

# How Collaboration between the EAL Teacher and the Homeroom Teachers Helps EAL Students in their Development of Vocabulary and Comprehension Skills

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## **Abstract**

This study offers a new perspective on EAL research. In this very large field of research, a terrain remains to be explored in more depth. The specificity of EAL research within the particular context of international schools is open to new findings. As international schools are organised very differently from one another, it allows for qualitative research to dress a portrait of teaching EAL students in this particular environment. Can similarities or differences with research among mono-lingual schools be observed in this different context?

This research paper would like to help open the door to this alternative part of EAL studies. It offers its readers an open window into one particular international school in Sweden and how this school organises EAL support thorough collaborative teaching. Designed to collect teachers and students' attitudes and belief towards this particular collaboration, this paper will attempt to compare these findings to general EAL research, and qualify the mainstream research to more peculiar school environments.

## **Introduction**

English has become a global language, the lingua franca of the world (Graddol, 1997). I was intrigued to understand the implications of teaching English as an additional language (EAL) to students in schools where English is the medium of communication. As Schneider and Arnot note, these students are meant to be 'offered support from specialist teachers' (2018, p. 247). This implicates that teachers should work alongside language acquisition specialists to cater for the needs of these students. How does this particular collaboration help EAL students in their development of vocabulary and comprehension skills? In this study, the attitudes and beliefs of homeroom teachers (HTs), an EAL teacher (EALT) and students (aged 8-11) from an international school in Sweden are attentively analysed in regard to their particular context.

## Literature

### Challenges for EAL students

#### *Vocabulary and comprehension gap with their monolingual peers*

A large trend of EAL research studies the comparison between EAL students' achievements and their monolingual peers' (Cummins, 1984; McWilliam, 1998; Cameron, 2002; Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith, & Connors, 2003; Schneider & Arnot, 2018). If differences in language and communication achievements were looked at in the 1980's EAL research field (Long, 1983; Cummins, 1984), more recent research focus on vocabulary and comprehension skills (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith and Connors, 2003; Burgoyne, Whiteley and Hutchinson, 2011; Murtagh and Francis, 2012). Burgoyne and colleagues (2011), for instance, advocate for a stronger support of these EAL students to develop their vocabulary skills in their early years in order to prevent arising difficulties in literacy. The underlying assumption that focus needs to be especially important in early education, is questionable. Indeed, EAL students' mobility is not merely and only happening during their early stage of childhood. Students might arrive at a more advanced age, when extra support might still be needed. As the curriculum evolves into more challenging activities that require reading more complex texts, the newly arrived EAL students might struggle more to adapt and comprehend materials (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith and Connors, 2003).

#### *Impact of students' environment and limits to assess their actual comprehension skills*

Another aspect addressed is the impact of the environment on their vocabulary and literacy skills (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith and Connors, 2003; Burgoyne, Whiteley and Hutchinson, 2011). EAL students may lack cultural support to expand their vocabulary knowledge, notably because of a limited access to the English language at home. Unable to base their language knowledge from home experiences, reading offers an alternative for accessing new linguistic skills. However poor comprehension skills might limit access to literature and might result in the limitation of vocabulary expansion (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith and Connors, 2003, p. 20). The difference between decoding skills and comprehension skills arises as another struggle that EAL students might have. The ability to decode a text properly doesn't necessarily mean that the student fully comprehends it (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith, & Connors, 2003; Burgoyne, Whiteley, & Hutchinson, 2011). Hutchinson and colleagues warn about the methodology used to assess children's comprehension skills, and advocate for less standardized tests, free of cultural bias (2003, pp. 21-22). Not understanding the question does not mean that they do not know the answer, and if the students' abilities are only assessed in a unique language their actual knowledge might be overlooked. This reasoning could be linked to recent research based on translanguaging and how multi-lingual students may use their full linguistic repertoire to show knowledge (García, Johnson and Seltzer, 2017). Knowing the students' actual comprehension level may lead to a better support suited to them. The underlying idea is that EAL students would perform better at school if accompanied by specialized professionals who can understand the needs of students, when standard assessments would fail to recognize them. An idea found again in a teaching manual by Pim (2014, p. 33). It is interesting to question the nature of support that students need.

## **A collaborative support**

### *One class, several educators*

The idea in mainstream research that classrooms are home for only one teacher is challenged by Creese (2006) from the start of her paper. To her it is not being representative of all the different combination of adults around a classroom (special teachers, co-teachers, or assistants). She argues that the responsibility to care for EAL students should not solely rely on the teachers' shoulders, but that collaborative work between EAL teachers and subject teachers with different skillsets should be encouraged to help EAL students navigate the curriculum. However, Creese is aware that social and cultural environments can influence language and teaching (2006, p. 437). Her study of the collaboration between EAL teachers and subject teachers in secondary education is thought-provoking and leads me to question whether similarities could be observed in international primary education.

### *Collaboration influenced by context*

Thus, I wonder if similar findings could be observed in a different context. In Ireland for instance, the collaboration between specialized EAL teachers and homeroom teachers has been closely reflected on by Murtagh and Francis (2012). They have showed how different each teacher's approach is toward facilitating understanding for the EAL students. Teachers have different objectives and are under different kinds of pressure, thus their behaviours towards their students are different. The authors similarly highlight the importance of external factors in supporting students such as the demography of the local population, the economy of the country or the political decisions. A larger proportion of immigrants might result in larger needs for EAL resources, but financial limitation might induce lesser access to them. Similarly, in the UK, schools are responsible for funding support and must decide where the money is spent (Schneider and Arnot, 2018). Financing EAL programs might vary from school to school. International schools are no different. Among the different reasons for creating them (Steiner-Khamsi and Dugonjić-Rodwin, 2018), international schools answer the need to support the growing expatriate population. However, financing international schools depends on who is allocating the funds: parents, local governments, or sponsors. Thus, the resources allocated to support EAL students might vary from school to school. With limited resources, an increasing need for more adequate material and training to fill the gap has been requested by teachers (Murtagh and Francis, 2012).

