOL in Context is a refereed journal with a wide target audience, both national and international. Readership includes TESOL / EAL professionals working in all sectors of education; universities, primary and secondary schooling, early childhood settings, adult migrant programs, vocational training, ELICOS and TESOL teacher education, both in Australia and internationally. Articles published in *TESOL in Context* typically examine the nexus between theory and practice.

The aims of *TESOL in Context* are to:

- provide professionals in the field with insights into TESOL issues in Australia and internationally
- contribute to the development of classroom expertise through dissemination of current research and thinking around TESOL.

For **guidelines** on length and presentation of items submitted to *TESOL in Context*, please consult the Notes for Contributors.

Please note

Views expressed in contributions to *TESOL in Context* do not necessarily reflect those of ACTA.

TESOL *in* Context, Volume 32, No.2, pp. 1-4

Editorial: TESOL in and outside of the classroom: From measuring intervention success to grappling with issues of identity and social cohesion

Averil Grieve
Sharon Yahalom
David Wei Dai
Editors

This issue of *TESOL in Context* contains two articles and two book reviews that illustrate the breadth of the field and scope of *TESOL in Context*.

In their contribution titled *Innovative Progress Tracking: Enhancing Student Achievement with Effective Interventions (EAP)*, Ashley Starford and Ivona Ravlikj report on the results of a longitudinal study that measures the effectiveness of support interventions for international EAL students wishing to enter tertiary education in Australia. The interventions Starford and Ravlikj include in their research are broad and encompass activities to advance international students' abilities to paraphrase, reference and structure their essays, as well as develop students' reading, listening and writing skills for academic study. A key contribution of their paper is proposing innovative ways to systematically track student progress across different programs, leading to customised interventions and improvement in student success and completion rates. They argue that combining tailored support (enabled by systematic tracking of individual student development), with collaboration between academic support services and academic staff, is critical to the success of their ELICOS and Postgraduate Qualifying Programs.

In the second research article titled *EFL preservice teachers' professional identity dilemmas during the last-stage practicum; The case of Chile*, Priscila Riffo-Salgado utilises an in-depth case study approach to explore the complex identity conflicts encountered

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by EFL preservice teachers during their practicum in Chile. Riffo-Salgado situates the discussion in a clear geo-political framework, whereby she highlights how the introduction of the Chilean national English language policy reforms has resulted in many underprivileged students not being able to meet the required B1 standard of English language acquisition by the time they complete high school. Within the resultant social and educational segregation, EFL preservice teachers need to reconcile their theoretical and university-based conceptualisations of good language teaching with the exigencies of local underprivileged school learning and teaching contexts. For example, their conceptualisation of communicative language teaching as being taught fully in English clashes with the translanguaging needs of students in the classroom. The two case studies highlight how allowing local and contextual responsiveness in the ELT curriculum can empower pre-service teacher's identity development and enhance student success in underprivileged educational settings.

The first book review by Ruwani Tharaka Somaratne focuses on the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework outlined by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in the third edition of *Better Learning through Structured Teaching*. Somaratne argues that the book provides a highly comprehensive and accessible explanation of the framework with clear instructions concerning how it can be implemented in the classroom. She highlights how, by inclusion of numerous examples, EAL/D educators can easily understand how the framework can be applied to their various teaching contexts. According to Somaratne, a key strength of the model itself is how it facilitates classroom differentiation and empowers both students and teachers in English language acquisition classes to shape their learning experiences.

The second book review broadens the scope to discuss the contributions of Gabriela Meier and Simone Smala's transdisciplinary scoping review of the literature reported in *Languages and social cohesion: A transdisciplinary literature review*. Haiyan Wang highlights the significance of the book's focus on the relationship between language and social cohesion in an increasingly globalised and post Covid-19 pandemic world. She emphasises the creativity of the author's use of a hexagon pattern to provide a clear visual representation of the complex links between language and social cohesion. Wang also highlights the contribution of the book not only in creating clarity as to the state of research concerning language and social cohesion to date, but

also in terms of how it provides clear guidance for further research.

We hope each member of the diverse TESOL in Context readership will find material in this volume that assists in classroom practices or invites higher level reflection of professional identity and the role TESOL practitioners play in ensuring inclusive practices and social cohesion in an increasingly globalised world.

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TESOL *in* Context, Volume 32, No.2, pp. 5-40

Innovative progress tracking: Enhancing student achievement with effective interventions

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Abstract: *This paper examines the efficacy of academic support interventions provided by the Swinburne College Student Hub for international students enrolled in the Postgraduate Qualifying Program (PQP) or English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). Interventions for PQP students encompass plagiarism checking, paraphrasing, proofreading, referencing, and essay structure guidance, while ELICOS interventions are skill-based workshops focusing on reading, listening, and writing. The study highlights the importance of tracking student progress to refine interventions effectively. Program-specific student trackers were developed, leading to significant improvements in student success rates in assignments and unit completion, as revealed by analysis of empirical data from 2022. The findings underscore the effectiveness of tailored academic support, with implications for enhancing the delivery of support services and improving academic outcomes for PQP and ELICOS cohorts in academic settings.*

Keywords: *English as an additional language (EAL), pathway programs, student tracker, student progress, interventions*

Introduction

After nearly two years of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the reopening of university campuses and international borders in 2022 has allowed international students to resume face-to-face support for their studies. Academic staff can now refer students to academic skills services for in-person assistance with their assignments and the return to campus has provided more opportunities to involve students, academic staff, and academic skills services in the intervention process. Interventions are crucial

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for improving student academic achievement, especially when undertaken at the department or school level (Baik et al., 2016). However, the efficacy of interventions for international student cohorts with English as an additional language (EAL) backgrounds in degree pathway programs requires further research.

In this research, 'intervention' refers to specific actions, approaches, or strategies designed to support student academic success (Sneyers & De Witter, 2016). These interventions aim to enhance academic language proficiency, cultural adjustment, and tailored academic support for EAL students in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and Postgraduate Qualifying Program (PQP) programs, fostering academic success and a smooth transition into Australian higher education. Despite their potential benefits, detailed studies on the implementation of effective interventions for international EAL students in degree pathways, and the role of tracking student progress in improving academic performance, remain under-researched. This gap may be due to historical research focusing on broader student issues rather than specific EAL needs or the challenges of tailoring interventions, which requires collaboration between support services and faculty, along with organisational adjustments and resource allocation.

This study investigates intervention methods used for ELICOS and PQP cohorts at an Australian university and examines their impact on student academic performance. It aims to understand how tracking student progress can improve academic outcomes for international students, especially through collaborative efforts between academic support services and academic staff.

Literature review

ELICOS as an adult context for teaching English

In Australia, ELICOS courses serve as a pivotal context for teaching English to adults, particularly to international students preparing to enter higher education (Hyland, 2018). ELICOS programs play a crucial role in equipping learners with the language skills necessary for academic success, including proficiency in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Weigle & Malone, 2016). These courses cater to diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, providing a supportive environment for students to improve their English proficiency and navigate the academic demands of Australian universities (Fenton-Smith et al.,

2017). Consequently, understanding the role of ELICOS within the broader landscape of English language education is essential for comprehensively examining student experiences and support practices in Australian ELICOS contexts.

The interactive nature of ELICOS EAP classrooms aligns with the principles of constructivism, emphasising communication and knowledge sharing among learners. Applying constructivist theory in EAL contexts can offer insights into the learning processes as it is rooted in active learning and emphasises learners' role in constructing knowledge from their experiences (Sankey, 2020). Learners, according to this theory, build subjective representations of reality by integrating new information with existing knowledge (Crosslin, 2016). In the realm of EAP, which integrates various theories and methods, constructivist theory finds applicability in understanding learning experiences (Asoodar et al., 2014).

In addition to addressing pedagogical challenges, it is imperative for student support services in ELICOS contexts to respond effectively to the diverse needs of learners. EAP pedagogies are essential for fostering learning in such environments, where students are tasked with managing complexities of language acquisition alongside disciplinary content (MacDiarmid & MacDonald, 2021). As educators navigate the dynamic interplay of learning tasks, environments, students, and teachers, student support must align with pedagogical approaches to optimise learning outcomes. MacDiarmid and MacDonald (2021) advocate for continuous exploration and research into EAP pedagogies to meet the evolving needs of diverse learners, such as those in ELICOS contexts, and stress the importance of reflective engagement with classrooms to inform decision-making processes. Furthermore, academic staff should demonstrate innovation and adaptability to address the specific needs of each ELICOS classroom, balancing disciplinary content with language instruction (MacDiarmid & MacDonald, 2021). In essence, effective student support services complement EAP pedagogies by providing tailored assistance, resources, and guidance to enhance the learning journeys of English language learners in ELICOS settings.

ELICOS and assessment

In ELICOS contexts, assessment practices follow institutional and regulatory requirements to ensure effective learning outcomes for international students (Department of Education, 2023). Upon

arrival, students undergo placement assessments to determine their initial class level (English Australia, 2024). EAP courses employ assessments to gauge general proficiency or competency-based learning outcomes and direct entry courses for higher education maintain rigorous schedules that include both formative and summative assessments. Institutions offering ELICOS programs adhere to regulatory mandates, adjusting assessment practices based on stakeholder feedback to meet diverse learning needs and ensure appropriateness across student groups (Department of Education, 2023). Clear assessment policies outline formative and summative components that track student progress, ensuring validity, reliability, fairness, flexibility, and alignment with predefined criteria (Department of Education, 2017). Oversight and moderation mechanisms uphold assessment integrity, supporting student readiness for higher education while meeting rigorous standards.

ELICOS assessments in Australia are designed to prepare students for undergraduate and postgraduate university programs, aligning curricula with specific IELTS band equivalences that assess academic readiness (Weigle & Malone, 2016). These assessments integrate academic, cultural, and ideological dimensions relevant to studying in Australia, influenced by stakeholders like the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, and Cambridge Assessment English (Mauranen et al., 2016). EAP courses monitor student progress through diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments across core skills: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and research project. Each skill area is weighted: listening (20%), reading (20%), writing (20%), speaking (20%), and research project (20%). Ongoing feedback and support are integral to these assessments. Specific assessment tasks include listening and reading examinations, writing workshops, project presentations, and a project assignment spanning Weeks 1 to 5. To successfully pass the course, students must satisfactorily complete all required tasks and assessments, including those from Weeks 1 to 5, to progress to subsequent units.

International students studying in English and academic support

Australia's international education industry has been steadily growing to become one of the Australian economy's largest goods and services exports (Department of Education, 2024). While international student numbers experienced a sharp decline during the COVID-19 pandemic (Department of Education, Skills, and

Employment [DESE], 2020), overall Australian universities have seen a significant increase in the number of international students enrolled in higher education in the past few decades (DESE, 2024a). In Australia, international students are defined as individuals who are enrolled in higher education institutions on a temporary student visa (subclass 500) (Ferguson & Spinks, 2021). International students form a significant proportion of the Australian tertiary education student population (DESE, 2023).

