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**Teaching Modern Foreign Languages to EAL students**

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### **Group Introduction to the Collaborative Enquiry**

This Collaborative Enquiry was carried out in three different schools in Sheffield and Rotherham. Our main focus was on the provision for students with English as an Additional Language in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). Therefore we focused on the policies and their implementation in each school and the help offered to these students.

We chose this topic for our project because it will help our professional development as MFL teachers by enabling us to understand the performance of EAL students in general and specifically adapt some strategies we have observed in other lessons to use within the MFL classroom.

By working on this project we meet the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) Standards 18, 19, 20 which cover the following areas of achievement and diversity. Having referred to the TDA standards (2009) we are able to “recognise that the development, progress and well-being of learners are affected by a range of religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences.” We know how to “provide support for those for whom English is an Additional Language and take account of diversity and inclusion in our teaching.” We are aware of “the roles of other professionals within the school who support both the students and ourselves as teachers” (P 34-36).

In order to realise this research we all investigated the varying EAL policies in our placement schools to compare and contrast the level and standards of support provided to EAL students. The research comprised a literature review, case studies, observation of strategies and interviews with staff members. The relevant ethical procedures have been adhered to and we ensured we have anonymised our work.

**Words:** 267

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**EAL at School W – Holly Jayne Price**

**Introduction**

School W is an 11 to 16 year old comprehensive located in Rotherham. It mainly serves the wards of Rotherham West and Keppel. This report intends to focus on the school's intake of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and the school's response to these students' needs and the personalised provision that is made available to them, focusing particularly within the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) department.

I have chosen to study this area as there are an increasing number of EAL students that are now enrolled in to the English school system. This trend is reflected in School W, where although the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language remains below the national average, the figure has almost doubled within the last three years. (OFSTED, 2010) School W has 1358 students on roll, of which 9.65% are Muslim EAL students and 4.7% are Eastern European EAL students. Equally, the outcomes of this research will aid me to better understand the needs of my students and will enable my professional development by finding effective ways to personalise provision for my EAL students in the future.

**Literature Review**

I thought it first necessary to research the literature regarding the teaching and provision supplied to EAL students, to research what is suggested by professionals in the field and to be able to compare if there are any similarities, positives or weaknesses reflected at School W.

The majority of the literature tends to agree with the argument of Benton and O'Brien (2003) that, "Teaching EAL students effectively demands collaboration between teachers of different subjects." (p53) Moreover, Leung and Creese (2010) build upon this argument stating "In order to meet the learning demands of mainstream classrooms, many EAL students need both language sensitive content instruction and intensive content based English language instruction in the core curriculum". (p75) Therefore the literature suggests that EAL students achieve better when in lessons with their peers but their provision needs supplementing with intensive English language instruction too, to make their education effective.

However, there are some critics of the EAL policy. Some (Rutter and Jones, 1998) claim that removing EAL students from lessons to provide intensive personalised provision is detrimental to the students' social development. Another downfall of the EAL policy are the methods used to assess EAL students. Lillis and McKinney (2003) highlight that "EAL students are assessed following a curriculum aimed at first language speakers of English and may be judged unfairly." (p89)

With regard to teaching MFL, the Department for Education highlight the benefits of involving EAL students in languages lessons. It states “...their [EAL students] awareness of other languages and cultures may enable them to make valuable contributions to languages lessons.” (Department for Education, May 31<sup>st</sup> 2010) Likewise, the Department for Education also emphasise the value of languages lessons for developing the linguistic capabilities of EAL students in both the target language and English, claiming that languages lessons offer the opportunity for the students to be exposed to “explicit attention to language learning, frequent pupil-pupil and pupil-teacher talk...and the use of helpful models of spoken language in real contexts.” (Department for Education, May 31<sup>st</sup> 2010)

### **EAL at School W**

During my time at School W, I was able to work within the EAL department to observe how the students are catered for and what additional support they receive. The EAL department at School W consists of 6 full time staff, one of whom is a qualified EAL teacher. The department also has a home liaison officer, who visits students if there is a problem with persistent truancy, absence or bullying. The department has designated classrooms that have internet access and bold English language displays. The displays are very visual and are related to school commands and objects. The students are also encouraged to attend school, successfully complete homework and achieve merits through competitive displays on the wall, which show their progress in school against their EAL peers in their year group. Moreover, the students are supported throughout school within lessons by a network of teaching assistants. The teaching assistants are able to help the students to complete tasks and to focus on good study skills, such as writing down homework and presenting work neatly, activities, that it has been previously noted, are not obvious to EAL students to fulfil. Equally, the teaching assistants can assess what level of support is required in each subject and report the needs of the individual to the class teacher and EAL department.