## **International contextualisation of this study**

Is the need for a combination of talents to accompany EAL students in their learning journey as strong in an international school? The research trends that I presented earlier in this paper mostly inquired into EAL support in national school systems. To my knowledge, the context of EAL within English-speaking international schools is less studied. I believe that it is interesting to study EAL within an international school community and link it to broader research on EAL education.

Murtagh and Francis (2012) agree on school being a motor toward cultural inclusion in society. International schools answering mostly the needs of expatriate children cannot be studied under the same lens as national schools. The role of the school is not to include children within the local society but rather in a larger global community. The English used within these schools might have

less cultural bias. However, mastering the language of the taught curriculum remains important to include the children within this international community. Supporting children with a lesser linguistic knowledge appears to remain an important goal in both national schools and international schools, with different implications, however. Skilled professionals and especially allocated resources for EAL are seen by Murtagh and Francis (2012) as necessary for Irish schools and I believe that it is a necessity for international schools as well. Thus, one of my leading inquiries in this study is to understand how an international school structures its EAL support program through the collaborative work between a specialized teacher and the HTs, as well as through the allocation of time and resources.

## **Methodology**

The prime approach to the data collection in this study is based on the ethnography of communication (Hymes D. , 1964; Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach, 1974; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This approach allows the researcher to analyse spoken and written language and how it represents a given culture –here the international education culture. The scope of this research is to take an interpretative stance (Cohen and Manion, 1994) and analyse speech and written answers within the frame of the relevant cultural and social environment. Thus, I have been interested in understanding how collaboration between the EAL teacher and the HTs helps EAL students in their development of vocabulary and comprehension skills. Similar to Creese’s study (2006), I have decided to inquire into such a collaboration from the participants’ points of view. Collecting students and teachers’ attitudes and behaviours through questionnaires and interviews, their words were analysed in regard to their contexts.

This study on an international school enters a part of the EAL field of research which to my knowledge remains mostly barren. The specificity of the environment, within an international school, makes it different to studies like Creese’s (2006), Bourne and McPake’s (1991) or Murtagh and Francis’s (2012), where the focus remains on national school context. However, this study doesn’t mean to generalise the practice in international schools and draw its conclusion from this small sample. International schools’ organisation differs from country to country, and its student body as well (Steiner-Khamsi and Dugonjić-Rodwin, 2018). The composition of the student body can vary from children of expatriates to national students seeking a different education (Kyburg, Hertberg-Davis and Callahan, 2007; Gardner-McTaggart, 2016; Steiner-Khamsi and Dugonjić-Rodwin, 2018). Thus, the demographics of the EAL students in international schools varies. One can argue that when the school is welcoming students from an international community, a majority of students can be considered EAL as they are learning in a language different from their native language. This study does not depict a general portrait of EAL teaching within international schools, but offers a peering window into one particular school. The school where I conducted my research was created to accommodate international families moving in a Swedish town for a short time; this public school is an alternative to Swedish schools, offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in English for international children aged 3 to 16 years old. Thus, the student body is mostly expatriate, many students coming from non-English-speaking countries. The EAL students are a large proportion of the student body. Therefore, I have decided to focus solely on newcomers who do not speak English. To accommodate their needs, an EALT teaches

them on a regular basis so that they can access better the curriculum. Similar to Murtagh and Francis' research (Murtagh and Francis, 2012) in Irish schools, I ponder on the collaborative work between the EAL teacher and the PYP teachers to support their newly arrived students, and especially how this collaboration is perceived by both teachers and students. Interpreting teachers' and students' attitudes toward teacher-EALT in regard to their cultural environment should allow the reader to understand the dynamics of this relationship within this particular context.

I decided to lead this study in three different directions. First, a questionnaire with open questions, scaled answers and closed questions was created to collect HTs' attitudes and beliefs on their collaboration with the EALT when teaching EAL students. An interview with similar questions, but specific to the EALT, was designed as well. It was decided that the EALT would reply to an interview rather than to a questionnaire because I was collaborating directly with her. The questionnaires and the interview allow teachers to give their opinion on particular aspects of the partnership. The open questions had been thought as giving more freedom to the participants. My plan was to compare the answers and see if similar attitudes can be noted among the teaching body. Secondly, a child-friendly questionnaire with open questions and scaled answers was designed to collect the point of view of the students. It was important for me to understand the behaviour toward the partnership from both side of the classroom. Students' appreciations or frustrations toward the collaboration would be put in light with the teachers' questionnaire. The aim was to give a broad and complete image of the relationship. Finally, class observations were initially planned within the EAL classroom. I hoped that the interactions between the EALT and the EAL pupils would shed some light on this particular class setting. I believed that what I would observe could illustrate some answers from the questionnaires. The observations were audio recorded to allow a further analysis. Unfortunately, the data collected during class observations won't be analysed in this paper, as already too much data was collected in the questionnaires and interviews. Further inquiry and research could be made solely on the recordings.

