

ARTICLE

A case study of a small-group EAL intervention for Grade 5 students in an International Baccalaureate (IB) school in Vietnam

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Abstract

This paper aimed to examine the effectiveness of an English as an Additional Language (EAL) intervention for a small group of Grade 5 students. The intervention took place in an International Baccalaureate (IB) school in Ho Chi Minh City, focusing on developing the students' verbal expression and listening comprehension skills, while also building their social language and connections with peers. The study uses a mixed method case study approach, including unstructured, non-participant observations, an interview with the EAL teacher together with a survey sent to all the Grade 5 Homeroom teachers and TAs and students' assessment data to critically evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Results indicate that the EAL intervention had a positive impact on the students' language skills and social connections, as evidenced by improvements in their verbal expression, listening comprehension, social language and peer connections; as well as characteristics of a good EAL practice model suggested by Carder (2007) and the Prism model of Thomas and Collier (1997) reflected in the EAL intervention. The session also proved the principles of the Responsive Classroom approach by NEFC, where students' social and emotional development is of equal importance as their language and academic growth. The findings suggest that more helpful CPD activities and opportunities for students to enhance their communicative skills outside the classroom may offer promising approaches to improving EAL students' language proficiency and social integration.

Introduction

“Our safety lies in schools and societies in which faces with many shapes can feel an equal sense of belonging. Our pupils must grow up knowing and liking those who look and speak in different ways, or they will live as strangers in a hostile land.”

This statement made by Gussin Paley (2000, cited in Conteh, 2019, p.12) concludes how schools and teachers should promote diversity and inclusion, as well as support students with English as an Additional Language (EAL). EAL students often experience difficulties in having to make progress not only in their language development, but also their cognitive and socio-cultural development (Naldic, 1999). which means additional support should be put in place to help them successfully integrate into mainstream classrooms (The Bell Foundation, 2020). Alongside fostering students' language and academic skills, more attention should be drawn to their socio-emotional growth, considering the frustration and stress they have to overcome in relation to immigration, language and cultural conflicts, etc. (Niehaus and Adelson, 2014). This paper intends to explore the effectiveness of an EAL pull-out intervention implemented for seven Grade 5 students who are at the beginner level of their English proficiency. The intervention took place in an International Baccalaureate school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where there is a cultural diversity with teachers and students bringing to the classroom a variety of different cultural and language backgrounds. As part of the school's philosophy of inclusion (2019) and its commitment to a “culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem solving” (International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2010, p.3), extra language support is provided by the EAL team to meet the needs of English language learners, ensuring both their social and academic skills.

This research focused on how the intervention supported students' verbal expression and listening comprehension, how students develop social language and build connections with peers. Such factors will allow them to access the grade level curriculum, and achieve higher levels of success and well-being.

Literature review

Comprehensible input and output - the importance of promoting talk

Whether EAL students acquire English through explicit instruction of rules and grammar or through natural communication and interaction in the target language is explained by Krashen (1982, 1985) in the monitor model, in which he believes learning (a conscious process of understanding the rules of a language) and acquiring (a subconscious and natural process that happens through constant exposure to the language) are separate features of language development. While acquisition plays a determining role in pushing language proficiency forward, the “learning” process acts as a “monitor” factor, allowing learners to self-correct before or after production.

Krashen (1982) refers to the English speaking environment in which learners are exposed to as “comprehensible input”, and explains that by providing learners with the “input” that is slightly above their current level of proficiency which they can still understand based on contexts, improvement is more likely to be made than correcting their mistakes while producing the language. Merrill Swain (2000) built on this idea by developing the concept of “comprehensible output”, in which she argues that the “input” itself is not enough if learners don't have opportunities in using the language. Only by noticing the gap between what learners can produce and what they aim to produce, trying new patterns of language and reflecting on the production of it would learners’ language development be fully processed (Swain, 1995, 2005, cited in Sharples, 2021, p.34).

Based on Krashen and Swain's work, recent research has investigated and pointed out the importance of the effective use of talk to assist with language acquisition (Sharples, 2021), develop students' cognitive thinking of related ideas and concepts and enhance their social skills (Graf, 2011). “Talk requires input, output and meaningful interaction - so it already meets our ‘basic formula’ for language learning” (Sharples, 2021, p.80). Thus, it is vital that conversations in the classroom supply the “conditions” that facilitate language development, which is a language rich environment with enough comprehensible input and output for students to not only enhance their speaking and listening skills, but also increase higher order thinking (Gibbons, 2014; Graf, 2011). Gallagher (2008) also emphasises the role of talk for language acquisition, but indicates that children should be encouraged to develop their listening skills before they feel ready to communicate in the target language and that real contexts of natural communication should be created to promote talk in the classroom.

Cummins' CUP, BICS and CALP

Many schools and classrooms follow the idea that languages should be kept separate from each other, and each of them should be assigned specific time in the school timetable to be used. Cummins (2001, cited in Gallagher, 2008, p.35-36; Sharples, 2021, p.75-76), however, explains that bilingual learners draw on both languages as they work in the classroom using their “Common Underlying Proficiency” (CUP), which is often described in the “dual iceberg diagram”. No matter how different the two languages are in terms of vocabulary and grammar, which are stored separately like the two icebergs on the surface of the ocean, there is always one common place where they are linked together below the surface, which symbolises concepts and understandings coming from the same central source in two languages (Figure 1). The implications for EAL pedagogy from this theory suggests that L1 should be encouraged in the classroom to support the proficiency of L2, and that the joining area of languages should be well developed to bring about “social advantages, thinking advantages and cultural advantages in the long term” (Gallagher, 2008, p.39).

