

Study of an EAL (English as an Additional Language) pull-out intervention

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Introduction

Background of the intervention

This case study looked at a secondary school initiative put in place in order to help new arrivals to Luxembourg who do not speak one of the official languages of the country (Luxembourgish, French, or German) and opt to join an International School in the English section. The pull-out intervention is an intensive study of English with French as a second language, mathematics, and sport being the only other subjects.

The teacher has overall control of the curriculum based on the needs of the students. Classes are created based on the context of each student including age, language knowledge, and educational background. This is to avoid students with vastly different levels of education or language skills being placed together. Students are not tested by the school itself but by the government. The Department for the Schooling of Foreign Children (SECAM - *Service de scolarisation des enfants étrangers*) takes care of the testing and then decides in which school to place each child, based on skills the child already has and where they live (i.e. which school is closest to their domicile). You can see in appendix A a redacted example of the form the school is sent when they are told to integrate a new child.

The Luxembourgish government focuses on the idea of 'an open and cosmopolitan society' (Luxembourg Government, 2022). As almost half the population do not have Luxembourgish nationality a high importance is placed on language acquisition and integration.

This case study will start by looking at literature reviews around EAL and what has been seen as effective in order to build up an idea of what previous studies have managed to conclude about EAL interventions. This will help to answer the question posed by this study - *Does the EAL pull out class help children integrate into school life?*

Without sufficient language knowledge the students cannot join in with the traditional education and integrate with their peers. Therefore, it appears initially there is a fundamental need for this intervention.

Literature review

The classic and main EAL themes condensed

One of the key points from this literature review is some conflicting advice on what is important for the EAL teacher to focus on. Gallagher writes the focus should be on providing as many occasions as possible for the students to speak about a variety of topics 'as a whole class, in small groups and in pairs as a class' (Gallagher, 2008, p.43).

This idea and other literatures imply that a pull-out class is preferable as an EAL teacher can focus on oral comprehension and oral expression. However it could be argued this covers BICS but leaves behind the academic principles needed with CALP. Sharples argues how the quality of the language is just as important as the quantity for students, and gives this as 'key reasons to support the mainstreaming of EAL pupils' (Sharples, 2021, p.42).

There also seems to be both sides of the argument available in the literature - a pull-out intervention gives the students the chance to learn to speak and start to gather the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, whereas a push-in intervention helps the EAL students learn more quality vocabulary which would help them more when joining a standard class (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). More evidence here could help decision making on a push-out vs pull-in approach to EAL interventions in general.

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Methodology and methods

A sample of the main points

Here a case study is defined following Graham's (2000) definition of a case study being an investigation into specific research questions using a range of evidence, and Yin's (2013) idea of an explanatory case study, which is looking into the how and why. All of the methodology behind this case study was to find evidence to discover if the intervention helps pupils overcome their language barrier and join a standard class.

This case study therefore used mixed methods research and Yin's idea of triangulation of data in order to help validate any findings. In this case it was collecting data from interviews, observations of the EAL intervention itself, and examples of school work and other data available.

Interviews with the class teachers and head staff were semi-structured. They were informal social and emotional encounters organised for two purposes. The first was information transfer about the intervention. The second was to find out the opinions and teacher experience for the intervention and what the school at large thinks about it in terms of its implementation and success. The types of interview questions asked were therefore very important to avoid bias.

These interviews can later be compared to in class **observation** and analysis of class material and method to see how (and if) the theoretical results match up with visible in-class results. As mentioned by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), it is essential to see the environment where the intervention takes place.

Data from class and government documents regarding number of students, length of time spent in the class before integration etc. was planned to help triangulate and critique the effectiveness of this intervention. As discussed later, data however was incredibly hard to find or does not exist, so the case study needed to rely more on in-class material given to the students and shown to the observer after the lesson.

Literature and theory reviews as mentioned earlier help give context to the study and give valid examples to compare the intervention to contemporary studies, evidence and literature, which can help analyse the effectiveness of the intervention as a whole.

Conclusion

1 It is still inconclusive whether a pull-out or push-in EAL intervention is better long-term

2 It could be seen as an advantage that teachers teach both the REAL intervention and standard classes, because they are well placed to judge when a student is ready to join the mainstream system.

