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**Integrating School-Aged ESL Learners into the  
Mainstream Curriculum**

Constant Leung  
*King's College London*

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# INTEGRATING SCHOOL-AGED ESL LEARNERS INTO THE MAINSTREAM CURRICULUM

**Constant Leung**

King's College London  
constant.leung@kcl.ac.uk

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## **Abstract**

The concept of 'integrating ESL learners into the mainstream curriculum' has been the subject of debate amongst educationalists and policy makers in many parts of the English-speaking countries in the past thirty years. The issues concerning the integration of ESL students into the mainstream curriculum are multi-dimensional - the label of ESL itself appears to be part linguistic, part educational, part social and part political. The main purpose of this chapter is to give an account of the multidimensionality of ESL curriculum and practice. The developments in ESL curriculum and pedagogy within the mainstream education system will be looked at first. The influences of wider concerns such as social integration, and rights and entitlements to equal opportunity in public provision will be discussed next; recent experiences in California, England and Victoria will be drawn on to illustrate the multi-dimensional nature of ESL policy and practice. This chapter will conclude with some deliberations on the formulation of an analytical framework which may be used to critically examine any ESL curriculum and practice. The central assumption throughout this chapter is that ESL in mainstream schooling can only be understood properly if we pay attention to its unique position at the crossroads of educational, social and ideological movements.

## **1. Introduction**

The integration of ESL students into the mainstream schooling provision in the publicly funded school system has been an established educational policy position for some time now in the ethnically and linguistically complex and diverse countries such as Australia, the UK and the United States<sup>1</sup>. However, this apparently common educational commitment has been realised by a whole host of different national and/or local policies and practices in terms of English (and other, minority community) language teaching. The wide-ranging discussion on integration in this area of education has oriented towards:

- linguistic and ethnic minority students who are (sometimes newly arrived) citizens and/or members of settled local communities, e.g. Vietnamese communities in Australia, Hispanic communities in the US, Chinese communities in English-speaking parts of Canada and Asian (with community links to the Indian subcontinent) communities in Britain
- educational integration in the general sense as much as English language learning
- social integration and inclusion, and citizens' rights and entitlements as much as individual achievement in school
- language policy/policies on English and other languages.

This chapter will argue that integration of ESL students into the mainstream (which is itself a metaphor) is as much a pedagogic issue as a social and ideological one; beyond its basic reference to a 'common' curriculum and viewed in a long(er) term perspective, the idea of the 'mainstream' is actually a contestable and contested set of curriculum choices and pedagogic practices. ESL is in some sense an educational arena where various, sometimes competing and sometimes overlapping, expectations and demands meet one another. In other words, ESL is

an ideologically charged discipline. A useful way of seeing the complex and ‘loaded’ nature of ESL is to compare it with other more ‘insulated’ school curriculum subjects such as mathematics and French (or indeed the more traditionally-minded varieties of English as a Foreign Language), which are generally less directly exposed to non-discipline-based pressure and influence. It is therefore a complex and non-static phenomenon requiring multi-faceted analysis. In order to understand the varieties of systemic responses in different locations we will need to look at lines of articulation between curriculum developments, and social values and beliefs. The purpose of examining the relationship between language education policy and practices, and social values is not to claim any causal explanation but to show the need to go beyond pedagogic considerations if we are to understand why certain policy and pedagogy are adopted and not others at any one time. Beyond analytical understanding there is a place for educationally and socially responsible critical questioning so that we do not stop at relativistic description. For that reason the final section of this chapter will raise principled questions of clarification which can be used to critically examine some of the claims, and equally important, areas of the confusion and omission, of integration policies and practices. Many of the observations and questions raised in this chapter will be influenced by the trajectory of developments in ESL in England (and the UK more generally) in the past 30 years. It is hoped that this ethno-aware perspective will allow for a heightened consciousness of the underlying poignancy and analytical relevance of the seemingly diverse developments in other world locations.

## **2. Integration: curriculum level developments**

Broadly speaking at the curriculum level the integration of ESL students into the mainstream can be seen to have developed in two directions: attempts at making the English-medium schooling environment inclusive and beneficial for language minority students; and attempts at making the curriculum accessible by actively using students’ first language (other than English) as a medium of learning and wider curriculum communication. The first is discussed as ESL pedagogy and the second as bilingual education.

### **2.1. ESL pedagogy**

For a variety of historical, demographic, social and legislative reasons the past thirty years or so have seen a high level of initiatives and activities in places such as Australia, Canada and England in integrating ESL learners, who are either new to the education system or from an ethnic minority community background with a home language other than English, into the mainstream English-medium educational provision. (See Ashworth, 2000:17-32 for a concise international overview.) The central idea behind the integration policies has been a concern with equal opportunities and entitlements in education. This invariably means an effort at accommodating or including ESL students into the mainstream across subject content classes and/or extending the time-tabling arrangements to provide access to mainstream curriculum-related but separate English language classes<sup>2</sup>. We will now look at a range of selective examples of pedagogic ideas and developments in ESL within the mainstream in the past three decades<sup>3</sup>.

In broad terms many of the ideas and developments can be seen as falling into one of the following four categories: language-content orientation, content-language orientation, trans-curriculum language orientation and student orientation. These categories are used here partly

are convenient labels to represent historically separate efforts by teachers and researchers. However, these categories should not be seen as mutually exclusive and, as it will be seen, they share some overlapping of concerns<sup>4</sup>.