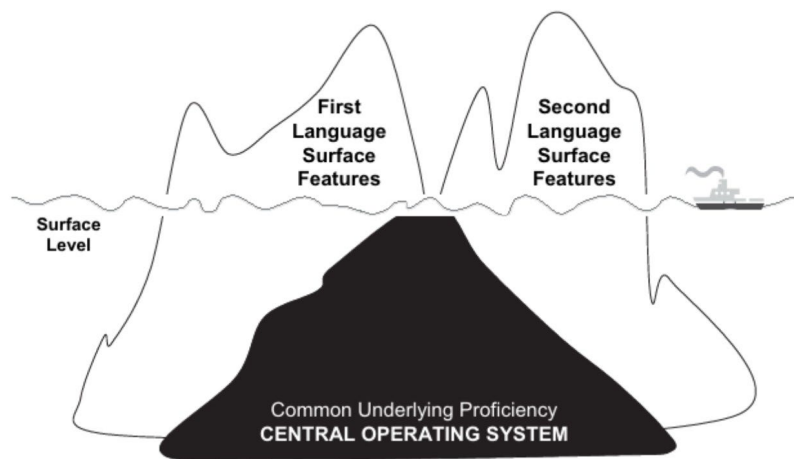


Figure 1: The Cummins dual iceberg
Source: Gallagher, 2008, p. 39

Cummins (1979, 1980, cited in Brown, 2007, p.219) also proposed the distinction between BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). While BICS refers to the language skills used for everyday communications and social interactions which are context-embedded and cognitively undemanding, CALP describes the academic language in subject content that is more context-reduced and cognitively challenging. Cummins explains the connection between cognitive demand and contextual embeddedness by the four-quadrant figure, where he believes the teacher's role is to gradually guide students from the high context/ low demand area (A) to the low context/ high demand area (D) (1979, 2001, cited in Sharples, 2021, p.77) (Figure 2).

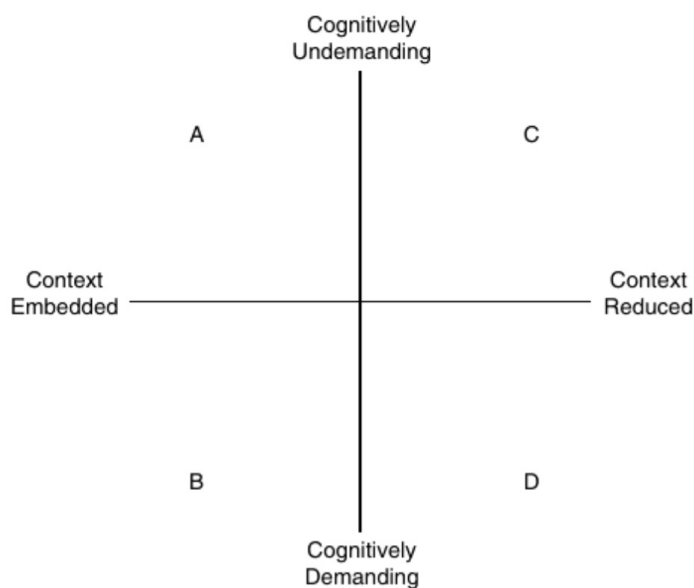


Figure 2: The Cummins' quadrants
Source: Sharples, 2021, p.77

Socio-emotional support for EAL students and the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach

Krashen and Terrell (1998) in the “Affective Filter Hypothesis” state that attitudinal variables like emotions, feelings and motivation can relate to one's success in second language acquisition. Krashen demonstrates this through the figure of the language “input” going through a “filter” of emotional states before reaching the language acquisition (Figure 3). With the same amount of input, those with a lower affective filter (high motivation and self-confidence, low level of anxiety) will acquire more input than those with a higher affective filter (lack of motivation, low self-confidence, stress and anxiety). Krashen suggests more optimal input be given and low-filter situations be promoted to make learning more effective.

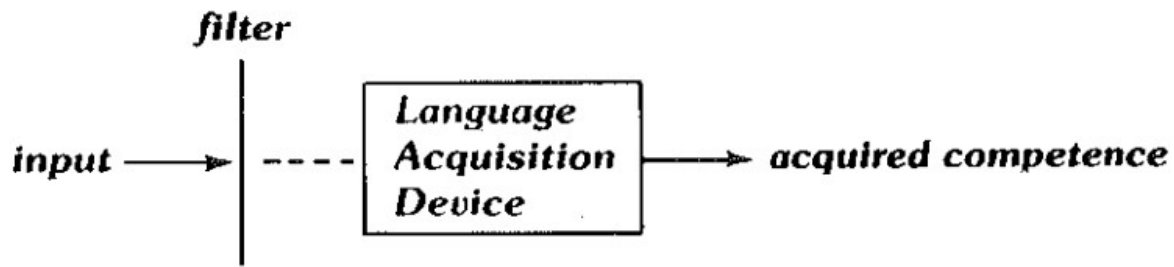


Figure 3: Operation of the “Affective Filter”

Source: Krashen and Terrell, 1998, p. 39

Many researchers have studied the factors that influence the process of acquiring a second language in a school context, starting with the Prism Model set up by Thomas and Collier (1997), which encompasses language development, cognitive development, academic development as three sides of the prism, and social cultural processes at the heart of the figure, driving the other three factors. Socio-cultural development was, again, described as one of the three factors of the learning situation of EAL students in the conceptual model by NALDIC (1999), in which language learners are “regarded as social beings and meaning is generated through social interaction” (p.4). Arnot et al (2014) also develops a similar framework, focusing on the interconnections between EAL students' educational achievement, language development and social integration. It is believed that a child's social needs such as their ability to connect and work with peers, their sense of belonging and identity, their ability to adapt themselves into the culture and ethos of the school have an interrelationship with their language development and academic attainment. This aspect should be given consideration together with students' academic needs when schools provide English language education for EAL students.

Taking into account the social-emotional challenges from immigration, culture conflicts, language barriers, etc that an EAL student may encounter, the Northeast Foundation for Children (NEFC) developed the Responsive Classroom (RC) approach that consists of a set of practices and strategies aiming at creating a safe and engaging place for students to develop their emotional and social skills together with their academic competencies (NEFC, 1997). The RC approach also puts emphasis on responding to students' strengths and needs linguistically, culturally and emotionally (NEFC, 2021).

EAL teaching - moving from theory to good practice

Carder (2007) presents a three-program model, in which he suggests three elements for an ideal second language program: immersion in second language through a strong ESL program, a mother tongue instruction program, and continuing professional development (CPD) of linguistic and cultural awareness for all teachers in the school. According to the Prism Model of Thomas and Collier (1997), it is indicated that a good curriculum for second language learning needs to centre around the four factors of language development, cognitive development, academic development and social cultural processes. Through the lens of the RC approach (NEFC, 2021), a good program also needs to place as much value on teaching social and emotional skills as teaching academic content, and that it should support students linguistically, culturally and emotionally.