The research has been reviewed by the ethical committee of the University of Sheffield. All the data collected was stored securely on the researcher's computer, and anonymised to protect the identity of the participants. Only the researcher accessed to the original dataset for analysis and illustration of this study project. To respect confidentiality and anonymity, the school's name is not mentioned. The PYP coordinator of the school granted her authorization to pursue this study on the premises. Participation was on a voluntary basis. Teachers were recruited via an email containing an information sheet and a consent form. If interested they received a digital questionnaire. Seven teachers replied to the questionnaires. The EAL teacher replied to a semi-structured interview. As for the teachers, participation was also voluntary for the students. Parents were informed of the procedure, and the EAL teacher posed as the adult witness for vulnerable participants. It was decided with the EAL teacher that only PYP 4, 5 and 6 students (aged 8-11 years old) would be offered to participate in the study. The reasoning was that some questions required reflection skills that younger children might struggle with. Ten students answered a questionnaire specifically designed for them. The researcher explained each question to them and students independently answered.

## Analysis and Findings

### The challenges of teaching EAL students

#### *Impact of experience and teachers' native language: the limit of this small-scale study*

As shown by Steiner-Khamsi and Dugonjić-Rodwin (2018), one of the reasons to create an international school is to cater for the needs of children following their expatriate parents. In such composition, one can assume that the majority of students are EAL. One HT agrees with this assumption and notes that

*At [school name] and many other international schools a very high percentage of students are EAL students (whether they are labelled as such or not).*

I wonder whether having to deal with more EAL students is a struggle for teachers with less experience in international school education. However, the differences in years of teaching experience in international schools doesn't seem to have a specific impact on the attitudes of teachers in this study. When asked whether teaching EAL students is a challenging or natural task, their answers vary from both ends of the scale. On this 5-point scale where 1 is very challenging and 5 very natural, one teacher answers 2, another one 3, three teachers reply 4 and the last two select 5. Thus, it is not possible to evaluate in this small-scale study whether external factors, such as teachers' experiences or native language, might qualify their attitudes. This could become another investigation: understanding if the transition from national school settings to international school settings is challenging for teachers when addressing EAL students' needs.

#### *Time constraint*

##### Insight on teachers' feelings

To the question regarding the HTs' feelings toward time constraint in teaching EAL students, no trend could be observed either. Among the seven HTs, four replied 'yes' and three replied that 'it could be a little longer'. As no clear answer arise, I cannot arguably align the results of this study to Creese's findings (2006) showing that time seems to be a constraint for teachers when caring for EAL pupils. A larger sample of participants might have offered an identifiable trend. However, the following question offers some insights on HT's feelings toward time constraints. Two teachers find it hard to differentiate their lessons to cater for the needs of all their students, not just the EAL; while two others find it difficult to balance between working with the EAL students on their English skills and working on all of the other skills. As Creese (2006) highlights in her paper, mainstream teachers are under different pressures and need to care for larger groups of children with different needs while delivering a complete curriculum. Having support from an EALT allows the student to receive appropriate and individual help. The EALT thus having more time and different responsibility than mainstream teachers to cater for the needs of the EAL students.

### Individual care: extra time for students with different needs

The EALT and two out of the seven HTs think that the EAL students could spend more time with the EALT. The other five HTs believe it is enough time. However, one of them adds that this year time spent with the EALT is enough because of the group of students he has, as not all are new to English. Another teacher mentions that the time was enough for most of her group, but appreciates the extra time the EALT is spending with one child in particular. The EALT also commented on the creation of special extra sessions for individual students. This relatively new action seems to be appreciated by the HTs and the EALT equally. These side notes were not anticipated in this study but shed light on the idea that extra time offered to special needs students can vary according to the child. If a set amount of time is enough for one group, another group or another child might need extra time. This is in line with Pim's (2014) idea that EAL students have different needs.

### *Differentiation: lessons designed to cater for the needs of EAL students*

Within the students' questionnaire, the students differentiate working with the EALT and working in their homeroom. During the EALT session, the students feel that the activities are more play-based, the teacher seems to be spending time on working with each of them on reading and translating skills and she seems to re-explain subjects often. Having smaller groups leads to being able to individualize better one's teaching, more than in a situation with an entire classroom. To the EALT, being able to differentiate as well as keeping the students interested are key elements in her teaching. In the same sense as Pim's (2014) idea that EAL students have different needs, the EALT notes that her principal challenge is to cater for this diversity of needs when working in groups. She notes the importance of differentiating and planning engaging lessons based on their abilities.

On the other hand, the students' appreciation of their work with the homeroom teacher is different. The focus there appears to be more on working independently. The students thus seem well aware of how different the two environments are. Interestingly, three HTs mention that the students' dependence on the teacher to follow the lesson is something that they find challenging. As Creese (2006) shows, larger classrooms could mean that teachers have less time to cater for all of their students' individual needs, thus leading teachers to consolidate working independently with their students.

### *Resources*

Due to the small number of participants, no decisive trend can be observed in finding whether HTs feel that they have enough resources to cater for their EAL students in their classroom. One teacher comments on the difficulty of finding resources for her students, especially if the material would be in the student's home language and would not be assessable by the teacher. Interestingly, a teacher questions the definition of resources by asking whether class assistants can be considered a resource. In my questionnaire, I did not define what I consider a resource, leaving it open to interpretation. Material and digital resources are mentioned by the EALT. She acknowledges that she has access to good specific resources, such as subscriptions to learning software, and she feels supported by the school when asking for more. Limitation of resources, being shared between different schools or classrooms is raised by Murtagh and Francis (2012),

however, in this particular school, it doesn't appear to be an issue for the EALT but rather for some HTs.