3 It is beneficial to have a specific room for EAL to give visual supports and more scaffolding for students.

References

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Data, analysis and discussion

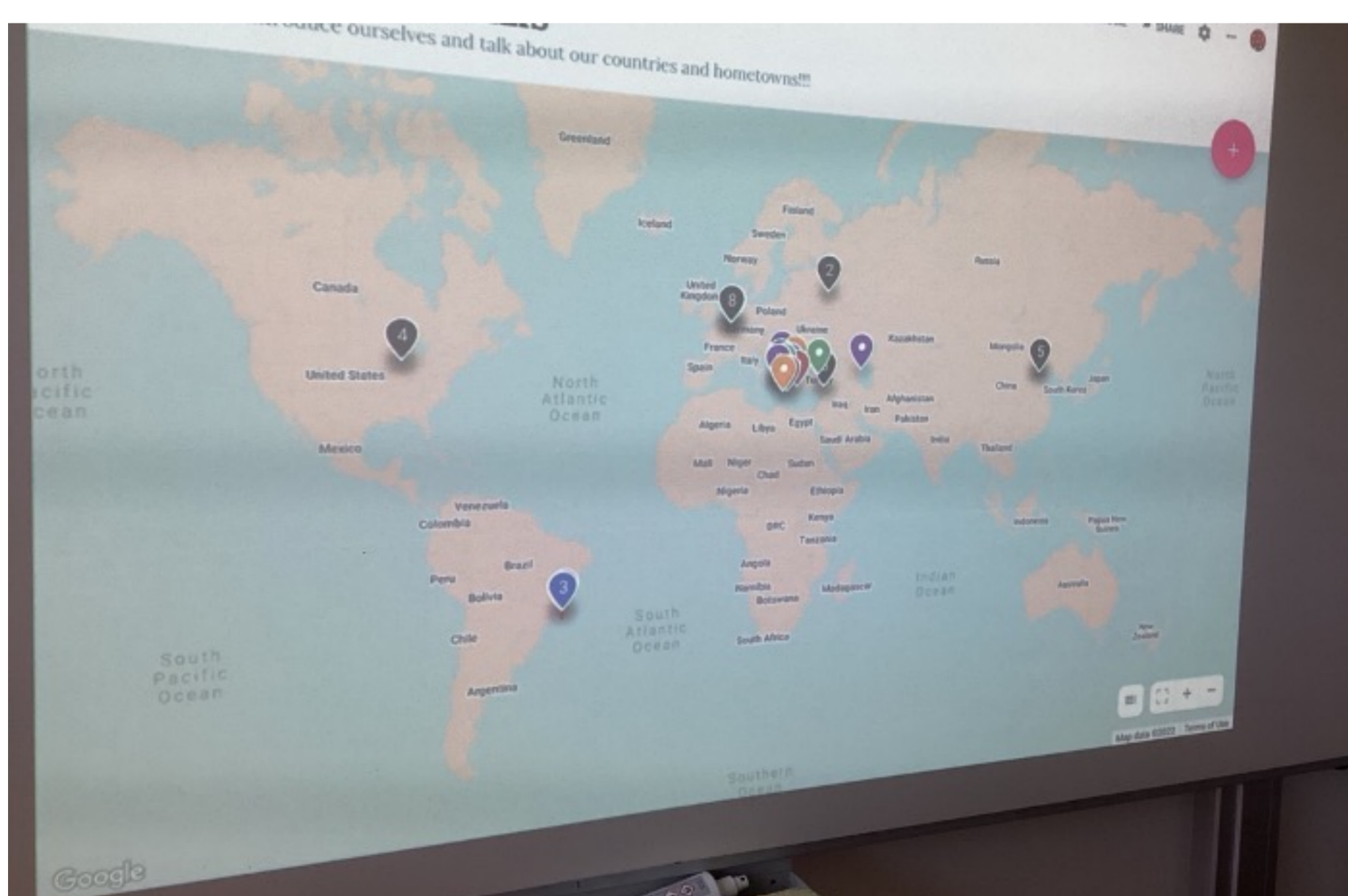
Some examples of recommendations

The first finding to look at would be the intervention's success at not just BICS but whether CALP has also been implemented to make sure students can integrate into the curriculum successfully (Cummins, 2000). This can be judged a success because the teacher clearly focused on work that helps prepare students for a standard class. The vocabulary taught was not too basic and the test included parts where students needed to give longer, more complex answers (see appendix C). Further evidence for this is that as discovered in the interview, the class teachers also teach standard classes. This is an interesting approach, and although it could be argued it goes against the idea of EAL teachers being highly qualified for their specific job as they also teach elsewhere, (Carder, 2007) it does help validate Carder's (2007) and Spencer's (2021) research on the importance of a strong link between the EAL and mainstream teachers. So it appears that the intervention is a success following Cummins' intentions of BICS and CALP 'to warn against premature exit of ELL English Language Learner students from bilingual to mainstream English-only programs on the basis of attainment of surface level fluency in English' (Cummins, 2000, p.58). However more data and research are needed to conclude whether this is more efficient than an EAL student being integrated into the class to start learning the required vocabulary directly, as recommended by Sharples (2021).