Good practice for EAL teaching based on the above-mentioned principles, in short, will cover the following characteristics:

- English proficiency to be developed in a language rich environment, with enough “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1982; 1985) and activities that “promote natural flow of talk” (Gallagher, 2008)
- Age-appropriate English instruction to be taught across the curriculum (Carder, 2007), which allows development of children's CALP and increase cognitive thinking skills (Thomas and Collier, 1997; Sharples, 2021)
- Bilingualism and multilingualism to be used as an asset to support all four dimensions in the Prism Model by Thomas and Collier: (1) language development in all languages that a child speaks; (2) “Common Underlying Proficiency” (CUP) utilized in L1 and L2 to activate cognitive thinking; (3)

academic language taught in both L1 and L2; (4) a socio-culturally supportive environment for a child to integrate fully into the school's ethos and cultures (Thomas and Collier, 2007; Gallagher, 2008; The Bell Foundation, 2021)

- Social and emotional teaching to be integrated with academic teaching, in which pedagogy responds to students' cultural, emotional and linguistic needs (NEFC, 2021)
- The EAL department to be staffed with qualified teachers, preferably bilingual teachers or those who are EAL learners (Carder, 2007), with CPD provided and reinforced every 3 years (Carder, 2020)
- Students to be integrated into mainstream classrooms, along with appropriate out-of-class interventions (The Bell Foundation, 2020), which requires the support from and collaboration between homeroom teachers, EAL teachers and other subject teachers (Carder, 2007).

Methodology

The case study was carried out using the mixed method approach, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data through different sources and "triangulating" them to "see the same thing from different perspectives" and "confirm...the findings of one method with those of another" (Bell and Waters, 2018, p.140).

Firstly, unstructured, non-participant observations were conducted with the intention to gather data on the "interactional setting" (interactions between teacher vs students; students vs students) and the "programme setting" (structures and organization of the session, materials, pedagogy and approaches) (Morrison, 1993, cited in Cohen et al, 2018, p.543). This would allow the researcher to assess how students were making progress throughout the intervention, and understand the content as well as pedagogy of the session, comparing them with the theories and the characteristics of EAL good practices presented in Literature Review.

Secondly, the researcher would interview the EAL teacher to understand her views on students' improvements in the four core areas (verbal expression and listening comprehension, social language and peer connections) of the case study. The interview also intended to dig deeper into strategies and approaches of the intervention, and whether they are aligned with good practice of EAL teaching. A survey was then sent to all the Grade 5 staff, including homeroom teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and the EAL teacher to understand how well students integrated into the mainstream and how EAL is supported in a larger context.

Lastly, students' assessment data was analysed to show their development in the four areas that this research focuses on. Students' English proficiency is demonstrated by their WIDA scores taken at the beginning and the end of an academic year, which means there wasn't enough data for this year's cohort due to the time constraint of the case study. Data of a similar group last year was used instead, allowing the researcher to look at a completed data set across a full year to evaluate the anticipated levels of progress of this year's group. Besides, students' speaking and listening checklists conducted in September and December also enabled the researcher to explore how students flourished in their linguistic skills, how they built up their vocabulary in both academic and social contexts, and how they connected and interacted with their peers throughout the intervention.

This case study was conducted following the BERA guidelines (2018), in which students or parents were not interviewed as part of the research, and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their data were strictly ensured.

Data collection

Data was collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention regarding students' progress, the extent to which the school and the intervention adhere to good practice of EAL teaching, and the level of competence of Grade 5 teachers and TAs in second language acquisition together with how helpful they find the CPD opportunities offered in the school.

Observations

Observations of the intervention took place on 18 October and 7, 10, 15, 30 November. Notes were taken for each day and can be found in Appendix 1. In summary, the session created opportunities for students to interact with each other to build up their social speaking and listening skills. Multilingualism was promoted throughout the session by encouraging students to use translanguaging strategies that support their L1, discussing with peers using L1 before re-sharing with the class in English, valuing students' cultures and languages through some cultural celebration activities. The intervention was not a standalone ESL class, but integrating with what students were taught in the mainstream, providing scaffolds and building up students' academic language to support the Unit of Inquiry. The RC approach was employed to support students' socio-emotional development together with their academic needs.

Interview with the EAL teacher

The interview with the EAL teacher was noted down in Appendix 2. The teacher believed the intervention was successful with regard to students' progress across the four domains of the research. She then went further into the details of the approaches and strategies used in the session, and was positive about how they were parallel with good practice of EAL. Finally, she shared some recommendations concerning students' punctuality to the session.

Survey results

Results of the survey were collected and demonstrated in Figure 4, 5, 6, 7, including teachers' evaluation of students' progress in the mainstream classroom; how well the staff and the school in general adhere to the skills and practices of a good EAL model; the level of competence of the staff in second language acquisition and supporting students with EAL; and teachers' perspectives towards the CPD and trainings provided by the school.

To sum up, results of the survey have shown that almost all the teachers believe the students have made progress throughout the intervention, and that this intervention was successful in terms of supporting students in the four domains of the research. On average, 83% of the teachers agree or strongly agree that the school adheres to good practices of EAL amongst the criterias listed (Figure 5). Almost all Grade 5 teachers believe that they're in line with good practices of EAL in the classroom. CPD opportunities offered by the school, on the other hand, were not highly evaluated by the Grade 5 team. In fact, less than a half of them find the current CPD activities beneficial in supporting EAL in the school context.

