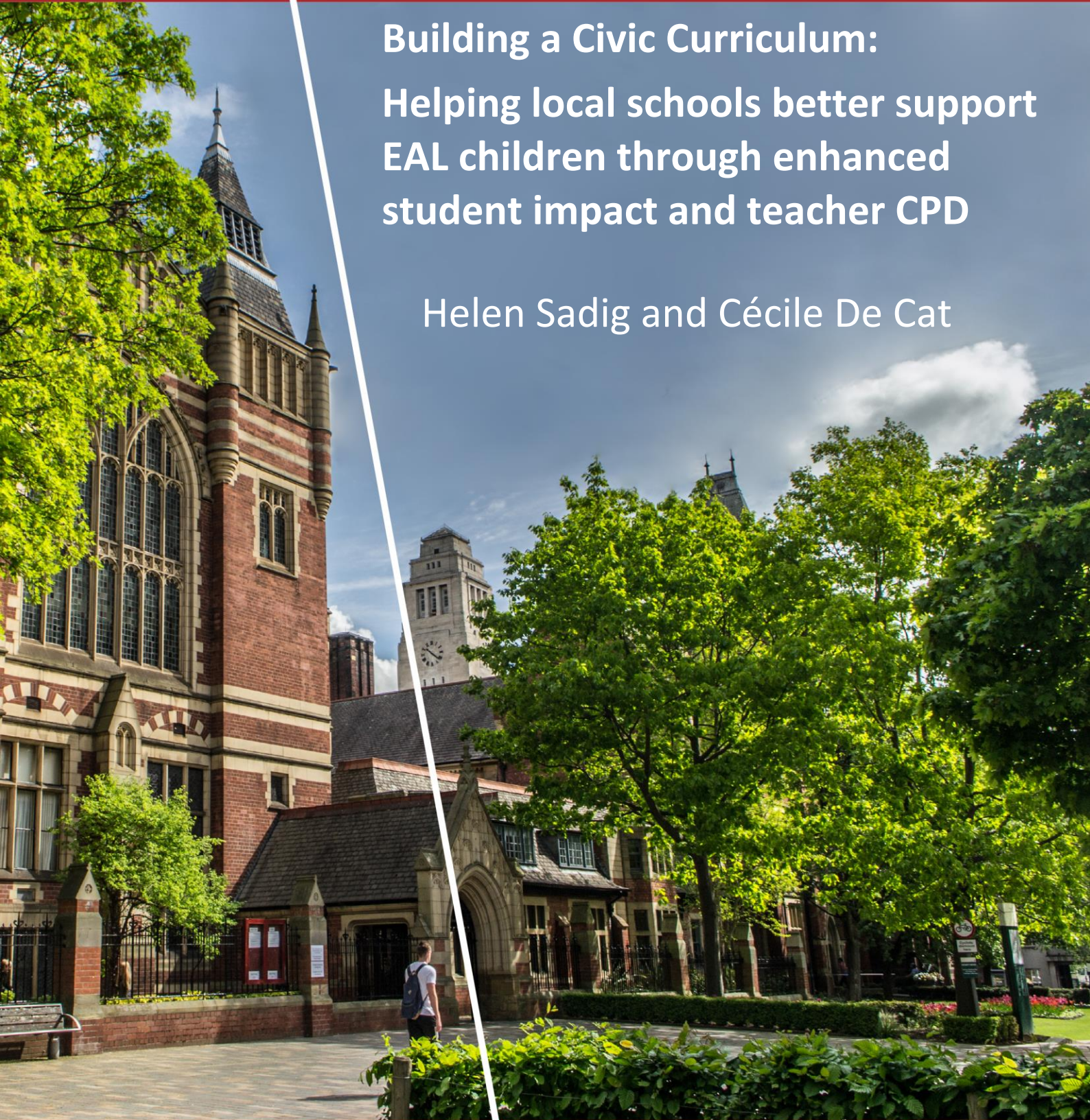


**Building a Civic Curriculum:
Helping local schools better support
EAL children through enhanced
student impact and teacher CPD**

Helen Sadig and Cécile De Cat



Project Overview

Leeds University operates a well-established and successful *Students into Schools* (SiS) scheme, which attracts approximately 400 students each year, who participate in school placements to provide literacy, numeracy or subject-specific support to children in local primary and secondary schools.