### 2.1.1 Language-content orientation

Much of the early attempts at developing specialist programmes for ESL students were based on a structural approach. For instance the Scope materials (1978:i) advised teachers that '[f]rom the very beginning you have to see to it that your pupils learn correctly organised language, not a makeshift kind of pidgin ... They have to master the way words are put together and the correct form of those words.' In some sense under this kind of approach the content of learning is the language system itself. However, there is often a 'functional reality content' organized as themes in this kind of materials. For instance, the Scope beginners materials were organised around the themes of shopping, farm animals and farming.

An example of a specifically mainstream curriculum-derived language-content oriented syllabus is the topic approach (Cleland & Evans, 1984). This approach was initially developed out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the traditional grammar or structure-based teaching (Evans & Cleland, undated) for ESL students who were in the process of being integrated into the mainstream classes. It was felt that ESL pedagogy should pay attention to students' English language competence with reference to their communicative requirements when studying curriculum subjects such as science and humanities. The conventional concerns of language teaching, e.g. grammar knowledge and the ability to use spoken and written language, are manifested through the content of topics such as the life cycle of an animal. The topic content terms (vocabulary) and language expressions (structure and discourse) are presented and rehearsed through a teaching sequence which includes visuals and group activities. (For a fuller discussion see Davison, 2001).

### 2.1.2 Content-language orientation

The work of Crandall and her colleagues (Crandall, 1987; Crandall, Spanos, Christian, Simich-Dudgeon, & Willetts, 1987) can be seen as an example of curriculum content-oriented ESL, sometimes referred to as content-based language instruction. This approach is built on the observation that if school-aged ESL students are to participate in mainstream classroom learning, then it makes sense to focus 'on the ways in which the language is used to convey or represent particular thoughts or ideas' (Crandall, 1987:4)<sup>5</sup>. Subject specific uses of vocabulary and discourse expressions are identified and classroom strategies are built around these in order to promote both understanding of the subject content and learning of English at the same time. For example, it is pointed out that mathematics uses English language vocabulary and structures in particular ways, e.g. the notion of subtraction can be expressed by 'subtract from', 'decreased by', 'less', 'take away' and so on, and language expressions such as 'If  $a$  is a positive number, then  $-a$  is a negative number ...' to represent the axioms of opposites (Dale & Cuevas, 1987:17). Classroom activities designed to promote ESL development are built around the identified content-language.

Working within a theoretically explicit systemic functional linguistics perspective Mohan (1986; 1990; 2001) proposes a content-language integration approach which ties language expressions and curriculum content together via a set of underlying knowledge structures. These knowledge structures, such as description and sequence, are argued to be cross-curricular. So one may find sequence in narratives, in ordering historical events, and when

analyse the key knowledge structures in different subject areas and tasks, and identify appropriate language expressions for teaching and learning for students at different stages of ESL development. Mohan also suggests that knowledge structures can be visually represented in graphic forms such as charts and diagrams. Thus the use of visual representations and other forms of graphics such as flow charts can be used to assist understanding of the key language and content meaning by students.

### 2.1.3 Trans-curriculum language orientation

ESL pedagogy has also been discussed as a trans-curriculum issue. We will look at two examples. The first is the work of Cummins (e.g. Cummins, 1992; 1996; 2000; Cummins & Swain, 1986). Cummins suggests that language proficiency can be analysed in terms of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS is understood to mean 'the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts'; CALP is conceptualised as 'manipulation of language in decontextualized academic situations' (Cummins, 1992:17). BICS tends to occur in situations where the meanings communicated are broadly familiar to the participants and/or the immediate context or action provides supportive clues for understanding; greeting friends and getting food in a student canteen are examples of context-supported BICS; a class discussion on the merits and demerits of the use of pesticide in farming, without any supporting print, visual or video materials, is an example of context-impooverished CALP. These two conceptual categories do not yield precise linguistic descriptions nor do they map on to any specific area of the curriculum directly. But they can be used to estimate the language and cognitive demands of a variety of communicative situations in school. It is understood that the predicted language and cognitive demands have to be worked out with reference to the learning needs of specific students. In general, ESL students tend to acquire BICS relatively easily whereas the development of CALP used in decontextualised situations is a more complex and long term process. Pedagogically it is suggested that ESL students, particularly those in the beginning stages, would benefit from context-embedded communication, e.g. learning new information and language expression through hands-on activities and/or with the support of visuals or realia, whenever the curriculum language is inaccessible.

The second is the conceptual framework proposed by Snow, Met, & Genesee (1989; 1992). This framework has been formulated specifically to enable ESL and content teachers to share a common teaching agenda. It is assumed that in a content-based approach to second language development the language learning objectives are derived from '(a) the ESL curriculum, (b) the content-area curriculum, and (c) assessment of the learners' academic and communicative needs and ongoing evaluation of their developing language skills' (op.cit.:30). Working with these three concerns, Snow *et al* propose two types of language objectives: content-obligatory objectives and content-compatible objectives. Content-obligatory objectives specify the language, both structural elements as well as other features of discourse, that must be taught and learned as an integral part of any specific content topic, e.g. technical vocabulary such as 'vibration' and 'frequency' when studying the properties of sound and the associated discourse features of a formal scientific definition. Without learning these language items and features of discourse, content learning cannot be said to have taken place effectively. Content-compatible language objectives are language knowledge and skills which can be taught opportunistically, in a strategic sense, in the context of a particular topic or subject. For instance, if it is felt by teachers that some students would benefit from more guidance on the use of the past tense, then a history or humanities project on, say, Victorian clothing may provide the appropriate content environment. (For a further discussion of the varieties of content-language integration

Thus it can be seen that the ideas proposed by Cummins and Snow *et al* are pedagogically relevant to second language development within the mainstream curriculum but they are not tied to any specific areas of language and content. Cummins' BICS and CALP can be used to map out classroom strategies and the conceptual framework proposed by Snow *et al* lends itself to both language and subject content analysis and planning.

