

The collaborative role of EAL teachers in Australian schools from the perspective of EAL teacher education

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ABSTRACT

The Australian Curriculum brings with it a strong focus on catering to EAL learners in the mainstream (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2014a). The focus is most apparent in the supplementary documents for EAL students that are currently embedded within different subject areas. This explicit and systematic acknowledgement of ways to teach EAL learners provides an opportunity to explore the collaborative role of EAL teachers, who are well placed to work with content area teachers to develop EAL students' language proficiency. In this article I suggest that EAL and content area teacher collaboration outcomes may be enhanced by a dual focus on content area and language development. However, I also suggest that if this dual focus is not made explicit, the scaffolding of content areas is likely to take priority over the development of language proficiency. Data is taken from interviews with four EAL pre-service teachers who took part in a voluntary collaborative activity with pre-service content area teachers. Findings revealed both a lack of confidence and a perception that EAL and content area teacher collaboration signified providing the content area teacher with language support.

Introduction

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum encourages an explicit focus on English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) students in mainstream classrooms (ACARA, 2014a). Detailed explanations of what an EAL/D student might find difficult at every stage from Foundation to Year 10 in the fields of Mathematics, Science, History and English now appear on the ACARA website as specialised, content-specific resources (ACARA, 2014a). Explanations are both linguistic and cultural in nature and teaching strategies are provided. Also, in the English Curriculum, priority is given to learning English as a system, or 'knowing about the English language' (ACARA, 2014b). As Derewianka (2012) pointed out, this priority is informed by a Hallidayan functional model of language (e.g. Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday, 2009), and also by the concept of genre-based pedagogy (e.g. Martin, 1985, 2009; Christie, 2005; Rose & Martin,

2012) that took as its base Halliday's functional approach to language. Derewianka's (2012) connection between the English Curriculum and Halliday's functional model and genre-based pedagogy could also be extended to the way the EAL/D resources have been tailored to different subject areas, or different contexts of language use, rather than only offered in the more traditional format of a separate resource.

The systematic focus on a functional integration of language and content offers significant potential for collaboration with EAL teachers. Here, the 'D' has been deliberately omitted from the acronym in order not to conflate language and dialect: the article takes language as its focus. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (2009¹), in Victoria reported that there were 464 EAL teachers placed in Government schools across Victoria in 2009 and of these, 75.2% were qualified. Timetabled EAL classes were the most common form of instruction for

EAL teachers. Although this number of Government-employed EAL teachers is not high, exploring ways to leverage the knowledge and skills of EAL teachers across Australia in general, and to prioritise the upskilling of teachers not qualified to teach EAL, is likely to benefit EAL students. My aim in this article is specifically to discuss the knowledge and skills of EAL teachers as they relate to collaboration with teachers of other content areas. In my discussion I draw on data taken from a small-scale qualitative study on EAL and content area pre-service teacher collaboration. The data relates to EAL pre-service teachers' perceptions of their future collaborative role. The findings from this small data set assisted with the thinking behind my ultimate suggestion that language development, as well as language scaffolding, be a focus of content-area and EAL teacher collaboration. I will begin by addressing the content area of the EAL teacher, and move on to subsequent issues surrounding a collaborative role. I will then discuss the pre-service teacher study and finish with implications and recommendations for EAL and content area teacher collaboration.

The content knowledge of an EAL teacher

In response to an increasing amount of diversity in schools, a focus on content-based instruction for EAL learners has been emerging over the past two decades in English-speaking countries (e.g. Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Snow, Met & Genesee, 1989; Stoller, 2004). The integrationist approach has 'radically changed the role of language teachers and the language curriculum in primary and secondary school settings and in postsecondary contexts' (Kaufman & Crandall, 2005, p. 2). The approach has also brought the English language discipline out of isolation and into other domains (Kaufman & Crandall, 2005; Harper, de Jong & Platt, 2008). Harper et al. (2008) explained the complexity of the changing roles of EAL teachers in this way: 'When EAL teachers' instructional goals are framed in terms of [EAL students'] academic achievement in other content areas, the professional identity and roles of [EAL] teachers and those of other teachers begin to converge' (p. 271).

