



Research and practice in EAL teaching: an exploration of teachers' attitudes and engagement

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Abstract: *This paper presents findings from research conducted amongst teachers in mainstream schools in England on their research engagement and the ways in which they develop their practice. In the context of the continued growth in the proportion of learners who are designated English as an Additional Language, the motivation for the research was to identify how teachers have developed their practice in response and what sources they refer to in order to do so. A mixed-methods approach was used, including an online survey (n = 21) and follow up, semi-structured interview (n = 1). This paper identifies sources teachers turn to in order to develop their teaching practice, the barriers they experience to engaging with research and explores some of the teaching practices used when teaching EAL learners.*

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1.0 Introduction

The motivation for this study comes from my own experience of teaching both in the UK and in international contexts. Although the teacher training program I attended included a section on teaching students with English as an Additional Language (EAL), the poverty of pedagogy within this component of the course was striking to me, having come to the course with experience of teaching English as a second language in other contexts. This impression was further cemented during teaching placements and early career experiences where I was also struck not only by the lack of knowledge of pedagogy relevant to EAL learners, but also the disdain for English second language pedagogy expressed by other teachers and school leaders.

Alongside this experience, I found it unusual to observe that both the teacher training course and a number of teachers I worked with advocated engagement with research, but only that which was directly relevant to the subjects which the teachers were responsible for. The potential for cross-fertilisation of research conducted for both Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to develop teaching practice and pedagogy for EAL learners seemed fairly obvious, but attempts to advocate for this were often met with scepticism.

For example, the teaching of phonics is already a core part of the UK national curriculum. As discussed by Woore (2022), there is a place in MFL teaching for phonics instruction, particularly sound-symbol correspondences (SSC) in text as well as assessing learners for their existing knowledge of these. This, I would argue, is a key body of knowledge absolutely relevant for learners of English as an additional language. It is a body of knowledge which teachers or EAL specialists can integrate into current practice fairly quickly given that technical knowledge of phonics instruction is fairly well established within schools. This may offer a means to reduce the time taken for newcomers to English to develop the language proficiency to enjoy their full academic and individual potential.

When we account for both the enormous growth of the international school sector, with increasing numbers of students being entered into English medium of instruction schools (including those which use the UK national curriculum) (ISC Research, 2025), or the continued increase in numbers of EAL students in the UK (Lindorff, Strand, & Au, 2025), I would argue that there is a clear ethical, professional and practical need

to ensure teaching practice is informed to enable the success of EAL learners. These considerations led me to the conclusion that it was necessary to take stock of how teachers are developing their pedagogy and practice to fulfil these ethical and professional obligations encapsulated in section 5 of the teaching standards wherein teachers need to “have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including...those with English as an additional language...and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them” (Department for Education, 2011).

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Definitions

To maintain consistency with the existing literature I have adopted the definitions of research used by Borg (2010) and Winch, Oancea and Orchard (2015). First, research more broadly following Winch et al.’s adaptation of Stenhouse’s (in Rudduck & Hopkins, 1985, p.120) definition of research as “‘systematic enquiry’ that is ‘made public’ and exposed to collective criticism” (Winch et al., 2015, p.203). Added to this are the more specific definitions utilised by Borg of engagement *in* research “by doing it” and engagement *with* research “by reading and using it” (Borg, 2010, p.391).

The UK department of education defines a student as being a learner of English as an Additional Language (EAL) if a language other than English is spoken at home (Department for Education, 2020). This is, of course, a very broad definition and has been subjected to criticism for this vagueness, particularly that it does not offer a sound basis for pedagogical decision making and encompasses newcomers to English along with students who can utilise the language to the same - or better - standard as their monolingual peers (Chalmers & Murphy, 2021). The five-stage EAL assessment introduced in 2017 offered a more sensitive measure of the actual capabilities of students in English, but was discontinued even though there is evidence to support its use as a guide for pedagogical and curriculum choices (Demie, 2018; Hessel and Strand, 2023). As current policy stands, EAL as defined by the Department for Education remains in widespread use in the state education system in England. It is therefore a definition likely to be understood by the widest number of teachers, irrespective of whether or not they engage with educational or second language acquisition research.

Where regards second language acquisition (SLA) research, I have followed a broad definition, mindful of the variety of approaches and foci identified by Ellis (2015), and of the way ‘learning’ and ‘acquisition’ have been used as separate concepts in the literature. For the purposes of this study, I have followed Ellis’ (2015) approach of using these as interchangeable terms. I have also endeavoured to approach the question mindful of the limitations of the label ‘second language’, given that many learners who are labelled as ‘EAL’ in England may already speak two, three or more languages at home. The intention is to specify that body of research pertaining to the acquisition of any language in addition to those which the learner already makes use of.

Where I have used the term *educational research*, this is intended as defined by Winch et al. (2015, p.203) as being composed of a variety of methods and focused on teaching practice, teaching, learning and school effectiveness.

2.2 - Policy landscape - 2010 to 2015 – the ‘practicum turn’

The role and importance of education research in the practice and development of teachers has a long, contested history in the UK, if not the wider world. At the very least this goes back as far as Stenhouse’s advocacy in favour of teacher engagement with and in research (e.g. Rudduck & Hopkins, 1985), an engagement which was also met with strident criticism (e.g. Barrow, 1984). The role education research could play in teaching practice in England was the focus of particular dispute in the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. Carr, 2006; Oancea, 2005; Oancea & Furlong, 2007), with a key shift in both policy and public discourse with the election of 2010 and the formation of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government.