Perhaps we should mention a specific aspect of one other relevant development which is also trans-curricular in nature: the cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA) (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). The CALLA was designed to be used for students in the transitional stage between attending separate ESL classes and mainstream schooling. Both language and subject content are addressed; it explicitly incorporates elements of Cummins' and Mohan's work. A distinguishing feature of this approach is that it pays attention to learning strategies. Chamot and O'Malley (1987:240) argue that

- '1. Mentally active learners are better learners ...
2. Strategies can be taught ...
3. Learning strategies transfer to new tasks ...
4. Academic language learning is more effective with learning strategies ...'

The CALLA encourages students to use metacognitive strategies such as selective attention and self-monitoring, cognitive strategies such as grouping and classifying words according to their attributes and visual imaging to understand and remember new information, and social-affective strategies such as cooperating with peers to solve problems and asking teachers or peers to provide additional explanation or rephrasing. Quite clearly these learning strategies are neither language nor curriculum oriented in any direct way, but it is argued that they assist both content and language learning.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that the examples of curriculum level developments described above can be, in principle, adopted in a variety of modes of delivery. For instance, teachers may use the content-obligatory and content-compatible objectives to guide their planning for ESL students who are within an 'integrated' class (with English proficient students) and for ESL students who are enrolled in 'integrated' schools but are attending some separate English or sheltered content lessons.

#### 2.1.4 Student orientation

The liberal humanistic perspective on language development has also had an influence on ESL pedagogic development, particularly in the development of a particular kind of student oriented ESL pedagogy. An early proponent of this perspective was Levine (published posthumously, edited by Meek, 1996) who saw mixed ability teaching in mainstream classrooms as a potentially effective response to meeting the language learning needs of ESL students. Levine (Meek, 1996:15) emphasises the importance of 'letting children have *their own voice*' (italics in original). In the English (subject) classroom this means, *inter alia*, setting a teaching context whereby ESL students are encouraged to engage with ideas and projects which reflect their own interests as well as to work collaboratively in small groups with one another. In this perspective social interaction between students and between students and teachers is seen as pivotal to second language development. While the importance of the curriculum and teacher's instruction is acknowledged, the focus of attention is on the 'dynamic and dialectical learning relationships' (op.cit.:118). In contrast to the language and content oriented approaches mentioned earlier, the specific language to be learned is often not discussed explicitly. The notion of language is expressed either in terms of the 'underlying systems of

rules which govern native speakers' use of English' and 'structure' (e.g. sentence level grammar) (op.cit.:22-23) or communicative competence in an abstract process sense:

'In so far as communicative competence equates with having learned language behaviour which is both appropriate and effective for the context of our lives, we all probably learn what we are able to do – no matter how different that is in kind or extent – in much the same way. That is to say, we are, and have been, open to external stimulæ and motivation to learn the code and its appropriate use while, at the same time, having the opportunity to exercise an innate drive to learn on the code and on the situations and contexts in which particular parts of it are used ...

If these observations are applied to the communicative teaching of an additional language, it must surely suggest a more active role for learners in the learning-teaching process, and a more interactive one, allowing development from the data of the environment.' (op.cit.:123-124)

The language teaching agenda for the teacher in this conceptualisation is essentially reactive in that the kind of teacher intervention made is dependent on the needs or problems shown in the active work of the ESL student. Classroom pedagogy is conceptualised in terms of learner active engagement. This perspective has been further elaboration in the officially promoted Partnership Teaching model (Bourne, 1989; DES, 1991; DfEE, 2001) in Britain:

'Learning is best achieved through enquiry-based activities involving discussion ...

To learn a language it is necessary to participate in its meaningful use ... The curriculum itself is therefore a useful vehicle for language learning ... A main strategy ... for both curriculum learning and language learning is the flexible use of small group work ...' (Bourne, 1989:63)

(For a more detailed discussion see Leung, 2001).

## 2.2 Bilingual education<sup>6</sup>

The use of language minority students' first language as a medium of learning and curriculum communication has played a significant, if small in terms of student numbers<sup>7</sup>, part in the effort to provide effective mainstream response to linguistic diversity. In the United States, where the use of students' first language in the curriculum has received some federal and state level legislative support (Crawford, 1997), the concept of bilingual education is found to be expressed through three main programme models:

1. Transitional/early exit bilingual education – the use of students' first language is intended to help them keep up with curriculum subject learning; English is phased in as soon as possible; its primary goal is to mainstream students to all English classrooms.
2. Developmental/maintenance bilingual education – the use of students' first language is maintained through active curriculum-related use even after English has been introduced gradually and successfully learned; its aim is to produce fluent bilingualism and high level of academic success for language minority students.
3. Two-way bilingual education/dual language instruction – this type of programme is designed to cater for both language minority and English proficient students; the curriculum is taught in a community minority language, say, Spanish, for up to half of the subjects and in English for the rest. The claimed effect is language maintenance for language minority students and second/foreign language immersion for language majority students which has been favourably supported in the research literature<sup>8</sup>. The aim is to produce fluent bilingualism and high levels of academic achievement for both

The arguments for two-way biligual education is consistent with the L1-L2 interdependent hypothesis advanced by Cummins (1992:22):

‘To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly ... and adequate motivation to learn Ly.