### **Necessity of a partnership**

In keeping with Creese's (2006) findings, both the EALT and HTs all seem to agree on the necessity for a partnership between HT and EALT. When asked if they believe that the collaborative work with the EALT has been improving the language skills of their EAL students, the HTs answer quite homogeneously. They agree that it has a positive impact (on a scale 1 to 5 where 5 is absolutely, three answered 4 and four answered 5). The following question being an opened question, I hoped to understand their personal reasons. My hypothesis was that if they all agreed with this assumption, maybe they had different ideas on the technicality of it. However, I notice some similar themes exposed by the teachers. Overall, they tend to agree on the reasons that makes this collaboration a success for the students.

#### *Designated EAL classroom as a safe zone*

Something I did not anticipate, but is mentioned by several teachers in the questionnaire, is the idea of having the designated EAL classroom as a safe zone. In there, the children are in smaller groups than in the regular classroom and they can build on their confidence to use the language. One teacher comments on this having an impact on the well-being of her students. Withdrawal from classroom is a common technique in supporting special needs students (Murtagh and Francis, 2012, p. 204), and seems to be valued by these teachers as fostering students' wellbeing in school. The students weren't asked whether the designated classroom makes them feel more confident, however the majority (9 out of 10) answer that they like their English lessons (EAL lesson).

#### *Trust established between students and teachers*

Six of the students feel more confident asking questions to either the HT or the EALT. Thus the students seem to equally trust both of their teachers. To a certain extent, this observation highlights the well-researched theory on the importance of teachers in fostering student motivation in learning (Maliqi and Borincanj-Cruss, 2015). The trust established between them leads the students to feel comfortable asking questions to their teachers (EALT or HT) and pursuing their quest for knowledge. However, two teachers comment on the difficulty to motivate their EAL students: when failing, the students feel frustrated and tend to be more defiant towards the teacher. This defiance echoes with the theory of inclusion and exclusion; when feeling excluded lead students to take actions that would exclude them even more (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1968; Bourdieu P., 1977; Bourdieu P., 1984; Bourdieu P., 1993).

#### *Working collaboratively*

##### Combining talents

Similarly to the research on the need for specialisation (Creese, 2006; Burgoyne, Whiteley and Hutchinson, 2011; Murtagh and Francis, 2012; Pim, 2014), the HTs and the EALT equally advocate for a partnership where talents are combined. The majority of the HTs believe that the EALT has more specific skills, training and time to further accompany the students and better differentiate



her lessons. The HTs thus are in line with Creese's observations that "the facilitative, accessing and scaffolding work done by an EALT does require particular knowledge and skills" (2006, p. 437).

#### Developing vocabulary and comprehension skills: allowing access to taught curriculum

Aligning with the research on vocabulary acquisition (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith, & Connors, 2003; Burgoyne, Whiteley, & Hutchinson, 2011; Murtagh & Francis, 2012), seven of the HTs and the EALT agree that the EALT provides support to the EAL students in developing their vocabulary skills. As Murtagh and Francis (2012) highlight, the collaboration between the different professionals to support EAL students' vocabulary development is seen as allowing them access to the taught curriculum. As one teacher notes, 'collaboration leads to learning through language, not solely learning the language as such.' The EAL sessions are thus not seen by the HTs and the EALT as disassociated with what is happening in the classroom.

Following the IB curriculum (IBO, 2021), both the EALT sessions and the regular classroom lessons are based on similar themes called units of inquiry. Four HTs and the EALT stress the fact that their lessons are intertwined, following the same themes. It is also pointed out by two students, one for instance explains that '[they] are doing the same thing in both class'. This student is thus aware of the thematic link between the homeroom classroom and her EAL classroom. This leads us to further question the technicalities of the partnership, and inquire how the HTs and the EALT synchronize their teaching.

#### Planning effectively together in limited time

Regarding EAL students' care, it was relevant to understand HTs' attitudes toward the differences between working in a partnership and working alone. All of them experienced attending to the needs of EAL students on their own during their career. The majority of the teachers feel that attending to EAL on their own was harder or slightly harder than collaborating with an EAL. Only one said it was much easier. However, this teacher believes that more time would be needed to collaborate with the EALT. This could probably be interpreted as working in collaboration with another specialist requires time for it to be a positive experience, at least for this particular teacher. The EALT believes that collaboration is different with every teacher. Some collaborate more than others, but for her it is important to 'be on the same page'.

The HTs and the EALT meet at the beginning of each new unit to collaborate and decide on themes addressed and the vocabulary needed to follow the lessons in the mainstream classroom. The EALT then plans her lessons accordingly. Time spent on actual collaborative meetings is not much according to both the HTs and the EALT. Three out of the seven HTs agree that not enough time is spent in meetings. If official meetings are rare, five teachers mention exchanging emails or having quick discussions in the corridors, and when there is a particular issue or a need to be addressed, a spontaneous meeting can be organized. The majority of the HTs and the EALT answer that during their meetings they discuss students' progress and individual learning goals and plan the content of the themes to be addressed in both classes. Keeping with the findings of Murtagh and Francis (2012), both the HTs and the specialist appear to be working along the same direction, by delivering lessons that thematically complete each other and by supporting the identified needs of their students. I understand that the collaboration between teachers and

EALT is not so much based on regular weekly meetings but more on a common understanding of goals at the beginning of each unit and special spontaneous meet-ups if a need arises. As we have seen previously, time is a constraint (Creese, 2006), thus having more meetings might be harder to set up for schools. Teachers nonetheless seem to value these meetings. As one teacher explains,

*It would be great to have more collaboration with the EAL teacher. I really have little idea of what H. in my class is getting up to in her EAL sessions, so I don't know what to practise or reinforce in the homeroom. I'm sure this is the same for the EAL teacher's perspective too. To me having things a bit more "joined up" would help the students.*

Interestingly, the EALT similarly believes that it is important to report on the progress of her students and meet when necessary.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

This study proposes a new focus on the research on EAL: the lens was aimed at the belief and attitudes of teachers and students regarding the collaboration between EALT and HTs in an international school. Similarly to research in monolingual schools, the participants of this study highlight the struggles that one must face when caring for EAL students and confirm the necessity for a partnership between teachers and language acquisition specialists.