Although Harper, de Jong, and Platt (2008) were discussing the US context, this lack of clarity around the instructional goals of an EAL teacher is also applicable in the context of the Australian Curriculum. In her discussion on meeting the needs of EAL students in the new curriculum, Hammond (2012) suggested that, as a result of the number of EAL students in the Australian education system, responsibility for these students needed to rest with content area teachers. This is a highly appropriate argument given the large number

of EAL students in Australia. Nevertheless, the increase in more explicit content area teacher responsibility for EAL students might be positively influenced if the role of EAL teachers, however limited their number, is also given some thought. The two roles for EAL teachers mentioned by Hammond (2012) were team-teaching within classes and providing parallel withdrawal classes. In both of these examples, it is easy to see how the EAL teacher may be considered to take a supporting role. Indeed, this role is frequently reflected in a strategy-based, rather than content-based, view of what EAL instruction entails (e.g. Arkoudis & Creese, 2006; Davison, 2001; Harper et al., 2008; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Moore, 2007). Harper et al. (2008) argued that EAL is often not considered to be curriculum 'content' but rather based on pedagogical modifications. This claim is indirectly supported in Foley, Sangster and Anderson's (2013, p. 195) UK study of content area pre-service teachers involved in an EAL curriculum extension program, in which it was determined that 'an overly narrow EAL-centric approach' (p. 197) should be avoided. Foley et al. (2013) reported that many of their pre-service teacher participants 'recognised that such pedagogies were equally useful for mainstream as well as EAL learners' (p. 197).

What, then, is the domain of the EAL teacher? In this article I will focus on the language element of EAL. I acknowledge that the domain is larger than this, and also that separating language from content is essentially an artificial distinction. Halliday (1993) drew attention to this point in his statement that, 'language development is learning how to mean; and because human beings are quintessentially creatures who mean [...], all human learning is essentially semiotic in nature' (p. 93). I therefore do not seek to make a distinction but rather to shift the focus to language on the basis of the finding, mentioned earlier, that EAL instruction is frequently perceived to be strategy rather than content-based. I do this in order to demonstrate three important aspects of what an EAL teacher does that fall outside the ambit of pedagogical modification. These three aspects include (1) diagnosing and furthering the language progression of EAL students, (2) understanding and being able to explain how the English language is structured, and (3) knowing about theories of second language acquisition. As can be seen in the Australian Curriculum, teachers of other content areas are receiving very particular advice on how to teach their EAL students and this includes advice on all three of the points listed above (see ACARA, 2014a for numerous examples). I would argue that the three points are the core business of EAL teachers, and the depth of their knowledge is key to their specialist area.

Understanding the language aspect of the EAL teacher domain in terms of depth, rather than as a separate field, complements the explicit language integrationist model that is being implemented in the Australian Curriculum.

These three aspects of the EAL teacher domain may be referred to as knowledge about language (KAL). KAL has been discussed in this journal in different ways (e.g. Derewianka, 2012; Jones & Chen, 2012) and in the Australian Curriculum: English KAL refers to students developing 'their knowledge of the English language and how it works' (ACARA, 2014b). KAL has also been discussed in EAL teacher education literature, notably by Bigelow and Ranney (2005), who explained:

[EAL teachers] need to develop and apply KAL to make decisions in the classroom, from issues of curriculum design to the question of whether and how to offer corrective feedback. [EAL] teachers must be skilled at gathering linguistic information from their students to choose suitable linguistic structures to teach and to assess students' linguistic development. They have to be able to predict what language will be problematic in a text or class activity and then decide how to address the language in the lesson. They need to decide whether instruction should be proactive (i.e. planned instruction) or reactive (e.g. recasts), implicit or explicit [...] KAL informs what materials, tasks and assignments are best suited to students according to their global literacy skills and their syntactic development. KAL is core to the everyday work of language teachers (p. 179).