The EAL admissions policy at School W states that every student should be assessed before being submitted on to the school roll. The admissions interview is used as an opportunity for data collection and the student’s language acquisition is tested. The student is tested in reading, writing, speaking and listening and then given a final grade which determines the intensity of their school timetable. Within ten days the student is put on to the school roll and starts to attend lessons. Timetables for EAL students can range from part-time to full-time, depending on the language capabilities of the individual. Moreover, every EAL student has a data profile on the school system that is available to all teaching staff. The profile provides information about the individual’s nationality, mother tongue, the length of time the individual has lived in the UK, the length of time the individual has studied at School W, details about their schooling in their own country, information about their behaviour and their levels of attainment in reading, speaking, listening and writing English. The profiles are updated twice a year or with significant change, so that the teaching staff can provide suitable personalised provision for each student within their lessons.

### Teaching Modern Foreign Languages to EAL students at School W

With regard to MFL, the EAL students at School W are taught either French or Spanish depending on their year group. They work in mixed ability classes until Year Nine, at which point they are placed in sets according to their ability. Whilst teaching at School W, I have observed that only EAL students in the first year are timetabled to attend every MFL lesson. Weaker EAL students in older years are often removed from their MFL lessons to attend English lessons at the EAL department to develop their linguistic capabilities. I was able to interview the Head of the EAL department to ask why this was. She replied that it was assumed that a modern foreign language was too difficult for EAL students due to their lack of proficiency in English. However, due to changes in the leadership of the EAL department, more research in to the prior learning of EAL students and testing of their cognitive abilities; it is now considered that MFL is perhaps, the one area of the curriculum where the EAL students are on a par with their peers.

The provision for EAL students in MFL at School W is not immediately obvious, although on closer analysis it is evident that the department do have some strategies in place to support its EAL students. The MFL department, upon the advice of the EAL department, teach using as many visual stimuli as possible, which corroborates with Dymoke's and Harrison's (2008) suggestions for good practice to support EAL students in the MFL classroom. The teaching method is also used in the EAL department when teaching the students English and therefore the students can transfer their skills between the lessons.

Furthermore, the students are often seated in seating plans, where EAL students are sat with more able students. This is hoped to function as some sort of "buddy system" where the more able native English speaking student can help the EAL student if necessary, by explaining tasks or helping with the vocabulary. Blandford and Shaw (2001) recommend such a system encouraging teachers to "...collect information on the student's language...and operate a peer support system..." (p69)

Moreover, the modern foreign languages department is also responsible for encouraging and organising examinations for the EAL students in their mother tongue. The department provides past papers and mock exams to the students and where possible will conduct the exam with the student in order to create a familiar and positive examination environment. Encouraging the EAL students to take a formal qualification in their mother tongue not only highlights the school's appreciation of diversity but is a positive boost for the individual student and helps them to confidently adjust to mainstream UK schooling.

Other areas of good practice which I observed were encouraging EAL students to share their knowledge of language and customs in their own country, when having intercultural discussions. There were some examples of students, when learning new vocabulary also teaching the class the vocabulary in their mother tongue too. This seemed an effective practice as it made the EAL students feel truly valued members of the class and allowed them to positively

contribute to the lesson. However, the levels of this practice differed from lesson to lesson and the approach was not consistent across the department.

Equally, the department are also inconsistent in their approach to differentiating class materials to suit the needs of their learners. The differentiation I observed ranged from additional vocabulary sheets, extra detail on listening grids to parts of the answers filled in depending on the ability of the student. However, the level and amount of differentiation was again dependent on the class teacher and not standard practice across the department.

### **Case Study**

Nevertheless, the data appears to show that EAL students are performing well or similarly to their English speaking peers within MFL. Therefore I decided to realise a small case study that analysed the attainment from two data collections of Y7 students. I chose this sample as it is the year where the EAL students are timetabled to attend every MFL lesson and I can examine and analyse the progression they have made throughout the year. The sample of EAL students is a mix of boys and girls from different tutor groups to get as broad a picture as possible of the current achievement of EAL students at School W. Whilst I have aimed to acquire as broad a range of data as possible, unfortunately there is no data available to assess the quality of teaching in these groups nor the students' attendance at the lesson, which are contributing factors to their attainment grades. In order to remain ethical, I have kept the identity of the students anonymous and have requested permission from the school to publish the data in my study.

Analysis of the attainment grades across the two terms (appendix item A) highlights that the EAL students have all made progress across the two terms. This is clear evidence to suggest that EAL students are capable of achieving in MFL and make progress in mixed ability lessons. Furthermore the range of results is comparable to that of their native speaking peers (appendix item B and C) and demonstrates that EAL students, despite not necessarily having the same level of linguistic capabilities in English as their classmates, can achieve well and in some cases outperform their peers in MFL.

### **Conclusion**

Therefore, it is clear to see that at School W well thought out schemes and provision is being put in to place to support the needs of the increasing EAL population. However, whilst highlighting the positive facilities that School W have put into place to support their EAL students, this study has also raised some interesting points that could be considered as possible facets for further research.

The school as a whole celebrates its diverse make-up by incorporating elements of the EAL students' language and culture in to displays and lessons around school. The EAL students themselves are well supported in their daily learning through a system of teaching assistants and even in their extended learning, by initiatives such as the after

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school homework club. Likewise, they are encouraged to be proud of their heritage and take a formal qualification in their mother tongue.