In concrete terms ... Spanish instruction that develops L1 reading skills for Spanish-speaking students is not just developing Spanish skills; it is also developing a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of English literacy and general academic skills.’

The effectiveness of developmental and two-way bilingual education in producing high levels of bilingualism and cross-curricular achievement has been reported by Krashen (1996), Ramírez (1992) and Thomas & Collier (1997) among others.

It should be noted here that there are a number of education systems which use students’ first or home language as the medium of instruction, e.g. Welsh in Welsh-medium schools in Wales (see Willaims, 2000), Basque in the Basque country (see Azurmendi, Bachoc and Zabaleta, 2001) and the multilingual curriculum in European Schools (see Beardsmore, 1993). The first two cases are examples of efforts to revitalize and to support indigenous national minority languages. The European School approach to languages is an attempt to promote a transnational identity and multilingualism within a European Union context. Although these systems and programmes are also discussed as forms of bilingual education, they are not directly concerned with the integration of more recently settled ethnic and linguistic minorities<sup>9</sup>. Therefore they fall outside the scope of the present discussion.

### **3. Curriculum orientations: knowledge base and pedagogic choices**

The collective efforts of researchers and practitioners in the past thirty years or so have led to a corpus of organised information and documented experience in the field of ESL. It would be reasonable to assume that there is now sufficient accumulated development of ideas and professional experience for education systems to choose and adopt pedagogic approaches and curriculum arrangements (particularly in terms of modes of delivery) which would, at least on the basis of available knowledge, promise the most effective response to the language and learning needs of ESL students. However, current experience in different parts of the English speaking countries suggests that making pedagogic and curriculum decisions is neither a disinterested intellectual exercise nor a simple technical matter of choosing the most efficient means to achieve the desired ends. The common sense idea of ‘choosing the best deal’ does not necessarily apply because there are multiple end-point consumers and there are different ‘best deals’ for different parties. In linguistically and ethnically complex societies language education policy decisions reflect the intricate interplay between demographic shifts, social values, political processes and (often unevenly distributed) political power. The policy of educational integration of ESL students is arguably more exposed to these wider social and political developments than most other curriculum issues. We will now look at some key moments of recent experiences of integrating ESL students in three locations, England, Victoria and California, and attempt to understand the differences with reference to local ideological environments and political processes. These places have been chosen here not because they represent manifestations of some universal development but because they can be seen as experiences which illustrate the nexus between integration of ESL students and wider

### 3.1 England

The mainstreaming initiatives in England since the 1980s have been largely expressed through a student oriented pedagogy. ESL students are expected to be placed in mainstream age-appropriate classes as soon as possible upon joining school<sup>10</sup>. Pedagogically (all) teachers are expected to provide ESL development opportunities through engagement with curriculum activities which allow active hands-on participation and small group based learning (see the earlier discussion on the tenets of Partnership Teaching). ESL specialist teachers, where they are available, have multiple roles which include offering mainstream/subject teachers advice and guidance on how to generate English language learning opportunities in content lessons (including the use of students' first language where possible and appropriate as a transitional facility into English), and doing collaborative 'support' teaching in classes where ESL students are present (see Bourne, 1989:107-8 for further discussion). There is relative little *second language-specific* discussion on second language students learning English. For instance, there is currently no dedicated ESL curriculum; the mainstream English and literacy (mother tongue) curricula are presented as suitable for ESL development<sup>11</sup>. Professionally ESL as a discipline is not offered as a main subject in pre-service teacher education; indeed there is no officially required credential for ESL teachers. Under these circumstances, ESL mainstreaming appears to have resulted in full structural integration for students, i.e. ESL students attending ordinary classes, and, at the same time, under-provisioning in terms of curriculum infrastructure (e.g. the absence of explicit ESL curriculum specifications and mandatory specialist teacher education). (For a fuller discussion see Leung 2001.)

The current ESL policy and practice seem to be **student**-oriented but the mainstream curriculum itself is not *ESL*-oriented. This de-emphasising of ESL has to be explained if we are to understand the current policy-practice configuration. The lineage of the current integration approach can arguably be traced back to a moment in the mid-1980s occasioned by the publication of two landmark documents. In 1986 the Commission for Racial Equality published a report on the practice of teaching English to ESL students in separate language centres in one local education authority and found this practice tantamount to racially discriminating in terms of outcome (CRE, 1986)<sup>12</sup>. The publication of this report led to the effective termination of the provision of separate ESL centres in the state-funded sector. The impact of this report was a reflection of the gathering strength of an emergent view on social integration of ethnic and linguistic minorities captured in the report of an official committee of enquiry, generally referred to as the Swann Report (DES, 1985).

'We believe that a genuinely pluralist society cannot be achieved without the social integration of ethnic minority communities and the ethnic majority community within a common whole. Whilst we are *not* looking for the assimilation of the minority communities within an unchanged dominant way of life, we are perhaps looking for the 'assimilation' of *all* groups within a redefined concept of what it means to live in British society today.' (op.cit.:8)

Swann projected a vision of nested communities within a framework of a stable nation-state: Britain as a community of communities<sup>13</sup>, engaged in the process of reconciling itself to the legacy of its imperial past. (See Harris, Leung, & Rampton, 2001 for a further discussion.) This shift from assimilation of ethnic and linguistic minorities to pluralist integration is articulated to a policy statement which emphasises attitudinal change linked to a particular kind of educational inclusiveness:

‘Language and language education ... [have] usually been perceived in narrow and discrete terms, initially as concerning the “problem” of teaching English to children for whom it is not a first language ... We believe that the language needs of an ethnic minority child should no longer be compartmentalised in this way and seen as outside the mainstream of education since language learning and the development of effective communication skills is a feature of every pupil’s education ... Linguistic diversity provides the opportunity for all schools ... to broaden the linguistic horizons of all pupils by ensuring that they acquire a real understanding of the role, range and richness of language in all its forms.’ (DES, 1985:385-386)

The call for social integration, articulated to an inclusive education as defined by the Swann Report, signals the need to end the ‘compartmentalised’ teaching of English to ethnic and linguistic minority pupils. By treating second/additional language learning as part of a broader communication issue, ESL can now be seen as an integral part of a generalised and common curriculum process, i.e. mainstreamed ESL. As Bourne (1989:64) observes, the Swann Report found a policy position that ‘was able to return English language learners to the mainstream classroom’. Thus, in educational terms, this redefined vision of a pluralist society in a multiethnic and multilingual context has led to a view which favours social integration through common and undifferentiated membership in mainstream processes; conceptualising ESL as a part of the more general communication issue provides a perspective that allows a toning down of distinctiveness and difference. The prioritising of the social and socialising aspects of education in the rhetoric of this form of pluralism made it possible to downplay the significance of the different language and language learning needs of ESL students and to direct attention to the common communication needs. In other words, mainstreaming ESL students takes priority over the adapting and extending the mainstream curriculum for ESL students. The pedagogic option that makes immediate sense in this primarily social integration agenda is a student-oriented one which, above all, aims at helping the individual student benefit from the ‘mainstream’ classroom activities, dispensing the need to address ESL as a distinct curriculum issue<sup>14</sup>. ESL, as it is currently conceptualised in the official educational literature, can be seen as a continuation of that line of thinking<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.2 Victoria

ESL in Victoria, as in Australia more generally, has been mainstreamed<sup>16</sup>. Unlike the situation in England however, the Victoria mainstream system works with a range of structural (time-tabling) options which, according to Davison (2001) include fully integrated mainstream multiethnic classes with ESL support (similar to the situation in England), mainstream multiethnic classes with some separate ESL classes, ESL classes combined with some mainstream classes and intensive English classes in separate English language centres. These structural options are accompanied by a variable curriculum concern which ranges from a high language (integrated with content) focus for those who are ESL beginners to a high content (integrated with language) focus for those who are at more advanced stages of ESL development. In other words, the mainstreaming of ESL is simultaneously language-content-oriented, content-language-oriented and student-oriented. Furthermore, the Victorian mainstream curriculum includes a dedicated ESL ‘companion’ curriculum (Board of Education, 1999). Taken all this together, the Victorian notion of mainstream appears to be quite different from the one adopted in England.

The idea that the mainstream curriculum itself should be open to adjustment and change to take

discourse in the 1980s in Australia. The central proposition was that public institutions should address the needs of ethnic minorities as part of their core services, not as some additional or marginal activity. In relation to the federal level provision for ESL in Australia, Campbell and McMeniman (1985:32) argue that '[i]t should not be a question of "NESB [non-English speaking background] versus the rest", but of acknowledging that, having been brought into Australia, NESB [non-English speaking background] persons are "us"'. Davison (2001:31) reports that in Victoria there was an early recognition that mainstreaming ESL and curriculum design for ESL students in the mainstream are not the same thing: 'the ESL profession has strongly resisted any reductionist tendencies, arguing that in a mainstream environment, ESL programming is necessarily complex. It involves ... interrelated decisions about curriculum focus, first language input, modes of delivery, learner groupings and teacher roles'.

However, the level of ESL provision and even the particular kind of ESL responses that we have just discussed are reported to have been under pressure across different parts of Australia in the past few years<sup>17</sup>. The acceptance of a 'multicultural' Australia, once regarded as part of an accepted national policy, and continuing immigration from non-English speaking parts of the world does not appear to receive unquestioned public support as it once did. At the same time, the introduction of economic rationalism in public finances has meant downwards pressures on public expenditure in general and, in education services in particular, value for money measures (see Williams, 1998). The education system in this new dispensation is meant to produce the human resources required for the nation's economic competitiveness. Under this political climate ESL has been affected by a number of policy initiatives that have emerged. Broadbanding and benchmarking literacy appear to have been most significant. Broadbanding is an administrative device with consequences for the use of resources:

'Broadbanding involves collapsing specific purpose programs into general purpose programs. This is done via the creation of categories broader than those of the specific purpose programs ... Producing fewer programmes means lowering administration costs and imposing fewer constraints on the use of funds by recipient jurisdictions. However, broadbanding can result in (across Australia this now happening) a narrowing of ESL's scope and a reduction in ESL provision. In some places there is even a collapse of general support for ESL altogether.' (Lo Bianco, 1998:15)

The demand for the education system to produce the necessary human resources for economic competitiveness is translated into a concept of accountability through quantifiable measures of attainment in, *inter alia*, literacy, defined in terms of standards or benchmarks to be achieved at different stages of school education by all students. These benchmarks assume 'mother tongue fluency in English and formal learning of English from Kindergarten' (Hoddinott, 1998:24). This push for literacy as a national educational priority, accompanied by broadbanding as an implementation device to enhance administrative efficiency, can have the effect of blurring the differences between first and second languages, and the differences between developing mother tongue literacy (however defined) and learning a second language and the associated literacy practices. As McKay, (1998:9) points out:

'The incorporation of ESL under "literacy" carries with it the danger of the ESL learner being constructed and taught as just one of the many learners of literacy in our classrooms. Inclusion rather than marginalisation is certainly crucial for ESL learners in our schools, but submersion rather than ESL-informed and ESL-specialist teaching is something we have successfully fought against for many years in Australia'.