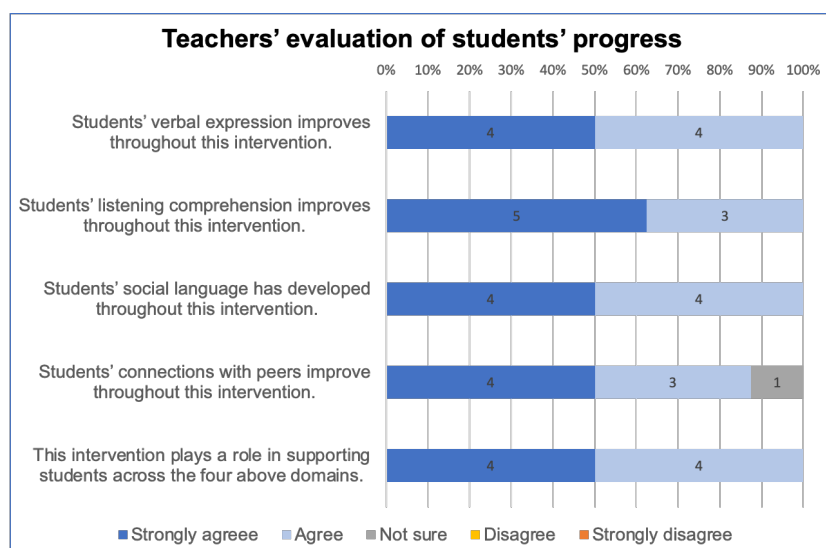


Figure 4: Teachers' evaluation of students' progress

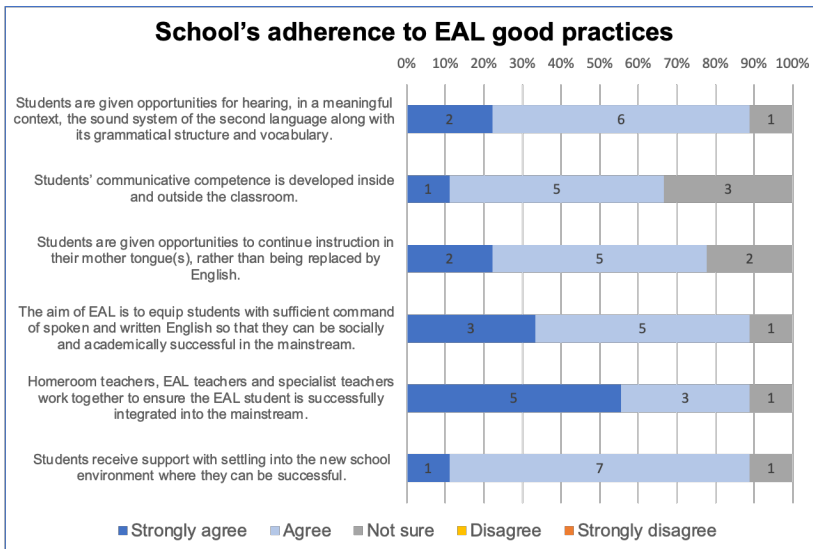


Figure 5: School adherence to EAL good practices

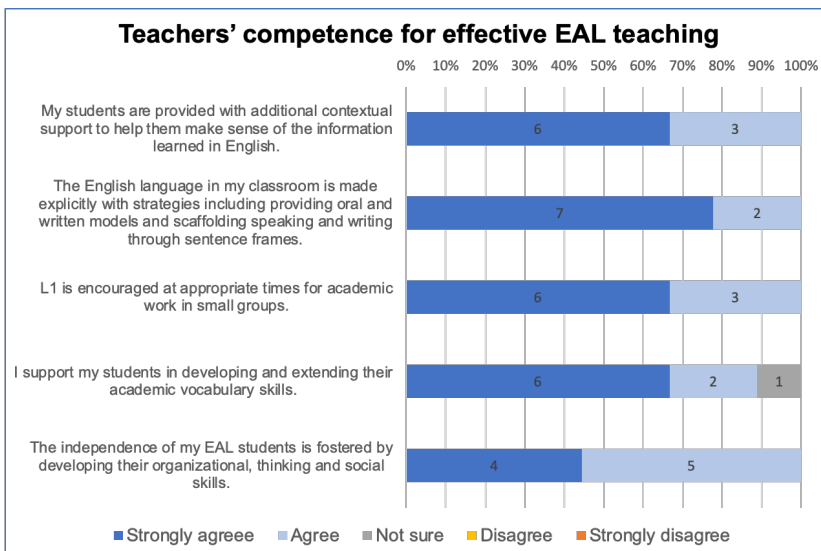


Figure 6: Teachers' competence for effective EAL teaching

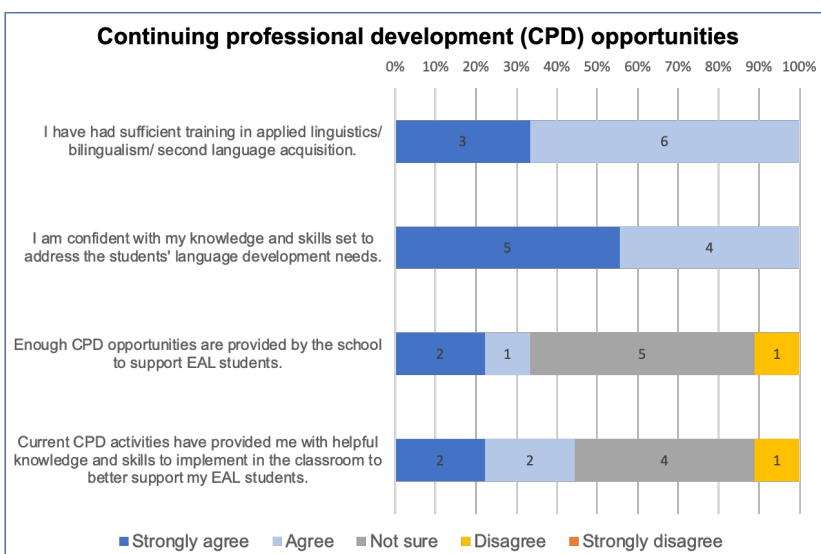


Figure 7: Continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities

Students' assessment data WIDA Scores 21-22 Cohort:

Table 1: WIDA Scores of Grade 5 21-22 cohort in September 2020 and May 2021

WIDA scores	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
Sep 2020	1.6	3.7	3.9	2.9	3	1.4	3.9	3.9
May 2021	N/A	3.8	5.6	3.3	3.9	1.7	3.9	5.1
Beginner level		Intermediate level			Monitor level			

The table gives information about the WIDA scores of the 2021-2022 cohort of EAL Beginner. The colour coding illustrates the level of EAL support, which is yellow for Beginner, blue for Intermediate and green for Monitor. Placing students in a level or moving students to the next level depend on not only their WIDA scores, but also their reading assessment (PM or Probe), their recent writing piece, and recommendation from EAL and homeroom teachers.

Speaking and listening checklists:

The speaking and listening checklists were developed by the EAL teacher based on the WIDA consortium rubric (Appendix 3), assessing students based on 4 domains of speaking and listening: social and academic language, linguistics and vocabulary. Students were given a score from 1-4 (1 - entering, 2 - emerging, 3 - developing, 4 expanding) for each criteria of the 4 domains. (Appendix 4).

Table 2 shows data of students' average scores of each domain in their listening and speaking skills in September and December. Figures in the table were calculated based on the mean scores of each domain in all the listed criterias in Appendix 4.

How much progress students have made is also illustrated in Figure 8.