Yet to support the students and enhance their personalised provision throughout the school, it seems necessary to implement effective school-wide strategies. The EAL department have successfully developed strategies within their own department to enhance the learning of the EAL students, yet these strategies do not seem to be implemented across the school. Whilst the MFL department have adopted some good practice, such as using transferable language learning skills and using visual stimuli in lessons, there is still work to do to improve their teaching and apply a consistent approach across the department. Another initiative that could be easily adapted to a whole school approach is the buddy system. Therefore every EAL student has a source of help within each curriculum area, independent from the teacher, so that if the teacher is unavailable the student is still able to attempt the work. Obviously, new initiatives pose the problem of viability in terms of access to resources, time efficiency and cost. Yet with the increasing EAL population at School W, it is clear that more and more effective policies are going to have to be implemented to support the growing needs of their learners and to maintain the current levels of attainment.

**Words:** 2202

## **EAL at school F – Eileen Basford**

### **Introduction**

School F is an 11 to 16 year old comprehensive located in the north of Sheffield. It serves a large area of council estates and is considered a nationally challenged school. This report will focus on the school's policy for the inclusion of students with English as an additional language and how it tries to ensure that they are catered for within the National Curriculum. This has always been a problem for this school, but the nature of the problem is currently changing. I will first of all focus on the strategies recommended by Sheffield City Council, then see how these have been implemented in the school and finally relate this to my own experience of teaching two EAL pupils.

### **Sheffield City Council Policy and Guidelines**

Sheffield City Council has created a 55 page document entitled 'EAL Strategies for New Arrivals and Isolated Learners' which was published in October 2005. This document has many recommendations for dealing with EAL pupils, not just within the classroom, but for all pastoral care, ranging from welcoming them into the school, making sure they know where all the classrooms are, identifying 'special friends' for them, suggestions for where to sit them in class and also specific strategies for use in lessons. There is much emphasis placed on making the pupils feel welcome and on learning key phrases in their native tongue. The pastoral care of the pupils is seen as being just as important as ensuring that they learn English. There can be many cultural differences for these pupils to cope with.

The paper is meant as a starting point for schools to base their own policies on and talks quite generally about most things. It is not aimed at secondary schools in particular and contains some references to primary. There is no specific reference to MFL lessons, indeed these seem to be totally missing from any strategy. All the focus is on improving their English without compromising their learning in other core subjects. It suggests that they be allowed to complete work in their native tongue and have an adult translate it for them so that the teacher can mark it. This would seem sensible, but likely to be problematic as how many schools have the staff capable of doing this? There seems to be very little funding and very few teaching assistants with the relevant knowledge.

### **School F EAL Policy**

The school has had experience of EAL pupils for a significant number of years, although the countries involved have changed over the years. Initially the EAL pupils were from India and Pakistan. Now, these pupils are not really identified as EAL as they are now third or fourth generation and have grown up speaking English. The majority of EAL pupils are now of Somali origin or are refugees from places such as Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

School F has a very extensive policy for EAL students which covers all aspects of their learning and potential problems due to different cultures and previous life experiences, though again, there is very little reference to MFL. The policy has clearly drawn heavily on the Sheffield City Council document and it details ways of helping pupils to

learn English, whilst not forgetting their first language, and in order to help them get the most out of their lessons and follow the National Curriculum as much as possible. Several of the suggested strategies are ones commonly used in MFL classes such as repetition of key words, pair and group work, callout cards, speaking frames, use of images and video, facial expressions, gestures and mimes.

The school's policy has changed over the years. Previously the policy was to remove pupils from MFL lessons, more recently they have been included, however the current head of EAL is in the process of defining a future policy that will see EAL pupils removed from MFL lessons again. This has been documented very recently in a paper entitled 'Vision for a sustainable and effective EMA team' written in March of this year.

Within the school 30% of pupils are from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background. This represents an increase of 38% since 2005 (the last time the policy was reviewed). 18% of all students are classed as EAL; this represents an increase of 29% since the previous year. The profile of the four main feeder primary schools is of an increasing percentage of BME students from 35% of the current Year 6 through to 43% of the current Year 3. There are also a growing number of students arriving as part of the Gateway Refugee Resettlement Programme (one last year), seven so far this year, although funding for support staff has already been reduced. Therefore there is currently more focus on EAL as the number of pupils increases.

There is a department exclusively dealing with EAL pupils. There is a head of EAL (who is an English teacher so cannot commit herself to this full time), two full time teaching assistants attached to EAL, plus two part-time learning mentors (native speakers of the language) who work 2 days a week. The head is based in the same room as the heads of year (one member of the teaching staff and one non-teaching staff for each year). This means that she is able to have direct contact with them and bring up any issues with the relevant person.

The MFL department does not have any specific policy for dealing with EAL students, partly because this is a fairly new occurrence for them, the students having previously been removed from MFL lessons. Each teacher is left to do what they think best for the pupils in their lessons.