In this particular school, the EALT's support is seen as allowing students to access the curriculum by sharing the same themes and consolidating children's vocabulary. The EALT and the HTs share a number of similar concerns and appreciations toward this collaboration. Teachers in this study reflect on time, both time dedicated to the specificity of teaching EAL students as well as collaborative planning time between teachers and specialists. It appears that there is a need to allow more time to cater for specific children and share responsibilities to ensure that students access curriculum fully. To some of the HTs, the EALT is bringing her specific set of skills to care for new to English learners. Similar to Creese's findings (2006), the combination of skills and knowledge between all the educators within one classroom seems to be appreciated and needed in this international school. Some HTs also comment on their struggle to access specific resources while the EALT acknowledges the school's support in letting her use specific resources. Teachers highlight on the importance of building trust with their students, and some note the importance of a 'safe zone', being the dedicated EAL classroom. In there, the teachers believe that students have more freedom to try out and practice their language skills, more easily than in a bigger classroom. Children seem to appreciate being in both classrooms. They seem fully aware of the similarity in curriculum content (units) while the techniques used are different (more play-learning in the EAL classroom). Finally, teachers comment on the necessity to adapt one's teaching to the specific needs of their students. All EAL students do not all have the same needs, and it seems appreciated by many that the EALT dedicates extra one-on-one time for some children.

The reader must be warned, however, that the findings of this small-scale study cannot generalise the implication of EAL teaching in all international schools. Each school has its own context that can particularly influence EAL teaching. Further research in different context might

help to qualify the idea that collaboration between professionals helps cater for the EAL students' special needs in international schools.

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## Annex 1: Teachers' Questionnaire

HOW DOES COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE EAL TEACHER AND THE HOMEROOM TEACHERS HELP EAL STUDENTS IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT OF VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS?

**Question 1: How long have you been teaching?**

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**Question 2: If English is not your main language, how long have you been teaching through the medium of English?**

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**Question 3: How long have you been teaching in international schools?**

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**Question 4a: Do you feel that the collaborative work with the EAL teacher is improving the language skills of your EAL students?**

Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Absolutely
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Question 4b: In what ways does the collaboration with the EAL teacher impact the vocabulary and comprehension skills of your students?**

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**Question 5: Do you think that the EAL teacher's time with the EAL students is enough to support them?**

- Yes, it is enough time.
- No, it could be a little longer.
- No, more time is definitely needed.

**Question 6a: How much time do you spend in collaborative meetings (formal or informal) with the EAL teacher (approximately per week)?**

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**Question 6b: What is usually discussed in those meetings?**

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**Question 7a: Do you feel that you have enough time in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?**

- Yes, it is enough time.
- No, it could be a little longer.
- No, more time is definitely needed.

**Question 7b: Do you feel that you have enough resources in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?**

- Yes, I have enough resources in my classroom.
- I have some resources but they are not enough.
- No, I have no resources for the EAL students.

**Question 8a: During your career, have you ever been in a situation where you had to support EAL students on your own?**

- Yes
- No

**Question 8b: If yes, how did you feel about the experience compared with having an EAL teacher collaborating with you?**

It was much more difficult	1	2	3	4	5	It was much better
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Question 9: How comfortable is it for you to teach EAL students?**

Very challenging	1	2	3	4	5	Very natural
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**Question 10: According to you, are there any challenges in teaching EAL students?**

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**Is there anything else you would like to add? This space is for you to write what you want. I value your views, as it might give be a different perspective, or theme I did not think about.**

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**Thank you for your participation.**

**Project contact details for further information:**

You can contact the researcher at [jmchaleat1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:jmchaleat1@sheffield.ac.uk)

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## **Annex 2: EALT's Interview**

HOW DOES COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE EAL TEACHER AND THE HOMEROOM TEACHERS HELP EAL STUDENTS IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT OF VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS?

**Question 1: How long have you been teaching EAL?**

**Question 2: Was your training specialised in EAL?**

**Question 3: How long have you been teaching in international schools?**

**Question 4a: Do you feel that the collaborative work with the homeroom teachers is helping in improving the language skills of your EAL students?**

**Question 4b: In what ways does the collaboration with the homeroom teachers affect your students' vocabulary and comprehension skills?**

**Question 5: Do you think that your time with the EAL students is enough to support them?**

**Question 6a: How much time do you spend in collaborative meetings (formal or informal) with the homeroom teachers (approximately per week)?**

**Question 6b: What is usually discussed in those meetings?**

**Question 7: Do you feel that you have enough resources to attend to the needs of your students?**

**Question 8a: Have you ever been in a situation where you had to support EAL students without collaborating with homeroom teachers?**

**Question 8b: If yes, was this experience better or worse for you compared to having the homeroom teachers collaborating with you?**

**Question 9: How comfortable is it for you to teach EAL students?**

**Question 10: According to you, are there any challenges in teaching EAL students?**

**Is there anything else you would like to add? This space is for you to write what you like. I value any information you wish to provide, as it might give me a different perspective, or theme I did not think about.**

### Annex 3: Students' Questionnaire

## HOW DOES COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE EALTEACHER AND THE HOMEROOM TEACHERS HELP EAL STUDENTS IN THEIR DEVELOPMENT OF VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS?