Table 2: Students' listening and speaking skills in September 2021 and December 2022

Note: Scoring 1-4 (1 - entering, 2 - emerging, 3 - developing, 4 - expanding)

Listening and speaking skills	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3		Student 4		Student 5		Student 6		Student 7	
	Sep	Dec	Sep	Dec	Sep	Dec	Sep	Dec	Sep	Dec	Sep	Dec	Sep	Dec
Social language	1	2	1.4	3	1	2	1.4	3	1.2	1.8	1	2.2	1.6	3
Academic language	1	1.1	1	2.4	1	1.7	1	2.4	1	1.6	1	1.3	1	2.3
Linguistic skills	1	1	1.2	2.2	1	1	1	2.4	1.2	1.4	1	1.2	1	2
Vocabulary	1	2	1.3	2.3	1	2.3	1.3	2	1.3	2	1.3	2.3	1.3	2.3

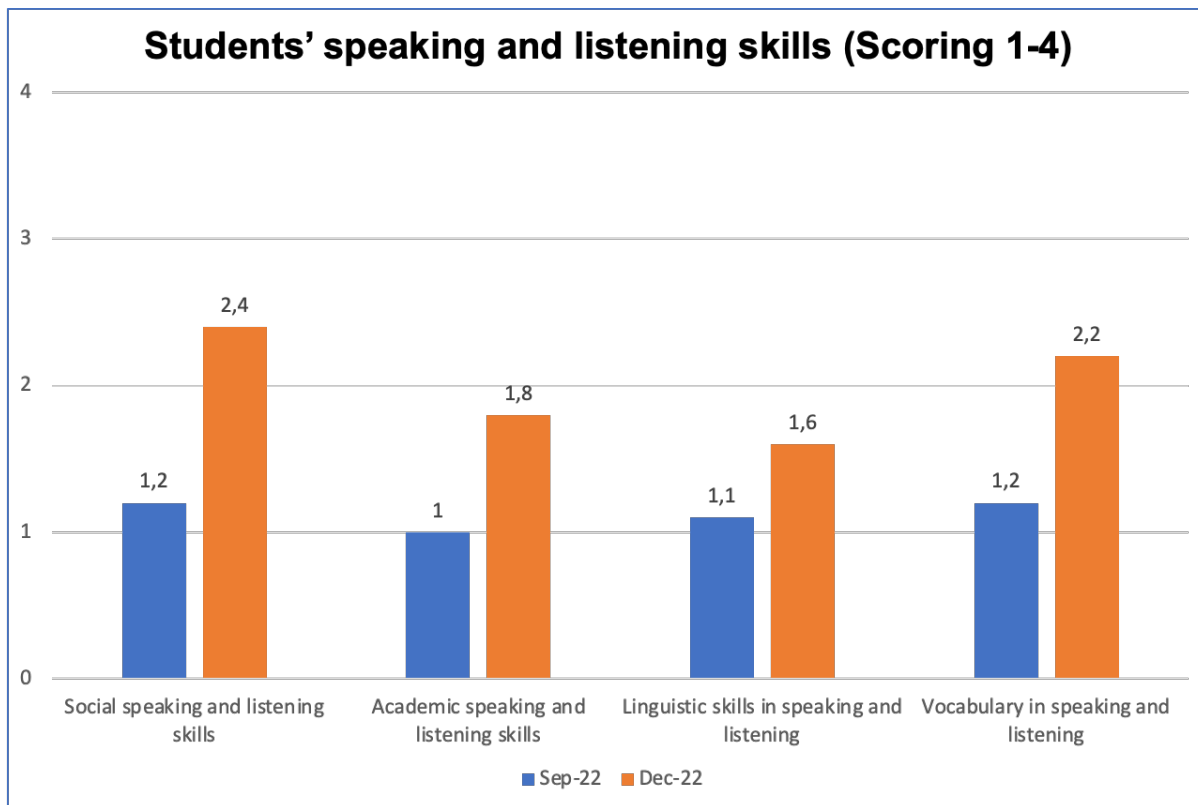


Figure 8: Students' average scores of speaking and listening in Sep and Dec 2022

Discussion

This study discussed the effectiveness of the intervention through the following aspects: (1) students' progress in verbal expression, listening comprehension, social language and peer connections; (2) The structures, pedagogy and approaches of the EAL intervention; (3) How EAL is supported in a larger context; (4) Teachers' competence and CPD opportunities.

Students' progress

Students in the intervention group, according to the researcher's observation and from the EAL teacher's view, have developed their verbal expression and listening comprehension by moving from speaking in words and chunks to speaking in longer phrases and sentences to express their ideas and feelings; being able to ask others to repeat if they didn't understand at the first time and use reflective listening skills to respond to and retell what others have said; being able to follow multi-step directions and use translanguaging partnerships to support their listening comprehension, which was the result of a language rich environment with "comprehensible input" suggested by Krashen (1982, 1985), and the promotion of bilingualism and multilingualism to create a socio-culturally supportive environment, which is at the heart of the Prism Model by Thomas and Collier (2007).

Students' progress was also demonstrated through the mean scores of the group in the checklist (Appendix 4) that assess students' speaking and listening skills in four domains of social skills, academic skills, linguistic skills and vocabulary. Figure 8 shows that the group has made progress towards the 4 areas, in which their social speaking and listening skills have improved the most, from 1.2 in September to 2.4 in December. Students' improvement in peer connections were observed through how they supported each other in their mother tongue(s) and the way they broadened their friendship to include other students who don't have the same mother tongue(s) as them. "Their social language has improved and thus their social connections through language and play have also been positively impacted." - said the EAL teacher (Appendix 2). The role of social and emotional teaching in student's language development indicated by the NEFC (2021) was proved to be very vital here.

How students integrated into the mainstream community was evaluated by all the Grade 5 staff, which is depicted in Figure 4 that almost 100% of the teachers agree or strongly agree that students have made progress in the four areas of the research in the classroom, and that the intervention plays a role in helping students successful in those areas.

There wasn't enough data to show students' development in their English proficiency presented through their WIDA scores. However, by looking at the data of last year's cohort (Table 1), in which 6/8 students have made progress during the school year, two out of whom have developed significantly that allowed them to move from Beginner to Intermediate level, it is clear that a similar increase in the WIDA scores of this year's group is expected, which again proves the impact of the intervention in students' language development.