I have also spoken to other departments who likewise have no set policy. They tend to rely on the mentors who sit in the lessons with the pupils, or with the catch-up work that is done outside the classroom. English seems to be the place where most emphasis can be found on EAL pupils, though for some they are withdrawn from English completely as they do not have enough English to benefit from the advanced English techniques which would be expected of them if they stayed in the lesson. It is hard enough for a native English speaker of thirteen to cope with Shakespearean English and we cannot expect a very new speaker of English to understand the subtleties of iambic pentameter.

### Case Study

When starting this project the intention was to concentrate on trying out different techniques with EAL pupils to see how effective they can be. However, since deciding on this topic this has not been entirely possible. Firstly, I have had to stay on a 60% timetable so I have had very little time to do any additional research. Also, at school I have been involved in the GCSE speaking assessments for French and German so had to spend two days off timetable while these were taking place. Then there has been a Progress day and a PSHE day which have both meant that I haven't been teaching any MFL lessons. I have just two classes where I have EAL students – one in each. One of the students moved classes as soon as I started work on this project so I have had no opportunity to try anything out with this pupil. The other pupil has regularly been taken out of my lesson at least once a week so again my opportunities have been limited. I have therefore limited myself to finding out more about these pupils from their mentor and reflecting on what has actually happened in the lessons with the support they currently have and the lessons I have previously taught.

The two pupils that I have had contact with are both from Iraq and their native tongue is Arabic. One is in Year 7 and the other in Year 8. The Year 7 boy was moved to another class so I was unable to try out any particular techniques with him. While he was in my class he had a learning mentor with him who would translate any instructions and go through work sheets with him. This meant that he could participate fairly well in the lesson. In one lesson we were learning days of the week and it became clear that he did not know them in English, so his mentor took the opportunity to teach him the days of the week in English rather than in French. It may be that other opportunities like this were also taken without my being aware of it.

The other pupil is a Y8 female from Iraq (I will refer to her as Pupil A). She had previously had private schooling in Iraq and was academically fairly advanced in her own language. She had been learning English, but only the grammar and very little vocabulary; she had not been learning any other European languages. She has not been in the country very long having been part of the Gateway Refugee Settlement program. This means that she is having fairly extensive tutoring in English, being taken out of classes for 6 hours a week (3 hours on two separate days). This is mainly for English tutoring and to keep her up to speed with what is seen as the core subjects. She is taken out of English totally as she cannot cope with this and is given extra help with Maths and Sciences. She is a very shy girl and has very little confidence in her spoken English. She rarely contributes in lessons and most of the time does not seem to understand what is going on. There is another girl in the class whose English is almost perfect who is from the same country. Occasionally she will help Pupil A (though only if specifically asked) and explain to her what the task involves. Once this has been done, Pupil A is normally able to complete the task. More recently another new pupil has joined the class whose English is good and who is also from Iraq. She has requested to sit next to Pupil A and they seem to get on very well. Pupil A has become much happier and more communicative, though mainly in Arabic to the new girl. I am not sure how this is going to work out, as they talk to each other in Arabic most of the

time and I'm not able to tell whether they are on task or just chatting. This will need to be monitored closely to see what happens. It is also upsetting one of the other pupils who is convinced that they are talking about her in Arabic. Pupil A is a well-behaved pupil and causes no behaviour problems through her lack of English.

Of the limited number of techniques I have had the chance to try, the things that seem to have worked best with Pupil A are as follows. Matching up of pictures with French words has worked well. The re-ordering of mixed up sentences in French, with no English to confuse her also seems an effective exercise. I have tried charades and Pictionary; however she is too shy to benefit from this as she will not volunteer to take part.

I have spoken to her learning mentor and he is of the opinion that at the moment she would benefit from being totally withdrawn from MFL lessons as they are too much for her to cope with at the moment. Trying to learn another language is confusing her in her attempts to learn English and the extra time could be better used in learning English and catching up with other lessons.

### **Conclusion**

EAL is a problem that School F has been addressing for many years yet there does not seem to be a consistent policy in place. Much is done to aid these pupils, yet in MFL some of them are struggling as they are constantly taken out of the lessons for extra English. The MFL department seems to no policy as a whole on how to deal with these pupils and this is probably because they have not previously had to cope with them. If the new head of the EAL succeeds in their suggestions, then the problem will again be taken away from the MFL department and they will not need to consider changing anything. However, until that happens I believe that more emphasis should be given to these pupils. Most of them seem to be left to cope by themselves under the assumption that the very nature of the language lessons means that they are easy enough for them to cope with. This may be the case for some, but there are times when they struggle and the MFL department would do well to revisit the schools overall EAL policy and see how they can implement some of this in their lessons.

**Words:** 2149

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## **EAL at school S – Karin Raffa**

### **Introduction**

School S is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school with approximately 1238 students on roll, which mainly serves the south-west of Sheffield. The school has an integrated resource unit for Profoundly Deaf children staffed by teachers from the Sheffield Service for Sensory Impaired Children. School S has been a Specialist School in Languages since September 2005. The school outperforms LEA targets; against national averages and benchmarked criteria the school achieves results well above average in all core subjects. School S received Achievement Awards in 2001 and 2002. Value Added data at both KS3 and KS4 demonstrates that students at School S are performing in the upper quartile nationally and against similar school benchmarking.