### 3.3 California

The complex nature of integrating ESL students into the mainstream educational provision and the choice of curriculum response is nowhere illustrated more dramatically and vividly than by the political events in California in 1997/98. California, as in some other parts of the USA, has responded to the educational needs of a linguistically and ethnically diverse student population with a number of different approaches and programmes which range from English language medium schooling with little or no ESL support to bilingual education<sup>18</sup>. Of particular interest to this discussion is bilingual education. García & Curry-Rodriguez (2000: 2) define bilingual education in the Californian context as ‘... the application of specialized educational techniques utilizing a student’s native language to enhance the learning opportunities of students who come to school speaking a native language other than the predominant language of the school process’; and the term bilingual education in this context normally refers to the use of two particular languages: Spanish and English<sup>19</sup>. This particular conceptualization of bilingual education takes a variety of forms in terms of the balance of use between the two languages for curriculum purposes and the length of time/duration (see Crawford, 1997). But taken as a whole bilingual education is not available to all students: for instance, in 1997-98 only 29% of California’s school students were officially classified as attending bilingual classrooms (Gándara, 2000). The published research on the strongest forms of this kind of bilingual education, e.g. maintaining a 40/60 or 50/50 split between Spanish and English up to Grade 6, has consistently pointed to the long term overall educational benefits in terms of students’ language and across the board curriculum achievement (e.g. Cummins, 2000; Ramirez, 1992; Thomas and Collier, 1997). Given the clearly demonstrated benefits and the comparative small percentage of students involved, one would have thought that this would be a programme type in line for further support and promotion. However, events turned out quite differently.

In 1998 the voters of California supported Proposition 227 ‘English for Children’ (also known as the Unz initiative, named after its promoter) which was designed to severely restrict the use of linguistic minority students’ first or native language for curriculum learning purposes<sup>20</sup>; Proposition 227 also mandated the introduction of a transitional ESL programme referred to as ‘structured English immersion’ that was not normally to last more than one year. In other words, under this programme ESL students are expected to have developed sufficient English language knowledge and skills within one year to be able to participate in all-English medium schooling without further ESL assistance. During the campaign leading up to the vote, the pedagogic efficacies of different kinds of language education for linguistic minorities were debated by the proponents and opponents of Proposition 227. For reasons of focus the case for and against the initiative will not be rehearsed here<sup>21</sup>; nor will we enter into the debate on the success or failure of the so-called structured English immersion since 1998<sup>22</sup>. What is of interest here is the background thinking behind Proposition 227. Unz’s own writings offer some interesting insight which may help to clarify the underlying arguments. First, there appears to be an instrumental argument for learning English:

‘... if other languages such as Chinese or Spanish are of growing world importance, English ranks in a class by itself ... over the past 20 years it has rapidly become the entire world’s unofficial language, over the past 20 years it has ... [dominated] the spheres of science, technology and international business ... lack of literacy in English represents a crippling almost fatal disadvantage in our global economy.’ (Unz, 1997: M6)

In addition, there seems to be an interesting ideological articulation of a pro-immigration and an anti-affirmative action stance, i.e. against ethnic preferences for jobs in public sector employment, leading to an English language-only view of social and ethnic assimilation (Unz, 1999:18):

‘It is ... a tragedy of the first order that, even as the reality of the American melting pot remains as powerful as ever, the ideology behind it has almost disappeared, having been replaced by the “diversity” model ... A social ideology that allots to blacks and Latinos and Asians their own separatist institutions and suggested shares of society’s benefits cannot long be prevented from extending itself to whites as well, especially as whites become merely one minority among many minorities ... the diversity prescription contains the seeds of national dissolution.’

On this view, the English language is seen as a sort of cement capable of binding all individuals, from whatever ethnic and language background, in the common endeavour of the American melting pot.

#### **4. Integrating ESL students: clarifying policy goals and pedagogy**

We have seen that the integrating of ESL students into the mainstream curriculum has received public policy support in the past thirty years or so. In this same period we have also seen a number of highly innovative and practicable pedagogic and curriculum ideas designed to explore and exploit language development within a mainstream curriculum context. However, as our earlier discussion suggests, the policy and practice of integration of ESL students can be sometimes strongly shaped, some may even say determined, by wider social and ideological developments. In many ways it is difficult to imagine ESL as a totally autonomous area of schooling for as long as public education is part of democratic political processes. Initiatives and movements for change in education are often triggered by perceived problems or deficiencies in the existing policy and practice. However, the proposed alternative/s may involve not just ‘fixing’ the perceived problem at a professional or technical level, e.g. adjusting the amount of curriculum content if the teaching/learning load is judged to be too great, but also wholesale shifts in the fundamental analysis and framing of the issues. The re-defining and re-framing of ESL within a particular notion of literacy in Australia is a case in point. In any case, ESL educators and researchers themselves, like fellow professionals working in other areas of education, often have educational, social and ideological commitments which may be more favourably disposed towards a particular kind of policy and practice than others. Questions concerning educational values, epistemology and empirical evidence can get caught up in a whirlpool of policy contest; some very important analyses and observations may be lost or not heard in the process. The recent discussion on the merits and demerits of the bilingual education triggered by Proposition 227 in California bears witness to this (see for example Cummins, 2000 and Krashen, 2001). This seemingly unavoidable messiness when education enters the public policy arena, however, can be understood better with an analysis comprising principled abstraction and comparison of relevant experiences.