The structures, pedagogy and approaches of the EAL intervention

During the intervention session, opportunities for immersion in the English language were created with the aim to provide as much "comprehensible input" as possible for students to "acquire" the language recommended by Krashen (1985), which was done by scaffolding the instructions and content using pictures, body language and verbal prompts, encouraging translanguaging partnerships and reflective listening strategies to help students make sense of the language they hear. The "output" (Swain, 2000) was promoted through social contexts and an environment that was "rich in talk so that students could interact, explore, think, question and express themselves" (Gallagher, 2008, p. 46). Students were grouped based on a shared mother tongue to collaborate and support each other using L1, or mixed grouping to encourage using the language in different contexts, which also fosters peer interaction and relationship building within the community, which is in line with Cummins' CUP model of how L1 impacts the development of L2. During the interview, the EAL teacher mentioned that Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is the basis of the program, meaning that the intervention was not a standalone ESL class, but integrated with what students were taught in the mainstream, providing scaffolds and building up academic language to support the Unit of Inquiry. During the session, attention was directed not just to the BICS but also the CALP to develop both students' social and academic oral skills as suggested by Cummins (1979, 2001, cited in Sharples, 2021, p.77).

Multilingualism was promoted throughout the session by encouraging students to use translanguaging strategies that support their L1, and discuss with peers using L1 before re-sharing with the class in English. "Supporting students to keep growing their own mother tongue is imperative to their continued language development across all their additional languages... students should be encouraged to use their mother tongue, especially when tapping into new ideas and concepts that might stretch and build their academic language and understanding in the classroom." (the EAL teacher, Appendix 2). This is a reflection of Carder's ideal second language model (2007) which stresses the importance of instruction in mother tongue; the use of L1 to support multilingualism in all four dimensions of language development, cognitive development, academic development and social cultural processes (Thomas and Collier, 2007); and the utilization of the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) to activate cognitive thinking (Cummins, 1979, 2001, cited in Sharples, 2021, p.77).

The teacher also stressed the importance of supporting students' socio-emotional development together with their academic and language needs. The RC approach by the NEFC (2021) was employed through the strengths-based strategy to "help students to notice and celebrate their strengths" and "notice and celebrate other students in the community". This was exemplified by activities where students practiced giving themselves compliments (Appendix 1, 15 Nov), or finding ways of giving and receiving compliments (Appendix 1, 10 Nov). Students' academic and social-emotional development was promoted through "an environment that is safe ... to share ideas, make mistakes and hold themselves and others accountable" (the EAL teacher, Appendix 2), which then generates a "low affective filter" to facilitate effective acquisition (Krashen and Terrell, 1998). For example, on 30 Nov, the teacher encouraged students to "wipe it off your shoulder" if they feel stressed about their natural phenomena research. Additionally, the RC also means that students' cultures and languages are valued, and this was done through some cultural celebration

activities where students shared about what cultures mean to them and made a poster to celebrate their cultures and languages (Appendix 1, 18 Oct). “Many students are 3rd Culture Kids, meaning that they might be born in one place and never again call that place home. We need to support them with assimilation and acculturation, all important aspects in a classroom community.” (the EAL teacher, Appendix 2)

How EAL is supported in a larger context

The intervention itself couldn't be a success if the support given in the school context wasn't taken into consideration. As illustrated in Figure 5, 90% of the teachers agree or strongly agree that the school provides exposure to the English language in meaningful contexts; it gives opportunities for students to continue instruction in their first language(s); it equips students with sufficient command of English to integrate socially and academically in the mainstream; it allows collaboration and interaction between all the teachers to do so; and it creates a welcoming environment for students to settle into the school's ethos and cultures. A noteworthy point was that communication between homeroom teachers, EAL and subject teachers made up the largest proportion of the 'strongly agree' answers (more than 50%), which was also stated in the interview that “collaboration with classroom teachers is one of the most important ways to inform teaching” (the EAL teacher, Appendix 2). Daily check-ins with homeroom teachers to exchange information about students' progress and next steps, regular planning and integration of the EAL teacher within team meetings conducted twice a week were evidence of how this part was fulfilled effectively, which are reflective of Carder's suggestion (2007) of how collaboration and support from homeroom teachers, EAL teachers and other subject teachers play an essential role in supporting EAL students.

Whether or not students' communicative competence is developed inside and outside the classroom was demonstrated by a percentage of 60% of the teachers who agree and strongly agree with the statement (only 1 strongly agrees and 5 agrees), which was the lowest figure compared to the other criteria. It was noticed that although communication with the parents was done by giving instructions in supporting students' communicative skills outside the classroom, not much was under control of the teachers. There were times when the EAL teacher followed up on students' monologue practice with their parents (Appendix 1, 7 Nov), or conversations with their parents about the natural phenomena (Appendix 1, 30 Nov), it was figured out that for some students, the parents weren't able to help because they were too busy.

Teachers' competence and CPD opportunities

Carder (2007, 2010) indicated that teacher's competence and CPD opportunities also contribute to the success of an EAL intervention. Data from the survey reveals that almost 100% of the teachers agree or strongly agree that they're in line with good EAL practices in the classroom, where they provide meaningful contexts for students to understand the language taught; make the language explicit using speaking and writing frames; encourage L1 during collaborative work; support students in building their academic vocabulary; and promote students' organisational, thinking and social skills. This accelerates the development in all four factors of the Prism Model that affect an EAL learner (Thomas and Collier, 1997). All of the teachers and TAs in Grade 5 are fluent in at least one other language, and have direct experience of living in other cultures and/or teaching in an international setting, which allows them to understand the process of learning another language to better “empathize... and support students in their language learning journey” (the EAL teacher, Appendix 2). This is aligned with Carder's recommendations for the teachers in the EAL department to be bilinguals or EAL learners (2007).

With respect to CPD opportunities offered by the school (Figure 7), although all the teachers are qualified in second language acquisition and are confident with their knowledge and skills for supporting EAL, only 3 and 4 over 9 of them, respectively, felt they are supplied with enough CPD opportunities and that the current CPD activities are helpful to them. Enhancing this aspect of EAL practices is, therefore, recommended by the researcher to promote effective teaching of EAL learners in the school context.

Conclusion

The results of this case study indicated that the intervention has been successful in improving students' verbal expression, listening comprehension, social language and peer connections, with the aim of providing them with sufficient social and academic language to integrate into the mainstream classroom where they can access the grade level curriculum.