This report aims to focus on the school's provision for students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and the school's response to these students' needs with its main focus on the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) department.

### **Literature review**

“Pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) share many common characteristics with pupils whose mother tongue is English, and many of their learning needs are similar to those of other children and young people learning in our schools. However, EAL pupils also have distinct and different needs from other pupils, by virtue of the fact that they are learning in and through another language, and that they come from backgrounds and communities with different understandings and expectations of education, language and learning” (Milton Keynes Council 2004:5).

EAL students are taught within the mainstream curriculum but their needs are different. The most considerable distinction is that they are learning through a language other than their native language. Therefore, EAL students have two main objectives in the learning situation in school: they have to learn English and they have to learn the subject content. The learning situation will have an effect on both of these, as learners will be influenced by attitudes towards them, their culture, first language(s), religion, and ethnicity. Consequently, “EAL pedagogy is about utilising strategies to meet both the language and the learning needs of EAL pupils in a wide range of teaching contexts” (Milton Keynes Council 2004:5).

According to Milton Keynes Council (2004), evidence illustrates that bilingualism confers intellectual advantages. Pupils learning EAL are already skilled in one or more other languages. They are capable of using their linguistic and cognitive skills from one language to another. This emphasises the significance of strong development in their first language for students while they are learning English. As a result, it is vital to be aware of the fact that EAL students

are as able as their English peers, and that the activities provided should be as cognitively challenging as the ones set for English native speakers.

Faltis, C. and Hudelson, S. (1994:9) argue that EAL students should be allowed to use their native languages. Pease-Alvarez and Winsler and Lucas and Katz (in Faltis and Hudelson 1994:9) provide a range of examples of the techniques, how EAL students used their native language to sustain and emphasise their learning of English.

### **EAL at School S**

During my time at School S, I worked within the Modern Foreign Languages Department and was also able to research the help and support provided for students for who speak English as an additional language. School S recognises that all pupils come to school with a range of linguistic skills and repertoires, that being bilingual or trilingual is an advantage not a learning difficulty and that this enriches the ethos of the school.

Teachers within the MFL department have assigned classrooms with internet access and language displays accompanied by self-explanatory pictures rather than the English translation. EAL students at school S are offered support before and after school to complete homework, receive extra help to develop their written and spoken English, and are supported throughout school within lessons by a teaching assistant and two staff members of the EAL department. Parents of EAL students are also contacted directly by phone by the EAL department, whose staff members speak Arabic, Urdu and Somali, rather than receiving a letter home which is written in English. EAL students can receive help in all subjects up to GCSE, not just in English, however, it depends on the interest of pupils and their parents whether the support offered is taken or not. Parents have to understand the value of education and have to be fully supportive in order to enable the children to achieve their greatest potential.

School S works closely with its feeder schools in order to provide a smooth transition from Year 6 into Year 7. EAL students with very little English knowledge are provided with a set of flashcards which will help them communicate in the first weeks in school. Furthermore, they are withdrawn from English lessons to receive extra lessons, and are supported during break, lunch break, before and after school and attend a homework club to encourage them to complete their homework. In addition to this, they receive a limited timetable. Some EAL students are taken out of Modern Foreign Languages lessons in Year 8 and 9; however, this applies only to about 15% of EAL students and is not a permanent decision for the majority of them. A large number of EAL students decide to study NVQ in a language or choose to do asset languages in Year 10. Asset Languages is a new way of motivating language learners and rewarding their language skills. It is the assessment scheme for the Languages Ladder, a national recognition system for language learning, and is being developed by Cambridge Assessment through OCR and Cambridge ESOL, as part of the National Languages Strategy. The scheme means to supplement existing national qualification frameworks and offers a 'ladder of recognition' from beginner (Breakthrough level) to postgraduate or native

equivalent (Mastery level). “There are 6 levels, with three steps within each of the first five levels, two within the final one. It is intended for use by both children and adults.” (CILT website: languages ladder)

Staff in the EAL department at School S argue that the stronger the first language, the stronger the second (English) will be. An EAL student whose knowledge of the first language is strong, will quickly learn English, while a student who struggles with the first language will most certainly encounter difficulties learning English and will therefore need more support. Furthermore, many EAL students also have other commitments, such as Arabic school in the evening. If Arabic isn't their first language, they are already learning a foreign language in the evening while learning English and possibly another foreign language during the day in school. Moreover, many EAL students are placed in sets according to their linguistic ability rather than their cognitive skills. As a consequence, many EAL students are in the lower ability groups and are lacking self discipline and motivation. In addition to this, many students in lower ability groups also have behaviour issues which often appear to be a catalyst for further disruption and misbehaviour.

