

Hope and challenge in The Australian Curriculum: Implications for EAL students and their teachers



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Abstract

My purpose in this paper is to address the place of English as a Second Language (EAL) students in The Australian Curriculum. Given the significant numbers of EAL students in schools, I argue that overall responsibility for education of EAL students is a mainstream, rather than minority, issue and that it is therefore legitimate to ask to what extent and how EAL students are positioned in the Curriculum. I begin the paper by addressing the needs of EAL students and the domains of knowledge required of mainstream teachers who work with such students in their classes. I suggest that these domains, while most obviously including extensive knowledge of language, literacy and language development, also include in-depth curriculum knowledge and knowledge of how to plan and implement programs characterised by high intellectual challenge and high support. I ask to what extent these domains of knowledge are acknowledged in The Australian Curriculum, and what guidance and support are provided for teachers in relation to them. I argue that within the constraints of what is possible in a national curriculum, developments to date offer considerable hope for EAL students and the teachers who work with such students, but they also present some challenges. I conclude by offering some suggestions of how these challenges may be addressed.

Introduction

Australia is in the process of developing a national Curriculum. Curriculum documents in disciplines of English, Mathematics, Science and History are now complete and, despite resistance from some states, are currently being trialled. Work on documents for other disciplines is underway. Despite broad agreement on the need for a national Curriculum (to ensure greater national consistency in educational priorities and outcomes; to facilitate the education of students who move between states, etc), the processes of developing the Curriculum have been complex and at times fraught.

Those involved in the development of any national curriculum have a difficult task. They must identify (and shape) the broad goals of a society for

its education system. They must identify the abilities, skills and knowledge required of citizens now and into the future, and reflect these abilities, skills and knowledge in key principles and content of individual curriculum documents. Inevitably, they must also acknowledge and respond to the diverse views of the public and of those involved in education, and the debates (informed or otherwise) that these views generate. As has been the case with previous such initiatives, considerable debate and disagreement has accompanied the development of The Australian Curriculum. The overall task is further complicated by demands that the Curriculum should acknowledge and address the needs of diverse groups of students: including those from non-English speaking backgrounds. These debates raise questions about what it is realistic to expect from one curriculum initiative.

While acknowledging the complex task of developing any curriculum, my purpose in this paper is to address the place of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students within The Australian Curriculum. Australia has significant numbers of established and more recently arrived immigrants within its student population. Consistent estimates are that around 20 – 25% of students attending schools are from backgrounds where English is an additional language. In Australia, the education of EAL students has frequently been seen as a minority issue and as the responsibility of specialist EAL teachers. However, the significant numbers of EAL students in schools suggest that the majority of teachers at some point in their careers will work with such students. Further, it suggests that the overall responsibility for education of EAL students, especially once they are beyond initial stages of learning English, must lie primarily with mainstream teachers. While specialist EAL teachers can, and do, provide support for EAL students either as team teachers within class or in parallel withdrawal classes, once beyond the initial stages of learning English, the majority of students' time is necessarily spent in mainstream classes. An understanding of the diverse linguistic and cultural background of these students, their educational needs, and of ways of addressing these needs, is thus essential knowledge that at some point in their careers will be required of most teachers. While it can legitimately be argued that the role of a national curriculum is to identify the abilities, skills and knowledge required of all citizens now and into the future, it is also legitimate to ask how EAL students are positioned in the curriculum; to what extent their needs are recognised; and to what extent the knowledge required of teachers who work with EAL students is addressed in the curriculum. The major overall focus in this Special Focus Issue of AJLL is with The Australian Curriculum: English and the resources it offers. Since EAL students must participate in subjects across the Curriculum, my concern in this paper is somewhat broader: I therefore focus on the overall shape of the Curriculum as well as details of the English Curriculum. I also focus on the Science Curriculum, as an exemplar of ways in which needs of EAL students are addressed (or not) in

disciplines other than English. (Limitations of space prevent detailed discussion of curricula from other disciplines.)