Evaluating the years of the Coalition and Conservative governments (i.e. from 2010), the underlying assumptions in education policy identified by Mutton, Burn, Thompson, and Childs, (2021) include the assertion that little can be learned of the teaching process other than by direct experience, even if there is some recognition of the influence of the quality of the practicum experience (presumably including feedback from and reflective discussions with ‘masters of the craft’). There was also the assumption that theory is irrelevant, with little to no recognition of the possibilities offered by the clinical practice model (Mutton et al., 2021). Mutton et al. proceed to outline the ways in which education has long been highly politicised in England, with the stance of the government being perceived by many as hostile to university

involvement in training teachers and to 'progressive' education. The teacher recruitment schemes, the authors argue, point to the prevailing attitude amongst ministers of the day that "teaching should be seen as a trade that can be learnt through apprenticeship or by those who have a particular form of resilience" (Mutton et al., 2021, p.66). Alongside these run questions of how a teacher can be prepared for the various challenges and contexts they will encounter in their career, and an over-riding focus on structures and course content of initial teacher education (ITE) programs, rather than how to develop effective teachers.

Particular political pressure was brought to bear on academics and researchers in education by successive ministers in the government of 2010-2015. Michael Gove, speaking at the *Policy Exchange* in 2013, cast blame for the quality of educational research at the feet of academics who had "dominated" the education debate. He went on to laud the role of teacher led research, expressing relief that "teachers are taking control of their profession's intellectual life, taking the lead in pioneering educational research and creating a living evidence base" (Gove, 2013). The conceptualisation of teachers-as-researchers which Gove advocated here effectively demarcated the only 'appropriate' kind of educational research as that which enhances student learning and performance on national examinations from a narrow technical perspective. This positions teachers as 'executive technicians', teachers who are able to follow procedures developed from educational research, rather than acting on the basis of their own subject knowledge and judgement (Winch, 2015; Winch et al., 2015). In this view of teaching, it is not seen as necessary, or even desirable, for these teachers to engage with research, nor to critically reflect on the results of applying such procedures (Winch et al., 2015).

Winch et al make the case that the conceptualisation of teachers as 'craft workers' underplays the complexities of both craft work and teaching, over-emphasising "situated professional knowledge" (Winch et al., 2015, p.208 – the knowledge acquired from engaging in a particular line of work over a period of time) as opposed to technical knowledge and critical reflection within the conception of *phronesis*. For Winch et al. this is a form of "practical wisdom", or the capacity to evaluate a given situation and make ethically and practically sound decisions leading to successful professional action (Winch et al., 2015, p.204-5). The 'craft worker' model of developing teachers implies a limited model of early career teachers being 'apprenticed' into a community

of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1999) wherein the relevant knowledge is acquired by observing other teachers, learning from their experiences, receiving counsel, informal and formal exchanges, and continuing professional development (CPD). Indeed, there is some evidence that being apprenticed into a CoP is the preference of a significant proportion of teachers within TESOL (Tavakoli, 2015) and in mainstream schools in the UK (e.g. Williams & Coles, 2007).

Winch et al. make the convincing case that the ‘craft worker’ conception of teaching, sidelining or eliminating research from the equation, reduces phronesis to “mere flair or ‘common sense’” (Winch et al., 2015, p.209). The result of this is that such ‘common sense’ may be no more than fossilised theoretical knowledge and values percolated through a variety of mediating sources, including the CoP. These may originate in research, but have become “homilies, maxims and reactive attitudes” as a result of the process of mediation. This state of affairs can perhaps be characterised by the contribution of one of the interviewees in Williams and Coles’ (2007) study, who stated the opinion that teachers were “entrenched in their approaches and practices . . . when they left teacher training college . . . that was the end of professional development” (Williams & Coles, 2007, p.193).

The problem emerging from this being that ‘common sense’ may be no more than the uncritical repetition of theories that have already been discredited (Winch et al., 2015). This is particularly concerning in light of the work of Schwartz, Hinesley, Chang, and Dubinsky (2019) on how misconceptions or misunderstandings of research findings or outdated ideas can circulate amongst teachers. A particularly striking example of the process by which ossified ‘common sense’ can be disseminated within CoPs is the persistence of neuromyths within education in the UK across a variety of contexts (Dekker, Lee, Howard-Jones, & Jolles, 2012). The systematic review by Torrijos-Muelas et al. (2021) points to the extent to which false theories – learning styles, multiple intelligences etc – are deeply rooted within the teaching profession. For example, in the independent review of Initial Teacher Education of 2014 led by Sir Andrew Carter (Carter Review), it was found that some ITE providers continued to advocate awareness of pupil learning styles in the course materials preparing teachers for mainstream schools (Carter, 2015). This was despite a variety of papers and systematic reviews pointing to the lack of evidence in support of the learning styles concept (e.g. Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer & Bjork, 2008; Riener & Willingham, 2010).

These misconceptions cannot simply be replaced with other concepts, irrespective of the strength of the empirical evidence. Two similar studies in electronics and mechanics by Brault-Foisy, Potvin, Riopel, and Masson (2015) and Masson, Potvin, Riopel, and Foisy (2014) concluded that experts within a field must inhibit misconceptions when accessing other concepts within that field which have a stronger evidence base, suggesting that these misconceptions are not simply displaced by newly learned concepts.

This leads towards the possibility that teachers may be exposed to various false theories within their community of practice, and base their decision-making on these misconceptions. Even where teachers are able to identify and challenge the misconceptions they may hold, significant remedial work is required in order to shift the knowledge base teachers use when making decisions within the classroom. The opportunity cost of teachers utilising poorly evidenced practice (Gorard, See, & Siddiqui, 2020, p.574) warrants further inquiry within studies of teacher engagement – or lack thereof – with educational research.