In order to make the transition process as easy as possible for new EAL students, School S offers summer activities for Year 6 students of its feeder schools. Students can sign up for a two weeks holiday course at School S. During these two weeks, School S offers approximately 35 places for students to go on trips and activities where students can get to know teachers, the new environment and already meet some of their new peers. These summer activities are highly valued and places are often quickly filled.

Furthermore, School S highly values its ethnic diversity among students and staff. Every year in July, a multicultural evening is held which is highly popular among students, staff and parents. The evening often consists of a talent show, where students sing in their native language, play traditional instruments of their home countries or dance; a fashion show where pupils present their traditional clothes; and different traditional dishes and food are served. This evening is a great confidence builder for EAL students and encourages participation within the school community.

In addition to this, School S established *The Somali Shakespeare Company (The SSC)*, a community-based group, in Sheffield, to promote Somali-language theatre and culture. The company was originated on the motivation of a Somali student at School S, who announced his plan to translate *Romeo and Juliet* into Somali. A group of his teachers and fellow students took the idea very seriously and so *The Somali Shakespeare Company* was established. “The company is currently in the process of abridging and translating *Romeo and Juliet*, and will be performing the play in the summer of 2010 at various venues around the country. *The Somali Shakespeare Company* aims to encourage the following:

- an elevation of the status of the Somali language and culture, especially among younger age groups;
- a process of cultural exchange between the poetic heritage of Somalia and the poetic heritage of Great Britain;
- access to personally enriching cultural activities in socially and economically deprived areas;
- a deeper understanding of, and interplay between, the different languages, cultures and values represented in our community.” (The Somali Shakespeare Company Mission Statement)

Even though the project is called *The Somali Shakespeare Company*, it is not limited to Somali native speakers. Many native English speakers are also involved in the project which will be performing at a school in London in July this year. *The SSC* meets once a week during lunch time and once a week in the afternoon to rehearse and discuss company business. A further afternoon per week is reserved for translating and script writing. Currently, there are more than 20 students involved in the project but it is still open to new participants.

### **Conclusion**

School S has successfully implemented support for EAL students through a variety of strategies to meet EAL student’s needs. The school rejoices in its ethnically diverse make up by incorporating elements of the EAL students’ language and culture in projects around school. The EAL students receive a variety of support to help them in their everyday learning. A supportive net of in class support for those who need it, learning support before and after school, as well as during break and lunchtime and a homework club, are offered. In addition to this, EAL students have the opportunity to obtain a qualification (NVQ) in Business English rather than a modern foreign language. The project called *The Somali Shakespeare Company* celebrates ethnic diversity and encourages students to be proud of their heritage and introduce their peers to a play in their native language.

**Words:** 1765

**Observation of an EAL student at School S: María Usón.**

“[The] LEA needs to ensure that:

- They [the LEA] are accessible, welcoming and value the views and involvement of parents
- Information is available in a range of appropriate languages and variety of mediums, so that all parents for whom English is not their first language, and those with a disability or learning difficulties can access the information.

LEAs should work in partnership with local parent and voluntary organisations, as well as the parent partnership service, to produce such materials and ensure that parents receive comprehensive, neutral, factual and appropriate advice.” (Special Education Needs Code of Practice, 2001)

English as an Additional Language (EAL) is considered to be a Special Education Need, as established in the Special Education Needs Code of Practice.

The following section is based on an observation of an EAL student in Year 7 who will be referred to as student XX in order to remain ethical. It is fundamental to understand how an EAL student works and is involved in a mainstream school. I selected this student because I already know her from my previous teaching. As well as English being an additional language student XX presents characteristics such as communicative and learning difficulties and a short attention span. I presented my project to one of the teachers and she supported me from the beginning, letting me know that student XX has more than one language that is not English and also highlighting one fact that I could consider important for my observation: student XX shows problems with English during the lessons because she cannot read and write English properly. Furthermore, I asked the EAL coordinator for specific information and help in order to be able to support this student during French lessons. I would like to mention here that from the moment that I suggested the idea of supporting this student, I was told that this was not going to be an easy project. In addition to the previous information, I learned that student XX also lacks motivation and family support.

I started working with XX individually on the 21<sup>st</sup> May supporting her in a French lesson. I sat next to her in order to focus only on her. First, she arrived late to the lesson; when the teacher asked why she was late, the fellow members of the class answered that she arrives late to every lesson. In this French lesson they started by revising numbers. She did not know the numbers so I explained to her how the numbers work in French. It seemed that she understood and was happy to write them down in her book. The lesson carried on but she was focusing only on the numbers now that she understood them. The rest of the lesson she did not pay attention to the explanations given by the teacher or to me while I was trying to help her, because she only wanted to work on numbers now. At the end of the lesson I explained to her that I would like to work with her for 10 or 15 minutes at lunch time at least twice per week. She gave me several excuses why she could not do this, saying that she was busy.

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Comment: Which version are you looking at?

As I already knew that it was not going to be easy to work with her I decided to have a talk with the KS3 coordinator and asked her to tell student XX to see me during lunch time in order to reinforce the work done in class. Although the KS3 coordinator instructed her, she never came. Despite telling me that she had meetings with other teachers, I was aware that this was an excuse, as I saw her playing during the periods that I asked her to see me.