Before turning to details of the Curriculum, I address what I regard as the needs of EAL students, and essential domains of knowledge required of mainstream teachers who work with EAL students in their classes.

Needs of EAL students and domains of knowledge required of their teachers

Knowledge of language and literacy

The most obvious area of need for EAL students is support in their English language development. Such support must address development in spoken language as well as in English literacy. A widely recognised phenomenon in second language development is that while EAL students typically develop fluency in everyday conversational English quite quickly (within a year or two), they take considerably longer to develop peer level control of academic English (around 7–8 years) (Cummins, 2000; Gibbons, 2002). This distinction is captured by the familiar constructs of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979; 2008). Cummins himself has acknowledged these constructs are overly simplified and has elaborated them in subsequent work (Cummins, 1996); however, they remain useful for teasing out what is involved in language and literacy development for EAL students in mainstream education. For students living in a culture where English is the predominant language and where they are mixing with English speaking peers, development of competence in BICS can be expected to proceed relatively smoothly. However, development of CALP requires more effort and more support. CALP is equivalent to academic English, and its development requires increasing control of what Gibbons (2009) refers to as ‘literate talk’, as well as control of academic literacy in discipline specific areas. Thus, it involves developing control of specific registers as well as key genres within disciplines. Literate talk introduces concepts to students and provides discipline specific ways of talking about these concepts. In science for example, it introduces technical vocabulary, but also the grammar that will enable students to engage in scientific ways of thinking and talking about phenomena: of classifying; of discussing cause and effect; of explaining. It is literate talk that enables students to move from everyday understandings and ways of talking about phenomena (‘light need electricity to make it work’) to increasingly scientific ways of thinking and talking about phenomena (‘under the globe is a concave mirror which reflects the light up to the Fresnel lens.’) EAL students, and indeed other students, require extensive opportunities to engage in such talk, and targeted support to do so.

In addition, as students progress through school the demands of academic

literacy (that is, of academic reading and writing, and engaging with a range of multimodal texts) become greater. Students need to be able to build on their knowledge of everyday and literate spoken language to develop understandings of written genres, and they need support to develop insights into the distinctive rhetorical structures and grammatical patterns of these genres (Christie, 2005; Macken-Horarik, 1996). As they work their way through school they need to be able to read texts where information and arguments are organised in ways that differ from spoken language (whether that be everyday or literate talk), and they need insights into the increasingly abstract and metaphorical language of academic written texts (Christie & Martin, 1997; Hammond, 1990). They also need insights into ways in which language and literacy differ across different curriculum areas (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Thus, support in academic language and literacy development needs to be available in **all** curriculum areas, not just in the subject English. While many students from English speaking backgrounds also require such support, the difference is that English speaking students are able to build on a familiar oral language (despite possible dialect differences) in their developing control of academic English while EAL students are not. Despite differences between EAL students themselves in terms of their socio-economic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, all face the dual task of learning academic English while also learning through English.

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 (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001; Hammond, 2008; Jones and Chen, this Issue; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011). Thus for mainstream teachers working with EAL students, a key requirement of The Australian Curriculum is that it addresses the need for teachers to develop substantive knowledge about language, and that it provides guidance on what knowledge is relevant. Experience in working with teachers of EAL students suggests that this knowledge should include at least a strong and coherent theoretical framework for understanding the nature of language and of language systems at the levels of text, paragraph, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation; for addressing the relationship between spoken and written modes of language; and for understanding first and second language development, especially of academic English across the years of schooling (Hammond & Derewianka, 1999; Hammond, 2011).

While substantive knowledge of language, literacy and language development is the obvious and pressing need for teachers working with EAL students, it not enough. Research that my colleagues and I have been involved with over the past ten years or so, indicates further categories should be added to the list of what teachers working with EAL students need to know. In particular, the research suggests the need for a deep understanding of discipline

and curriculum knowledge, and an understanding of ways of designing and implementing programs that both challenge and support students as they engage in learning across the curriculum (Gibbons, 2008; Hammond, 2009).