2.3 BERA-RSA and The Carter Review – integrating theory and practice

The publication of the joint report by the British Educational Research Association and the Royal Society of Arts in 2014, followed by the Carter Review of 2015, mark what could have been a watershed with a return back to a teaching profession informed by educational research. The authors weave together papers from various educational research specialists and make the case for embedding not only research engagement but research as a practice within schools, alongside research literacy (the extent to which teachers are familiar with methods, findings and implications of research pertaining to their teaching practice – BERA-RSA, 2014, p.40). Amongst the papers informing the report, Leat, Lofthouse and Reid (2014) make the case that the experience of engaging with research leads to teachers thinking beyond the narrow confines of performativity and accountability, and allows teachers to more readily adapt to challenges and difficulty. The BERA-RSA report emphasises teachers becoming “discerning consumers of research” (BERA-RSA, 2014, p.5) as well as engaging with it, pointing to this kind of research engagement by teachers as the “hallmark of high performing education systems” (BERA-RSA, 2014, p.6). At the core

of the model of teaching the report advocates for is the paper provided by Winch et al. (2015).

Following on from the BERA-RSA paper, the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training delivered its report in 2015 and continued the swing back towards valuing research in teacher practice and training. The commissioning of the review came on the heels of Goldacre's *Building evidence into education* (Goldacre, 2013) which advocated for teachers to be "critical consumers" (Goldacre, 2013, p.13) of research, possessing the knowledge to evaluate the quality of research likely to emerge in teaching careers spanning decades. Of particular note is the call for research literacy to be a component of teacher training which would be built upon in continuing professional development. This in turn, Goldacre argues, would prove fruitful for researchers, teachers and policymakers as "understanding how research is done also enables teachers to generate new research questions. This, in turn, ensures that the research which gets done addresses the needs of everyday teachers" (Goldacre, 2013, p.14).

While anticipated by some to be an exercise in validating an existing, ideologically informed policy on teacher education, the report published by the Carter Review was significantly more nuanced in the attitude it expressed, particularly in the role education research should play in teaching practice and the preparation of teachers in training programs (Mutton, Burn and Menter, 2017). The Review's citation of the 2014 BERA-RSA document clearly indicates the influence the latter had on the findings of the Carter Review.

As noted by Mutton et al. (2017), the Review expresses a variety of tensions on the thorny issue of teacher education. While unequivocal about the importance of research, and evidence borne out of research, for teaching practice the Review implies "a narrow conception of teacher as technician" (Mutton et al., 2017, p.27) putting into practice the findings of researchers filtered down to them. The addition of the need for teachers to demonstrate an ability to evaluate the quality of research of various types, knowledge of empirical research methods, and where to find resources based upon evidence aligns well with the conception of "teaching as a professional endeavour" offered by Winch et al. (2015, p.210) and echoed Goldacre's advocacy for teachers "who know the basics of "how we know" what works" rather than being presented with the results of research "as a completed canon" (Goldacre, 2013, p.13).

The Carter Review was followed in March 2016 by *Educational Excellence Everywhere* (EEE) published during Nicky Morgan's time as Secretary of State for Education. This reasserted various aspects covered by both Goldacre and Carter. As well as the need to integrate research into teaching practice, the EEE paper identifies a "patchy" evidence base (Department for Education, 2016a, p.13), difficulties in accessing research or translating it into action as key barriers to teachers utilising research. This added to problems identified by Goldacre (2013) to the effect that research was "written up in very technical documents, in obscure academic journals....rarely read by teachers" (Goldacre, 2013, p.13). To overcome these problems of the language used in academic journals, the EEE paper asserted the need to disseminate research via an "independent College of Teaching" (Department for Education, 2016a, p.13), modelled on the Royal Medical College, tasked with publishing a peer-reviewed journal to disseminate research "in an accessible and relevant format" (p.39). This resulted in the creation of the Chartered College of Teaching (CCoT) offering a variety of research centred professional development courses and accreditation, along with publishing the journal *Impact*. The CCoT claimed a membership of "45,000 educators worldwide" in June 2025 (Chartered College of Teaching, n.d.) in contrast with the 468,258 full time equivalent teachers employed in state-funded schools in England alone (Department for Education, 2025b). Alongside this, the work of the *Education Endowment Foundation* in disseminating research, as well as evaluating its quality and impact, was endorsed (Department for Education, 2016a).

The Carter Review and EEE led to the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) framework, which codified aspects of teacher training in order to standardise trainee experience across all providers in England. The publication of the ITT framework attempted to reconcile the Carter Review in particular with government policy, and ultimately included an explicit statement that trainee teachers should both be exposed to "research, propositions and theories relevant to good classroom practice" (Department for Education, 2016b, p.6), therefore reflecting the narrow definition of research engagement identified by Mutton et al. (2017) but also that they should develop the research literacy necessary for teachers to act as critical consumers of published research (Goldacre, 2013).

For Mutton et al. (2021) the shifting policy positions of the governments of 2010-2022 has led to a polarisation between theory and research at one pole, and practical knowledge at the other. This has unnecessarily complicated matters, when the need is to acknowledge the complexities of teacher education which requires a focus on pedagogy, as well as a capacity to integrate theory and practice (Mutton et al., 2021). In all of this, there remains need to emphasise the *critical* aspect of teachers acting as critical consumers of published research. Without this critical standpoint, and the research literacy to complement it (BERA-RSA, 2014), there are risks presented by poor quality research, or research which comes from a study without replication, including where it is endorsed by the UK Research Excellence Framework (Gorard et al., 2020).