Educational policies and practices are multidimensional and the dimensions involved may or may not fit together as pieces of a puzzle at any one time<sup>23</sup>. Therefore it would be useful to adopt a multidimensional view on any discussion on existing and/or proposed policy and practice for integrating ESL students<sup>24</sup>. If we look at the cases of England, Victoria and California we can extract the following dimensions from the earlier discussion:

Table 1: Abstracted dimensions of ESL policy and practice in California, England and Victoria

A. Public social and educational policy stance	B. Desired/ possible outcome	C. Underlying language education assumption	D. Mainstream curriculum provision	E. Pedagogic approach to language in classroom
1. Equal access and equal opportunities for all, with English as the preferred school language for minority language students	1. Monolingualism in English; minority bi/multilingualism not encouraged	1. Priority on developing English (minority L2); minority L1 not addressed	1. English-medium universal curriculum, with no dedicated L2 English extension for minorities; student-oriented ESL (England)	1. English L2 focussed; minority L1 not addressed
2. Equal access and equal opportunities for all, with promotion of English (minority L2) and community language/s (minority L1s)	2. Monolingualism in English; <i>laissez faire</i> position on minority bi/multilingualism	2. Priority on developing English; minority L1 useful as transitional aid to English (L2) development	2. English-medium universal curriculum, with dedicated L2 English extension for minorities; language-content, content-language and/or trans-curriculum-oriented ESL (parts of California before and after Proposition 227; Victoria)	2. English L2 focussed; minority L1 may be used opportunistically
	3. Monolingualism in English, recognising minority bi-/multilingualism as worthwhile	3. Priority on developing English (L2) and minority L1; both important as part of overall intellectual development for individuals	3. Bilingual (minority L1-L2) medium curriculum (parts of California before Proposition 227; and post-Proposition 227 where special local dispensation is granted)	3. English L2 focussed; minority L1 used as transitional aid in a structured way (e.g. early-exit bilingual programmes)
	4. Minority bi-/multilingualism in English and minority community languages			4. Both minority L1 and L2 addressed in a systematic way (e.g. two-way bilingual programmes)

It is quite clear that the five dimensions and the characterisations included in the above diagram by no means represent an exhaustive empirical account of the complexities of ESL policies and practices even in just the three locations under discussion. It is certainly not claimed here that the relationship between policy and practice is a straightforward one<sup>25</sup>. The key argument here though is that policy rhetoric and curriculum statements often conflate social aspiration, desired/possible outcomes, policy declarations, curriculum provision and classroom pedagogy as if they were one and the same thing. At times policy rhetoric or curriculum statements may make aspirational claims that are circumscribed by the actual

and practice ‘can be a messy affair – ad hoc, haphazard, and emotionally driven.’ There is a need for greater conceptual and analytical clarity.

By conceptually separating the social from the pedagogic, and the desired outcome from the curriculum provision and so on, there is a better chance of achieving some clarity in way policy and practice are discussed and understood. For instance, in England there is a frequently rehearsed pro-multilingualism public rhetoric in local and national educational documents which suggests that the use of both English and minority community languages are or should be considered languages of the mainstream curriculum. One example of this is a statement in the English (subject) National Curriculum document: teachers are advised that, in relation to the development of spoken and written English, they should be ‘building on pupils’ experiences of language at home and in the wider community, so that their developing uses of English and other languages support one another’ (DfEE and QCA, 1999:49). A closer examination of the current policy and curriculum infrastructure would show that students’ first language can only be used opportunistically in the classroom (E2) because the mainstream curriculum is mediated through English (D1); the use of students’ first language is seen as at best an aid for transition to English (C2) when teachers and students (accidentally) share common language backgrounds; bi-/multilingualism in English and minority languages is rarely recognised in any systematic way beyond recognition of individual efforts and/or talent (B2); and curriculum achievement is measured only in terms of English mediated attainments (A1) except in language subjects such as French. This example shows that by paying attention to the multidimensionality of policy and practice, it is possible to begin to understand the contextualized meaning of policy declaration in relation to actual curriculum possibilities.

The value of paying attention to the multidimensional nature of policy and practice can also be demonstrated by, for instance, examining the use of economic rationalism, i.e. efficiency in producing a productive work force, as a key argument against bilingual education in California. The rhetoric of the need to produce an English-proficient work force is best served by an exclusively English-medium curriculum is premised on a common sense argument of ‘the more time on learning English, the better the English proficiency’. But the long term research evidence (see references cited earlier) suggests that two-way bilingual education actually produces the best academic and scholarly achievements, as measured by standardised testing, across the curriculum for linguistic minority students including achievement in English. This shows that if the dimensions in the policy and practice arena are examined carefully in terms of their contribution to students’ academic attainment and their relationships with one another, it is possible to identify the heavily ideological nature of the pro-Proposition 227 arguments. This offers all parties involved in the debate, proponents and opponents alike, a clearer sense of where the contest is located. In this case, it is clearly not located in the actual bilingual schooling provision itself, if achievement in English language competence is the only issue at stake.

The analytical approach taken here can be useful in real-world practice at the more here-and-now sense. By paying attention to the multidimensionality of policy and practice policy makers can be shown the kinds of examination of issues and actions they should be engaged with if their social and educational goals are to be translated into curriculum provision and classroom practice. The carrying over of policy positioning into ideologically comfortable curriculum options will be made to look less ‘natural’ or common-sensical. For teachers a careful analysis of their curriculum and policy environment with reference to the five dimensions would produce a knowledge of the types of pedagogic freedoms and constraints they work with; at the same time such an analysis would provide them with an understanding

of their own pedagogic and ideological position in relation to the wider curriculum and policy environments and where changes, if changes were desired, should be made.