Curriculum knowledge and intellectual challenge (key learning vs getting through the curriculum)

There is consistent evidence to suggest that like other students, EAL students benefit from high challenge programs. Research undertaken by Newmann and his associates (Newmann and Associates, 1996; Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1996), for example, provides evidence that programs characterised by high intellectual challenge had a positive impact on the educational achievement of *all* students, including those from diverse social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and that, as a result of engagement with such programs, the equity gap between students was reduced. Replication of this research in Australia has broadly confirmed these outcomes (Ladwig, Smith, Gore, Amosa & Griffiths, 2007). In our own research into teachers' responses to the NSW Quality Teaching initiative (Hammond, 2008), we found an emphasis on high intellectual challenge resulted in teachers becoming more conscious of the needs and capabilities of their EAL students. They reported that, as their expectations of what these students were able to achieve rose, their EAL students' educational achievement also rose (Hammond, 2008). Such outcomes are consistent with the extensive literature on teacher expectations that indicates all students, including those who are linguistically and culturally diverse, achieve higher educational outcomes when teachers' expectations are high (Carrasquillo & London, 1993; Darling-Hammond & Schon, 1996).

Such evidence is compelling, and suggests that if teachers are to plan and implement programs characterised by high challenge pedagogy, they need an extensive knowledge of their discipline. And indeed the majority of mainstream class and subject teachers see such knowledge as essential to their role as effective teachers. However, teachers are constantly forced to balance pressure on the one hand to 'get through the curriculum content', often with the additional pressure of upcoming high stake assessments, and, on the other hand, to develop programs that genuinely aim for deep knowledge and deep learning. In ongoing professional development work with teachers, especially those in secondary schools, this is the 'burning issue' most frequently raised in discussions about the needs of EAL students. Pressure on teachers to 'cover the curriculum' is immense. It poses major problems for those trying to implement pedagogical practices that allow time for EAL and other students to engage at a deep level with curriculum knowledge.

For mainstream teachers working with EAL, and other, students a second key requirement of The Australian Curriculum, therefore, is that it prioritises intellectual challenge and provides legitimacy for an emphasis on deep

knowledge. While this may mean less emphasis on covering content than has previously been the case, it is likely to result in more learning, especially for EAL students.

Planning for high challenge, high support programs

Programs characterised by intellectual challenge that aim for deep knowledge not only require teachers to have an extensive knowledge of their discipline. They also require teachers to have an extensive knowledge of processes of program planning and high support, in order to ensure that relevant deep learning occurs. Socio-cultural theories of learning that build on Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development and his arguments regarding the social nature of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) have impacted internationally and nationally on ways of understanding high support learning environments (Mercer, 1994; Miller, 2004; Wells & Claxton, 2002; van Lier, 2004). In Australia, as elsewhere, such work has built on the metaphor of 'scaffolding' to identify pedagogical strategies that provide high levels of targeted support for students in their engagement with curriculum content (Dufficy, 2005; Gibbons, 2002; 2009; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). The metaphor teases out ways in which knowledgeable others (primarily teachers in classroom contexts) are able to provide strong guidance and support when needed, but also able to withdraw that support, and handover responsibility, as learners become increasingly able to work independently. For EAL students, this support will most obviously address language and literacy development.

The need for teachers working with EAL students to develop an extensive understanding of ways of planning and implementing high challenge, high support programs that can target students' specific needs seems clear. What is less clear, however, is the role of a curriculum in respect to developing such understandings. Is it the role of a curriculum to address questions of how to teach? It seems reasonable to expect The Australian Curriculum to acknowledge the importance of processes of program planning and implementation, although detailed support for implementation may need to be provided in tandem with the Curriculum itself.