The importance of supporting international students throughout their academic pursuits becomes evident when we recognise the substantial economic and social impacts they have on Australian society (ICEF Monitor, 2020). Beyond their financial contributions, international students significantly enrich the cultural tapestry of Australian society. International students using English as EAL contribute to the diversity of the tertiary education system in Australia (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018; Lin, 2014), which is mostly reflected in the cultural and linguistic differences between students (Lin, 2014). Data also highlights the role of international education in sustaining nearly 250,000 jobs in Australia during the 2018-19 period (Department of Education, Skills, and Employment, 2020b). Notably, Australia's university sector attributes the preference of international students for studying in Australia to the sector's high educational standards, the opportunity to live in a safe learning environment, and the overall quality of life (Universities Australia, 2019).

Before commencing higher education studies, a substantial proportion of these students undertake ELICOS studies (DESE, 2024b). Upon completion of ELICOS courses such as English for academic purposes (EAP), students are able to enter a higher education course through an arrangement called 'ELICOS Direct Entry' (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2023). In recent years, EAP has become a significant part of English language teaching and research (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). The purpose of EAP programs is to equip students with the essential skills for tertiary study while improving English language proficiency (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). EAP courses have been provided to international students to improve their academic English language skills and demonstrate a certain level of English language proficiency before entering their higher education studies (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018;).

A body of research reveals a problematic deficit approach where international students often struggle with English

proficiency, encounter participation issues due to language barriers (Baik & Greig, 2009; Lin, 2014; Warner & Miller, 2015), and experience accent-related communication barriers impacting their confidence and engagement (Ma, 2020). Additionally, deficit-focused research highlights struggles with class participation, writing tasks, and critical thinking skills (Andrade et al., 2014; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). In addition to delivering high-quality education and educational opportunities at our universities, it is crucial to assist international students during their adjustment to studying within the Australian higher education system (Le & McKay, 2018). This involves familiarising students with the academic conventions typical of Western learning and teaching methods, as Australia welcomes students from diverse backgrounds, educational experiences (including those from non-Western educational traditions), and linguistic abilities. Given the unique challenges faced by international students, as they adapt to a new academic environment, including the need to understand academic integrity standards, it is essential to provide customised academic support. Higher education institutions must recognise the importance of offering tailored assistance to international students to ease their transition into the Australian academic landscape. By understanding students' needs and cultural backgrounds, educators can develop English intervention approaches to provide help and support (Wong et al., 2017). Thus, there is a need to develop methods that can support international EAP and postgraduate degree students to enhance their English language proficiency and help them engage with new knowledge and information (Han & Schuurmans-Stekhoven, 2017; Hyland & Jiang, 2021). In this study, we explore how the academic support provided by the Swinburne College Student Hub impacts the learning process of international EAL students with a particular focus on learners in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and Postgraduate Qualifying Program (PQP).

EAP and other postgraduate pathway students may require various support measures throughout their learning journey, including implementing English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as demonstrated in the study by Wong et al. (2017). This involves employing specific teaching strategies aimed at facilitating the learning process (Ayu et al., 2017). Providing crucial information, assistance and programs that help international students meet their educational goals is of high importance for educational

providers (Andrade & Hartshorn, 2019). A number of researchers (Beatty et al., 2014; Pantelich, 2021; Silva et al., 2016) have investigated the effectiveness of the academic and language support programs developed by Australian universities. Pantelich (2021) suggests that even though international students have improved their English proficiency to meet the linguistic demands of their course or degree, they may still benefit from language support services, particularly as they familiarise themselves with their new learning environment. Thus, international EAP and postgraduate degree students can benefit from English proficiency support and resources that will help them progress through their studies and improve their English skills (Lin, 2014). Australian universities, therefore, are looking for ways to academically support the EAP and international postgraduate degree students in enhancing their educational experiences and developing their academic skills. This is often delivered through linguistic and academic support, faculty-based workshops, academic literacy skills sessions, and citation conventions workshops (Lin, 2014). More recently, some universities have increased their support services in the areas of critical thinking, presentation skills, and digital literacy to better reflect contemporary student needs (Pantelich, 2021).

So far, research conducted on specific support programs that assist international students has focused on peer support between host students and international students by attending on-campus social activities (Andrade, 2006), transitions into studying in Australian higher education contexts (Le & McKay, 2018), understanding academic integrity requirements (Fass-Holmes, 2018; Fatemi & Saito, 2020), shifting into learning in English rather than their L1 (Freeman & Li, 2019; Le and McKay, 2018). Ashton-Hay et al. (2016) and Silva et al. (2016) have detailed the types of linguistic support for international students in Australian universities, while Pantelich (2019) has advocated discipline-specific linguistic support approaches. The Swinburne College Student Hub provides international students with varying levels of support in these domains. This article addresses a research gap by analysing student progress tracking through program-specific trackers (e.g., ELICOS and PQP) and its possible impact on student success and unit completion rates.

Interventions applied and their (in)effectiveness

Researchers have examined the types of English language support that educational institutions need or are already providing

(Akanwa, 2015; Andrade et al., 2014; Ashton-Hay et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2016). So far, various intervention methods such as early reading intervention (fluency, comprehension of text, and meaning of vocabulary), one-on-one tutoring, and providing additional support within the classroom have been implemented (Amendum, 2014). While universities in Australia are continuing to review and improve practices to support international students in improving their English language proficiency (Pantelich, 2021), additional active support is needed to help learners improve their English language needs and abilities (Amendum, 2014; Pantelich, 2021; Silva et al., 2016). One of the factors that influences whether an additional language learner can acquire knowledge is the context of the learning environment and its productivity conditions (Serrano et al., 2011). Another factor is the learner's beliefs that impact their learning strategies, motivation to study, and the extent to which to participate in discussions (Lee, 2016).

Upon more detailed consideration of the different interventions used by institutions that offer English language support, it can be seen that some interventions are more effective than others. One-time workshops, as a lone intervention method, have been found ineffective in helping learners achieve their goals (Amendum, 2014). Although attending workshops has positively influenced students' academic skills, a challenge for international students, especially those from non-Western educational backgrounds, is adapting to the academic and language demands in Australia (Freeman & Li, 2019; Le & McKay, 2018). This requires rapid adjustment to a new learning environment, including learning in a language in addition to their existing languages (L1s) It has been argued that higher education institutions have increased their support for international students in recent years (Arkoudis, 2019; Fatemi & Saito, 2019), indicating a positive trend. Research conducted by Freeman and Li (2019) indicates the advantages of integrating support directly into courses and a gap in academic support across disciplines. Much of this assistance is delivered at specific times throughout the semester, typically involving one-to-one support, occasional workshops, or language support (Ashton-Hay et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2016). These endeavours are primarily structured as a 'supervisory framework' rather than continuous, comprehensive support (Silva et al., 2016). Therefore, a more proactive support system that actively addresses the needs of students every week

has been suggested (Pantelich, 2021).

Face-to-face writing sessions that are conducted in a dedicated learning environment on campus can enhance students' understanding of managing their own learning processes (Lee, 2016). This type of workshop differs from a traditional classroom learning environment as it provides a particular space and time for the tutor and the learner to interact outside the classroom (Lee, 2016). One common issue that researchers have found with such workshops is that tutor dominance is often evident in facilitating interactions with the learner (Lee, 2016). A study in New Zealand explored the efficacy of developing writing interventions with a particular focus on improving delivery of instructions (Jesson & Parr, 2019). These interventions incorporate specific instructional focus such as examining texts, combining sentences, and summarising, as well as writing support through collaboration, planning, setting goals, and providing feedback (Jesson & Parr, 2019). Interventions about writing skills are based on the Inquiry Learning Model (a framework using evidence of the learning needs) and the Learning Schools Model (based on classroom observations and analysis of students' strengths and areas for improvement) (Jesson & Parr, 2019). The purpose of these models is to help academic staff develop effective classroom practices for improving learners' writing skills (Jesson & Parr, 2019). Another intervention model used for improving students' writing skills is the Feedback Cycle Model, where feedback is provided on student writing, starting from comprehension of instructions and requirements, through formative evaluation of assignment drafts, to summative assessment (Warner & Miller, 2015). The purpose of the feedback is to identify the areas where students need to improve and help them achieve better results (Warner & Miller, 2015).

Researchers have also examined whether students can improve their academic performance during their studies by participating in discipline-related academic support sessions (Baik & Greig, 2009). In general, Australian university Language and Academic Skills (LAS) programs support international students through English language and academic skills development, academic writing, and oral communication. In addition, supplementary study skills, research techniques, digital literacy, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication are offered (Ashton-Hay & Chancock, 2023; Gleeson & Davison, 2016). Since LAS often focuses on developing generic English skills, faculties

and colleges in Australian universities have developed their own units for providing discipline-related courses and workshops to advance students' academic skills (Baik & Greig, 2009). Thus, researchers have suggested that students are more inclined to attend extra-curricular workshops when the content is closely related to their field of study and when there is a mediator who can interact with students and provide vocabulary that is tightly related to their discipline, resulting in increased comprehension of the topics (Baik & Greig, Pantelich, 2019; Woollacott et al., 2014).

Other researchers have found that when second language learners interact outside of class, their grammatical accuracy and writing skills may improve (Trofimovich et al., 2013). Two programs have been examined that provide: (i) comprehension-based sessions focusing on reading and listening activities; and (ii) traditional sessions that focus on all four language skills (Trofimovich et al., 2013). The comprehension-based model has been found to be more beneficial for learners than the traditional model owing to the greater repertoire of skills covered in the learning materials (Trofimovich et al., 2013).

In this study, we explored the effectiveness of these interventions provided by the Swinburne College Student Hub. For the ELICOS students, we examined the outcome of the face-to-face skills sessions covering the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For the PQP students, we explored the effectiveness of academic and linguistic interventions, such as plagiarism and similarity score checking, paraphrasing support, proofreading, assistance with materials and task comprehension, referencing formatting, spelling and grammar, and essay and report structure guidance. During the intervention process, academic staff and academic advisers provided timely feedback through appropriately detailed annotations on student assignment drafts.

Tracking student progress to develop effective interventions

Teaching requires undertaking important educational decisions based on context. However, teaching actions do not always produce the same results for different learners (Jesson & Parr, 2019). To improve the effectiveness of teaching practice, professional learning for individual academic staff members and the systems where they work is considered a useful approach (Jesson & Parr, 2019). The limited opportunities for academic

staff to get to know their students in a meaningful way is a challenge within large and diverse classrooms comprised of students with different interests, backgrounds, knowledge and learning styles (Woollacott et al., 2014). The more the academic staff member knows their students and their learning capabilities, the more they will be able to assist them in the learning processes of their students (Woollacott et al., 2014). For this reason, universities and colleges are emphasising the importance of academic staff knowing their students to be able to help them throughout their educational journeys (Woollacott et al., 2014).

While Andrade et al. (2014) found that a large proportion of educational institutions do not track student progress or are not aware of how to track progress, higher education providers in Australia track student progress through regular assessment and feedback, attendance monitoring, and academic advising (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency [TEQSA], 2020). They also utilise learning management systems, student records, surveys, and graduation/retention rates to monitor and support student success, facilitating continuous improvement in educational programs and services for students, including those identified to be at academic risk (TEQSA, 2022). Many higher education institutions engage in monitoring and student performance data, and opportunities for improvement in the utilisation of such data by institutions to proactively identify potential academic issues exist (TEQSA, 2020). These institutions use traditional support approaches where a combination of required coursework and additional optional support such as tutorials, skills centres, and workshops are utilised (Andrade et al., 2014). Less than half of Australian higher education institutions track retention and persistence to graduation (Andrade et al., 2014). This creates the need for institutions to develop methods and systems that source data, identify student needs, and track, and support student progress (Andrade et al., 2014). Predicting student performance using educational data mining techniques has been found to assist educators in creating educational intervention materials and strategies, understanding their students, and facilitating the student learning process (Ragab et al., 2021). Such data extraction can provide early diagnostics about specific learners' areas for improvement or unwanted student behaviours (Ragab et al., 2021).

