

A case study of a small group pull-out EAL for KS5 pupils in a Hong Kong secondary school

Justine Tizzard
Hong Kong SAR

Introduction

Context of school and region

- This is a case study of a small group pull-out EAL for KS5 pupils in a local secondary school in Hong Kong.
- The name of this intervention, given by the school, is the English Enhancement for Mainland Chinese students', an initiative which has been running for 3 years consecutively.
- The aim of this pull-out EAL intervention is to help improve the confidence and fluency when speaking English for KS5 students so they can have a smooth transition into Hong Kong's educational system.
- All the students from Mainland Chinese in the school are invited to attend, although the target students are those who have recently moved to Hong Kong and have not achieved over 60% in their English exam for the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), also known as the gaokao (高考).
- Having a low English language proficiency, is not only a problem for the Mainland Students but also for the local Hong Kong students. The common denominators found on these articles and media include the 2012 changes in the educational policy (Lin, 1997).

Literature review

Cummins Iceberg Theory

- Cummins (1996, p. 110-111) hypothesises a common underlying proficiency (CUP) model in which literacy related aspects of a bilingual's proficiency in first language (L1) and second language (L2) are seen as common or interdependent across languages.
- The learner profiles in this case study pull-out of EAL learners are mostly monolingual.
- Although some students might seem academically proficient, there are factors that affect the rate of L2 acquisition (Cook, 2008; Roessingh & Kover, 2003).
- The CUP model is illustrated in the metaphor of an iceberg, also known as the Dual-Iceberg Representation of Bilingual Proficiency (Cummins, 2005).
- Cummins iceberg hypothesis suggests that learning L1 will facilitate acquiring a second language, which in the paradigm of this case study it would be Cantonese and English.
- The iceberg model highlights cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). While students may be proficient in BICS, they may require an intervention to improve their CALP.

Methodology and methods

Pull-out and group size

The cohort for the pull-out group size was made of 14 students. After semester 1, the students have an internal assessment and then are encouraged to take the IELTS examination (and achieve at least overall 5.5).

Method	Overview	Justification
Researching	Important to understand the context and create a solid foundation and understanding of a research case study, with background information on the context.	Glaser and Strauss (1967) outlined the process when building theories from case study research, also Yin (1984) and Miles and Huberman (1984).
Observation	Observe how the intervention is conducted for 6 weeks to get a better understanding.	Case studies require observations within the context of their environment (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 289).
Informal interviews	Interviews the English teacher and the LRC staff in charge of the English Enhancement initiative.	Interviews provide important data but can be subjective depending on the point of view (Nisbet & Watt, 1980).
Creation of new quantitative data	To be able to collect data at different points to observe any English-speaking proficiency progress made by the students	Collection of data to observe different variables (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 289).
Questionnaires/surveys	To the English teacher and the LRC staff in charge of the English Enhancement initiative.	Collection of data to observe different variables (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 289).