An example of the potential impact of this kind of tandem support can be seen in outcomes of a recent project conducted in NSW schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). This project, referred to as *The Successful Language Learners (SLL) project*, was conducted in eleven Catholic and State primary schools over a period of two years. Schools were selected to participate in the project on the basis of the low socio-economic status of their school communities, low overall literacy and numeracy performance in NSW Basic Skills Tests, and their demographic profile, including the numbers and proportions of students from language backgrounds other than English, in particular EAL and refugee students (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 1). The project involved 4,957 students (of whom 4,440 were EAL students), 283 teachers and

80 executive staff. It addressed four major areas: targeted support for students; professional learning for teachers; school leadership development; and schools as centres of community activity. In addition to professional development and intervention in pedagogy, students' progress was assessed and monitored over the two years of the project (see Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, for further details). As part of this assessment, results from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (ACARA, 2011c) from students in participating schools were compared with results that could be expected on the basis of state averages. These outcomes are summarised in Table 1 (see also Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 13).

Table 1: Mean growth in NAPLAN results for matched students in Year 3, 2008 and Year 5, 2010: comparison between all schools in NSW and SLL group of schools

NAPLAN tests	All NSW schools	SLL Schools	Difference
Reading	83.4	92.3	8.9
Writing	66.1	73.0	6.9
Spelling	82.6	91.9	9.3
Grammar & Punctuation	94.8	122.1	27.3
Numeracy	88.8	100.4	11.6

Table 1 shows the actual growth of students' scores in SLL schools between years 3 and 5, in comparison to the average growth across NSW schools between years 3 and 5. As the Table indicates, the growth for students in SLL schools was substantially greater than that expected on the basis of state averages. These outcomes were consistent with those from other assessment procedures used in the project. Since one criterion for selection of schools in the project was low overall performance in formal assessment procedures, these outcomes are noteworthy. It is certainly likely that all four areas of the project (targeted support for students; professional learning for teachers; school leadership development; and schools as centres of community activity) contributed to positive student outcomes. However, since three of the four areas specifically addressed notions of challenge and support in language development, it can be argued that outcomes from the SLL project provide evidence of the positive impact on students' educational outcomes of high challenge and high support programs that deliberately targeted students' language and literacy development. It can also be argued that outcomes such as these are directly relevant to a discussion of the domains of knowledge needed by teachers working with EAL students, especially in relation to language and literacy education. While it is always necessary to be cautious in drawing conclusions on the basis of one project, the outcomes of the SLL project suggest the value of similar tandem interventions to accompany introduction of the Australian Curriculum.

With all this in mind, I turn now to the Curriculum to ask how EAL students are positioned; to what extent their needs are recognised; and to what extent and how the domains of knowledge required of teachers who work with EAL students are addressed. As indicated earlier, my focus is on the overall shape of the Curriculum, as well as details of the English and Science Curricula.

What the Curriculum has to offer: hope and challenge

From the perspective of EAL students and their teachers, I believe The Australian Curriculum offers both hope and challenge. The first area of hope lies in the overall emphasis on high intellectual challenge, and the priority accorded to equity in the Curriculum as a whole.

Equitable access to discipline knowledge and intellectual challenge

An emphasis on high intellectual challenge is evident in overall goals within The Australian Curriculum as well as in specific discipline documents. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) – the organisation charged with responsibility for developing the curriculum – specifies national goals of schooling that emphasise high ideals of excellence in education. Specifically the ACARA commits to *supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens ... and to promoting equity and excellence in education* (ACARA, 2011a, p. 8), and the Curriculum builds on intended educational outcomes that explicitly prioritise intellectual depth and quality.