Depending on the university systems, intervention models can be developed by collaborating with educational ministries or

educational institutions may create their own internal measures and systems to facilitate the learning process in students (Jesson & Parr, 2019). Intervention models focus on understanding the teaching processes and their alignment with the learning outcomes for students (Jesson & Parr, 2019) and for each intervention model continuous evaluations are conducted to examine whether the changed practices have been incorporated as required and whether they contribute to increased learning performance (Jesson & Parr, 2019). It is important that the evaluation model is based on sourcing data about how the student is performing or in a certain area (e.g., writing) and accordingly determining any underperformance by using established measures (Jesson & Parr, 2019). Data sources can include student performance over time, academic staff member and student interviews, classroom observations, and survey questionnaires for leaders (Jesson & Parr, 2019). Based on the data sourced, the underperforming behaviours and the intervention needs are determined by the school in the form of an action plan (Jesson & Parr, 2019).

Since 2011, Post-Entry English Language Assessment (PELA) has been implemented in around 65% of all Australian universities (Wong et al., 2017) and has now been implemented by 69% of Australian universities in some capacity (Veitch & Johnson, 2022). Its purpose is to identify incoming international students enrolled in research degrees who may need English-language support and help educators develop targeted interventions (Tynan & Johns, 2015; Wong et al., 2017). PELA can assist students to become aware of their English language skills, while, from the university perspective, PELA can identify students who are at risk of failing due to the level of their English language skills (Wong et al., 2017). Based on the PELA insights, educators can provide support mechanisms and writing assistance (Wong et al., 2017). However, the accuracy and effectiveness in diagnosing students' needs through PELA have been questioned by researchers, especially in terms of negative results and student frustrations due to the assessment being incoherent with classroom pedagogy and the learning processes (Wong et al., 2017). Therefore, universities and colleges should aim to develop course-related English language support mechanisms, which will help international students improve their skills through discussions and written exercises with specifically focused vocabulary in their area of study (Wong et al., 2017).

The Student Hub's approach is to undertake a targeted view of students' progress through the ELICOS and PQP student trackers. The student tracker is an electronic documentation system where academic staff can flag students and add brief comments outlining any concerns or observations related to declining attendance, reduced engagement, poor output, reduced participation, and poor performance of students. Academic staff can tag each other in their comments to ameliorate any lack of face-to-face conversations about student progress. By enabling a whole department view, the student tracker allows academic staff to see if their co-teachers and those delivering other units are experiencing similar behaviours or trends amongst their students.

Methodology

Research setting

The study was conducted at Swinburne College, a private entity that delivers ELICOS and PQP courses in liaison with Swinburne University of Technology. For the ELICOS cohorts studied in this research project, we used data from all EAP and General English (GE) courses from 2022. These courses are five weeks in length, with most assessments taking place in the final week of each term. EAP courses are divided into A and B modules. Courses in the A modules take on a formative approach to assessments, notably with writing, where students are required to complete writing workshop assessments in weeks two, three, and four. This way, students are provided with ongoing feedback to improve their writing skills and academic staff can identify any perceived areas that may require an intervention. GE courses are also divided into A and B modules. In GE courses, both A and B modules include three grammar skill assessments scattered at regular intervals throughout the term. Macro skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) are formally assessed in weeks 4 and 5 of each term. Interventions take place between weeks one and four of each term. There are nine terms in each calendar year and most students study at least two courses. Most of the interventions were recorded before, between, or after students attended ELICOS skills sessions.

We also observed the intervention data for students studying in the PQP program. Unlike the ELICOS cohorts, PQP students are required to complete four non-award units which are designed to prepare students who have not met the English language or academic entry requirements to commence postgraduate study.

Once complete, the program enables guaranteed entry to the first year of a postgraduate degree. The units aim to combine academic studies and English language training by providing students with the required skills for success in postgraduate study disciplines. These include business administration, marketing, social impact, supply chain innovation, practicing accounting, finance and banking, digital business management, information technology, and media and communications. Operating concurrently with other Higher Education (HE) courses, the PQP program runs twice per calendar year. Each unit has four assessments, except for Applied Academic Literacies, which has five.

The ELICOS student tracker

In our centre, each ELICOS class is taught by at least two different academic staff members. The nature of timetabling means that not all academic staff members encounter each other in the staffroom. As such, face-to-face conversations about student progress do not always occur. For example, a student might display a relatively sudden decline in attendance, engagement, participation, or performance. The same student might fall slightly behind or be absent from a couple of classes or ask for an extension on an assignment. In cases like this, if co-teachers are also experiencing these kinds of behaviours, or if other academic staff are seeing similar trends in the behaviours of their students, then appropriate timely interventions will need to be developed to support the student.

Therefore, our approach is to undertake a department-wide view of our students' progress through the ELICOS student tracker. Academic staff can flag students and add brief comments outlining any concerns or observations. Not only do these tags notify the Student Hub, but they also indicate that the student has been referred for academic support. Academic staff can also refer to these comments when they teach students in subsequent teaching terms, thereby remaining up to date in terms of their knowledge of their students. In the follow-up stages, the Student Hub academic advisors will often contact the academic staff of flagged students for their feedback on the particular student(s) in question. This can help determine whether the student is experiencing difficulties in a particular skill (e.g., reading) or if there are other possible underlying issues at play (e.g., the student is experiencing a health issue). A simple colour code is also used

to identify new, repeating, and conceded pass-receiving students. New students are highlighted in blue, repeating students in yellow, and conceded pass-receiving students in green. The Student Hub academic advisors also record student weekly engagement in the intervention process through ELICOS skills sessions attendance and one-to-one consultations.

The PQP student tracker

Like its ELICOS counterpart, the PQP student tracker relies on effective communication between academic staff. Academic staff still record their observations by making comments related to indicators of risk, including declining attendance, reduced engagement, poor output, reduced participation, and poor performance. Academic staff can also tag other each other in their comments to ameliorate any lack of face-to-face conversations about student progress and are required to add any other useful information in the notes section. Taking a department-wide view, academic staff are able to see if their co-teachers and those delivering other units are experiencing similar behaviours or trends.

Three main aspects of the PQP Student tracker make it unique. Firstly, the ELICOS Student tracker is used for five weeks only, as that is the length of each ELICOS term. When each ELICOS term is complete, the engagement data is recorded. When each new ELICOS term begins, the engagement data is removed, commencing students are added, and recently graduated students are removed. However, the PQP student tracker is used for 12 weeks across the duration of the semester, which is in line with the university's higher education calendars. In addition, PQP students undertake and are attached to four units each semester. This contrasts with ELICOS students, who are only allocated one subject code each term. Lastly, owing to the frequency of terms, the ELICOS student tracker uses colour coding to highlight new, repeating, and late-enrolling students. The PQP student tracker does not require this step as the length of the course is longer and each student is inherently new to the course. A snapshot of the PQP student tracker can be seen in Table 1:

Table 1. PQP Student Tracker engagement snapshot.

Student Name	Student ID	Country	Unit Code	Unit Name	Academic staff member	Flagged?	Reason	Ast#1	Ast#2	Ast#3	Ast#4	Ast#5	Notes
Stu_1	xxx	China	Unit_1	Unit_1	xxx	Yes		Fail					
			Unit_2	Unit_2	xxx								
			Unit_3	Unit_3	xxx								
			Unit_4	Unit_4	xxx								
Stu_2	xxx	Cambodia	Unit_1	Unit_1	xxx	Yes		Fail					
			Unit_2	Unit_2	xxx	Yes							
			Unit_3	Unit_3	xxx	Yes							
			Unit_4	Unit_4	xxx	Yes							
			Unit_3	Unit_3	xxx	Yes							
			Unit_4	Unit_4	xxx	Yes							

The study participants

The study was conducted over 12 months beginning in the first week of the five-week ELICOS term in January 2022. In line with higher education commencement dates, the PQP program was included in the study at the beginning semester one in March 2022. Initially, some of the ELICOS students were offshore and studied in a hybrid learning environment, while in Teaching Period 7, hybrid learning environments ceased to be offered. In the semester one PQP cohort, two students were initially offshore and studied in a hybrid learning environment. These two students then arrived in Australia in week 6 of a 12-week semester mid-semester break and completed the rest of the coursework face-to-face. In semester two, all students were studying face-to-face in this study. The participants are summarised in the table below:

Table 2. Number of participants per course.

Course	**Number of students**	**Countries of origin**
2022 ELICOS	553	Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Russian Federation, Thailand, Timor-Leste, The People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, The Republic of China (Taiwan), Türkiye, Vietnam
Semester one 2022 PQP	7	Cambodia, The People's Republic of China, Vietnam
Semester two 2022 PQP	14	Bangladesh, Cambodia, The People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam

Data collection

In this study, each ELICOS and PQP student's academic performance and engagement over the 2022 year was recorded. This was performed using the ELICOS and PQP student trackers. When a student engaged with the intervention process in weeks one to four, an engagement was recorded. For ELICOS students, an engagement was recorded when they attended a skills session, attended a one-to-one meeting, or sought feedback or guidance electronically. Engagements were not recorded in week five as this

is the main assessment window in ELICOS courses. In week five, each student's final course grade was recorded. A snapshot of ELICOS engagement and academic performance in a single teaching term can be seen in Figure 2 in the following text.

Data analysis

From observing each student's final course grade and their engagement in the intervention process, emerging trends were identified, with a particular focus on whether there were more overall pass scores among students who engaged in the intervention process and more fail scores among those who did not engage. The research team also identified academic performance and engagement trends among students who received conceded passes. A similar strategy was adopted when analysing the data from the PQP cohorts. When observing the data, various trends emerged and form the focus of the results section of this paper.

Results

Student performance in ELICOS: Interventions

Table 3 highlights the frequency of ELICOS student engagement in the intervention process. As can be seen, there was significant fluctuation in the number of students in ELICOS programs in each teaching period throughout 2022, particularly in Teaching Period 2 (19 students) and Teaching Period 9 (102 students). These fluctuations were the result of less busy and busier teaching periods as pathway intake deadlines approached. Table 3 shows that approximately 34% of ELICOS students engaged in interventions, while the level achieved (LA) rate for ELICOS courses was 89%. Over 90% of students engaging in interventions passed their ELICOS units, compared to just over 58% who did not engage. Smaller student cohorts in teaching periods correlated with higher incidence of LAs. For level not achieved (LNA), the rate for ELICOS students was around 7%, with approximately 26% engaging in interventions. About 74% of LNAs did not engage in any interventions. Larger cohorts, particularly in teaching periods 4, 7, 8, and 9, saw more LNAs, possibly due to increased variability and resulting in challenges for Student Hub staff in managing interventions. Regarding conceded passes (CPs), the rate for ELICOS courses was slightly above 4%, with a 33% engagement in the intervention process. Overall, the data suggests that student engagement in interventions potentially leads to improved pass rates.