#### Question 1:

Do you like your English lesson?

YES

NO

#### Question 2:

How long have you been learning English?

Less than a year

1 year

2 years

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

You don't have to  
answer the  
questions if you  
don't want to!

#### Question 3:

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not very much and 5 is a lot), how much do you think your English lessons have helped you to follow your lessons in your homeroom?



1

2

3

4

5



#### Question 4:

Again, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is not very much and 5 is a lot), do you feel lost sometimes during your lessons because of the language?



1

2

3

4

5



**Question 5:**

Who do you feel happier asking more questions about English?

Your homeroom teacher

Your English teacher

**Question 6:**

How is the English teacher helping you understand your lesson? (You can ask the help of the researcher to type down your answer)

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**Question 7:**

How is your homeroom teacher helping you understand your lesson? (You can ask the help of the researcher to type down your answer)

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ANSWERS!



#### Annex 4: Teachers' Questionnaires Answers

Questions	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
1: How long have you been teaching?	8 years	6 years <sup>1</sup>
2: If English is not your main language, how long have you been teaching through the medium of English?	8 years	English Native
3: How long have you been teaching in international schools?	8 years	4 years
4a: Do you feel that the collaborative work with the EAL teacher is improving the language skills of your EAL students?	5	5

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<sup>1</sup> + 2 years as a TA

<p><b>4b: In what ways does the collaboration with the EAL teacher impact the vocabulary and comprehension skills of your students?</b></p>	<p>The EAL specialist can take the time to pre-teach vocabulary that the students require to participate in their homeroom, and build the learners' confidence to communicate more independently. Additionally, the EAL specialist can identify challenges that the student faces when accessing the curriculum, and help to work on individual goals in collaboration with the homeroom teacher. This is highly important for the well-being of the child who is often dealing with a transition linguistically, culturally and otherwise while being in ELS.</p>	<p>Having an EAL teacher to focus on the main language acquisition (general vocab and comprehension) is hugely helpful, as it gives the students a chance to specifically focus on these skills, which we can then consolidate and build on in the classroom setting, and vice versa. With this EAL focus time and a specialist teacher, students generally pick up English more quickly and accurately and it is a great opportunity for students to practise in a smaller group setting, where they often feel more comfortable at first. This helps them to gain confidence, which is such an important part to making progress and enjoying school. Spending time each week with a unit focus this year has also helped the students to consolidate their understanding of the new vocabulary, and means they follow the inquiries in the classroom much better.</p>
<p><b>5: Do you think that the EAL teacher's time with the EAL students is enough to support them?</b></p>	<p>Yes, it is enough time.</p>	<p>Yes, it is enough time</p>
<p><b>6a: How much time to you spend in collaborative meetings (formal or informal) with the EAL teacher (approximately per week)?</b></p>	<p>This varies a lot depending on availability and other duties. I would say that we spend about 60-90 minutes per month collaborating, and not always in formal meetings, but often via email or by having one-on-one conversations.</p>	<p>This can vary as we do not necessarily meet every week, but rather when we have collaboration time planned in to meeting times or more informally, when we feel there is a particular need. I would say this adds up approx. 30 minutes per month. We communicate via email or on planning documents in between these meeting times though.</p>

<b>6b: What is usually discussed in those meetings?</b>	We talk about learning goals and individual progress for each child, and check in when social or emotional concerns arise. Some time is also dedicated to working on curriculum documentation and unit planners.	.Unit overview planning and key vocab .Students' progress and areas for development and how best to support .Extra-interventions .Students who need/no longer need EAL classes
<b>7a: Do you feel that you have enough time in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	Yes, it is enough time.	Yes, it is enough time. <sup>2</sup>
<b>7b: Do you feel that you have enough resources in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	I have some resources but there are not enough.	Yes, I have enough resources in my classroom.
<b>8a: During your career, have you ever been in a situation where you had to support EAL students on your own?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>8b: If yes, how did you feel about the experience compared with having an EAL teacher collaborating with you?</b>	2	2
<b>9: How comfortable is it for you to teach EAL students?</b>	5	4

<sup>2</sup> For the majority of students yes! I appreciate that the EAL teacher is now doing 15 mins extra interventions every week for those who need some extra input for certain skills.

**10: According to you, are there any challenges in teaching EAL students?**

At [school's name] and many other international schools a very high percentage of students are EAL students (whether they are labelled as such or not). This is something that has become an inherent part of my role as an educator. In fact, I was educated at an international and IB school myself, so I would consider myself a lifelong EAL student. :) I feel that I can relate to my students' experience and find it less challenging to address their learning needs as a result.

I feel there are many challenges when teaching EAL students, which I felt most when teaching in schools with no extra EAL support time or much training. Finding and differentiating lessons and resources in a way that benefits each individual child is hard, especially as students come in with such varying levels of English. It is difficult when a student joins half way through the year with little to no English, as they have missed the settling in routines put in place at the beginning. It can also be challenging to balance the time spent with an adult and the time spent solely on English language skills (phonics, reading, writing etc.) and integrated learning.



**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

The biggest help for me to support EAL learners was the training I have had on it, which included lots of practical ideas to support EAL learners as well as the theory around language acquisition. It wasn't a particular focus during my time at previous schools, although it would have been very helpful!