## 5. Concluding remarks

Historically, the integration of ESL students into the mainstream curriculum is an ideologically laden process. Over the past three decades or so there have been a large number of developments in language curriculum and pedagogy which have attempted to address some of the teaching and learning issues concerned with ethnic and linguistic minority students. However, the curriculum options and approaches adopted by policy makers and education systems have not always been influenced by professional experience and research-based arguments. The recent experiences in California, England and Victoria strongly indicate that arguments emanating from other spheres of society often hold sway and policy decisions on ESL can be made on non-language education grounds. This suggests that there is a need for analytical clarity in understanding the multidimensionality of ESL policy and practice. Such clarity, if nothing else, will serve to help identify what is being argued for and against.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> In England the preferred term in the official educational documents for ESL is EAL (English as an additional language). In this chapter the more internationally common term ESL is used.

<sup>2</sup> This kind of classes are sometimes referred to as sheltered English classes.

<sup>3</sup> These examples are used to illustrate the kind of innovations and developments that have emerged; no evaluation is intended. There are other concomitant developments related to the idea of mainstreaming which are not the subject of this discussion, e.g. multiculturalism in the curriculum.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted out that a number of ideas emerged from the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research, e.g. Krashen (1981, 1985) and Widdowson (1979, 1983) have been part of the backdrop of the intellectual landscape of mainstreaming ESL. See further references in the discussion on bilingual education.

<sup>5</sup> There were similar developments in adult and university sectors, generally known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). For a discussion see Johns (Johns, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> There is a variety of bilingual education programmes in different parts of the world (see e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995). The discussion here is limited to those relevant developments with reference to ESL students in mainstream schooling.

<sup>7</sup> Crawford (1997) points out that in the United States, where this form of education has been practised in some areas/states, only a small number of students are involved. For instance, in California in 1994-95 'fewer than 30 percent of LEP [limited English proficiency] students were taught academic subjects in their native language ... And of these students, only about half were in classrooms staffed by certified bilingual and ESL teachers ...' (op.cit.: 16).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of immersion education for language majority students see Cummins (2000: chapter 8) and Johnson and Swain (1997).

<sup>9</sup> It is recognised that the distinction between 'indigenous minorities' and 'more recently settled minorities' is fraught with ethical, epistemological and ideological difficulties (see May 2001 and Taylor 1992). The use of these terms here is intended to signal the thematic focus of this discussion.

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<sup>10</sup> There are some induction classes in school for newly arrived ESL beginners. But these classes or courses can best be described as tolerated (rather than encouraged) by curriculum authorities and the official educational inspectorate. See Leung (2002) for further discussion.

<sup>11</sup> Although some guidance and advice on how to work with ESL students are available in a number of official curriculum, teacher training and inspections publications, e.g. DfEE (2001), OFSTED (2000) and SCAA (1996).

<sup>12</sup> In the 1970s ESL provision, often very patchy and short-term, for school-aged students was mostly organised as a separate provision in addition to the mainstream school curriculum or in the form of separate English language centres (Townsend, 1971).

<sup>13</sup> This can be seen in its view of language: 'The English language is a central unifying factor in 'being British', and is the key to participation on equal terms as a full member of this society. There is however a great diversity of other languages spoken among British families in British homes' (DES 1985: Ch 7.1.1).

<sup>14</sup> A corollary of this line of thinking is that teachers are often reminded that teaching techniques that enable ESL students to participate in lesson activities, such as breaking up complex texts and asking students to re-assemble the parts, are good for all students (e.g. DfES, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note that, while ESL has not been conceptualised as a curriculum issue, the statutory National Curriculum (comprising school subjects) and the officially promoted National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy for primary and secondary schools provide explicit curriculum content specifications.

<sup>16</sup> There is inter-state variation in ESL provision and organisation within Australia. For a detailed account of developments in Australia as a whole since the 1960s, see Davison in Mohan, Leung and Davison (eds), 2001: chapters 1 and 2.

<sup>17</sup> Australian ESL professionals would argue that ESL provision has been undermined in a series of government funding cuts since the 1980s. Focus and scope preclude a fuller discussion here. See Williams (1998) and Lo Bianco (1998) for a fuller discussion.

<sup>18</sup> For a full discussion on programme types see Crawford (1997), García (2000) and Thomas and Collier (1997).

<sup>19</sup> The shortage of suitably qualified bilingual teachers has made it impossible to offer bilingual education to all minority language students. For instance, Crawford (1997:15-16) reports that '... in 1994 California enrolled recently arrived immigrants from 136 different countries, but bilingual teachers were certified in only 17 languages – 96 percent of them in Spanish ...'.

<sup>20</sup> Exemption from the mandate can be granted where local parents can demonstrate the benefits of bilingual education in relation to their own children's needs.

<sup>21</sup> The documents and papers for and against the Proposition can be found on a number of websites, e.g. see the TESOL website [www.tesol.edu](http://www.tesol.edu). Also see Cummins (2000: chapter 8) for a view on the different evaluations of the empirical evidence.

<sup>22</sup> See Krashen (2001) and Gándara (2000) for a view on the reported results of structured English immersion.

<sup>23</sup> For a related discussion see Ball (1996) and Yanow (1996).

<sup>24</sup> For an earlier discussion on social goals and educational outcomes see Churchill (1986).

<sup>25</sup> See Yanow (1996) for a discussion on the complex relationship between policy and practice.