Further, and of very direct relevance to EAL learners, the Curriculum specifically rejects an alternative or simplified curriculum for ‘disadvantaged’ students. The initial draft of *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2009) states:

One important lesson learned from past efforts to overcome inequality is that an alternative curriculum for students regarded as disadvantaged does not treat them equitably. It is better to set the same high expectations for all students and to provide differentiated levels of support to ensure that all students have a fair chance to achieve those expectations. (p. 8)

Subsequent drafts of this document state: *The Australian Curriculum has been developed to ensure that curriculum content and achievement standards establish high expectations for all students* (ACARA, 2011a, p. 17). These ideals are reflected in key abilities, skills and knowledge within individual discipline documents of key learning areas. The Australian Curriculum: English (ACARA, 2012a, p. 1) aims to ensure students *learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose*. The Australian Curriculum: Science (ACARA, 2012b, p. 3) *provides opportunities for*

students to develop an understanding of important science concepts and processes, the practices used to develop scientific knowledge, of sciences' contribution to our culture and society, and its applications in our lives.

While, inevitably, national goals, discipline goals and aspirations are expressed in rather general terms, they are important as they provide 'legitimation' for domains of knowledge outlined in the previous section as relevant for education of EAL students. Thus, despite ongoing debates in regard to the details of both the English and Science documents (and others), overall, the Curriculum provides explicit support for ideals of deep knowledge and high intellectual challenge, and it advocates the same high expectations of EAL students as for other students. In addition to the general rejection of an alternative curriculum for 'disadvantaged' or diverse students, both the English and Science documents explicitly reject an alternative curriculum for EAL students (ACARA, 2012a, p. 11; ACARA, 2012b, p. 11).

Hope for EAL students and their teachers thus lies in the legitimacy provided in the Curriculum documents for principles of high challenge and equitable access. Despite ongoing debate and compromise regarding details within specific discipline documents, hope also lies in the fact that each discipline document aims high and addresses deep learning that is essential to that discipline. The challenge faced by teachers working with EAL students is to ensure they are able to provide the necessary support to enable students to have full and equitable access to the Curriculum. Anything less would compromise the choices available for EAL students in their lives beyond school.

Language and literacy development

As argued earlier, if EAL students are to achieve equitable access to curriculum knowledge, they need high levels of differentiated support. The most obvious area of need for support is in academic language and literacy development. Here, The Australian Curriculum again offers hope as well as challenge.

Language and literacy is rightly fore-grounded in The Australian Curriculum: English. Curriculum content here is built around the three interconnected Strands: **Language**, which addresses the kind of knowledge about language and literacy required by students; **Literature**, which addresses students' abilities to interpret, appreciate, evaluate and create literary texts; and **Literacy**, which addresses students' abilities to comprehend, interpret and create a growing repertoire of spoken, written and multimodal texts. It is significant that these interconnected Strands not only address the *use* of language (through the Literature and Literacy Strands), they also give status to *knowledge about* language (through the Language Strand) (ACARA, 2012a).

These three Strands are elaborated under common sub-headings for each school year from Foundation to Year 10. Amongst others, sub-headings for **Language** include: *language variation and change, language for interaction, text*

structure and organisation; for **Literature** they include: *literature and context; responding to literature*; for **Literacy** they include: *texts in context; interacting with others*. Details of curriculum content for each sub-heading are explained and elaborated. For example, in Year 6, the sub-heading of **Text structure and organisation** is explained as: *Understanding how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects*. This explanation is in part elaborated as: *Exploring a range of everyday, community, literary and informative texts discussing elements of text structure and language features and comparing the overall structure and effect of author's choices in two or more texts* (ACARA, 2012a, p. 64). Within this format, Year 6 content under the heading of **Language** includes (amongst others): the nature of dialects; differences in language use in different contexts and for different purposes; cohesive links; purposes of commas; complex sentences; verb groups and tense; visual representation of concepts and information; spelling etc. Descriptions and elaborations for the Strands of **Literature** and **Literacy** are similarly detailed. In addition, **Achievement Standards** for each school year are identified in relation to Receptive modes (listening, reading and viewing) and Productive modes (speaking, writing and creating).