The vagaries of the last thirty years of education policy, especially around preparation of teachers and the associated public discourse, points to the possibility that route of entry into the profession – i.e. via School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), university based PGCE – may be a significant variable in teacher attitude to research. The hypothesis from this is that more negative attitudes to education and/or SLA research will correlate with those entering the profession via non-university based routes, and the inverse for those who complete the training via the university based route. What may be more difficult to parse (and perhaps lies outside the scope of this study) is whether or not a positive disposition towards research was engendered by completing university based ITE, or if the pre-existing attitude influenced the route of entry to the profession.

2.4 Communities of malpractice

Although they may not use the term ‘community of practice’ (CoP), a variety of previous studies have reported that teachers in a variety of contexts prefer to confer with other, often more experienced teachers where they work for their professional development (e.g. Borg, 2010; Tavakoli, 2015; Williams and Coles, 2007). Indeed, some studies have identified a particular antipathy towards educational research within the teaching profession (e.g. Kostoulas, Babić, Glettler, Karner, Mercer, & Seidl, 2019; Lofthouse, 2014).

The concept of a CoP has been subjected to critique in fields outside of educational research, including for a “rose-tinted” (Pemberton, Mavin, & Stalker, 2007. p.63)

presentation of CoPs. Contu and Williams (2003) re-evaluated the concept, and highlighted the language used within the literature to erase the conflicts which can take place within CoPs, assuming consensus and abstracting “the ‘community’ of learners from the wider field of social relations” (Contu and Williams, 2003, p.288). As Roberts (2006) contends, the central members of a CoP hold a certain degree of power over what is and is not legitimate knowledge to acquire within the CoP. As a result, where peripheral learners instigate the introduction of new ideas or new practices, this can threaten to displace those ‘masters of the craft’ who are at the centre of the CoP leading to tensions within the ‘community’ (Contu and Williams, 2003). The mere existence of a group of teachers within the same school will not, of course, lead to the automatic emergence of a CoP. A degree of curation, planning and cross-fertilisation is necessary to ensure that the CoP is successful (Probst and Borzillo, 2008). An awareness of the possibility that a CoP can become entrenched in particular modes of thought and resistant to change is also critical. Instead of generating creative or novel solutions and ideas, knowledge may be aligned with the predispositions of the CoP, and ideas which support the current practices of the CoP are likely more readily adopted than those which challenge the practices of the CoP (Roberts, 2006).

The paradigm of ‘experience’ and ‘on the job learning’ directing newly qualified teachers to develop positive practices which drive the academic, linguistic and social-emotional development of students is, it seems, a highly problematic assumption. There seems little reason to believe, and certainly limited evidence, that there are successful CoPs waiting for each and every newly qualified teacher. The possibility that a newly qualified teacher is recruited to a school with a dysfunctional subject department, or even whole school, remains. Rather than being guided to develop positive practice, it may be that the CoP is little more than the accretion of layers of habit, along with unchallenged pedagogical practice which evades criticism by finding fault in the student rather than the teaching practice (e.g. Murakami, 2008).

This can become particularly pernicious where the external social pressures and attitudes –racism towards refugees and migrant workers, for example – intermix with ineffective or even harmful pedagogy. This includes racist attitudes expressed in various ways by teachers and students (e.g. Page, 2020; Searle, 2017; Stevens, 2009). If culpability for failure to make progress is located in the pupil, rather than the

pedagogy utilised within the CoP, then what incentive is there for the members of that CoP to develop their pedagogy? Expectations are low, results are low, the student is moved on to the next educational phase and there is limited accountability to drive change.

2.5 EAL teaching in England

There is, of course, a long history of students in England whose first language was not English, not least those who migrated to the UK from 1948. As Costley (2014) recounts, the education system of the day at the level of policy and individual schools was slow to respond to the needs of children moving to schools in the UK. The paradigm through the 1960s into the 1980s was to pull EAL learners out of mainstream lessons, a paradigm which shifted to mainstreaming in the 1980s following the Swann Report (Costley, 2014). Costley makes the case that this mainstreaming – although couched in public discourse of embracing cultural and linguistic diversity – effectively erased the distinct learning needs of EAL learners from the curriculum, reinforced the advantage of students who spoke English as their L1, and rejected much of the evidence on language learning acquired from SLA research (Costley, 2014).

Prior to the oscillations in policy of the Coalition and Conservative governments, the needs of EAL learners within the education system in England had emerged as a research priority. Andrews' (2009) review of studies reported as specifically EAL research within the school sector identified 54 studies from 2000 to 2008. Andrews identified gaps in research around pedagogy, studies with the 11-18 age group, pathways into EAL teaching, and the CPD needs of teachers in this area of their practice.

The systematic reviews conducted by Murphy and Unthiah (2015), covering studies with experimental or quasi-experimental designs of EAL interventions between 2000 and 2014, found only one item of research in the UK, with the remaining conducted primarily in the USA. Oxley and de Cat (2019) added the years 2014 to March 2017 using the same criteria as Murphy and Unthiah (2015), and identified only one additional study in the UK. This striking poverty of experimental or quasi-experimental studies within any context in the UK, much less England, remains, as Murphy and Unthiah described it a decade ago, “alarming” (Murphy & Unthiah, 2015, p.vi). It also serves to reinforce the troubling impression that the needs of EAL learners have been

a low priority for educational research as much as for the Department for Education, despite the clear growth in number of EAL students throughout the period 2000-2017.

There was an opportunity to take up the challenge identified by Andrews, it seems, but one that was almost forgotten amongst the policy disputes which came with the attempted shift towards the 'craft' model of teaching. This is particularly significant given the continued growth in number of students classified as EAL, from 8.4% of all pupils in 2000, 14.1% in 2010, and up to 21.1% in 2024 (Lindorff et al., 2025). Many of these children came to the UK as refugees – a significant number of these unaccompanied children - and therefore with complex needs in addition to EAL status. The question arises whether teachers would be left "fumbling along" (Murakami, 2008, p.275) with learners whose parents were enfranchised citizens of the UK, rather than those subjected to racist stereotyping and vilification in the media and public discourse (e.g. Allen & Blinder, 2013).