Questions	Teacher 3	Teacher 4
<b>1: How long have you been teaching?</b>	9 years	12-13 years
<b>2: If English is not your main language, how long have you been teaching through the medium of English?</b>	8 years	9 years <sup>3</sup>
<b>3: How long have you been teaching in international schools?</b>	8 years	9 years
<b>4a: Do you feel that the collaborative work with the EAL teacher is improving the language skills of your EAL students?</b>	5	4
<b>4b: In what ways does the collaboration with the EAL teacher impact the vocabulary and comprehension skills of your students?</b>	In addition to developing the general language knowledge and skills, collaboration on what we are working on in the classroom gives students additional time, vocabulary, and skills to access e.g. unit of inquiry learning. Collaboration leads to learning through language, not solely learning the language as such.	I believe the more confident and comfortable a student is in the classroom environment, the more successful they are academically. Overall, I think the work the EAL teacher does with the students impacts their confidence firstly; teaching them school vocabulary and most common phrases used in the classroom, so the students know what's going on around them.

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<sup>3</sup> + 1.5 years as EFL

<b>5: Do you think that the EAL teacher's time with the EAL students is enough to support them?</b>	No, it could be a little longer.	Yes, it is enough time.
<b>6a: How much time to you spend in collaborative meetings (formal or informal) with the EAL teacher (approximately per week)?</b>	5-10 mins	Hm, a couple of scheduled meetings per term, and perhaps some check-ins before each unit.
<b>6b: What is usually discussed in those meetings?</b>	How a student did in lessons (class or EAL), what the EAL teacher can support with during push-in, how to encourage student development. Generally informal meetings, e.g. a quick discussion as they pick students up.	Well, mostly the progress of the EAL students and the (UoI) vocabulary that the students can be supported with.
<b>7a: Do you feel that you have enough time in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	No, it could be a little longer.	No, it could be a little longer.
<b>7b: Do you feel that you have enough resources in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	I have some resources but they are not enough.	Yes, I have enough resources in my classroom. <sup>4</sup>
<b>8a: During your career, have you ever been in a situation where you had to support EAL students on your own?</b>	Yes	Yes

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<sup>4</sup> Do assistants count as a resource?

<p><b>8b: If yes, how did you feel about the experience compared with having an EAL teacher collaborating with you?</b></p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p>
<p><b>9: How comfortable is it for you to teach EAL students?</b></p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>
<p><b>10: According to you, are there any challenges in teaching EAL students?</b></p>	<p>It can be difficult to balance teaching them English vs. teaching other things, e.g. is now a good time for a pull out session? Will they miss something important? It is also challenging to find materials for supporting their learning, e.g. facts or videos in their language, especially when I can't assess their ability to access written materials in it.</p>	<p>For me, the biggest challenge is time. Time for preparing differentiated work for EAL students (again, something they can do that is similar to what others are doing, and that will make them feel successful). Time to regularly be able to sit with an EAL student, or a small group to check-in, or work on target vocabulary, support with other class work etc.</p>

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

Teaching EAL students can be challenging, and it was definitely a struggle at the start of my career. It has taken a lot of time and resources to support me in teaching them as well as they deserve. Nowadays, the big struggle is time: to find resources, to check in and give separate instructions, to provide extra practice, to collaborate with assistants, to collaborate with the EAL teacher, etc. It is a balancing act to prioritize between the needs of the class as a whole, EAL students, SEN students, academic, social and emotional needs, etc. and sometimes some things have to wait to be addressed, which sometimes can be stressful as you feel you're not providing as you should.

Questions	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
<b>1: How long have you been teaching?</b>	17 years	20 years
<b>2: If English is not your main language, how long have you been teaching through the medium of English?</b>	English Native	English Native
<b>3: How long have you been teaching in international schools?</b>	3 years	9 years
<b>4a: Do you feel that the collaborative work with the EAL teacher is improving the language skills of your EAL students?</b>	4	4
<b>4b: In what ways does the collaboration with the EAL teacher impact the vocabulary and comprehension skills of your students?</b>	<p>This has changed over time I have been at [school's name]. With the previous EAL teacher, there was relatively little collaboration: EAL lessons were stand alone, not related to units. The current EAL teacher has been more collaborative, working with unit vocabulary, which I feel has had an impact.</p>	<p>I feel that collaboration between the homeroom teacher and the EAL teacher has a positive impact because the EAL teacher can provide a differentiated lesson that is not always possible for the H.R. teacher. Vocabulary understanding is essential for language comprehension, so combining the talents of both professional is a benefit to EAL students.</p>

<b>5: Do you think that the EAL teacher's time with the EAL students is enough to support them?</b>	Yes, it is enough time. <sup>5</sup>	Yes, it is enough time.
<b>6a: How much time to you spend in collaborative meetings (formal or informal) with the EAL teacher (approximately per week)?</b>	Not much: an hour of collaborative time at the start of units, if that. (1 hr every 6 weeks.)	Not much time given to meet with the EAL teacher.
<b>6b: What is usually discussed in those meetings?</b>	What we are covering in the units. Any unit vocabulary.	If we do meet, it is usually to discuss the language progress of the students.
<b>7a: Do you feel that you have enough time in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	Yes, it is enough time. <sup>6</sup>	Yes, it is enough time.
<b>7b: Do you feel that you have enough resources in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	No, I have no resources for the EAL students.	I have some resources but they are not enough.
<b>8a: During your career, have you ever been in a situation where you had to support EAL students on your own?</b>	Yes	Yes

<sup>5</sup> For the children in my class now who already have some English. If they were new to English they would need more.

<sup>6</sup> But I don't have any new to English learners.

**8b: If yes, how did you feel about the experience compared with having an EAL teacher collaborating with you?**

5

1

**9: How comfortable is it for you to teach EAL students?**

2

5

**10: According to you, are there any challenges in teaching EAL students?**

How much to use their home language. For example, for the last two years I have had support staff who could speak the students' home language. This helped them settle in but maybe didn't give them a reason to develop their English quickly.