The following observation of XX was in a Science lesson. This lesson was different because half of the students were on a trip, so there were only five students in the room. The teacher decided to show a documentary about animals instead of continuing with the scheme of work. At the beginning student XX's behaviour was exceptional and she volunteered to help the teacher set up the DVD player. She was quiet and showed interest in the subject, but after about 30 minutes her behaviour started to change and she occasionally lacked focus. After about 45 minutes, she started distracting other students, therefore, the teacher moved her to sit next to him. She continued distracting other students, even after being moved and complained when the teacher asked her to be quiet. At the end of the lesson she prompted the teacher to finish the lesson by saying "Sir, it's time", highlighting her total lack of concentration.

I shadowed her into her next lesson: History. Again there were only five students due to the school trip, so the lesson followed another unconventional format. The teacher decided to use the laptops and introduced the task. On the laptops the students had a variety of activities to complete within the lesson. Student XX was again very helpful at the beginning of the lesson and even volunteered to get out the laptops, but throughout the rest of the lesson student XX was again disruptive and unfocused.

In addition to this observation I also interviewed some of student XX's teachers. All of them mentioned the learning difficulties that this student has across the subjects. She has no special support during lessons, but her peers are particularly helpful with her and her teachers differentiate her work according to her ability. The main difficulty that all the teachers mentioned, when asked about her capability, was her low ability in reading and writing English. In an interview with EAL coordinator in the school, I was informed that student XX has special support from the SEN department. This support comprises lessons which have a reduced number of students. Therefore, Student XX is attending specialist classes in which she receives the attention and support that suit her needs instead of going to mainstream lessons. Nevertheless, during the lessons that I have observed student XX has not received any personalised provision that is specifically focused on her as an EAL student. Consequently, this leads to her disturbing other students and her becoming disengaged by the classroom activities.

In conclusion to this observation I would like to add my personal point of view. After working with student XX and observing her in a wide range of situations and different teaching techniques, I have come to the conclusion that her lack of motivation and interest in learning is caused by a lack of knowledge, not only of English as the main language, but also due to her low ability in most of the of the subjects. Student XX has a language deficiency that has affected

her learning in the early stages of her education, resulting in her present situation. She had not been identified as having special educational needs early in her education and therefore, has not received the necessary support to address her needs. Student XX has not received adequate support, from the school and other professionals and is also lacking support and encouragement from her family. Consequently, the present situation is very difficult for her and her teachers in school as they consistently offer her help and support but she invariably declines it.

#### **How to support EAL students?**

*“The identification and assessment of the special educational needs of children whose first language is not English, requires particular care. It is necessary to consider the child within the context of their home, culture and community. Where there is uncertainty about an individual child, schools should make full use of any local sources of advice relevant to the ethnic group concerned, drawing on community liaison arrangements wherever they exist.”* (Special Education Needs Code of Practice, 2001)

The following section is a brief investigation on the different strategies that can be applied to help EAL students to develop their learning and assist them in overcoming barriers. The following measures should be adopted in order to help EAL students achieve and develop to their fullest potential. To support a student like XX a personalised plan is required. There are three main questions that need to be asked when planning individual provision for an EAL student:

1. What are the potential barriers for student XX?
2. How can teachers set suitable objectives for student XX?
3. What teaching styles best suit the needs of student XX?

By answering these questions teachers will be enabled to plan adequate support for an EAL student.

The potential barriers that an EAL student faces in a lesson are “limited vocabulary and knowledge of language structures required for a specific task, unfamiliar subject context and lack of confidence” (Milton Keynes Council, p. 21). Therefore, the objectives for both the student and teacher need to be realistic and achievable, so that the teacher can help to increase the basic knowledge of the student gradually and ensure the student’s progression. Furthermore, one has to consider appropriate teaching styles in order to support EAL students effectively. For example, when observing student XX, I learned that she regularly lacks concentration and gets distracted very easily. Consequently, short sessions need to be planned which comprise a wide range of activities which change frequently in order to engage her and make learning more attractive to her.

If I were to develop this research project further, I would plan a strategy to use with student XX. Firstly, in order to support an EAL student in modern foreign languages, we should first examine their level of English, and, dependent on the outcome, decide how recommendable it is for each individual to enrol in the learning of two other languages in the school. At this time it would be a possibility to offer the student the option of learning only one new modern foreign language and using the additional hours within the student's timetable to reinforce their English through additional classes. This variation on the timetable would allow the student to initially improve their English and form a good, positive basis for the rest of their learning. That strategy includes language teaching using target language as much as possible and teaching only in the target language when reading and writing, utilising gestures and pictures to supplement her understanding. The introduction of vocabulary would be based on images and pictures and the use of English in any other format apart from speaking would be avoided. With this technique I would intend to achieve better language teaching for student XX in which she could use her first language to learn another one. The activities would be fun, competitive and based on speaking activities to increase her level of concentration and to motivate her towards learning.