Although perhaps less explicitly than in earlier drafts, oral language development is given priority as well as literacy development. The Curriculum aims include reference to *spoken, written and multimodal texts* (ACARA, 2012, p. 3); they specify (amongst others) the need for students to *learn to read, view, speak, write create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose* (p. 3). Specific emphasis on *listening and speaking*, as well as *reading and writing*, is identified in the curriculum details provided for each school year. As a result there is overall provision for sequential development of oral English from Foundation to Year 10, as well as for development of reading and writing.

As indicated earlier, development of The Australian Curriculum: English has been highly contested (see also Editorial in this Issue). Yet, despite the arguments and despite the inevitable compromises that have been made in writing of the more detailed versions, I suggest the Curriculum offers a substantial resource that gives rightful emphasis and priority to language and literacy teaching. Its embrace of a broadly functional perspective provides an overall theoretical cohesion while also providing a necessary level of detail into aspects of language and literacy that need to be taught (for further details of this functional perspective and the opportunities and challenges associated with it see Macken-Horarik et al., 2011; Derewianka, this Issue; Love & Humphrey, this Issue). This detail ranges across levels of language and includes: whole text analysis; cohesion; sentence grammar; spelling; phonics. As indicated earlier, there is substantial evidence that teachers' lack confidence in their knowledge about language and in their knowledge of which aspects

of language they need to teach. The kind of detail that is available in the English Curriculum will go a considerable way to addressing this problem. Of particular importance is the emphasis on knowledge about language, and of talk about language (metalinguage). The emphasis on metalinguage is consistent with research evidence showing that opportunities to reflect on, and talk about, one's own and others' use of language, assists students to develop understandings of ways in which language constructs meanings, and impacts positively on their developing control of spoken and written language (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999; Olson, 1989).

The challenge I believe will lie in implementation of the Curriculum, and in particular in comprehensive teaching of language and of knowledge about language. Previous experience, especially in New South Wales, is relevant here. The 1998, English K-6, syllabus (NSW, Dept of School Education, 1998), introduced some years ago, is also underpinned by a functional perspective. It introduces the notion of 'text types' (key written genres that are typically part of curriculum disciplines); the rhetorical structure of these text types and key language features. In NSW, as in other Australian states, teachers have generally embraced the notion of 'text types' (Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001), but consistent anecdotal evidence suggests that the teaching of text types often results in an overly reductive focus on the structure of reports, narratives, explanations and expositions, with little emphasis on a functional analysis of text patterns or related language features. This experience suggests that substantial and ongoing professional support for all teachers will be necessary to ensure a nuanced and in depth engagement with the details of the Language and Literacy Strands that are outlined in the English Curriculum (see also Derewianka, this Issue; Jones & Chen this Issue). Despite this, from the point of view of EAL students and their teachers, there is much to be thankful for in the English Curriculum, as it unambiguously places language, literacy and knowledge about language at the centre of the discipline.

As argued previously, however, EAL students require support in their language and literacy development in **all** key curriculum areas, not just English. Key questions in relation to The Australian Curriculum therefore must include: to what extent is the role of language and literacy in learning acknowledged in disciplines other than English, and to what extent is language and literacy development supported across the Curriculum? I turn now to the Science Curriculum (ACARA, 2012b) to address these questions.

The Australian Curriculum: Science has three interrelated strands of **Science Understanding; Science as a Human Endeavour; and Science Inquiry Skills**. **Science Understanding** comprises four sub-strands of Biological sciences, Chemical sciences, Earth and Space sciences, and Physical sciences; **Science as a Human Endeavour** comprises two sub-strands of Nature and development of science, and Use and influence of science; **Science Inquiry Skills** comprise five sub-strands of Questioning and predicting;