Table 3. 2022 ELICOS level achieved (LA), level not achieved (LNA), and conceded pass (CP) engagement data.

Teaching period	Total number of students in program (per period)	LAs*	LAs who engaged	LAs who did not engage	Number of LNAs**	Number of LNAs who engaged	Number of LNAs who did not engage	Number of CPs***	Number of CPs who engaged	Number of CPs who did not engage
1	48	44	18	26	2	0	2	2	1	1
2	19	19	8	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	59	53	23	30	2	1	1	4	2	2
4	79	70	20	50	7	2	5	2	0	2
5	63	53	27	26	6	3	3	4	0	4
6	38	33	9	24	1	0	1	4	3	1
7	67	62	23	39	5	2	3	0	0	0
8	93	84	30	54	5	0	5	4	1	3
9	102	88	17	71	10	2	8	4	1	3
Total	568	506	175	331	38	10	28	24	8	16

***LA** (Level Achieved) denotes students who passed their unit of study with an overall minimum score of **65%** with no less than 60% in any skill area.

****LNA** (Level Not Achieved) denotes students who did not pass their unit of study.

*****CP** (Conceded Pass) denotes students who passed their unity of study with between **55%** and **59%** in one skill area only (e.g., Reading). This does not include Writing and a **CP** is not possible at an exit point (e.g., EAP 4B into Foundation Studies or UniLink, EAP 5B into undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and the PQP Program).

The intervention sessions were created based on data from previous groups of students to tailor the content to address specific needs identified in those cohorts. Additionally, the interventions are designed to provide each class with opportunities to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, ensuring a comprehensive approach to language support. All students were sent invitations through the university email account to the interventions relevant to their skill level. From terms 6-9, the interventions were held in the Student Hub classroom space once all students were able to return to Australia for ELICOS studies. In addition to attending language skills interventions, academic staff were encouraged to recommend specific students to engage on a one-to-one academic support intervention basis if they were deemed at a higher risk level. Interventions were typically 45 minutes in length, other than Conversation Club (30 minutes). An overview of a typical ELICOS skills interventions timetable can be seen below in Figure 1:

Figure 1. ELICOS skills sessions timetable from Teaching Period 9, 2022.

ELICOS skills sessions TT T922 from November 14, 2022. NOTE: these sessions will be held in XXXX.	
Date	**Session Name**
Monday 10:45am – 11:15am 11:15am – 12:00pm 12:45pm – 1:15pm	 Conversation Club EAP 3 Skills (reading and listening) EAP 3 Writing drop-in 1:1 consultations
Tuesday 10:45am – 11:15am 12:45pm – 1:30pm 1:15pm – 2:00pm 2:45pm – 3:30pm	 Conversation Club Skills Plus (EAP 4A reading and listening) Skills Plus (EAP 4B reading and listening) EAP 4 Writing drop-in
Wednesday 10:45am – 11:15am 1:15pm – 2:00pm 2:45pm – 3:30pm 4:45pm – 5:30pm	 Conversation Club EAP 5A Skills (reading and listening) EAP 5B Skills (reading and listening) EAP 5 Writing drop-in

It is important to note that if a student attended an ELICOS skills intervention, and by extension engaged in the intervention process, it did not mean that they were necessarily categorised as an 'at risk' student. Intrinsic motivation and commitment may have driven this type of engagement to learning, since motivated students often pursue additional opportunities, like skills interventions, to improve their language proficiency. It could also reflect their commitment to achieving their academic goals and preparing for the next phase of their studies, given the tight turnaround between completing ELICOS studies and commencing degree programs.

Engagements were recorded in the ELICOS tracker when a student attended any intervention in any given week. This meant that, for example, if an EAP 3 student attended a Conversation Club and EAP 3 Skills, their engagement was recorded as once for the week, while a student attending EAP 4 Skills once on Tuesday morning also meant one engagement for that week. This approach differs from simple attendance records by focusing on recording engagements based on participation in any intervention within a week, rather than just recording the presence of a student at specific interventions. This approach offers a more holistic view of student engagement, capturing overall participation levels rather than just the frequency of attendance at individual interventions. It also ensured a simpler engagement data collection process, as data was only able to be collected within four weeks in each term, and helped create an engagement snapshot for each term before new terms recommenced every five weeks (Figure 2).

Figure 2. ELICOS Student Tracker engagement snapshot.

Given name	Family name	Preferred name	Student ID	Student email	Country	Course Code	Previous course	Pathway course	Teacher's name	Student flagged/ student referred	Flagged by (teacher's name)	Notes	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total engagement	Last course grade	Final course grade
xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	Vietnam	ENL00012	ENL00012	Foundation Year (Business)	xxxx	Yes	xxxx		ü	ü		ü		3	LNA	LA
xxxx	xxxx		xxxx	xxxx	Cambodia	ENL00012	N/A	Foundation Year (Design)	xxxx					ü	ü	ü	4	NA	CP
xxxx	xxxx		xxxx	xxxx	China	ENL00017	ENL00016	Bachelor of ICT	xxxx	Yes	xxxx				ü	ü	c	CP	LA
xxxx	xxxx		xxxx	xxxx	Thailan	ENL00017	ENL00017	Bachelor of Computer Science	xxxx	Yes	xxxx		ü	ü	ü	ü	4	LA	LA

Student performance in ELICOS: LA, LNA, and CP

As can be seen in Table 3 above, the percentage of ELICOS students who engaged in an intervention throughout 2022 was just under 34%. The LA rate for ELICOS courses throughout 2022 was 89%. Just over 90% of students who engaged in an intervention passed their ELICOS and received an LA in 2022, while just over 58% received an LA without engaging. Generally, the teaching periods with smaller student cohorts had the highest incidence of LAs.

Among the LNA data, the LNA rate for students studying ELICOS courses throughout 2022 was a little under 7%. The percentage of these students who engaged in an intervention throughout 2022 was just over 26%. Just under 74% of students who received an LNA for an ELICOS course in 2022 did not engage in any interventions. As affirmed by teaching periods 4, 7, 8, and 9, when there were more students enrolled in the teaching period, more LNAs were recorded. This is not surprising as larger cohorts generally increased variability and a greater range of results. The increased proportion of LNAs in these terms may also be due to the increased difficulties in managing interventions with larger student cohorts. While students received invitations to the skills sessions relevant to their learning level, ensuring they attend these sessions (and including academic staff in the communication processes involved in the intervention process) is more laborious in comparison to periods with fewer students. Equally, this may help explain why the teaching terms with the fewest total enrolments (teaching periods 2 and 6) had the lowest incidence of LNAs.

Among the CP scores, the CP rate for ELICOS courses throughout 2022 was a little over 4%. The percentage of these students who engaged in interventions throughout 2022 was 33%, while just 67% of students who received a CP in an ELICOS course did not engage in any interventions throughout 2022. The most striking observation to emerge from this data is that when students engage in the intervention process, the probability of their receiving an LA for an ELICOS course is higher. Among the LNAs and CPs, those who did not engage with the intervention process significantly outweigh those who did engage. Therefore, this data indicates that engagement in the intervention process likely results in increased student pass rates. Engagement records also affirm that when students receive an LNA or a CP, they most likely did not engage with the intervention process.

Student performance in PQP units: Interventions

Unlike the intervention process used in ELICOS cohorts, the PQP students were not provided with a regular weekly skills session timetable. Rather, the intervention process began when once a student failed an assignment, which is communicated on the tracker to prevent them from failing the next assignment. Effectively, this intervention is undertaken to prepare students for the next assignment. Some academics also used the tracker to indicate when they believed a student was at risk of failing an assignment, or the unit overall.

As many of the assessments in PQP units were report or essay based, a combination of academic and linguistic interventions was applied to this cohort. Commonly, these included plagiarism and similarity score checking, paraphrasing support, and proofreading. Other students required assistance with materials and task comprehension, referencing formatting, spelling and grammar, and essay and report structure guidance. Student Hub advisers would carefully read student drafts and submissions before providing timely feedback through appropriately detailed annotations.

Student performance in PQP units: Results of interventions

Table 4 highlights when interventions were required for the PQP units in semester 1, 2022. Interventions were required in two of the four PQP units. In Unit 1, two students failed Assignment 1, while one student failed Assignment 1 in Unit 2. However, these students then went on to passing the subsequent assignments following their engagement in the intervention process. One student also failed Assignment 2 in Unit 1 before passing after an intervention. In semester 1, no fails were recorded in Unit 3 and Unit 4. Ultimately, all PQP students passed all their units in semester 1.

Table 4. Semester 1, 2022 PQP engagement data.

Semester 1	**No of students**	**Unit_1**	**Unit_2**	**Unit_3**	**Unit_4**
Assignment 1	total	7	7	7	7
	failed	2	1	0	0
	passed	5	6	7	7
			Intervention		
Assignment 2	total	7	7	7	7
	failed	1	0	0	0
	passed	6	7	7	7
		Intervention			
Assignment 3	total	7	7	7	7
	failed	0	0	0	0
	passed	7	7	7	7
		Intervention			
Assignment 4	total	7	7	7	7
	failed	0	0	0	0
	passed	7	7	7	7
Assignment 5	total	N/A	N/A	7	N/A
	failed	N/A	N/A	0	N/A
	passed	N/A	N/A	7	N/A
Final result	**total number of interventions**	**4**	**1**	**0**	**0**
	passed	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**
	failed	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

As can be seen in Table 5, interventions were required in three of the four PQP units in semester 2. In Unit 1, two students failed Assignment 3. However, these students subsequently passed Assignment 4 following their engagement in the intervention process. In Unit 2, one student failed Assignment 1. Like the previous instance, this student then went on to pass the following assessment after successfully engaging in the intervention process.

Two interventions were administered in Unit 3, while another two took place in Unit 4 resulting in the successful completion of the subsequent assignment. All PQP students passed all their units in semester 2.

Table 5. Semester 2 PQP, 2022 engagement data.

Semester 1	**No of students**	**Unit_1**	**Unit_2**	**Unit_3**	**Unit_4**
Assignment 1	total	14	14	14	14
	failed	0	1	0	0
	passed	14	13	14	14
			Intervention		
Assignment 2	total	14	14	14	14
	failed	0	0	0	2
	passed	14	14	14	12
Assignment 3	total	14	14	14	14
	failed	2	0	1	0
	passed	12	14	13	14
		Intervention		**Intervention**	**Intervention**
Assignment 4	total	14	14	14	14
	failed	0	0	1	0
	passed	14	14	13	14
				Intervention	
Assignment 5	total	N/A	N/A	14	N/A
	failed	N/A	N/A	0	N/A
	passed	N/A	N/A	14	N/A
Final result	**total number of interventions**	**4**	**1**	**0**	**0**
	passed	**7**	**7**	**7**	**7**
	failed	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Discussion

This study found that student engagement with the intervention process, such as attending live language skills workshops, as well as 1:1 academic support session, has a positive impact on their learning processes. These engagements were made visible through the program specific ELICOS and PQP trackers, where academic support staff and academic staff could track student engagement and progress while identifying any additional areas of support. The interventions for ELICOS comprised of language skills sessions conducted at the Student Hub, which is an environment dedicated to study located outside the classroom. This aligns with Heron (2018) and Lee (2016) who emphasised that international students improved their academic skills and English proficiency when attending workshops in a dedicated learning environment on campus. The interventions for PQP students were most effective when implemented as a combination of both academic and linguistic skills assistance, which included plagiarism checking, proofreading, paraphrasing, help with task comprehension, spelling and grammar check, and guidance for writing structure. The positive results of these interventions are in line with the literature where writing interventions have been found to improve student academic and linguistic skills by focusing on sentence structure, text examination and summarising, collaboration with advisers, and setting goals through the learning process (Jesson & Parr 2019). Student advisers providing feedback on the written texts of PQP students, by reading student assignment drafts before submission and providing comments and feedback for improvement, was also found an effective approach in enhancing students' writing skills. This supports the intervention method discussed by Warner and Miller (2015) which helps students improve their writing skills by assisting with task comprehension, and feedback on assignment drafts and assessments.