Some work exists to identify the EAL pedagogy in use in schools in England. Prentice (2022) conducted case studies with two schools which had established reputations for working positively with refugee children. Amongst the EAL strategies implemented are the use of visuals and dramatization, peer scaffolding, access to internet image searches to enable discussions, and modelling of tasks. One of the teachers Prentice spoke to stated that the primary message from an EAL training course was "visual, loads of visual" (Prentice, 2022, p.1134) along with the use of model examples of tasks as opposed to purely verbal instruction. Both of the schools integrated explicit teaching of vocabulary and grammar, utilising an approach which will be familiar to teachers from a TEFL or CELTA background – the singing or chanting of new vocabulary, varying this in different styles or emotional states. In one instance, a teacher demonstrates linguistic knowledge by contrasting the pronunciation of 'ir' in different languages. The two schools in Prentice's case studies were perhaps unusual within the education system in England, insofar as their teaching staff brought many years of experience working with refugee children, as well as a range of formal qualifications (master's degree, TESOL certification) and experience working abroad. It is worth noting the words of one of the mainstream teachers in the study who stated that without the EAL specialists in the school "we'd be lost. It would be a real shame for those students because I think they'd struggle to meet their potential" (Prentice, 2022, p.1137). There is evidence, therefore, that positive practices for EAL learners exist

within some schools in England which have come about as the result of cross-fertilisation of practice, with teachers coming to the schools from TEFL roles, or working in international settings (Prentice, 2022).

A question arises from the changing characteristics of the students entering the education system in England, and the tendency toward conceiving of teaching as a craft which eschews the engagement with theory concomitant with research engagement: *if expertise in teaching comes from mastering a craft, via a process of being apprenticed into a community of practice, are 'masters' of this craft able to grasp the nature of new problems, of which the CoP has no previous experience, much less identify and iterate potential solutions?* In other words, if required to teach a student with limited to no knowledge of English the problem may be obvious. However, as Cummins highlights (1979, 2000) in his discussions of BICS and CALP, an EAL student may evidence competence in English in social-emotional aspects of school life and yet struggle to access the academic content of classroom materials or discussion. Would a craft-teacher recognise the nature of the problem, or put this down to a lack of academic ability?

Franson's (1999) study would suggest the outcome is the latter, with teachers lacking the language to express the nature of the problem they were trying to solve. Some may be indifferent to the question of EAL pedagogy, and "write it off" at the stage of ITE (Murakami, 2008, p.273). It is unclear whether there has been a change since Franson or Murakami's (2008) study. Taken as a whole, the education system in England has experience with teaching EAL learners going back around 70 years, including a period of cross-fertilisation with TEFL teaching in the 1960s (Costley, 2014). If there were validity to the teacher-as-craft-worker model, then schools in England should be rich sources of EAL pedagogy and data on the impact this has. This should have filtered through to teacher education programs, which, according to Czerniawski (2018), see many teachers transition from mainstream teaching into teacher education and fall into a similar 'craft' model of learning how to teach student-teachers.

From the turn of the 20th century, Costley (2014) notes that the type and depth of training teachers across the UK received regarding EAL learners was consistent only in its variability. Starbuck's (2018) study highlighted the DfE's annual survey of NQTs,

which indicated that the proportion of NQTs who reported feeling prepared to teach EAL learners had never been higher than 50%, and had been lower than all other aspects of teaching since 2004. A majority of participants in Starbuck's focus groups and interviews indicated that they received little to no training on supporting EAL learners during ITE, and were not aware of any opportunities for professional development. Equally, participants in Flockton and Cunningham's (2021) study with teacher educators indicated that the content of teacher education was responding to backwash from the pressures placed on the education system, particularly performativity as measured by national exam results. Even where EAL is prioritised as an aspect of inclusion, this does not offer a way to identify the appropriate or optimal pedagogy (Flockton and Cunningham, 2021). While some respondents indicated the belief that there was value in providing student-teachers with a theoretical understanding of language acquisition, the respondents also emphasised the importance of placement experience involving EAL students over the teaching of theory. Alarming, one respondent also stated that teachers work on "instinct" once they leave the teacher education program (Flockton and Cunningham, 2021, p.228). This may be a way to express the idea that teachers base their decision making on practical experience acquired over time, therefore as a 'craft'. However, this leaves a tension at the core of the teacher education process with regards to EAL learners: a number of pre-service teachers enter teacher education downplaying the value of acquiring pedagogy pertinent to EAL learners; there is significant variability in knowledge and practice within schools, including the absence of both of these; and some teacher educators place emphasis on practical experience, implicitly within a CoP, as the primary means to develop pedagogical knowledge relevant to teaching EAL learners. This renders a picture in which each party to the teacher education process – at least in part – is abdicating their own responsibility towards EAL learners, and trying to place this on the shoulders of another party to the same teacher education process. Meanwhile, many of the most vulnerable learners are confronted by teachers incapable of guiding them and in some cases indifferent about learning how to do so.

2.6 Teacher attitudes to educational and SLA research

A variety of studies address the attitude of teachers in schools in England towards research, however, there appears to be a dearth of studies specifically addressing

their engagement (or lack thereof) with research specifically to support EAL learners. Studies of modern foreign language (MFL) teacher engagement with research, and SLA research specifically, do exist and appears to be the most obvious route for the cross-fertilisation of SLA research and teaching EAL learners. Other studies evaluating teacher attitude towards SLA research specifically tend to be conducted amongst language teachers within the fields of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), English as a second language (ESL) or English as medium of instruction (EMI) contexts in language centres or universities.