The University works with over 70 partner schools in West Yorkshire as part of this scheme, which comprise increasingly diverse pupil populations. This diversity is reflected in the numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), of which the national average is more than 1 in 5 children. In many of the schools in West Yorkshire, the proportion of pupils with EAL is between 50% and 90%.

However, the majority of SiS students are unaware of and unprepared to meet the needs of EAL pupils. Post-2010 funding cuts have also resulted in a reduction of the support that schools can provide for these children and an urgent need to help schools meet the growing demand for English language support.

This project aimed to address this civic need and provide language training for SiS students to maximise the effectiveness of the SiS scheme in terms of EAL support, and to offer workshops as a CPD opportunity for teachers in schools.

Project Objectives

This project had five main aims:

1. To undertake an assessment of needs of EAL teachers and SiS students in schools;
2. To develop linguistically-informed language pedagogy training for SiS students;
3. To provide a programme of CPD workshops to support teachers in local schools;
4. To develop a website for SiS students, teachers and researchers interested in CPD;
5. To curate a resource bank of EAL teaching and learning materials available online.

Methodology

In order to inform the development of the language pedagogy training for SiS students, we adopted a predominantly qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews and online questionnaires as primary methods of data collection to undertake an assessment of needs.

We tracked students' preparedness for and engagement with the SiS scheme through three online surveys, administered before, during and after their school placement. We also sought student feedback through online surveys after each of the SiS workshops to inform curriculum development. In addition, we nominated a student scholar, who participated in an interview and wrote an 870-word reflective account of her experience.



The main source of data was provided through semi-structured interviews with teachers in six local schools, which were selected to represent a fair demographic range of SiS partner schools in terms of size, location and proportion of EAL pupils. Online questionnaires were also sent to the remaining SiS partner schools.

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Findings

Key findings from participating SiS students

- Prior to their placement, students were mainly concerned about behaviour management (68%) followed by issues of pedagogy (26%) indicating a lack of awareness of the potential challenges of working with EAL learners.
- Once students had commenced their placement, their concerns changed to issues around supporting EAL learners, and students reported low levels of language proficiency in pupils as a barrier (43%) as frequently as their own lack of multicultural awareness (43%).
- Following their placements, the majority of students (75%) felt they would have liked additional training to support EAL pupils, ideally before the start of the school placement (63%).
- Most students (78%) felt that the SiS experience had raised their awareness of the local community.
- Most students requested teaching materials to use in the classroom (75%) and 50% of those who responded felt they would benefit from approaches to supporting EAL pupils, more knowledge of English grammar, strategies for developing learners' speaking and reading skills, and self-study resources on Minerva.



- A key finding from our student scholar relates to the impact of ‘peer literacies’, a term we have constructed to refer to the sociolinguistic codes associated with this paradigm. Specifically, younger monolingual English-speakers were linguistically more accommodating towards their EAL peers than those further up the school. The negotiation of peer literacies in this sense is not a construct we have hitherto come across in the literature nor from the findings from participating teachers, and most closely aligns with the concept of peer talk.