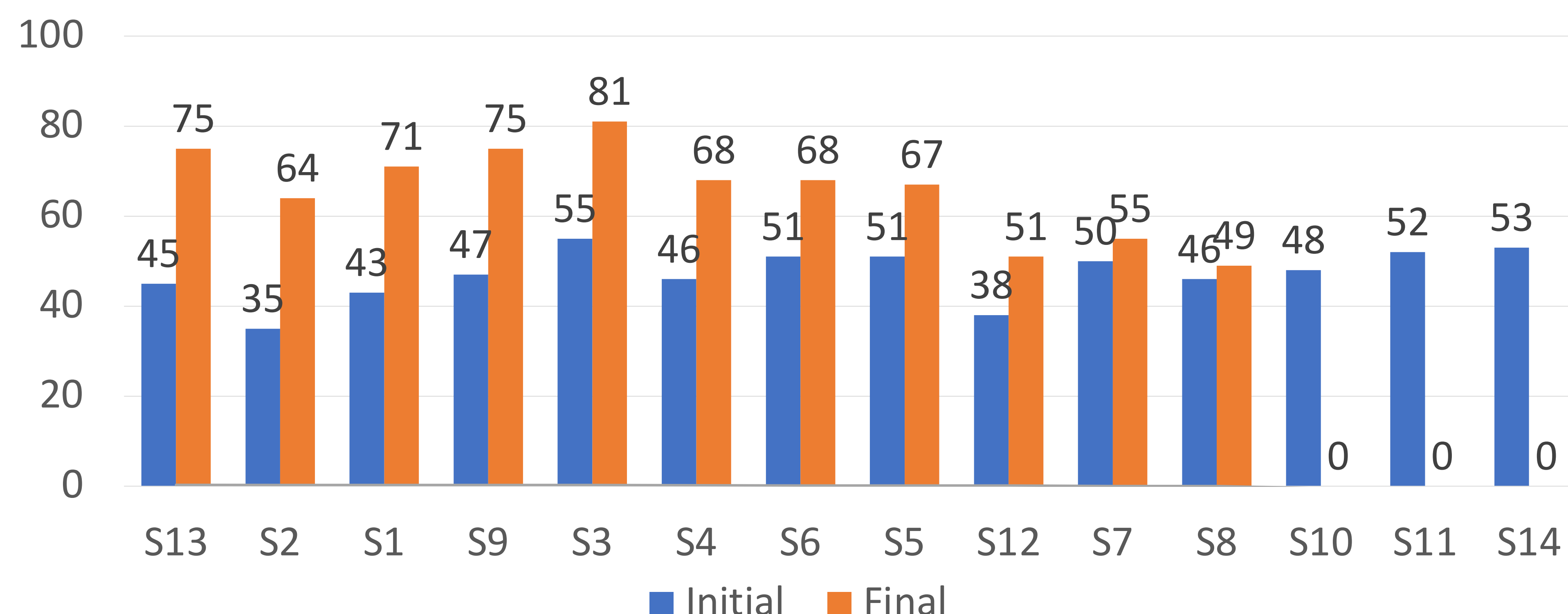
Conclusion

- 1 Proper training should be provided for the future teacher from an experienced staff that can provide support and advice to a new graduate or staff member with less expertise in a school (Le Maistre & Pare, 2010).
- 2 The intervention does help the target students learning needs that already proficient in their BICS and helps them develop CALP due to the nature of the class setting.
- 3 The implementation of an official exit policy, as currently there is no set-guidance for the teacher to follow. It should be decided for the student's best interest.

References

- Lin, A. (1997). Analyzing the 'language problem' discourses in Hong Kong: How official, academic, and media discourses construct and perpetuate dominant models of language, learning, and education. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 28(4), pp.427-440.
- Cummins, J. (1996). *European Models of Bilingual Education*. Hugo Baetens Beardsmore. Comparative Education Review, 40(2), pp.212-215.
- Cummins, J. (2005). *A proposal for action: Strategies for recognizing heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom*. Modern Language Journal. 89, 585-592.
- Cook, V., (2008). *Second language learning and teaching*. London: Hodder Education.
- Creswell, J. W. et al. (2007) 'Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation', *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), pp. 236-264.
- Roessingh, H. & Kover, P. (2003). *Variability of ESL learners' acquisition of cognitive academic language proficiency: What can we learn from achievement measures?* TESL Canada Journal, 21(1), 1 - 21.
- Bijsmans, P. & Schakel, A.H. (2018) *The impact of attendance on first-year study success in problem-based learning*. High Educ, 76(5), 865-881.
- Loyens, S.M.M., Kirschner, P.A., Paas, F. (2012). Problem-based learning. In K.R. Harris, S. Graham, T. Urdan (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook: Vol. 3. Application to teaching and learning* (pp. 403-425). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Maurer, H. (2015). Best practices in problem-based learning. In J. Ishiyama, W. J. Miller, & E. Simon (Eds.), *Handbook on teaching and learning in political science and international relations* (pp. 369- 383). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Students results compared between initial and final assessment



Data, analysis and discussion

Data Collected

- There was a trend observed when collecting data across the attendance and their performance in the tests, as the students with higher attendance performed better academically and in the examinations.
- The nature of this intervention revolves around speaking and having an active student engagement is key for their success (Bijsmans & Schakel, 2018).
- For this case study it was very clear that the attendance is deemed to be crucial for effective student performance in problem-based learning (Loyens et al., 2012, p. 419; Maurer, 2015, p. 372).

Connection to Theory

It was observed during the intervention that the mental barrier of the affective filter (Krashen, 1982) in the students lowered as the weeks went by, there was a welcoming learning environment where the students were encouraged to speak and not penalised for making mistakes, which made the class feel motivated and less anxious if they were not sure of the answer or topic.