The development of the student tracker allowed for the reporting of information on the types of interventions needed to help students improve their academic and linguistic skills. Researchers have suggested that educational institutions need to develop methods and systems for sourcing data on students' academic needs and accordingly create educational intervention strategies (Andrade et al., 2014; Ragab et al., 2021). Data recorded in the Swinburne College tracker was related to student performance throughout their studies, students at risk, as well as students who underperform in certain areas such as writing or

in-class discussions. This functionality of the tracker is in line with the model suggested by Jesson and Parr (2019), which was designed to help educators determine the areas of students' underperformance and consequently develop intervention measures. This enables Swinburne College staff and the Student Hub to create specific interventions suited to student needs, as well as to record the student learning progress, refer students who are considered at risk, and cross-check if other co-teachers are experiencing similar behaviours amongst their students.

Developing systems to source data on student progress, needs, and at-risk status, particularly among international students, is recommended for determining appropriate interventions to assist students throughout their learning process. This comprehensive approach is promising for enhancing student outcomes and fostering academic success in diverse educational contexts, not just limited to ELICOS and PQP cohorts. By pooling resources and expertise, institutions can collaboratively develop targeted strategies to address student needs effectively. Continuous data analysis allows for ongoing improvement, ensuring that interventions remain relevant and impactful.

Perceived surveillance and student encouragement

One potential concern with the implementation of tracking and interventions is the perception of surveillance among students. Ethical considerations ensure tracking mechanisms are transparent and respectful of student privacy (Mutimukwe et al., 2022). Communicating the purpose and benefits of these interventions clearly to students and academic staff helps reinforce the primary goals of providing support and enhancing academic success. While tracking student progress is a key component of effective interventions, balancing this with a supportive approach is also beneficial. When tracking is framed as a tool for providing personalised feedback and assistance, students may be more likely to perceive it favourably. By emphasising the supportive nature of these interventions, we can mitigate concerns about surveillance and foster a more encouraging academic environment.

Several best practices are recommended. These focus on the supportive aspects of interventions, clearly communicating their benefits, providing regular feedback, and involving students in the process to enhance their sense of autonomy and control. At an organisational level, allocating resources and facilitating collaboration between academic support services and academic

departments may help ensure that interventions are tailored to meet the unique needs of international EAL students.

Conclusion

This study has investigated intervention methods used for English ELICOS and PQP cohorts at an Australian university and aimed to understand their impact on student academic performance. By investigating the impact of monitoring student engagement needs and progress through a student tracker, the study adds essential knowledge to the field of language education and academic support services. The analysis highlights that student engagement in interventions, particularly in ELICOS courses, can improve pass rates.

Additionally, the importance of proactive approaches to learning should not be underestimated. These initiatives reflect student commitment to academic success and preparation for future studies. Collaboration between academic support services and teaching staff plays a crucial role in administering interventions and fostering student engagement. Interventions in PQP units also contribute to student success, particularly in addressing assignments that a student did not pass and providing necessary academic and linguistic support. The intervention process, initiated when a student did not pass an assignment, can be used to guide students towards successful completion of their units. Overall, the findings emphasise the significance of tracking student progress and implementing intervention strategies collaboratively to ensure improved academic performance.

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EFL preservice teachers' language teacher identity dilemmas during the practicum: The case of Chile

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Abstract: *This article investigates two language teacher identity dilemmas encountered by EFL preservice teachers (PSTs) during their last practicum and how they navigated them to reconcile their identities. Dilemmas, characterised as inner conflicts and challenges PSTs face in resolving contradictory demands and different roles in their profession (Cabaroğlu & Tillema, 2011), can illuminate how PSTs understand their teaching roles and language teacher identity (LTI) amidst the complexities of the teaching practice. The article begins by contextualising the study, presenting an overview of the ELT national curriculum and how this is reflected in the practicum. Next, an exploration of LTI and how dilemmas can serve as tools for reconciling this identity will be drawn. Lastly, findings and conclusions will be presented. This study suggests that a locally responsive ELT pedagogy could empower PSTs to better navigate and transform challenges into valuable learning-to-teach opportunities. Accordingly, caring emerged as a tool for PSTs to better navigate political dilemmas in underprivileged contexts. By integrating contextual knowledge into curricula, PSTs could align their language teaching identities with specific needs, enhancing student engagement, motivation, and success in diverse educational settings.*

Keywords: *Language teacher identity, dilemmas, practicum, sociocultural theory, local ELT pedagogies*

Introduction

Recognised as a tool for accessing the globalised realms of communication, technology, and business (Block, 2017), the teaching and learning of English have a pivotal role in Chilean educational policy. The national policy reforms for English Language Teaching (ELT) have democratised English language learning, ensuring access across schools, whether public or

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private. However, despite this veneer of broader accessibility, a significant gap persists, primarily impacting those unable to afford private education. The post-dictatorship education reforms initiated in the 1990s, aligned with a neoliberal national constitution, have heightened inequalities, and deepened social segregation (Romero, 2022). The implementation of a voucher-school choice system in the 1990s has accelerated the privatisation of education in Chile, leading to the deterioration of public education (Barahona, 2016), transforming them into specialised institutions for low-income students (Gonzalez, 2017). This has resulted in significantly lower English learning outcomes in underprivileged schools. Teachers in such environments feel ill-equipped to meet the curricular language demands, especially in schools characterised by affective-behavioural problems (Yirlom & Acosta, 2016). Although many Chilean educational contexts exhibit these characteristics, limited attention has been given to the experiences of PSTs in these settings (Farrell, 2016), particularly in Latin America, which is marked by profound inequality (Romero, 2022). Despite the challenges and contradictions inherent in the practicum, these features of inequality add to its complexity. Some of these issues, such as inequitable distribution of resources, and teachers feeling unprepared in such environments can lead to LTI dilemmas. Dilemmas are internal conflicts and challenges that PSTs experience in reconciling contradictory demands and different roles in their profession to come up with a comfortable identity (Cabaroğlu & Tillema, 2011). Internal and external constraints, reflecting shared and individual conceptualisations of what good language teachers (GLT) are and do, shaped the challenges encountered by PSTs.

This article explores two dilemmas faced by nine EFL PSTs from a university in the capital of the Araucanía Region, Chile. This administrative division is characterised by high poverty rates and a substantial indigenous population, and it has consistently reported low academic performance on national standardised assessments, limiting social mobility prospects (Casen, 2014). The dilemmas that PSTs experienced are attributed to their understanding of a GLT given the language policy that appear to overlook local contextual issues, coupled with the socio-political context at the time of data collection. This study positions dilemmas as a framework not only for identifying the challenges faced by PSTs during the practicum but also as a tool for PSTs to reflect on their conceptualisation of GLTs.

The Chilean ELT curriculum and school contexts

Since the 1990s, English Language has been mandatory in Chilean public education, encompassing eight years of instruction from year 5 to 12. Periodic standardised national examinations have revealed that many students fail to reach the expected learning outcomes, which should correspond to a B1 level by the end of secondary education (Mineduc, 2009, 2018), except for those in private institutions. According to Matear (2008) and Meckes and Bascope (2012), the difference in English instruction hours, material, and resources, such as the opportunity to sit for international exams and participate in exchange programs abroad, is the cause of the disparity in outcomes. However, these studies often overlook the significant role played by social and economic contextual factors in English teaching (Romero, 2022), which sometimes can result in teachers already harbouring low expectations from their students based on their underprivileged context (Archanjo et al., 2019).

For the past 30 years, the national ELT curriculum has undergone adaptations to meet international demands, particularly emphasising the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT), as outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) guidelines (Mineduc, 2015). However, Kuhlman and Serrano (2017) have noted that the investigation into the suitability of this framework regarding context is limited. This has begun to gain attention in the region (see Banegas, 2017; Kamhi-Stein et al., 2017), in efforts to produce local models. One strategy for local models that has gained prominence is Translanguaging. Translanguaging involves the use of both the first language and English simultaneously during teaching sessions and has proven to be an effective method for developing bilingual or multilingual learners' ESL skills (Conteh, 2018). This approach allows learners to use their existing linguistic knowledge to enhance language acquisition and deeper thinking (Ting & Jintang, 2020), and it could be considered a key teaching practice in ELT (Barahona, 2020). Despite teachers who use the L1 as a scaffolding tool being criticised by monolingual-centric ideologies (Altalhab & Said, 2024), this strategy can enable PSTs to navigate their identity in diverse and challenging settings. However, there is still a gap in ELT programs addressing teaching in underprivileged contexts in superficial ways, which, as demonstrated, falls short in adequately preparing teachers to navigate and adapt to these specific circumstances (Sleeter et al., 2016).

The language teacher education programme

The programme under study, like many Chilean LTE programmes, adopted a hybrid structure with linguistic and practicum components beginning in the second year of the five-year programme (Barahona, 2016). Despite the integral nature of linguistic and pedagogical skills in the language teacher knowledge base (LTKB), ELT training tends to disproportionately emphasise linguistic or disciplinary skills, validating non-native English teachers' expertise (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007). This linguistic emphasis perpetuates the misconception that English language mastery equates to better teaching practices. Despite Shulman's (1987) call for integrating content and pedagogical understanding, LTE programmes, particularly in non-native speaker contexts, still favour linguistic skills over pedagogical ones (Abrahams & Silva Rios, 2017). In Chile, the Guiding Standards for English Pedagogy (Mineduc, 2014) encompass both disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge. However, pedagogical standards cover the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for LTE programmes' graduates, regardless of their teaching subject (Mineduc, 2014), whereas seven out of the ten disciplinary standards focus solely on the knowledge of language and its constituents. This demonstrates the clear preference for language knowledge over teaching skills.

The practicum

The practicum serves as a crucial platform for PSTs to familiarise themselves with diverse teaching environments, aiding in mediating learning and consolidating knowledge acquired through school placements and academic trajectories (Pennycook, 2004). However, Barahona (2019) highlights in her study on EFL Chilean practicums that many supervisors, often teacher educators, lack familiarity with the school context, potentially resulting in insufficient guidance for PSTs. Experiences during the practicum may diverge from anticipation, entailing incongruent expectations, contradictory messages, and emotional variability (Mattsson et al., 2011). PSTs may feel disempowered in their teaching roles, with the university and school exerting control, leading to ongoing friction and misaligned expectations (Nguyen, 2017). Despite increased practicum exposure and early immersion in the school setting (Schuster-Muñoz et al., 2010), translating learnt concepts into practice remains challenging for PSTs, compounded by limited authority and resulting in a lack of confidence in exercising agency. To address this, Glas (2014) suggests PSTs be offered

external avenues to navigate issues and personal constraints. The practicum also serves as a platform for PSTs to meet their imagined selves and form their professional identities, which is a critical focus of this study.