Bigelow and Ranney (2005) thus defined KAL in terms of its implementation. This explanation is useful when talking about KAL from the point of view of an EAL teacher because it goes beyond knowledge of English language and how it works to include knowledge about theories of second language acquisition. This is especially apparent in the comment on corrective feedback, which draws attention to the potential for conflict between fluency (a focus on using language) and accuracy (a focus on learning language). Aspects of language 'content' for an EAL teacher, as mentioned earlier, are also visible in, for example, attention to curriculum design, the diagnosis and development of language proficiency, and predicting and addressing problematic language.

The collaborative role of the EAL teacher

I have discussed the linguistic 'content' knowledge of the EAL teacher in the previous section because it has some bearing on the potential for EAL and content area teacher collaboration. In literature on this type of collaboration, EAL teachers are often perceived to be marginalised (e.g. Arkoudis, 2003; Creese, 2005; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Pawan &

Ortloff, 2011). Pedagogies that are associated with facilitative approaches are understood to place EAL teachers at the periphery of a mainstream curriculum that promotes the transmission of explicit content knowledge (Creese, 2002, 2005; Harper, de Jong & Platt, 2008). McClure and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) further argued that, 'scheduling and time are serious issues that schools must grapple with, but critical questions of power, status, and conflicting pedagogies that come into play between coteaching partners may be even more important and are seldom addressed' (p. 107). As Allison (2011) pointed out, the Australian Curriculum should mandate EAL/D support and 'the provision of specialist [EAL/D] support [should also be] underpinned by ongoing research focusing on how to best meet the needs of EAL/D learners' (p. 195). If the EAL teachers are marginalised, this status is likely to be shared by their EAL students and reinforces the gap between rhetoric about meeting the needs of diverse students and what happens daily in schools, a gap to which Allison (2011, citing Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), referred at the end of her article.

One way to foreground the collaborative role of EAL teacher-as-specialist is to prioritise the linguistic development of EAL students when they are studying in different content areas. This is already happening in the Australian Curriculum and is a promising development. In an ACARA (2014c) resource prepared for teachers of EAL/D students there is direct reference to this: 'When working with EAL/D students, teachers need to understand where students are located on a typical English language learning progression *and identify where specific teaching is required*, as well as the level of support needed to help them access the curriculum in the learning area' (p. 10, italics added). Although strategies for explicitly teaching language are provided in the document, depth of knowledge can only help teachers implement the strategies. According to Hammond (2012), 'there is evidence to suggest that while many teachers recognise the importance of language and literacy in learning, and acknowledge the importance of teaching EAL (and other) students about language, they lack the confidence to do so' (p. 226). Collaboration with EAL teachers might be especially beneficial in this case.

Attention to linguistic progression in other content areas has the potential to position the EAL teachers as content area teachers in their own right rather than principally as assistants who help other teachers to scaffold and simplify content area English. In the UK context, Creese (2010) argued for a more integrationist notion of language development for EAL students, stating that language development was not

being given due precedence alongside their content learning. She (Creese, 2010) noted, 'When a pedagogy is in search of a subject, it will drag expertise down to a skill, rather than a knowledge. In other words, unless the EAL teacher is seen as having the same skills as subject teachers in terms of both the *what* and the *how* of the curriculum, their status and role will be marginalised in the mainstream, alongside those with whom they work' (p. 105). The ACARA EAL/D documents do not explicitly include EAL teachers, so the EAL teachers would need to show other content area teachers what they know by tailoring the language development outcomes to the language-learning trajectory of the EAL students, as well as to the objectives of the content area in question. EAL teacher confidence in their language 'content' area and an explicit focus on the inclusion of language development outcomes in other content areas are both considered to be important factors in making any collaboration reciprocal, and therefore potentially more sustainable.