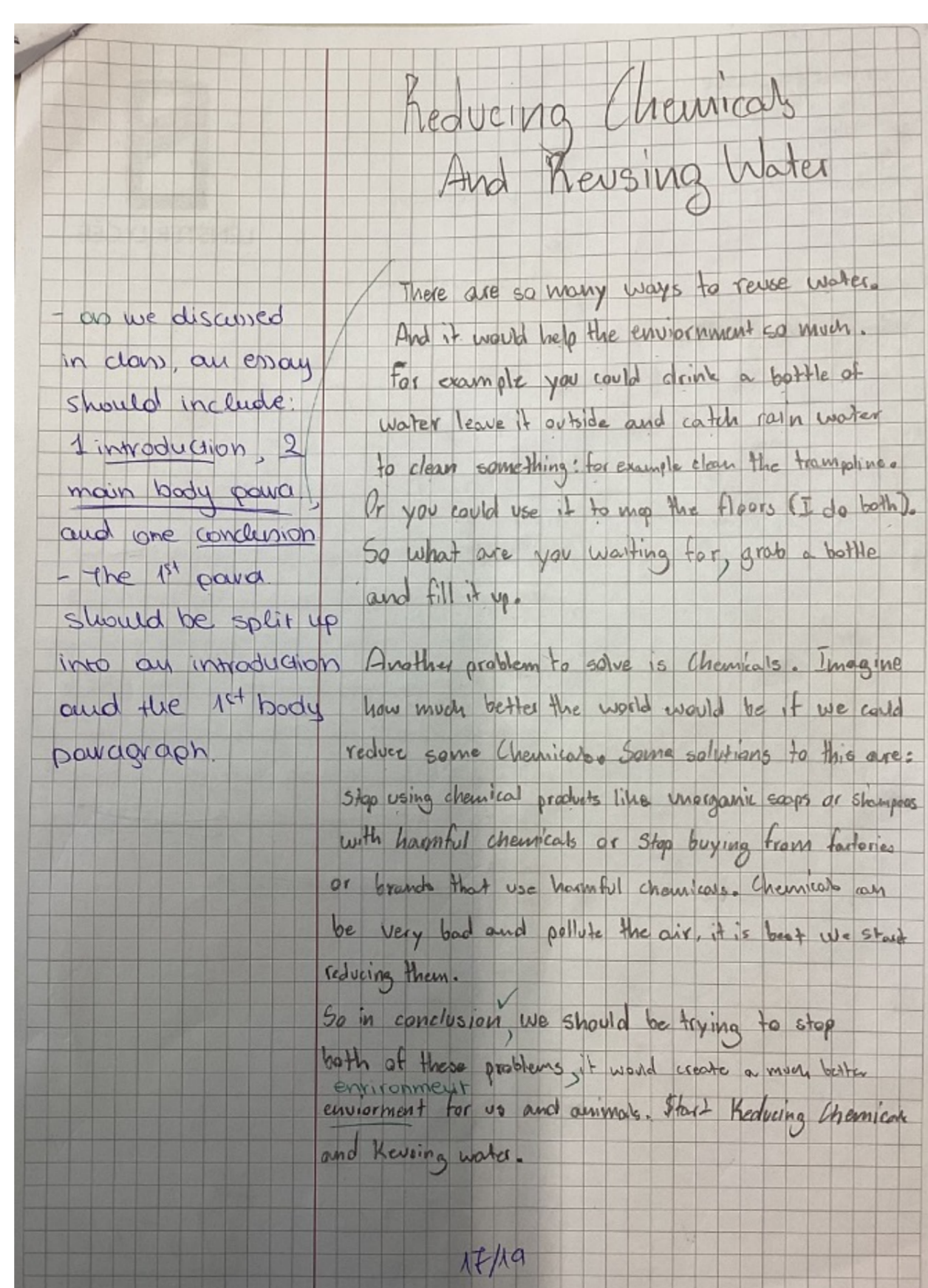
The EAL class has nine pupils. This follows Carder's (2007) emphasis on a small class size, and in observations the benefit of this was evident. All the students had time to speak, present, ask questions and interact.

With no data and the interviewee explaining that the length of time spent in the EAL class is decided on a case-by-case basis, no clear conclusion can be drawn about how long students should stay in the pull-out EAL class. Dixon's (2022) data analysis of it taking up to 7 years to catch up cannot be critiqued here because no data is kept on the students after they leave the intervention, so it is inconclusive if they underachieve compared to their peers later in their education.

The fact of two native speakers in the EAL class was not mentioned in the interview, but observations in class showed how, despite being beneficial for other students, as mentioned earlier, there was clearly a problem of motivation in class by these two students. The tasks were easy and the high test scores confirmed they were too advanced for this intervention. This study will now move on to summarise the findings and give any recommendations.



padlet.com being used in the EAL lesson in collaboration with a Greek EAL class.



Example of written work in preparation for joining a mainstream class