Language Teacher Identity

Language teacher identity in LTE, has garnered significant attention in the past decades (Kayi-Aydar, 2019), drawing insights from diverse disciplines and ELT-related research areas like beliefs and cognitions, facilitating a nuanced understanding of LTI. Although until the socio-cultural turn in LTE (Freeman & Johnson, 1998), studies acknowledged that a sociocultural perspective allows to understand the complexities of LTI, particularly when incorporating context-related issues (Johnson, 2009). Sociocultural theory stresses that L2 teaching is not merely about applying linguistic theories but entails a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge within specific sociocultural contexts. Scholars like Canagarajah (1999), and Kumaravadivelu (2003) have enriched this understanding, linking language teaching to neoliberal ideologies, power dynamics, and identity complexities, especially among non-native speaker teachers in ELT contexts. Recent research highlights the link between LTI and agency, emphasising the necessity of reflecting on personal practice and making informed contextual decisions (De Costa & Norton, 2017). Mockler (2011) contends that LTI serves to guide educators in aligning their beliefs with professional practice for enhanced effectiveness while politically positioning teachers against utilitarian and neoliberal ideologies and advocating for a more inclusive and transformative education system. Equally, Block and Gray (2012), have linked LTI to society's material and economic structures. Integrating social class into identity discourse has the potential to improve our understanding of professional identity. Despite international ELT discourses often neglecting challenges encountered by teachers in diverse contexts, Akbari (2008) sheds light on situations where teachers, grappling with long work hours and insufficient pay, prioritise familiar provision over embracing transformative social identities, considering the precariousness of their livelihoods.

When teachers enter the teaching profession, they actively negotiate their identities. Morton and Gray (2018) observe that in this dynamic journey of LTI, PSTs must reconcile compromises that challenge their personal beliefs or identity, which are usually

shaped by both external recognition and self-recognition. This process can involve a painful ontological shift, suggesting that PSTs undergo a profound and occasionally arduous transformation in self-understanding, existence, and purpose during their journey of learning to teach. Studies in Latin America (Kuhlman & Serrano, 2017) and similar (Altalhab & Said, 2024) demonstrate teachers struggles with identity conflicts and feelings of inadequacy, particularly regarding achieving 'native-like' language proficiency. These challenges diminish professional confidence, constrain exploration of pedagogical domains, and create a complex relationship between subject content and pedagogical knowledge in language teaching. Given its complexities and ongoing change, LTI could benefit from being understood as a dilemma to provide a framework that can illuminate the constraints faced by PSTs.

Understanding Dilemmas

While the practicum is widely recognised as a crucial phase for PSTs to familiarise themselves with teaching practices, it is not without complexities and tensions, as mentioned earlier, which may influence the development of LTI. The significance of dilemmas in teaching and learning arises from the well-established gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Cabaroğlu & Tillema, 2011; Windschitl, 2002), and can provide a useful framework to understand the complexities encountered by PSTs. Investigating the origin and resolution of these dilemmas within the context of the practicum provides valuable insights, since it is essential to carefully consider the specific context in which the practicum takes place, as it significantly influences the nature of the dilemmas encountered by PSTs (Ponte et al., 2004).

Drawing on the broad literature on dilemmas, a LTI dilemma is characterised by teaching decisions needed to be made even in circumstances where none of the available choices are optimal. Examining LTI dilemmas can illuminate the daily challenges faced by PSTs during their placements, and comprehending these dilemmas can facilitate the reconstruction of learning-to-teach practices and the re-evaluation of LTKB within a national context.

The study

This study shows part of my doctoral research, which aimed to explore what a GLT is from the PSTs' perspectives to explore LTI development. Employing qualitative research methods (Patton,

2023), a case study design was crafted to deeply examine the experiences of nine PSTs, alongside fourteen other participants including host teachers, mentors[1], and supervisors, who played crucial roles in facilitating the practicum process and assisting PSTs in resolving dilemmas encountered during their training. PSTs were placed in secondary education classes from year 8 to year 11, where they were assigned one class and needed to support the host teacher or mentor with another class. They usually spent three to four hours of teaching per week with their class and had to complete some time at the placement, including head teacher duties. This study sought to comprehend the challenges faced by PSTs in aligning their professional identity as aspiring language educators with the practical realities encountered during the practicum.

To ensure the validity and reliability of this qualitative research, diverse methods were used to understand PSTs' perceptions of their teaching practices during their 16-week practicum in the second semester of 2019. These included semi-structured interviews (SSIs), direct lesson observation to be used for stimulated recall interviews (SRIs) and a focus group (FG). See Table 1 for a breakdown of methods used per participant.

Table 1. Methods used to collect data per participant.

Participants	**Method**	**Number**
9 Preservice teachers	Semi-structured interviews	18 of each p/p
	Stimulated recall interviews	
	Focus group	1 as a group
5 Teacher educators (supervisors) 2 Mentors 5 Host teachers	Semi-structured interviews	18 of each p/p
Head of the programme	Semi-structured interviews	1 p/p

(1) In this study, mentors are schoolteachers who underwent a mentoring programme-which does not exist anymore- offered by the same university. These mentors followed the supervisory guidance from the LTE programme but had a formation on mentoring.

The analysis began during data collection, with the first emerging themes identified through interviews and observations of PSTs, where the first emerging themes were identified. Identity, understood as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by participation in communities of practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1999), was explored in classifying themes within sociocultural tools (Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2003), namely cultural artefacts and activities, cultural concepts, and social relations. Through both inductive and deductive approaches, patterns and themes that encapsulated the LTIs encountered by PST were identified (Patton, 2023). Thematic analysis proved pertinent in presenting rich and detailed accounts of data (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Table 2. Participants distribution across schools.

School	Preservice teachers	Supervisors	Supervisor number	Mentors	Mentor number	Host teachers	Host teacher number
Sch1	Rose Josie	Pia	-	Pia	M1	 Christopher	 HT1
Sch2	Robert Norah Pamela	Gala Cynthia	S1 S2	- -	- - -	Amy Clarence N/A	HT2 HT3 HT4
Sch3	Carina Susan	-	-	Giannina	M2	-	-
Sch4	Frank	Cynthia	S2	-	-	Christian	HT5
Sch5	Beatriz	Lily Lydia	S3 S4	-	-	Claire	HT6

Five schools, either voucher-funded or public, served as placements for PSTs (See Table 2). Four of these schools concentrated high numbers of vulnerable students, which means they were facing social, economic, psychological, cultural, or environmental challenges (JUNAEB, 2005). It is also relevant to mention that a social uprising emerged as a spontaneous social movement by mid-October, sparked by a public transport price increase and demonstrations that quickly led to police brutality (Phillips, 2019). Chile witnessed a spontaneous nationwide movement challenging deep-rooted issues tied to the constitution established during Pinochet's regime. Neoliberal reforms and the weakening of the state have widened the gap between the wealthy and underprivileged in Chile. The 2019 social uprising, marked by

unprecedented violence and human rights violations (INDH, 2020), prompted calls for a new constitution. However, despite two referendums, the nation remains dissatisfied with the outcome. This backdrop influenced the PSTs experiences, giving rise to two key dilemmas during data collection.

Dilemmas encountered

This section examines two key dilemmas faced by PSTs and the strategies they use to navigate them. The first dilemma involves PSTs' decisions to teach only in English, while the second dilemma arises from societal unrest, which influences their decisions on political identity in their teaching placements.

Dilemma 1. Should I teach English in English only?

> *The ideal thing would be to speak in English 90-100% of the time.* (Robert, SSI1)

During fieldwork, participants consistently stressed the importance of having a strong command of English to be considered a GLT. This section explores how the need for a proficient command of English, especially in its oral use in the classroom—reflecting the participants' understanding from the data—presented a persistent dilemma for PSTs.

PSTs may have viewed English-only instruction as essential to the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This could present a conceptual dilemma, reflecting a struggle with understanding the epistemological underpinnings of CLT (Windschitl, 2002). CLT prioritises meaningful communication as both the means and end of language learning, emphasising real-life communication and authentic language use (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Supervisors emphasised the significance of conducting English lessons exclusively in English, a concept that PSTs first endorsed in the SSIs conducted at the start of the practicum. This conceptualisation could stem from PSTs' instructional experiences and supervisor expectations, as well as being a requirement for assessment during lesson implementation. M1 expressed,

> *A good language teacher should have a good domain of the four skills and use them at all times.* (SSI1)

This GLT understanding, echoed by other mentors and supervisors, may explain why PSTs constructed the idea that

having a good command of the L2 entitled them and guaranteed them success at teaching English. Entrenched within the ELT programme, which heavily emphasises linguistic features (Veliz, 2021; Veliz & Veliz-Campos, 2019), PSTs believed that acquiring this knowledge would grant them the credibility and confidence needed to effectively deliver lessons in English and facilitate student learning. However, this practice presented more difficulties than expected for reasons pertaining to both the PSTs and the teaching contexts. The school context was the first issue encountered when attempting to use only English.

PSTs considered their placement to be too distant from what they had learned at university; underprivileged contexts, students' low English levels, and school culture expectations hindered them from embracing this LTI.

Pamela voiced,

> *When we attended teaching seminars, language teacher educators presented videos featuring a classroom with eight highly motivated students proficient in English. However, our classrooms typically contain thirty-five students, (…). It's not comparable; how can I teach such a class without the same students, facilities, or even basic resources?* (SSI1)

This finding is consistent with that of Romero (2022), where she discovered that PSTs felt unprepared to face the reality of vulnerable contexts, describing their university instruction as unrealistic and impossible to apply in numerous classes. Given the prevalence of disadvantaged school placement contexts, PSTs did not believe they possessed the necessary tools to navigate the encountered situation, especially considering the requirement to always use English.

Following this same idea, another salient issue was realising students' level of English was significantly lower than they were supposed to as per national curriculum standards. This resulted in PSTs not having sufficient time to complete their lessons as scheduled, which was also a component of their assessment. PSTs found themselves between choosing to finish their lessons on time or using more English, which would sometimes result in students losing attention and PSTs not feeling in control of the class.

> *The only way to shorten the activity and simplify it is by reducing the use of English in the classroom.* (Rose, SRI1)

This dilemma conflicted PSTs' language identity between what they were expected to do, wanted to do, and what they could actually do in the classroom. Some of the PSTs, after personal reflection or having discussed with mostly mentors, adapted the way they used the L2.

> *My first implementations were... classes in English, as they should be, but students didn't understand much. (...) What I do now is something in English and something in Spanish.* (Susan, SRI2)

Adapting the way the L2 was used functioned as a strategy both to embrace PST's professional identity and to be able to carry out an effective class. This approach aimed to prevent students from feeling lost and facilitate better understanding. Even though this was not the way the university programme instructed, it proved effective in that context. Additionally, having a mentor who worked at this placement allowed for greater flexibility in implementing Susan's lessons in English, with the support of the L1, as the M2 was familiar with the context and understood why Susan would not use an English-only approach. This could be identified as the use of translanguaging (Conteh, 2018), which despite its criticism by monolingual-centric ideologies (Altalhab & Said, 2024), worked as a key ELT practice (Barahona, 2020) for Susan to scaffold the L2 and to engage language learning (Ting & Jintang, 2020), This strategy enabled her to navigate her LTI in this context (Glas, 2014), by drawing on her personal experiences and reflecting on what could truly be effective in her particular context.