Yes, there are a couple of challenges I found teaching EAL students:  
 1) When students became overtly dependent on the teacher instead of pushing through with the language.  
 2) Students become too frustrated and defiant and a distraction to other students.



**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

It would be great to have more collaboration with the EAL teachers. I really have little idea of what H in my class is getting up to in her EAL sessions, so I don't know what to practise or reinforce in the homeroom. I'm sure this is the same for the EAL teacher's perspective too. To me having things a bit more "joined up" would help the students.

Questions	Teacher 7
<b>1: How long have you been teaching?</b>	14 years
<b>2: If English is not your main language, how long have you been teaching through the medium of English?</b>	7 years
<b>3: How long have you been teaching in international schools?</b>	7 years
<b>4a: Do you feel that the collaborative work with the EAL teacher is improving the language skills of your EAL students?</b>	5
<b>4b: In what ways does the collaboration with the EAL teacher impact the vocabulary and comprehension skills of your students?</b>	<p>The students get tailored instructions at their level. In a regular class situation, the teacher will not analyse the words as deeply, go back to the foundation, identify the very specific needs of the new English learner. They are the ones who can check the prior knowledge deeper with the students and share more safe opportunities for more comfortable learning, the setting is more neutral and there is a safe zone. A class teacher can simply not provide the best help for a student to be fully on track like all the other students, give them skills to gain deeper overall understanding and explain technical vocabulary for unit learning thoroughly. The EAL teacher is the one closing that gap.</p>
<b>5: Do you think that the EAL teacher's time with the EAL students is enough to support them?</b>	No, it could be a little longer.

<b>6a: How much time to you spend in collaborative meetings (formal or informal) with the EAL teacher (approximately per week)?</b>	0.5 hours, not even...
<b>6b: What is usually discussed in those meetings?</b>	The progress of the ELS students, any support that can be given and the upcoming learning unit, experiences and expectations. Parallels that can be drawn and skills that need to be taught for more successful learning in the classroom.
<b>7a: Do you feel that you have enough time in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	No, it could be a little longer.
<b>7b: Do you feel that you have enough resources in regular classroom setting to attend to the needs of your EAL students?</b>	Yes, I have enough resources in my classroom.
<b>8a: During your career, have you ever been in a situation where you had to support EAL students on your own?</b>	Yes
<b>8b: If yes, how did you feel about the experience compared with having an EAL teacher collaborating with you?</b>	1
<b>9: How comfortable is it for you to teach EAL students?</b>	3

**10: According to you, are there any challenges in teaching EAL students?**

It's rather difficult when students come from particular countries to find out the prior knowledge situation. I think the most challenge is when a student would be fully blocking and would not want to learn English... Motivation and challenging a student from level 0 is probably the hardest step...

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

EAL teachers' support is important, even though students speak fluent English. I think students speak English faster than they comprehend written texts...



### Annex 5: Students' Questionnaire Answers<sup>7</sup>

Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5
Do you like your English lesson?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
How long have you been learning English?	3 years	6 years	8 years	3 years	5 years
On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not very much and 5 is a lot), how much do you think your English lessons have helped you to follow your lessons in your homeroom?	4	4	4 and 5	3	4
Again, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is not very much and 5 is a lot), do you feel lost sometimes during your lessons because of the language?	1	1	2	1	1
Who do you feel happier asking more questions about English?	Both HT and EALT	HT	Both HT and EALT	Both HT and EALT	Both HT and EALT
How is the English teacher helping you understand your lesson?	She help to me vere mash and I like hrs aydiyas.	We are doing the same thing in both class to homeroom.	[She] dose let us use the translator but she mostly wants us to find out our slfs.	That the english teacher give exaple.	Playing games Calling chance to chance Reads book to me

<sup>7</sup> Children's spelling was kept as original.

**How is your homeroom teacher helping you understand your lesson?**

[She] is helping to us that she helps with speling, reding and oll the sings wot we ned.

For 2 lexsons are same t Els.

[She] helps us by reading and helping us with speling.

She give us a paper!

She says go grab a dictionary and find in it.

Questions	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8	Student 9	Student 10
<b>Do you like your English lesson?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>How long have you been learning English?</b>	4 years	4 years and a half	5 years	Less than 3 years	About 2 years
<b>On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not very much and 5 is a lot), how much do you think your English lessons have helped you to follow your lessons in your homeroom?</b>	4	4	3	5	4
<b>Again, on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is not very much and 5 is a lot), do you feel lost sometimes during your lessons because of the language?</b>	3	1	1	2	3
<b>Who do you feel happier asking more questions about English?</b>	Both HT and EALT	HT	HT	EALT	Both HT and EALT
<b>How is the English teacher helping you understand your lesson?</b>	She explains it again but if we still don't get it she explains with obgakts and play games.	Giving us hints. We do the same units. Helping with: writing, spelling, reading. Playing spelling games. Showing us things.	We get something written on the whiteboard and drawings, and worksheets.	She can help use to understand our lesson. She work with our homeroom teacher so [she] can work with use so we can understand more what we work with our homeroom teacher. With worksheet and site and video.	She help us by having some reading lessons, we work on a booklet. She help us understand English.



**How is your homeroom teacher helping you understand your lesson?**

He gives some hints about problume or a word. And if we still don't get it he writs on the board.

She shows us presentations, gove us tasks. She helps me find out by myself. She is finding out what is my problem.

I understand everything by my own.

I ask sometimes an other students to help me with english or math. And sometimes I also ask my teacher when I don't understand somethings. She try to explain more the questions when I don't understand.

[He] help me understand by explaining the details, sometimes he can talk for an hour.