Key findings from participating EAL teachers

- Socio-cultural factors may affect levels of pupil attainment and progress. These include factors such as parental attitudes to schooling and high mobility, which can influence learner aspiration, motivation and self-esteem. They are neither culture nor language-specific, however, and may affect traditionally disadvantaged groups such as white British working-class boys as equally as ethnic minority EAL pupils.
- There was some suggestion that certain behaviours for learning of EAL pupils, for example, of second and third generation Pakistani heritage speakers, may align with that of learners within monolingual English-speaking disadvantaged peer groups. This would suggest that the extension of support provided for EAL pupils would benefit these disadvantaged pupils.
- Changing EAL learner demographics, such as from sojourners to refugee-status migrants, for example, would appear to necessitate the development of awareness-raising activities for teaching staff, and there was much support for upskilling through whole-school CPD training, especially for classroom teachers and support assistants.
- A whole-school EAL approach appears to benefit all learners. In other words, the use of EAL strategies such as collaborative working and explicit instruction seems to support learning in both EAL and monolingual English-speaking pupils. For some schools this may have arisen out of necessity due to constraints on resources, for example, where there is no funding for a designated EAL support assistant.
- In addition to pedagogical considerations, there was also unanimous support for the *integration* rather than *separation* of EAL learners from their monolingual English-speaking peers for affective personal and adaptive socio-cultural reasons. These emotional and social factors were considered important pre-requisites for learning.
- Knowledge of academic literacies underpins effective learning and may be a greater barrier to learning than those associated with language proficiency per se. This is crucial for EAL learners in terms of language for learning, that is, being able to negotiate classroom literacies and those associated with instructions and examinations, for example.



- However, it was also generally accepted that negotiating academic literacies can be equally challenging for monolingual English-speaking children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This further supports the whole school approach, and highlights the need to distinguish the extent to which learners are *articulate* as opposed to *fluent*.
- The main linguistic challenges for EAL learners include restricted vocabulary and low reading proficiency. As EAL learners may have fewer opportunities to access target linguistic models needed to develop academic literacies, aurally outside of school, it is important to provide enriched linguistic support in all subjects across the curriculum.
- In particular, most teachers felt that vocabulary acquisition is central to learning across the curriculum, which in turn influences their pedagogical approach. This is supported through pre-teaching and metalinguistic strategies, for example, and should be prioritised both in CPD sessions for teachers and SiS training workshops.

Outcomes

This project had the following key outcomes:

- Linguistically-informed language pedagogy training workshops for SiS students;
- A programme of [CPD workshops](#) to support teachers in local schools;
- The EALchildren.org website for SiS students, teachers and researchers of EAL, and twitter feed: [@EAL_children](#);
- A [database](#) of open-access EAL teaching and learning materials available online.

Challenges

In terms of the research process, those teachers who agreed to be interviewed each held academic leadership responsibilities with a background in supporting EAL learners. This changed our initial approach from that of needs analysis to one of sharing best practice, and informing the development of training workshops for SiS students and CPD workshops for teachers.

The interviews generated a rich source of data with converging themes relating to the challenges facing EAL practitioners and learners in schools. As we were only able to interview eight teachers across six schools, this cannot be considered a representative sample. However, the responses to the online teacher questionnaires (in spite of a relatively poor response rate of 16) largely reflected the themes raised during the interviews, and therefore provided support for those findings.

The mean response rate of 12 students out of the total 518 SiS registered students this year was similarly low for the student questionnaires. Combined with proportionally low average attendance of 15 students at the language pedagogy training workshops, this indicated an



overall lack of engagement, which was perhaps best explained by the fact that these were run on a voluntary basis and scheduled 'out of hours' in the evenings.

Next steps

We plan to extend our existing collaboration with teachers in the local community to establish an EAL hub to facilitate the exchange of best practice and case studies across their schools, which will be promoted through the EAL Children website.

We also plan to deliver language pedagogy training workshops for students on the SiS programme in 2019-20. We will advocate a strategic move towards embedding future support into SiS modules and attempt to identify an appropriate mechanism for providing training for those students participating on the SiS scheme on a voluntary basis, rather than as a credit-bearing module.

Further to the findings on academic literacies, which seem to suggest a correlation between socio-cultural factors, language proficiency and academic attainment, we would like to investigate the extent to which knowledge of academic literacies can benefit traditionally underrepresented undergraduate student groups at Leeds University, and mechanisms for enriching support in this respect.

If you would like any further information about the project contact Helen Sadig (h.c.sadig@leeds.ac.uk) or Cecile de Cat (C.decat@leeds.ac.uk).

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