In the same vein, another PST with a more equipped language skills repertoire was able to construct and reconcile her LTI by using past personal learning experiences (Malderez et al., 2007).

> *I think it's good for them to listen to English as much as possible. (...) At least I learnt that way.* (SRI1)

Having studied in a bilingual school, Pamela demonstrated a willingness to create opportunities for students to learn, regardless of their low level of English. During lesson observations, Pamela noted varying English levels in the class. Instead of solely using Spanish, as some PSTs did for universal comprehension, she tailored the English language and vocabulary to the students' proficiency. She could relate her learning experiences to teaching

English using the L2, but judiciously (Cook, 2001). Susan, on the other hand, gradually increased the use of English by demonstrating consistency to her students, which over time demonstrated that learners became familiar with the vocabulary and expressions used frequently.

Despite having B2 or C1 English proficiency, PSTs still struggled to use L2 effectively in classrooms, demonstrating that the issue lies in their pedagogical content knowledge, revealing a gap in tailoring teaching to student needs. This highlights the need for LTE programs to address teaching in diverse, underprivileged contexts beyond aesthetic approaches (Sleeter et al., 2016).

When PSTs had the chance to try out strategies, with personal reflection and often guidance from host teachers and mentors, they made beneficial adaptations. Those who used more English found that increased exposure led to greater student learning, though they recognised it as a gradual process extending beyond the practicum.

Dilemma 2. Affording a political identity as a preservice teacher.

> *There were times when tear gas was thrown near me, and I heard gunfire." I quickly fled the demonstration.* (Pamela, SRI2)

As previously stated, data collection occurred during a period of social turmoil, with PSTs halfway through their practicum when the upheaval struck. To ensure the wellbeing of PSTs, the university instructed them not to attend their placements during the two most turbulent weeks. On their return, PSTs encountered a scenario where the four out of the five school placements had a 'back-to-normal' agenda. PSTs were challenged by the socio-political context and the dilemma of adopting a political identity, understanding this as questioning institutional norms and disrupting privileged routines that may encounter resistance from school stakeholders (Windschitl, 2002).

The fact that four of the five school placements chose to blur the topic clashed with PSTs' language identities that identified as political and could have served to advocate for a more inclusive and transformative education system (Mockler, 2011). By addressing the deficit in a socially just education system for disadvantaged learners, the integration of critical thinking skills into English language pedagogy can play a significant role in

fostering more equitable learning opportunities for all students (Veliz, 2021; Veliz & Veliz-Campos, 2019). However, PSTs soon recognised how the school placements suppressed this event, and they were expected to follow accordingly.

> *I didn't agree with teachers saying to students that everything was normal, as if these demonstrations were holidays. I thought, how are we creating this bubble at school? We know students are seeing violence every day, and they're not OK. One can't expect students to want to learn the present continuous because they have a test the following day. I didn't want to be that teacher, but I didn't think the school would have let me have some conversations with students.* (Pamela, SRI1)

Pamela expressed her disagreement with this situation, but as a PST, she understood she was not at a hierarchy level where she could start this conversation. It has been long reported that PSTs experience power issues during the practicum (Mattsson et al., 2011). These experiences may hinder appropriate reflection and do not offer opportunities for PSTs to embrace a political identity. However, Pamela herself found ways to address this in the private scene. She managed to get close to students and used care as a tool to navigate this dilemma.

> *This has motivated me to get to know students more. It's important to know our students and how they are processing things. I think we have looked at each other more as humans. (Pamela, SRI1)*

Pamela found ways to broaden the spectrum of skills required to be a GLT and caring seemed to be a form of resistance towards the school agenda.

At Sch1, Rose argued,

> *I haven't even heard conversations in the staff room when teachers know that most of this uprising has to do with inequalities in education, which we witness every day with students. I feel teachers are scared to lose their jobs.* (SSI2)

Although Rose did not agree with the school approach towards the social unrest, she did not feel she could do something about it and understood teachers were not in a position to get involved politically as they needed their job. The disengagement of a political identity from the school staff is comparable to the

findings of Akbari (2008), who highlighted that in precarious contexts, teachers cannot afford to be politically active at the expense of losing their jobs. This, in turn, supports the relationship between class and adopting a political identity (Gray & Block, 2012).

Other participants were also conflicted, and even though they were in a more powerful position than PSTs, they still struggled to adopt a political LTI. HT6 said,

> *At school, there was not enough space for students to discuss. There was a feeling of I'm here teaching while there is a barricade on the corner.* (SSI2)

HT6 went on to explain that she was aware teachers should be agents of change but realised the school agenda was far from promoting democratic conversations in the classroom.

One of the placements provided spaces for students to discuss this matter in a safe environment. HT5 says,

> *We had regular meetings (…). Then, both staff and students cast their votes, leading to a democratic strike. And students responded accordingly.* (SSI2)

This school took this as an opportunity to reflect collaboratively within the community. Unlike other schools, Sch4's school culture benefited from this experience and grew closer as a community.

As Frank voiced,

> *There was a union and sense of community at school between teachers and students. And students had the space to demonstrate with the support of teachers.* (SSI2)

As Romero (2022) asserts, collaboration and community are very important in marginalised contexts. Frank's political identity helped him to develop a better relationship with students.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, two specific dilemmas were explored to understand how PSTs navigated the challenges that emerged for them to reconcile their professional identities. As articulated by Morton and Gray (2018), PSTs undergo ontological discomfort during this period, encountering mismatches between university instruction, how they understand the ELT profession, and their teaching context. Some of the strategies used by PSTs to navigate

those dilemmas were to use translanguaging to create more context-responsive lessons based on the school and students' needs. Notably, caring emerged as a valuable tool for PSTs, aiding not only in building connections with students but also in navigating conflicting political identities. But most importantly, having spaces to meaningfully reflect on practices and being provided spaces to manoeuvre were highly valued by PSTs.

One of the challenges stemmed from the LTE programme's structure and instruction, which, at times, failed to consider context, leaving PSTs to choose between concentrating on disciplinary knowledge, as required by university instruction, and addressing school-specific contextual issues. This led PSTs to a sense of discouragement and the realisation that their training may not align with local standards. However, PSTs who demonstrated awareness of their students' contexts, coupled with reflective and agentive approaches, exhibited better student engagement.

This constraint is a result of perceived control by either the school or the university. During the social uprising, PSTs were expected to conform to the school's norms without voicing concerns about injustice or irregularities. This conflicting expectation may have left PSTs in a confusing position, as they were urged to adopt a social justice identity in constrained and precarious contexts that they could not openly adopt in most cases. Although, in contexts where a political identity was embraced, it was proven meaningful to be used as a learning collaborative experience.

The study suggests that LTE programmes, often distant from the reality of disadvantaged schools, should adopt a more flexible approach involving the school community in co-creating a suitable language professional identity (Romero, 2022). The findings call for a rethinking of contextualised LTE programmes to better support PSTs in their professional identity transformation. Some recommendations include providing opportunities for PSTs to reflect on LTI dilemmas. During the practicum, recognising PSTs as professionals with agency can have a significant impact on their ability to construct a context-responsive LTI. Collaborative spaces involving researchers, teachers, and PSTs can help produce a more context-responsive framework, creating a more aligned local LTI.

Overall, this study contributes to understanding the complexity of PSTs' language identity transformation, highlighting

that the use of dilemmas can help in reflecting and understanding these complexities and serve as a tool for language teacher educators, teacher practitioners, and PSTs to reflect on their conceptualisation of good language teachers.

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TESOL *in* Context, Volume 32, No.2 , pp. 63-66

Book reviews

LANGUAGES AND SOCIAL COHESION: A TRANSDISCIPLINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Gabriela Meier and Simone Smala

Meier, G., & Smala, S. (2021). Routledge

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Language and Social Cohesion: A Transdisciplinary Literature Review by Gabriela Meier and Simone Smala is a timely and highly topical review on the connection between language and social cohesion in the age of globalisation.

Social cohesion is a topic increasingly debated in public and gaining attention in academia, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic and a rise of conflict around the globe. This book complements general understandings of social cohesion, economic integration, global labour markets, national identity and immigration (e.g. Walter, 2020) with much needed research on the relationship between language and social cohesion in current social contexts. The subtitle of the book indicates that the work is "a transdisciplinary literature review", whereby transdisciplinary, as explained by the authors, contains two folds of meaning; first, the overlapping of different academic disciplines; and second, researchers across disciplines working together on research topics of practical significance.

The intended readership of the book is anyone with an interest in tension and conflicts between languages and communities. Through a thematic analysis of 285 research articles from 50 countries published between 1992-2017, the book provides an extensive transdisciplinary scoping review of literature that links languages and social cohesion. The authors propose a five-dimensional framework to dissect the influence of language use on social cohesion, particularly in terms of how societies affect language and how languages are organised in a society. The book clearly highlights how social cohesion is of great significance to any society and purports socially cohesive societies are more resilient and able to cope with challenges than divided societies. It

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suggests that a socially cohesive society might be described as one that is bound together by the same language, culture, and traditions. The book then unpacks this rather broad statement via research findings in applied linguistics and research literature across different disciplines.

Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction of the reasons for writing the book, namely that in a globalised world with linguistic diversity, maintaining social cohesion can be a challenge. Apart from an overview of the content, the authors also introduce two key concepts underlying this book. First, the authors provide a conventional concept of language as a stable system that can be studied. In addition, they highlight language as a means of identification and social practice, where it can be used as a political construct and interface of struggle. Second, borrowing on concepts such as social integration, community cohesion and social inclusion, the authors draw on updated sociological research findings to develop a working definition of social cohesion for this book. Their definition focuses on social cohesion as shared norms and values in a society on which people can build social trust, social networks, and a sense of belonging.

Chapter 2 draws on a scoping review of literature on different transdisciplinary perspectives to establish and link theoretical concepts of languages and social cohesion. It first discusses how languages affect society, then it investigates how social cohesion impacts on the language use of a society. This chapter ends with a transdisciplinary framework offering two dimensions of analysis to examine the relationship between language and social cohesion: 1) observable–analysis of social networks; and 2) invisible–analysis of social norms and sense of belonging.

Chapter 3 reveals the research methods employed for identifying relevant studies and the thematic analysis used for understanding the data. The authors conducted a systematic scoping review of literature and provide a quantitative description of criteria for choosing the 285 articles from 50 countries between 1992 and 2017 after screening an initial 16625 articles. The authors elaborate on how they employed thematic coding and synthesis as a data analysis method to generate five main themes from the data. While justifying the scoping review of literature published between 1992-2017 as research method for this study, the authors acknowledge the English-language bias in academic contexts and recognise that they may have missed possibly

relevant articles in languages other than English.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. In their review of the 285 articles, the authors crystalised five overarching themes to understand the connection between languages and social cohesion: Theme A highlights how social networks and access to resources through languages affect social cohesion. Theme B unpacks how language norms are related to social groups and substantiates the complex nature of norm-based social relations and linguistic repertoires. Theme C focuses on languages and group belonging and confirms linguistic allegiance as a complex affective factor shaped by historical and social context and individual identity. Theme D encompasses manifestations of linguistic behaviour that integrate or divide a society. It highlights how individual behaviour is guided by language ideologies and language behaviour can be used to integrate or divide language groups. The last theme (Theme E) continues to investigate manifestations of language behaviour, but from a top-down perspective. It analyses how social language behaviour can be informed by language policy and language planning methods such as institutional language regulation. Theme E exposes the controversial nature of language policy and language regulation; and raises awareness that language policy and implementation can polarise a society or pose a threat to social cohesion.