The intervention session also carried the characteristics of a good EAL practice model suggested by Carder (2007) and the Prism model of Thomas and Collier (1997). The EAL teacher also implemented elements of the Responsive Classroom approach by NEFC, where students' social and emotional development is of equal importance as their language and academic growth, and where the classroom is a safe space for learning, which is developmentally responsive to students' cultural, emotional and linguistic needs.

Looking at EAL support in a larger context, it was also evident that the school promotes a multilingual community throughout the program, and creates a welcoming environment that supports all students socially and culturally. All the teachers and TAs in Grade 5 have experience in learning a foreign language and were trained in second language acquisition. They all found themselves aligned with the skills and knowledge to support English language learners within the classroom, which in turn contributed to the effectiveness of the intervention.

It was suggested from the survey results that more attention should be drawn to designing and running more helpful CPD activities. Opportunities for students to enhance their communicative skills outside the classroom should also be offered by exhibiting parent involvement in a child's learning journey, which could be included in future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Observation notes

Dates	Notes
18 Oct	<p>Participants: Student 3, 4, 6, 7 Main focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students dressed up in their national costume. - Students shared what cultures mean to them. (Students shared with their mother tongue partners, then shared it again with the class in English.) - Students made a poster to celebrate their cultures.
7 Nov	<p>Participants: Student 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Main focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monologue practice: How many times did you practice your monologue at home? Who helped you? (Some practiced with their parents, some did it on their own, some didn't practice.) - Reading A-Z check-in: Reminding students to read 3 books per week (some don't remember) - Calendar of events
10 Nov	<p>Participants: Student 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Main focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monologue practice: Students presented their monologues in front of the class and gave each other feedback. - Academic vocabulary share - Speaking: I can show ways of giving and receiving compliments./ I can express my feelings with a group
15 Nov	<p>Participants: Student 3, 5, 7 Main focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speaking: I can give myself a compliment. (Students shared with their mother tongue partners, then shared it again with the class in English.) - Puberty: How do we learn about puberty in a safe way? How do you say "puberty" in your languages? - Adding verbs to the culture poster
30 Nov	<p>Participants: Student 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 Main focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural phenomena: Do you know the difference between a fact and an opinion? - Commitment to my phenomena: Teacher encouraged students to tap the chest and say "My natural phenomena is..." - Research check-in: Check if students had a conversation with their parents about their natural phenomena (Some didn't do it because the parents were busy.) <p>Teacher provided sentence frames about the research. "If you're feeling stressed you didn't do the research, wipe it off your shoulder" - the EAL teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you feel about your monologue? (Students share with someone not their mother tongue partnership). Teacher encouraged students to give themselves a pat on the back for good listening skills.

Appendix 2: Interview questions and answers (conducted on 22 December)

This case study concentrates on a small group of Grade 5 English Language Learners (EAL) at an International Baccalaureate school in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study will examine students' verbal expression and listening comprehension, and how they use the English language to build relationships and socially interact with their peers.

Please note: The term "intervention" refers to the EAL students (L1/2) in Studio 5 who attended the morning session during period 1 with the EAL teacher.

1. How long have you taught the intervention?

In Studio 5, this intervention has been used in different ways over the past five years, however, I have used this intervention for more than seven years. Within Studio 5, the intervention was also used in the time when students were learning in Home Based Learning. Over the past year and a half the intervention has been used more explicitly with a larger group because there are more L1s, emerging bilinguals, who are entering Studio 5. This means that there is a higher demand for this intervention in a group setting and not just individually for select students.

2. Do you think the intervention has been successful in terms of improving students' verbal expression, listening comprehension, social language and peer connections?

Yes, the intervention continues to indicate students' success across all four above mentioned domains.

3. How is students' academic performance affected by the above four areas? Academic performance improved in both a small group setting and within full class instruction. The aim is for students to be integrated into their select classes where they can access the grade level curriculum. Most importantly, as the year progresses students are able to advocate for themselves, asking clarifying questions of peers or teachers when unclear about a new concept or idea. This is an aspect of achieved success that is also indicated on the speaking and listening checklist. To see the students confident and connected to the curriculum and to their peers through social and academic language is the goal.

Academic performance includes the Arts, Physical Education, Music, Maths, literacy and Unit of Inquiry. Looking at the whole child is imperative and supports our understanding that language is not learned in isolation. The students within the intervention are able to access grade level curriculum with increased independence. How did the group progress during semester 1 in the four areas above in pastoral and academic settings?

Students in the intervention group were able to increase their verbal expression, even asking other students to repeat something if the student was not listening or unable to initially understand. These verbal prompts such as, "Can you repeat that please?" and reflective listening skills within partnerships that require students to repeat what other students have said, have proven very effective. When observed in their respective classrooms, these students can be observed independently using these verbal frames when in a group setting. Additionally, with regards to verbal expression, students in the intervention group increased their participation in the small group setting. Many students improved from using only a single word answer to now using small phrases when expressing ideas or feelings.

Listening comprehension links to verbal expression. Students improved with independently repeating multi-step directions and helping their peers to follow the same directions. Students use translanguaging partnerships to additionally support their listening comprehension and language development. Peer connections for the intervention group have flourished during this time. This is evidenced by the way that students are extending out beyond their same language friendships; students are broadening their social connections to include other students who have a different mother tongue. Their social language has improved and thus their social connections through language and play have also been positively impacted.

4. Here is the good practice model of EAL teaching. Does the intervention carry any characteristics of the suggested model?

- As an EAL teacher I am also a bilingual learner, meaning that I understand and respect the process of learning another language, other than my mother tongue. Having this experience, I am able to empathize with my students and support them in their language learning journey.
- The Responsive Classroom Approach supports students linguistically, culturally and emotionally. Students are encouraged to continue to study and learn their mother tongue across all four domains of language; reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Content and Language Integration Learning (CLIL) is the basis of the program. Regular planning and integration of EAL teacher within team meetings each week x2. Most students in Studio 5 are EAL students, so the strategies and scaffolds are useful for all students.
- Collaboration between the EAL teacher, homeroom teachers and other subject teachers: Yes, this is a constant.

5. What strategies do you find work best when you teach students whose English is not their first language?

A strengths-based approach to learning and teaching is one of the best to utilize within a classroom. Many students have pressure that may be self-imposed or stressors from an outside environment, however, as a teacher it is important to help students to notice and celebrate their strengths in the classroom and beyond. It is important to explicitly support students to notice the things that they do well and to celebrate these areas. Additionally, for students to notice and celebrate other students in the community. Explicit language is important; "I like how you _____." or "I notice that _____ does _____." This is part of giving compliments to self and others. Noticing the success of self and others is important in this process.