Planning and conductive; Processing and analysing data and information, Evaluating, and Communicating (ACARA, 2012b, pp. 4–6). *Communicating* is thus one of eleven sub-strands within the Science Curriculum, and is included for each school year (Foundation to Year 10) (ACARA, 2012b, pp. 22, 26, 29, 34 etc). This sub-strand identifies general aspects of oral and written language that are relevant to different stages of the Science Curriculum (e.g. Communicating for Year 4, specifies: *Represent and communicate ideas and findings in a variety of ways such as diagrams, physical representations and simple reports* (p. 34). In addition, the Science Curriculum identifies literacy as one of the ‘general capabilities’ relevant to science (ACARA, 2012b, p. 12)

Thus, in the Science Curriculum, language and use of language are acknowledged – albeit in general terms. While oral language receives priority in the English Curriculum, it is largely absent from the Science Curriculum. There is little systematic analysis of the role of oral language in learning specific science concepts, and hence relatively little guidance for teachers of what language (oral or written) needs to be taught. Overall, there is little detail, and therefore little support, for Science teachers to develop a necessary depth of knowledge about their students’ language and literacy development. In this respect Science is typical of other discipline Curriculum documents that have been completed to date.

Thus, while the role of language and literacy in learning is acknowledged across the Curriculum, there are major differences between English and other discipline documents regarding detail of what this means. There are also major differences in the detail of how language and literacy can be expected to develop across school years. The result is that despite broad acknowledgement of the importance of language across the curriculum, there is little support for integrating language and literacy with teaching of key concepts in disciplines other than English. For teachers who are already knowledgeable in theories and systems of language, and who know how to embed language and literacy teaching with Science and other disciplines, there is a legitimate space for teaching language and literacy. However, for teachers who lack knowledge and confidence in their ability to teach language and literacy, Curriculum documents other than English provide insufficient support to enable them to work effectively with their EAL students.

These differences between The Australian Curriculum: English and other discipline documents present serious challenges for teachers of EAL students. They also raise questions regarding where responsibility for language and literacy teaching lies, and what are the areas of overlap and division between English and teachers of other disciplines. Is it the expectation that specialist EAL and/or English teachers should provide a resource for other teachers? Should non-English teachers be expected to work with both the English Curriculum document and their own discipline document? To what extent, and how, are either of these options supported within the Curriculum? While

perhaps of less significance to primary school teachers who teach across the curriculum, such questions were likely to be very significant to high school teachers who are working within one or two disciplines, and who are unlikely to have access to the English Curriculum. Although especially relevant for EAL students, responses to such questions also have implications for academic language and literacy development of all students.

In sum, from the point of view of EAL students and their teachers, the place of language and literacy in The Australian Curriculum gives cause for hope, but also presents serious challenges. The **hope** lies primarily, although not exclusively, in the support for language and literacy development in the English Curriculum. Positive features lie in the dual emphases on language use (the literacy strand) and on developing explicit knowledge about language (the language strand). They also lie in the depth and rigour of knowledge about language and literacy that inform the Curriculum. The English Curriculum thus provides legitimation for an extensive focus on language, most obviously in the discipline itself, but also by potentially providing a resource for other disciplines where there is (somewhat minimal) acknowledgement of the role of language and literacy in learning. The **challenge** arises from the limited acknowledgement of the role of language and literacy in disciplines other than English, and the need for all teachers to ensure their EAL and other students have access to sufficient high levels of support for oral language development, including 'literate talk', as well as for academic literacy development across all disciplines. The further challenge lies in providing support for all teachers to develop the necessary knowledge about language and literacy to enable them to embed language and literacy teaching across the curriculum. While we can expect at least some professional support in this area for teachers of English, it is not clear that such support will be available for teachers from other disciplines.

Conclusions and Suggestions

In this paper, I have argued that, given the numbers of EAL students in our school population, it is legitimate to ask how EAL students are positioned, and to what extent the knowledge required of teachers working with EAL students is acknowledged and addressed in The Australian Curriculum. This knowledge I have suggested lies in at least three major domains:

- knowledge about language, literacy and language development
- in-depth knowledge of curriculum content
- knowledge of ways of planning and implementing high challenge, high support programs that target students' needs.