Macaro (2005) surveyed MFL teachers in England, with more than three-quarters of responses coming from teachers with over nine years of experience. A clear majority of responses were positive about the usefulness of research, with 55% rating it as fairly useful and 29% as very useful. Particularly positive opinions were expressed about the role of research in vocabulary acquisition, the optimum way to learn the rules of a language and how learners make progress with language learning. Indeed, if language learning strategies had been included in the survey, an EAL specialist would likely view the areas of research in the survey by Macaro (2005, p.5) as precisely those areas of critical need for teaching learners who are new, or fairly new, to English. Notably, there was far less unity of opinion on the question of accessibility of research, which Macaro reports as being roughly equal between positive and negative views. Macaro also reports that there were no statistically significant differences between teachers who had qualified more recently compared to those less recently.

Williams and Coles (2007) obtained complete survey responses from 312 teachers and 78 headteachers across primary and secondary education in Scotland, England and Wales, followed by interviews. Both teachers and headteachers were broadly positive about research (48.8% and 60% respectively) with a small minority holding negative views (7% and 2.7%) (Williams and Coles, 2007, p.191). Some respondents also stated that their engagement with research was stigmatised by other teachers, leaving them to do so in isolation and unable to share the results of their engagement within their workplace.

Amongst the barriers to accessing research, respondents in Williams and Coles (2007) stated that limiting factors included a lack of time and lack of easy access in one place (Williams and Coles, 2007). When asked about the sources they referred to for subject

related research, respondents ranked informal discussions with colleagues as their most frequent source, followed by professional publications and in-service training. When asked about sources they used for developing their teaching practice, informal discussions with colleagues ranked as most frequent again, with research journals the tenth most frequent with 11.2% referring to these regularly and 42.3 occasionally (Williams and Coles, 2007, p.199). A notable comment in their interview responses indicated that in-service training was a valuable means of circulating research as it was presented in an accessible manner with explicit links to practice.

Borg (2009) reported on a survey of 505 teachers globally, with 161 indicating that they rarely or never read research. The primary reasons given included 66% citing a lack of time, followed by a lack of practical relevance, and the inability to access the research.

In a broad overview encompassing ESOL, EMI, ESL and mainstream teaching contexts, Borg (2010) summarised barriers to engagement with or in research frequently cited by teachers. These included:

- a lack of a collaborative school culture, including teachers separating into groups based on whether or not they were engaged with research,
- a concern that doing research will publicise instructional problems,
- lack of time to do research,
- lack of money to pay costs associated with research,
- lack of access to research literature
- lack of a positive reason to undertake research activity
- research efforts not valued by colleagues or managers
- workload imposed by school leaving no time for research activity
- lack of support or even discouragement from school/institution leaders
- requirement from school to adhere to a prescribed curriculum

(Borg, 2010, p.409)

Borg goes on to state that his work with teachers indicated that research was not perceived as relevant to their practice. There was also a mismatch between how teaching and learning was portrayed in research, and how this was experienced by teachers.

In the years following Borg's 2010 work, a variety of survey based studies of teacher attitude to research, in differing national contexts covering both ESL and mainstream schools, have been published which reiterate the themes identified by Borg (2010).

Generally positive dispositions to research were identified by Tavakoli and Howard (2012), Bas and Kivilcim (2017) and Tekin (2023), though not without certain caveats.

For participants in Williams and Coles (2007), Borg (2009), Hennesy and Lynch (2019) and Vanderlinke and van Braak (2010), a significant barrier to engagement with research was a lack of time.

Participants in studies by Vanderlinde and van Braak (2010), Tavakoli and Howard (2012), Bas and Kivilcim (2017) and Hennesy and Lynch (2019) expressed the opinion that research had limited or no relevance to teaching practice. Participants in Bas and Kivilcim (2017) indicated the belief that disseminating research findings through CPD would have little value due to the perceived lack of relevance of research to their practice. Participants in Tavakoli and Howard (2012) and Hennesy and Lynch (2019) expressed the opinion that research priorities should be driven by the needs of teachers and students, rather than the directions researchers had taken their work in.

The studies by Vanderlinde and van Braak (2010), and Hennesy and Lynch (2019) identified contradictory or ambiguous findings as reasons why teachers did not engage with research.

Teachers in both Tavakoli (2015) and Hennesy and Lynch (2019) expressed preferences for engaging with immediate colleagues regarding challenges they experienced in the classroom, and would work through problems this way before taking the time to engage with research. This attitude generally aligned with what can be categorised as a preference for being part of a CoP.

2.7 Research Questions

The following research questions (RQ) were compiled on the basis of the above discussion, and following on from my own experience of teaching within both UK mainstream and international schools implementing the UK national curriculum. In order to explore how teachers develop their teaching practice, and if and how teachers engage with research to do so, I aimed to answer the following questions specifically where they concern teaching EAL learners:

RQ1. Which sources do teachers turn to inform and develop their classroom practice?

RQ2. What are teachers' views on the role research should play in informing and developing teaching practice?

RQ3. What are teachers' views on the relationship between research and their own classroom practice?

RQ4. Where, if at all, do teachers access findings and recommendations from research?

RQ5. What do teachers perceive to be the key challenges in accessing research evidence?

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Purpose

In order to obtain data required to answer the research questions a mixed-methods approach was utilised in the form of an online survey followed by interviews conducted via an online video-conferencing platform (Microsoft Teams). This approach allowed for analysis of broader trends amongst participants, followed by further probing of responses in subsequent interviews (Garrett, Coupland, and Williams, 2006).