Research context and method

The collaborative role of an EAL teacher will now be examined from the perspective of four EAL pre-service teachers who voluntarily collaborated with pre-service teachers from other content areas. The findings, albeit from a small scale research project, helped to explore and comment on EAL and content area teacher collaboration in Australian schools from the point of view of EAL teacher education. The data comes from a study conducted in a university teacher education setting in 2013. It involved a collaborative activity between pre-service EAL teachers and pre-service content area teachers. Four of the seven EAL pre-service teachers who chose to take part in the collaborative activity were interviewed at the end of semester. Given that there were approximately 40 students in the EAL method class in 2013, and only seven participated in the voluntary activity, the four participants in this study were not necessarily typical of their cohort. As can be seen below, the collaborative activity was designed to give the EAL and content area pre-service teachers experience with collaboration. The participants were therefore chosen for the study on the basis of their observed willingness to collaborate with their peers.

Participants

The four EAL pre-service teacher participants' names – Helen, Penny, Andrew and Michelle – are pseudonyms. Helen was a mature-age student with language teaching experience whereas Penny, Andrew and Michelle were younger and new to teaching. Helen and Michelle were also studying a languages method course (German

and French respectively), Penny's other teaching method was English and Andrew's other method was psychology. All four participants were Australian and had an English-speaking background.

Collaborative activity

Pre-service EAL teachers, along with content area teachers who were studying an elective unit on teaching EAL students in mainstream classrooms, were invited to participate in an extra-curricular collaborative activity. In this activity pre-service content area teachers brought with them a content area text that they were required to modify for hypothetical EAL students during the course of their elective unit. During the collaborative activity the pre-service EAL teachers worked with the pre-service content area teachers on the modifications.

Interviews

At the end of semester the four pre-service EAL teachers were interviewed separately for 10 minutes each. All data in the article is drawn from the interviews. The interview questions for the EAL pre-service teachers are below:

1. To what extent do you see your role as an EAL teacher as teaching content alongside English?
2. How did the collaboration activity you participated in this semester with content area pre-service teachers make you feel?
3. How confidently would you collaborate with a content area teacher if you were working in an EAL position next year? What is likely to add or detract from your confidence?
4. Do you think learning how to collaborate with content area teachers should be prioritised in your EAL method?

Data analysis

Data were analysed thematically and coded using speech segments: a segment is considered to be the smallest unit of delivery connected to a particular theme (Henri & Rigault, 1996). Data were analysed according to three themes. The first theme related to the language 'content' knowledge of the participants. This comprised the three aspects discussed earlier in the article: (1) diagnosing and furthering the language progression of EAL students; (2) understanding and being able to explain how the English language is structured; and (3) knowing about theories of second language acquisition. The second theme related to assisting the content area pre-service teachers make the language of their content area more accessible to the EAL learners – the subject of the collaborative activity. The third theme related to the importance of collaboration with content area teachers and involvement in

cross-curricular decisions around what materials, tasks and assignments may be best suited to EAL learners. Data were analysed using these three themes to investigate the EAL pre-service teachers' perceptions around if, why and how they would collaborate.

Results and discussion

This section will be divided according to (1) language 'content' knowledge; (2) making language accessible in content areas; and (3) collaborating with content area teachers. The first theme is relatively short because participants generally did not talk about language and language teaching when answering the interview questions about their collaborative role.

Language 'content' knowledge

The theme of language 'content' knowledge was the least represented in the data with a total of six speech segments. Three of the segments mentioned language development in relation to timetabled EAL classes. The remaining three segments related to Andrew's and Penny's concerns over the extent of their specialist knowledge and were brought up as a response to questions about collaboration. First, Andrew noted the lack of time in teacher education and the importance of prioritising content specific material. When asked whether he thought that collaboration should be prioritised in the EAL method, he stated:

I think we have a really restricted amount of time in actual content about EAL [...] I have a linguistics minor, so 2 years ago I did 4 years of linguistics and I haven't touched it since then. And they go, you have 3 classes, 6 hours [of EAL method classes], now go teach it, you're good enough to go off and be a specialist.