From the perspective of EAL students and their teachers, it seems developments to date in the Curriculum gives rise to hope but also present some serious challenges.

Hope lies first in the overall emphasis on high intellectual challenge, and equitable access to learning for all students. I have argued that it is the role of any curriculum to identify broad educational goals as well as key abilities, skills, and knowledge relevant to specific curriculum disciplines, and that it should aim high to provide a framework in which intellectual challenge, deep knowledge and deep learning is legitimised. I believe The Australian Curriculum achieves this. It provides a framework for equitable access for 'disadvantaged' and diverse students and legitimacy for teachers who seek to prioritise genuine student learning above pressure to 'cover curriculum content'. Despite ongoing debates about detail, it also provides genuine guidance to teachers in regard to discipline/curriculum content. The **challenge** is for teachers to provide the necessary support for their EAL and other students to ensure all students have full and equitable access to high challenge programs across the various disciplines they are studying.

Hope for EAL students, and their teachers, also lies in the priority accorded to the role of language and literacy in learning, and to the coherent and detailed knowledge about spoken and written language that is evident in the English Curriculum. The **challenge** is that this knowledge is located primarily in The Australian Curriculum: English document. Despite general acknowledgement of the importance of language and literacy, there is relatively little emphasis on detailed knowledge of language and literacy development in other discipline documents. As a result, there is insufficient detail about the role of language in learning, and a lack of clarity regarding whose responsibility it is to provide necessary support for language and literacy development in disciplines other than English. In their response to the consultation drafts (ATESOL, NSW, 2010), the ATESOL committee makes a similar point, and argues the need for a more detailed account of language and literacy in Curriculum documents other than English. I endorse this view.

There are, I believe, genuine questions regarding the purpose of any curriculum. My view is that while we should expect a curriculum to address questions of knowledge (of what to teach), it cannot necessarily address questions of how to teach. From the perspective of EAL students and their teachers, I believe it is legitimate to expect The Australian Curriculum to address in-depth knowledge of discipline content, and knowledge of language, literacy development, but I am less sure whether it should attempt to address the third domain – that of how to plan and implement high challenge, high support programs. This is not, of course, to suggest that processes of design and implementation of programs are unimportant. Equitable access to any curriculum is only possible if students have access to programs characterised by high challenge and high support. However, the demands and complexities of program-design which require differentiated support for diverse groups, including EAL students, are such that they need to be addressed in ways that complement the Curriculum, rather than in the Curriculum itself.

In their response to the consultation draft of the Curriculum, the ATESOL committee argues the need for supplementary strategies, documents and professional learning to address specific needs of EAL students and, where necessary, to provide the support for the teachers (both mainstream and English specialists) who are working with EAL students. I endorse this view. It is important to note that most Australian states already have substantial resources, developed over a number of years, that address processes of design and implementation as well as methodologies and assessment procedures relevant to needs of EAL students. Significantly, the document *English as an Additional Language or Dialect: Teacher Resource* (ACARA, 2011b) is now available. This document, developed to supplement The Australian Curriculum will provide a substantial resource and initial support for mainstream teachers working with EAL students. In addition to this resource, however, I suggest we need:

- Ongoing work that continues to consolidate and extend existing state resources and develops cohesive national support strategies, documents and procedures for teachers working with EAL students. Such work would build on the document *English as an Additional Language or Dialect: Teacher Resource* to provide further detail in addressing relevant pedagogical practices and assessment procedures to monitor the progress of EAL students and provide pathways into the mainstream curriculum. It may result in preparation of further support documents for teachers.
- Planning and funding of on-going systematic and in-depth professional development programs that address language and literacy development across the curriculum. Such programs should build on the English Curriculum;
- Funding for projects that target pedagogy to support EAL students – such as the Successful Language Learners project, described earlier.

As we work towards final versions and implementation of The Australian Curriculum, such tandem activities would address challenges and indeed give cause for hope on the part of EAL students and the teachers who work with them.

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