Online surveys were utilised, first of all, for the high return of data for investment of limited time and resources (Gillham, 2000), second, because they can be presented in a format which could be completed in a somewhat intuitive manner (or with minimal need for instructions) (Dörnyei and Dewaele, 2022).

3.2 Ethical considerations

At each stage of the study steps were taken to ensure the anonymity of participants. This included redaction of personal information or identifying details from transcriptions, data collected from the survey instrument and in correspondence with interview volunteers. Informed consent was sought from participants; the relevant consent forms for both survey and interview stages are included in appendix A and B. Application for ethics approval, outlining purpose and methods of this study, was made to the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee under reference 1266991. A favourable decision was granted 25th April 2025 (appendix G).

3.3 Survey design

A key concern in designing the survey was to maximise the data obtained from participants. Previous studies indicate respondent apathy is a recurring problem when conducting surveys amongst in-service teachers. The study by Chalmers, Faitaki and Murphy (2024), for example, ended with a 33.7% completion rate across all 81 questions (Chalmers et al., 2024, p.17). This is likely reflective of one or a combination of research fatigue amongst teachers and school leaders, particularly if there is no discernible practical utility for the participating teachers (e.g. Baildon and Ong, 2022; Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010), or a belief that educational research is not relevant to practice (e.g. Carr, 2006; Tavakoli, 2015; cf Hennessy and Lynch, 2019; Leuversink and Aarts, 2024).

In addition, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the demands on the time of UK based teachers lead a significant number to continue working outside of paid work hours, utilising their free time to complete tasks vital to their role. Even though half of an average working week of 51 hours is spent on administrative tasks, marking and lesson planning, teachers still had to work during evenings and weekends to ensure they keep on top of their responsibilities (Office for Standards in Education, 2019). There seems little reason to believe that there has been significant change for the better since the end of the emergency measures introduced during the Covid-19 outbreak.

These two factors – research fatigue and workload – were foremost in mind when considering number of items and time required to complete the survey. Without considerable personal connection to participants, particular motivation to participate in research, or interest in the topic of the survey, there was a considerable risk of not obtaining sufficient complete responses to the instrument. The guidance offered by Rea and Parker (2014) is that online surveys in L2 learner research should last no more than fifteen minutes. Given the above considerations (and the change of participants from L2 learners to in-service teachers), this was taken as the upper limit for the time required to complete the survey.

In their discussion of survey design within the L2 research context, Dörnyei and Dewaele (2022) state that it is necessary to collect socio-biographical information from participants in any empirical research, with the quantity dependent on the research

question. However, some autobiographical data like gender, age etc were excluded from this survey design. First of all, the manner of sampling (snowballing) precludes the possibility of making reliable generalisations to the wider population, so discussions of correlation between gender, age etc and attitudes to SLA research would be severely limited in the generalisability.

Second, there seems to be no theoretical justification to suggest that chronological age or gender should have a significant correlation with the content of the research question. Leuvenink and Aarts (2024), for example, found no difference in attitude to education research between genders, nor did Tekin (2023). While participants in Hennessy and Lynch (2019) may have expressed the belief that older teachers were less open to educational research than younger teachers, the authors point to the work of Ilisko et al. (2010) which indicated older teachers participating in their study were more highly motivated to engage in education research compared to younger teachers, and Labaree (2003) who identifies maturity and professional experience as key factors guiding teachers to engage with education research. Taken together, this suggests that it is not the chronological age of the teachers which bears a causal relationship with the motivation to engage with education research, but the individual teacher's time in the classroom and experience of teaching which does so. Given the need to minimise the number of individual items in the survey, the determination was made that years of experience was more relevant to the research questions and would be more informative than chronological age.

Third, the above discussion on the apathy amongst teacher's responding to surveys distributed by established researchers including use of institutional connections, and evidence of the pressures on teachers' time, leads to the conclusion that inclusion of items requesting socio-biographical data would become a point of frustration for respondents leading to an increased rate of abandonment. In addition, such data may be considered sensitive and given it is not clear this data is important to answer the research questions at hand, I considered it wiser to exclude autobiographical items as suggested by Dörnyei and Dewaele (2022) in their discussion of sensitive items.

By contrast, items around key stage, route taken through teacher training and years of teaching experience were of significant importance to the research question. Years of experience, in particular, was of far greater importance than chronological age,

particularly given previous research has identified experience and learning from their immediate community of practice as key routes to the development of phronesis (e.g. Biesta, 2017; Tavakoli, 2015; Winch et al., 2015).

3.5 Item design, piloting and iteration

When drawing up items for the survey the principles of design proposed by Dörnyei and Dewaele (2022) were utilised as the primary guide for the construction of the survey instrument. These included careful attention to length and layout of the survey, writing effective items, appropriate sequencing of items, and writing appropriate instructions.

Survey items covered five main areas to acquire data relevant to the research questions:

1. Professional-biographical data and teaching context (items 1-5)
2. Pre-service and in-service training and development relevant to teaching EAL learners (items 6-13)
3. Means by which teachers conduct their own professional self-development and overcome barriers encountered in the process of teaching (items 14-17)
4. Teacher beliefs about the role and relevance of education research, and second language acquisition research more specifically, for teachers (items 18-21)
5. Future directions identified by teachers for research and the interfacing of classroom practice and education research (items 22-23)

Items 1 through 13 were intended to establish the characteristics of respondents in terms of their experience, context and background. Data relevant to RQ1 and RQ4 was collected via items 14 through 17; for RQ2 items 18-21 and 23; RQ3 items 18 to 22; RQ5 by item 22 and 23.