**Words:** 1798

### **Group conclusion**

Having researched the situation in three different schools across South Yorkshire, it is clear to see that the number of EAL students is increasing and as teachers we need to ensure we are providing adequate support to enable students to develop to their fullest potential. This project has enabled us to examine the current policies and provision in place within schools. We have also been able to analyse the effectiveness of the schools' provision through investigation of assessment results of EAL students in comparison to their English native speaking peers. There is clear evidence to suggest that while some EAL students are making progress, others require further support. Therefore, we researched and evaluated the methods of inclusion that we consider effective and good practice, not only within the MFL classroom but school wide. These included recognising, valuing and celebrating the diversity and first languages of EAL students. Equally, we found that it is valuable to allow the students to use their first languages as a reference within lessons as students with a strong acquisition of a first language were able to adapt and use their skills effectively to learn other languages. Furthermore, it is helpful to engage parents in their child's education by selecting a representative in school who speaks their native language and acts as a liaison officer to communicate school notices. Some schools have particularly successful policies which include multi-cultural evenings to both celebrate the diversity of the school and encourage parents to informally engage with the school process and environment.

However, we also highlighted areas for improvement, such as a lack of consistency in the level of support within lessons across departments. It seems good practice to effectively and consistently communicate to share good ideas between the departments within the school. If this was realised, EAL students would receive a more efficient level of provision to supplement their studies and therefore would be able to achieve comparatively to their native speaking peers. Moreover, we have also noted that some students are placed in sets according to their linguistic capabilities as opposed to their cognitive abilities. This has then acted as a catalyst for discipline issues and misbehaviour within lessons. We think it would be more effective to place EAL students in sets that suit their capabilities, where the work provides an appropriate degree of challenge to motivate them and keep them engaged in their learning. In some schools we also witnessed a mutual lack of recognition for cultural barriers, for example asking students to look the teacher in the eye when being disciplined despite this not being the custom in their own culture and could cause offense. Therefore, it would be effective practice to train and introduce both students and teachers to common cultural differences in order to respect both cultures and adhere to the school ethos.

It is clear that this is a very broad topic and is likely to develop due to the growing numbers of EAL students being enrolled in British schools. The effect on modern foreign languages teaching will therefore be significant and teachers will have to adapt their strategies to suit the diverse needs of their learners, through using more visual aids and target language. If we had the chance to develop this project further we would investigate the creation of effective resources and the impact of using target language with EAL students. We would like to take this

opportunity to thank our participant schools and feel the project has been highly effective in developing our understanding and strategies to teach EAL students.

Words: 596

**Teaching Modern Foreign Languages to EAL students**

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**Appendix**

**School W**

**Item A - EAL sample attainment grades**

<u>Student</u>	<u>Attainment Term 1</u>	<u>Attainment Term 2</u>
Student A	Level 1b	Level 1a
Student B	Level 1a	Level 2b
Student C	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student D	Level 2b	Level 2a
Student E	Level 2c	Level 2a
Student F	Level 1b	Level 1a

**Item B – EAL samples’ attainment in comparison to peers in tutor group**

<u>Student</u>	<u>Attainment Term 1</u>	<u>Attainment Term 2</u>
Student 1	Level 2c	Level 2c
Student 2	Level 1b	Level 1a
Student 3	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 4	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 5	Level 2c	Level 3c
Student 6	Level 2c	Level 3c
Student 7	Level 1a	Level 2c
Student 8	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 9	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 10	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 11	Level 2c	Level 2b
Student 12	Level 2b	Level 3c
<b>Student E</b>	<b>Level 2c</b>	<b>Level 2a</b>
Student 14	Level 1a	Level 3c
<b>Student C</b>	<b>Level 2b</b>	<b>Level 3c</b>
Student 15	Level 1b	Level 2c
Student 16	Level 2b	Level 3c
<b>Student D</b>	<b>Level 2b</b>	<b>Level 2a</b>
Student 17	Level 1b	Level 2c
Student 18	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 19	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 20	Level 2b	Level 2a
Student 21	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 22	Level 2b	Level 2a

**Item C - Item B – EAL samples' attainment in comparison to peers in tutor group**

<u>Student</u>	<u>Attainment Term 1</u>	<u>Attainment Term 2</u>
Student 1	Level 2c	Level 2a
Student 2	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 3	Level 1b	Level 2c
Student 4	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 5	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 6	Level 2b	Level 2a
Student 7	Level 2c	Level 2a
Student 8	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 9	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 10	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student A	Level 1b	Level 1a
Student 11	Level 1b	Level 2c
Student 12	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 13	Level 2c	Level 2b
Student 14	Level 2c	Level 2b
Student 15	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student F	Level 1b	Level 1a
Student 16	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 17	Level 2c	Level 3c
Student 18	Level 2b	Level 2a
Student 19	Level 2c	Level 2b
Student 20	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 21	Level 2b	Level 2a
Student B	Level 1a	Level 2b
Student 22	Level 2b	Level 2a
Student 23	Level 2b	Level 3c
Student 24	Level 2b	Level 3c