Penny's concern, on the other hand, was positioned as an impediment to actual collaboration, rather than related to a restricted amount of time during the EAL methods unit. In response to the question regarding what would detract from her confidence while collaborating with a content area teacher, Penny stated:

I didn't get taught grammar exclusively at school, so that's something that I've had to learn now [...] I still doubt my abilities in the area, I still view my knowledge as quite holistic in terms of, you know, the function of language rather than really specific things like nouns and noun phrases.

Penny positioned herself as confident in her own EAL-timetabled classes during the interview: her discussion about language as a system detracted from her confidence as a content area teacher collaborator rather than her confidence in scaffolding learning for her own EAL students. Penny's speech segment in the next section reinforces this point.

Language accessibility in content areas

The theme of language accessibility in content areas received more attention than language development: twelve speech segments in total. Responses to the first interview question about whether participants saw their role as teaching content alongside English, the second question about how the collaborative activity made them feel and, in Penny's case, to the fourth question about the importance of collaboration related to this theme. All twelve speech segments indicated that the EAL pre-service teachers understood collaboration to entail simplifying and scaffolding content, the focus of the voluntary collaborative activity.

First, both Andrew and Penny used their second method of psychology and English respectively to discuss the utility of language scaffolding in a content area. Andrew began using the term 'EAL', but reverted to the 'ESL' terminology he had heard being used on placement:

My other specialism is psychology [...] when I was out on teaching rounds it was very interesting to teach these EAL classes and then see some of the ESL kids in my psych[ology] classes, to go how do I then present [...] I had psychology then ESL then more psych[ology] classes so I didn't know that they were ESLs to begin with, so that made me shift kind of, how do I present myself, what language do I use?

When responding to the final question of whether or not collaboration should be prioritised in the EAL method, Penny was also explicit about the connections she made between her two methods, and the importance she placed on scaffolding:

I've used the same activities that I've used with my EAL students with my mainstream English class, yeah, I think it would be really good if we just had a bit more [collaboration].

Unlike Andrew and Penny, Michelle and Helen both focused on the difficulties involved in separating content and English rather than integrating scaffolding strategies into their other method. However, for Michelle, the boundaries between EAL and English were unclear. In response to the first interview question about teaching content alongside English, Michelle stated:

Content and English are sort of the same thing aren't they? [...] I've only had practice in schools doing Year 12 and Year 11, so it was mostly content [...] it was based on issues, it was about [...] asylum seekers. A lot of it wasn't to do with English at all [...] I brought in newspaper articles with both sides, you know, about boat people, that type of thing [...] They had to write an essay in their exam about conflict or something. It was just to give them a whole heap of ideas, cos a lot of them are very quiet and don't seem to have opinions.

Michelle also mentioned scaffolding when discussing

the collaborative activity and displayed concern that she had been positioned as a scaffolding 'expert':

The [content area teachers] I helped with, one was with music, that was really simple the language that was in it [...] but the other one, I didn't have too many tips really. It was more about the format actually, about too many words all in one space [...] I feel like they sort of knew that as well. I didn't really think that I was much of an expert compared to anyone else, really.

Helen did not display this lack of confidence, but she also focused on students being able to access content. The teaching of English may not have been a focus given that its central importance for an EAL teacher may have been implicit but, for Helen, the idea of 'catching up' was central to her response:

Definitely, you can't teach English without teaching content, I would have thought. I mean you're helping these students to catch up with whatever else they're doing and that includes teaching them content.

For all four participants, the focus remained on their usefulness to the content area teacher, or to themselves in relation to their other method, rather than on the language development of the EAL students. Nevertheless, Helen did note the one-sidedness of the exchange in relation to collaboration with content area teachers. This will be addressed under the next theme.