Chapter 5 is the brainchild and embodiment of the authors' creativity and originality. The authors ingeniously use a hexagon knot with six points and interconnecting loops to clearly demonstrate the intricate and complex interconnections and interrelationships between languages and social cohesion. The proposed six perspectives – behavioural, organisational, emotional, ideational, distributive and contextual – complement the literature on social cohesion and provide a multifaceted, systematic, and nuanced way to view the interconnection between language and social cohesion.

Critique of the book

Meier and Smala's contribution to applied linguistics and issues of social cohesion is timely, particularly in terms of its topical value in post Covid-19 pandemic conditions brimming with conflicts and clashes. Social cohesion affects how well people can work together and trust each other in a society. In an increasingly pluralised world under globalisation, with clashes and crashes in ideological values and cultural practices, it is crucial to develop a

complete understanding of the connection between language use and social cohesion. They have combed through the literature of various overlapping fields to provide a systematic framework to scrutinise the links between languages and social behaviours, social practice and social cohesion.

The authors creatively apply a geometric hexagon pattern to visualise and simplify the intricate complexity of links between language and social cohesion. Further demonstrating the originality of the book, they also sum-up the findings of their scoping review of literature with a series of well-formulated questions informed by six perspectives to inspire further dialogues and investigations on language related issues. These inspiring questions for future study reflect the authors' ambitions to transform the knowledge and distinctive insights gained from their transdisciplinary review into practical and accessible significance, prompting further consideration of how multiple languages and diverse beliefs can coexist in a globalised world.

As acknowledged by the authors, the research is heavily biased toward English-language articles published in mainly in English-mediated peer-reviewed journals with only few research papers providing data from other areas, such as China. If the authors were to publish a future edition of the book, a recommendation would be to examine social cohesion from a more complete angle including factors, such as multi-languages and heteroglossia. More non-English articles could also be added to explicate the complexity of how a national language or languages may play a role in enhancing social cohesion or addressing social disruption.

In conclusion, this insightful book is highly recommended for those who study, work, or conduct research in any field related to language, identity, and cohesive society studies. The transdisciplinary scoping review of literature, rigorous analysis, and distinct insight contained in this book make it a must-read to unpack the nuanced and complex role that languages play in the operation of society and may provide readers with new perspectives on the role of language in social conflicts facing the globalised world.

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TESOL *in* Context, Volume 32, No.2 , pp. 67-70

Book reviews

BETTER LEARNING THROUGH STRUCTURED TEACHING: A FRAMEWORK FOR THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY (3RD ED.)

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2021).

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In contemporary classrooms, the implementation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework (GRRIF) is characterised by the consistent use of terms such as "I do", "We do", "You do together", and "You do alone" (Fisher & Frey, 2021, p. 4). In their 2021 updated edition of *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching (BLTST)*, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey bring forth a thorough explanation of how GRRIF is enacted. This book addresses the challenges teachers face in delivering the subject content to socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse classrooms particularly emphasising the importance of effectively differentiating instructions for students with varying abilities to ensure successful learning outcomes. Fisher and Frey contend that structured teaching plays a vital role in achieving this objective.

Book overview

The authors, both professors of educational leadership at San Diego State University and teacher leaders at Health Sciences High and Middle College, ground their conceptual framework in extensive intellectual and empirical expertise. Divided into six chapters, the book comprehensively covers all four phases of the GRRIF and offers resources for effective implementation, including exemplars and lesson plans. Chapter 1 delves into the authors' philosophical stance on teaching as both an art and a science, accentuating the critical role of instructional frameworks in the science of teaching and using examples from classrooms which clearly muster both art and science. The subsequent four chapters provide detailed explanations of each phase of the

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GRRIF: Focused Instruction, Guided Instruction, Collaborative Learning, and Independent Learning. The book concludes with a chapter addressing the challenges educators face when implementing GRRIF in their classrooms and what leadership expects for successful execution. Finally, the authors stress the importance of self-reflection by providing guiding questions for educators using the GRRIF.

Their first edition of *BLTST* was published in 2008, followed by the second edition in 2014. In this newest third edition (2021), the authors have updated the chapters to reflect modern developments of pedagogical practices. The chapter on focused instruction, has been revised to emphasise methods beyond teacher modelling to engage students and foster cognitive apprenticeship experiences. Guided instruction is highlighted as essential with added focus on scaffolding techniques in Chapter 3. The revised collaborative learning chapter places more prominence on student collaboration, drawing insights from professional learning groups to inform the concept of student learning communities. Chapter 5 prioritises the role of practice in independent learning, stressing its importance in solidifying learning. Throughout all the chapters, adaptation of distance and blended learning experiences are evident due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The most prominent modification visible in the chapters detailing the four phases of GRRIF, is the approach to assessment, with an emphasis on real-time data collection and analysis to inform instructional decisions.

Why BLTST is important for EAL/D educators?

This book offers a comfortable rather than an arduous read and delivers a crucial framework for English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) educators to be highly equipped with strategies to support Second Language (L2) learners in acquiring Standard Australian English (SAE). As clearly outlined in *BLTST*, the GRRIF, draws from Piaget's (1952) theory of cognitive development, Vygotsky's (1962) Zones of Proximal Development, and Wood and colleagues' scaffolded instructions (1976) which are essential for successful pedagogical practice in EAL/D education. In *BTLST*, Fisher and Frey demonstrate substantially how, SAE proficiency encompassing speaking, listening, reading, viewing, and writing skills (ACARA, 2022), can be efficiently achieved through the enactment of the four phases of the GRRIF.

Another key strength of the book lies in its incorporation of diverse array of examples drawn from contemporary classrooms, vividly illustrating the application of each phase of the GRRIF. Throughout the book, authors corroborate vibrant examples of the integration of learning concepts with real-life applications, facilitating differentiation of content, process, and product - all invaluable to EAL/D learners in developing proficiency. EAL/D educators can readily relate these examples to the unique lifestyles and cultural background of L2 learners, as depicted in the book, underscoring the importance of understanding students and their contexts in fostering content knowledge. This book can also be used as a resource for a broad audience, particularly in EAL/D contexts, and it clarifies how the GRRIF can be seamlessly integrated with various other teaching frameworks and strategies, making it a versatile tool applicable across different educational settings.

As an immigrant with an EAL/D background myself, I am deeply convinced that the adaptation of Fisher and Frey's GRRIF in modern classrooms facilitates differentiation. This empowers EAL/D students to acquire L2 proficiency and succeed in accessing and interacting with mainstream curriculum in SAE. Therefore, this book stands as an invaluable resource for EAL/D educators seeking to deliver content in a manner that resonates with their diverse learners.

In conclusion, it is evident that this latest edition of *BLTST* by Fisher and Frey emphasises the significant impact of teaching on students' lives and underscores the critical role of intentional decision-making in shaping learning experiences. As such, this book serves as an indispensable guide for implementing the GRRIF effectively in classrooms across various contexts, thereby fostering learning opportunities for every student, every day.

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Notes for contributors

- It is understood that articles submitted to TESOL in Context have not been previously published and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- Articles around 6,000 words including references are preferred, and an abstract of up to 200 words should be included with each article submitted.
- Electronic submission as attached files is required (Microsoft Word or rich text format).
- One file should contain a separate cover page with the article's title, the names of the author/s, their preferred titles, and the contact details for the author to whom correspondence should be sent (address, telephone numbers, and email address). About 70 words of biographical data should also be included.
- A second file should contain the title followed by the abstract, the body of the paper and the list of references. Number the pages but do not use identifying headers or footers.
- Headings and sub-headings should be left aligned, with the first letter capitalised.
- Indicate new paragraphs by using one extra line space.
- Text should be Times New Roman, 12 points, with 1.5 spacing.
- Short quotations should be incorporated into the text and enclosed with double quotation marks.
- Quotations of more than about 40 words should be set off from the main text by indentation, without any quotation marks.
- Referencing should follow the APA referencing style; for examples, see a recent issue of the journal at http://www.tesolincontext.org.au/.
- References in the text should be ordered alphabetically and contain the name of the author and the year of publication, e.g. (Adams, 2001; Jones, 1998). For direct quotations include the relevant page number(s), e.g. (Jones, 1998, p. 34).

- Tables, figures or diagrams should be numbered consecutively and included in the relevant part of the text. Each should have an explanatory title.
- Numbers up to and including ten should be spelt out and numbers over ten should be expressed as figures.
- The spellings used should be those given in The Macquarie Dictionary.
- All articles submitted are subject to blind, impartial refereeing; referees are asked to report against the following criteria:
    * The topic of the article is of relevance to readers of the journal (see ACTA Statement at https://tesol.org.au/publications/#publications-1).
    * The article is grounded appropriately in relevant published literature.
    * The article's claims/conclusions are based on rigorous analysis of primary data and/or well-supported argument and/or analysis of teaching practice.
    * The article is well structured and clearly linked.
    * Language use and style are appropriate to the audience and purpose.
    * Notes for contributors have been followed in all respects, including consistent use of APA style.
    * The article has potential to make a worthwhile contribution to the TESOL field.

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Australian Council of TESOL Associations

Mission statement

ACTA is the national coordinating body representing all teachers of English to speakers of other languages. It aims to promote and strengthen English whilst supporting people's linguistic and cultural heritage. English is the language of public communication and the lingua franca for the many different sociocultural groups in Australia, as well as a major language of international communication. For full and effective participation in education, society, and in the international arena, competence in English is necessary.

TESOL is the teaching of English by specialist teachers to students of language backgrounds other than English in order to develop their skills in spoken and written English communication. At the same time, TESOL teachers strive to be sensitive to the diverse linguistic, cultural, and learning needs of individuals.

TESOL draws on a knowledge of the nature of the English language, first and second language acquisition, crosscultural communication, and appropriate curriculum, materials, and methodology for multicultural contexts. It is an integral part of the broader social, educational, and political context. It can inform and be informed by this context.

As a program, profession, and field of study and research, TESOL shares certain understandings and practices with the subject English as a mother tongue, child and adult literacy, languages other than English (LOTE), and bilingual and multilingual education, but also has distinct characteristics.

ACTA's objectives are

To represent and support the interests of teachers of English to speakers of other languages ACTA is committed to quality teacher training and professional development in TESOL and working conditions and career paths which enable teachers to have the stability and continuity of employment to develop, maintain, and deliver quality programs.

To ensure access to English language instruction for speakers of other languages ACTA is committed to ensuring that all students with ESL needs have access to programs that acknowledge and meet their diverse specific needs.

To encourage the implementation and delivery of quality professional development programs ACTA is committed to the development and maintenance of the highest quality programs for students at pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels that are appropriately funded, resourced and staffed, and articulated in clear pathways.

To promote the study, research, and development of TESOL at state, national, and international levels ACTA is committed to ensuring that TESOL and TESOL related issues are debated and accorded due recognition in state and national policy initiatives as well as in the international community.