Supporting students to keep growing their own mother tongue (L1) is imperative to their continued language development across all their additional languages (L2, L3, etc) Part of this is also about parent communication and education about the importance of the mother tongue. In the classroom students should be encouraged to use their mother tongue, especially when tapping into new ideas and concepts that might stretch and build their academic language and understanding in the classroom.

Students are encouraged to celebrate their language and culture within the classroom. Many students are 3rd Culture Kids, meaning that they might be born in one place and never again call that place home. We need to support them with assimilation and acculturation, all important aspects in a classroom community. Building academic language across all their languages will help to support our students to be truly bilingual and even multilingual. Encouraging them to use this academic language across all four domains of language; reading, writing, speaking and listening.

6. How do you apply the RC approach in your class?

Many EAL strategies work within all classroom communities. What is important is that educators create an environment that is safe for students to share ideas, make mistakes and hold themselves and others accountable. These are each part of the responsive classroom setting that is important for academic and social progress. Responsive classroom is also about responding to students' cultural, emotional and linguistic needs. Meeting the students with where they are, thinking about 'Where we are in Time and Place', especially post-covid lockdown. There has been an increased need for responsive classroom engagement.

7. How do you group students?

Students are grouped according to linguistic, social and academic data; this pertains to the WIDA and other data points gathered to best support the students. Additionally, within the intervention students are consistently working in partnerships; these partnerships are based on a shared mother tongue and/or mixed grouping encouraging students to use their languages in different contexts.

8. What kind of assessment do you use to inform your teaching?

Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is the best way to inform and guide instruction and assessment. This includes checklists that are correctly utilized as an assessment tool. Additionally, assessment is not held in isolation, as the students experience language and content in tandem. This best supports student understanding and language acquisition.

Speaking and Listening Checklist is an additional data point that is used throughout the year. Daily check-ins with classroom teachers is also an important tool to gather observations, classwork and share concerns or next steps. We are a team and as the EAL teacher, collaboration with classroom teachers is one of the most important ways to inform my teaching. There is a need to reteach a new skill, frontload new vocabulary or give increased instruction, based on the above mentioned criteria. Content language integration learning also supports that the EAL teacher is not teaching a different curriculum, but rather, is parallel teaching the same concepts and ideas. The PROBE reading assessment is also used throughout the year to support students comprehension of texts, with the aim that we find their instructional level of reading for guided reading groups.

9. Do you have any recommendations to improve the intervention?

The timetable presented challenges this year because previously students were consistently present for the full 40 minute class time. Since this 40 minute class is the first class of the day, this has been a challenge for some students to arrive on time. In the near future, 2023, it is hopeful that students will be present for the early morning session, a full 40 minutes. This affects the intervention when students are not consistently present.

Appendix 3: Speaking Rubric of the WIDA Consortium

Task Level	Linguistic Complexity	Vocabulary Usage	Language Control
1 Entering	Single words, set phrases or chunks of memorized oral language	Highest frequency vocabulary from school setting and content areas	When using memorized language, is generally comprehensible; communication may be significantly impeded when going beyond the highly familiar
2 Emerging	Phrases, short oral sentences	General language related to the content area; searching for vocabulary when going beyond the highly familiar is evident	When using simple discourse, is generally comprehensible and fluent; communication may be impeded by searching for language structures or by phonological, syntactic or semantic errors when going beyond phrases and short, simple sentences
3 Developing	Simple and expanded oral sentences; responses show emerging complexity used to add detail	General and some specific language related to the content area; may search for needed vocabulary at times	When communicating in sentences, is generally comprehensible and fluent; communication may from time to time be impeded by searching for language structures or by phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors, especially when attempting more complex oral discourse
4 Expanding	A variety of oral sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity; responses show emerging cohesion used to provide detail and clarity	Specific and some technical language related to the content area; searching for needed vocabulary may be occasionally evident	At all times generally comprehensible and fluent, though phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that don't impede the overall meaning of the communication may appear at times; such errors may reflect first language interference
5 Bridging	A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral discourse; responses show cohesion and organization used to support main ideas	Technical language related to the content area; facility with needed vocabulary is evident	Approaching comparability to that of English proficient peers in terms of comprehensibility and fluency; errors don't impede communication and may be typical of those an English proficient peer might make

Source: WIDA, 2021

Appendix 4: Example of Speaking and Listening Checklist

Social Speaking and Listening Skills

Date	Sept 22	Dec 22	May 23
Demonstrates an understanding of ways to give and receive compliments, show gratitude, apologise.	1	3	
With scaffolds, is able to share his/her feelings in a group setting. eg. Zones of Regulation. Including expressing anger or impatience, etc	1	3	
Without prompting, is able to interact with peers and adults. eg. greeting others, etc.	1	3	
Makes polite requests of others	2	3	
Uses translanguaging strategies and supports to clarify understanding or expand ideas/ thoughts	2	3	

Academic Speaking and Listening Skills

Date	Sept 22	Dec 22	May 23
Active Listening: Can restate verbal instructions given by teachers or peers	1	2	
Rephrases, explains, revises and expands oral comments in order to check comprehension	1	2	
Negotiates solutions to problems, interpersonal misunderstandings and disputes	1	3	
Listens, comprehends, and follows multi-step classroom instructions	1	2	
Orally paraphrases a teacher's directions	1	2	
Uses polite forms to negotiate and reach consensus	1	3	
Explains change, makes detailed oral observations	1	3	

Linguistic Skills Speaking and Listening Skills

Date	Sept 22	Dec 22	May 23
Rephrases an utterance when it results in a misunderstanding	1	2	
Rehearses different ways of speaking according to the formality of the setting	1	2	
Uses a wide range of language patterns and compound tenses to create properly connected discourse	1	2	
Uses mostly correct stress and intonation to convey meaning	2	2	
Speaks as fluently as a Native Speaker	1	2	

Vocabulary in Listening and Speaking Skills

Date	Sept 22	Dec 22	May 23
Uses academic vocabulary that connects to the topic	1	3	
Draws on the mother tongue to build understanding and make connections to vocabulary in a range of content areas.	2	3	
Uses abstract language, expressions and idioms	1	1	