Collaboration with content area teachers

The final theme of collaboration with content area teachers is related to the EAL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards collaboration with content area teachers. It received eighteen speech segments. The main interview questions during which participants were found to engage with this theme were: (1) How confidently would you collaborate with a content area teacher? What would add to or detract from this confidence? (2) Do you think collaboration should be prioritised in your EAL method? Exposure to successful collaborative practices on placement and transfer of EAL teaching strategies into another method were found to influence the pre-service teachers' positive attitudes towards collaboration with content area teachers. Ambivalent attitudes were influenced by concerns around time constraints, personality and ideas clashes and around the abrogation of content area teacher responsibility.

First, Andrew's answer to whether or not he would feel confident collaborating with content area teachers appeared to be directly related to what he had observed in terms of school organisation. His attention to how collaboration might be sustainable indicated a taken-for-granted assumption of the benefits of collaboration:

Obviously having friendly staff, having structures set in would be really helpful. I guess in terms of detracting

[from my confidence] the opposite would be having very isolated staff, and that works on, like, do you have multiple staffrooms and are you segregated based on your specialisms. I've found across my teaching rounds both. I've seen really isolated teachers and I've seen some really good collaborative stuff where they actually get to talk to each other, which is nice.

On the other hand, in Penny's case, it was not so much exposure but her own successful transfer of teaching strategies, as can be seen in Penny's speech segment given in the previous section. Both Andrew and Penny were the most positively disposed towards collaboration with content area teachers but both still noted the time constraint issue.

Michelle and Helen were less positively disposed towards collaboration but their reasons were not entirely similar. Michelle voiced uncertainty as to what collaboration might entail and ultimately focused on general collaborative issues around personality and ideas clashes and the importance of feeling useful. Helen also cited the issue of personality and ideas clashes between teachers but the most prominent issue for her was the idea of responsibility. Her views demonstrated some insight into the complexity of the issues surrounding the EAL teacher's role. When asked what would add or detract from her confidence when collaborating, she replied:

I suppose the expectations. If anything [...] is helpful and they're grateful, then that'll be fine, and if there's a huge expectation that I will take the responsibility for their EAL students then that will probably be difficult, yeah.

However, it was clear that Helen's positioning in relation to responsibility was complex; later in the interview she stated:

I don't have that much experience of teaching EAL in schools but I had two weeks and I worried what was happening to these kids when they weren't in the EAL classes because they were obviously not going to understand most of what was happening. So I definitely think that you can't just teach them EAL isolated in individual subjects and then wait for them to come back in two day's time. I think your responsibility has to go further.

Helen thus demonstrated that she was torn between wanting to look after the EAL students and not wanting the content area teachers to 'offload' their responsibility. This insight is reminiscent of Pawan and Ortloff's (2011, p. 470) finding in the US that responsibility transfer was one of the main activities associated with EAL and content area teacher collaboration and it was 'primarily one-directional', thus creating a 'one-sided dependency' on the EAL teacher. Helen's insight is further evidenced in her response to whether or not

collaboration should be prioritised in the EAL method:

There's lots of things that we didn't learn so far. [EAL is] a very different kind of subject to most other subjects cos its content isn't as clear as if you're teaching science or history. EAL could be anything [...] [Collaboration] should be discussed in every method because they're all going to have EAL students in their classes.

In this final quote Helen noted the time constraints on learning everything, or 'anything' as she put it, and again she emphasised the importance of attributing responsibility to the content area teachers – or pre-service teachers in this context. Sharing KAL with content area teachers for her was therefore problematic but something she appeared to be predisposed to do if content area teachers demonstrated an equal sense of responsibility for their EAL students.

Conclusion

The results discussed in the previous section are from a small-scale study, but are indicative of a need to address the EAL teachers' collaborative role in the Australian Curriculum. All of the pre-service content area teachers who participated in the collaborative activity with the EAL pre-service teachers, when asked, were supportive of the idea of EAL teacher collaboration (see Turner, forthcoming). Ambivalence towards collaboration was more evident on the part of the EAL pre-service teachers. The ambivalence appeared to come from a lack of confidence on the part of the three younger participants and wariness on the part of the mature-aged participant. Michelle did not feel like an 'expert' and had little sense of what an EAL teacher may be able to do outside a timetabled EAL class. Andrew and Penny had a greater sense of what to do as a result of exposure to collaborative practices and/or to their knowledge transfer to the other method they taught, but they cited time constraints and insecurity around language 'content area'. Helen, the more experienced student, was able to articulate very well the dilemma of feeling responsible for EAL students but not wanting to shoulder this responsibility alone.

The EAL pre-service teachers' ambivalent attitudes towards the prioritising of collaboration are not necessarily in step with the provision of annotated content descriptions, examples of EAL/D learning progressions an EAL/D overview and advice for mainstream teachers across the curriculum (ACARA, 2014a) because, ideally, EAL teachers can assist content area teachers deepen their understanding of how to apply the EAL/D documents. Hammond (2012) referred to the need for content area teachers to be responsible for their EAL/D students, and I would add to this the importance of exploring equitable and sustainable

ways in which content area teachers and EAL teachers can share the responsibility should a qualified EAL teacher, or teachers, be working in schools. However, this requires EAL teacher confidence in their language 'content' area. The insecurity of three of the four EAL pre-service teachers who participated in this small-scale study is not necessarily representative of EAL pre-service teachers on the whole, but it reflects an issue worthy of consideration. EAL teacher education can assist with the confidence of EAL pre-service teacher through explicit focus on building knowledge around language and language development, and relating all pedagogical modifications and practical strategies covered back to this knowledge. Showing how what they are learning relates to the Australian Curriculum as a whole may also help the pre-service teachers view what they know and do in terms of depth.

Given EAL teacher confidence and this focus on depth, there may be at least three ways in which EAL and content area teacher collaborators can be equally supportive of each other: (1) through the recognition of complementary skill sets; (2) through the use of collaborative teams; and (3) through the inclusion of multiple perspectives in planning. These three suggestions build upon each other. Complementary skill sets may include content area teachers' ability to provide supplementary content that can be used in EAL timetabled classrooms in order to further the students' exposure to a particular content area, and the ability to explain to EAL teachers the way this content can be supported. The complementary skill set of the EAL teacher may include the ability to interpret and explain the EAL/D documents in the curriculum content area in ways which link both to the language development and scaffolding needs of the EAL students. If co-teaching, the EAL teacher would actively teach language at some stage and not only play a supportive role (see Creese, 2010).

Second, the use of collaborative teams reinforces the importance of institutional acceptance of the EAL and content area collaboration. Language development is planned alongside content and content area teachers assist EAL teachers in thinking about this language development in relation to the content area, just as the EAL teachers assist content area teachers in thinking about language scaffolding strategies. Finally, the employment of multiple perspectives in planning emphasises the importance of collaboration as preparation rather than reaction and the fact that collaboration can include different configurations: a group of EAL students who share the same content area classes are likely to be greatly assisted if different content area teachers jointly collaborate with their EAL teacher. Further research is needed in order to provide evidence

that these three suggestions are beneficial. The EAL/D and KAL focus in the Australian Curriculum provides promising opportunities for this kind of research.

In brief, the explicit attention given to language integration in the Australian Curriculum can include an enhanced role for EAL teachers. Since the late nineties, this role has been increasingly devalued as a result of Australia policy decisions (Cross, 2012; Moore, 2007). The greater the content-embedded focus on language, the greater the need for a collaborative role for EAL teachers, but the focus on language may need to be truly given the status of content area (Creese, 2010) before issues of EAL teacher – and by extrapolation, EAL learner – marginalisation can be resolved. I would maintain that the ability of EAL teacher educators to articulate the importance of reciprocal collaboration and to position the EAL pre-service teachers as cross-curricular specialists in language and language development, can only assist in making EAL and content area teacher collaboration sustainable and meaningful for EAL learners.

Note

- 1 Although the DEECD (2012) has published EAL reports up until 2012, information about the number of EAL teachers and their qualifications does not appear after 2009.

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