Following the guidelines offered by Dörnyei and Dewaele (2022), a stock of items was developed on the basis that they could be whittled down or removed/altered during piloting. Previous surveys amongst teachers relating to how they engage with research or their attitudes towards it were reviewed to identify whether their content could be repurposed for the current survey (e.g. Chalmers et al., 2024; Hennessy and Lynch, 2019; Leuverink and Aarts, 2024). When developing new items attention was paid to ensure items were succinct, aiming to be expressed in under twenty words, using

natural language which avoids jargon and avoided negative constructions (Dörnyei and Dewaele, 2022). In some items, the twenty word limit was marginally exceeded (items 8, 9, 10 and 12); items 13 and 16 were the longest at twenty-four and twenty-five words respectively, but could not be rephrased without negatively impacting the precision of the item.

In the main, items were sufficiently transparent to not require instructions to guide responses, or at least required minimal additional instructions. This was confirmed during piloting. Items 1, 2, 4, 14 and 16 were written as checklists; 8 and 10 as semantic differential scales from 'not at all useful' to 'extremely useful' and included a 'not applicable' option; 6 and 11 as closed-ended questions with options being 'yes', 'no', 'I don't recall' and 'no answer' (Dörnyei and Dewaele, 2022). The remaining items in the survey were phrased as open questions and provided a text box which allowed participants to answer in their own words. The intention with open questions was to allow participants the space to express themselves without being limited in their response, or being 'nudged' in a particular direction by the options presented. The hope was this would provide material for further elaboration in analysis and where participants volunteered for follow-up interview. The full survey as it was presented to participants is available in appendix C.

In some items, acronyms specific to the profession were used including "CPD", "EAL" and "ITT". To ensure clarity amongst respondents, the UK Department for education definition of EAL was included in brackets after the item. Both CPD (Continuous Professional Development) and ITT (Initial Teacher Training) were included without further clarification on the basis that both of these acronyms are used widely and frequently within the teaching profession in the UK.

3.6 Survey distribution

The survey was created in Qualtrics and distributed via a variety of channels through the method of snowballing (Oppenheim, 1992). In the initial stages this was done through my own personal connections with teachers I have worked or trained with, including the PGCE Secondary English cohort and two international schools. Each of these contacts was provided with an anonymous link to the survey and a digital leaflet with QR code (appendix E) and encouraged to share with their own colleagues and contacts. The same QR code and link were also shared with the wider student cohort

at the Department of Education of the University of Oxford, including PGCE and postgraduate students. This first stage was allowed to circulate for around 10-12 days, before a further circulation was made via the mailing list of the University of Oxford's Deanery Digest, with teachers who had signed up to learn about research projects. These latter two circulations in particular will likely have led to an over-representation of educators already open to/positive about education research. This adds to the existing likelihood that teachers who emphasise practical knowledge, or even denigrate the role of education research, would have chosen not to participate further skewing the data.

3.7 Survey response analysis

Upon completion of the survey collection process, the data collected was cleaned, removing incomplete responses and those which are not pertinent to the RQs.

Items 1, 2, 4, 6 and 11 are designed to provide relevant sociobiographical data on the teacher's context and experience, and are presented as raw counts. Descriptive statistics are provided for Items 5, 7-10, 12-13 along with the results of a Shapiro-Wilk test. This latter was included to indicate the distribution of the data, and selected for use with a small sample size (maximum here $n = 21$). Items 14 and 16 were collated utilising an UpSet plot in order to identify both frequently selected options and those options which were selected together.

To analyse items 18-23 as qualitative data, participant responses were coded utilising a thematic analysis approach (Robson, 2024). This analysis was supplied to two further master's students from the same course (who had not participated in the above coding process) to confirm accuracy, with one reviewing analysis for items 18-20 and the other reviewing analysis for items 21-23.

3.8 Follow-up interviews

To develop more robust data relevant to the RQs of this study, those teachers who volunteered were invited to participate in follow up interviews of greater length than the initial survey (up to 30 minutes). Follow up contact was carried out by email (appendix D) and included additional information about the purposes of the interview, data handling and consent (appendix B). In order to ensure maximum value was

gained from the interviews the guidelines proposed by Galletta (2013), Kallio et al (2016) and Richards (2003).

On completion of interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed and coded using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Robson 2024). This coding was reviewed by a fourth peer from the same course.

4.0 Results

Quantitative analysis of survey results was carried out in R, using the following packages:

- UpSetR (Gehlenborg, 2019)
- vcd (Meyer, Zeileis & Hornik, 2023)
- ggplot2 (Wickham, Chang, Henry, Pedersen, Takahashi, Wilke, Woo, Yutani, & Dunnington, 2025).

Prior to analysis in R the data was prepared in a .csv file, including removing any details which could be used to identify respondents. Responses were collected from a total of 66 participants. 34 of these completed the initial consent form, then abandoned the survey. A further 4 respondents partially completed the survey up to item 13, at which point they abandoned the survey. These were excluded from later analysis. Of the remaining 28 responses, one respondent indicated they were based in a school in Northern Ireland and 6 others in international schools outside of the UK. These responses were excluded from the analysis as the research questions are focused on teachers working in England as a separate administrative and legal entity in terms of the education system of the UK. This provides $n = 21$ in total for this study. Education in England is not, of course, a hermetically sealed unit. The transfer of accumulated practices and research can take place where teachers move across the administrative boundaries of the UK, or into and out of the international school market

4.1 Quantitative data

- ***Item 2: What Key Stages do you currently teach?***

It is not unusual for teachers in England to teach across two or more Key Stages, though typically this is either in primary stages (KS1 and 2) or secondary (KS3, 4 and 5). As can be seen in figure 2 and 3, the respondents were generally concentrated in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 with students at secondary level (i.e. 11-18 years old). Figure

2 indicates the way in which the key stages participants teach were clustered, with a number of participants teaching KS3 and 4, or KS3, 4 and 5.

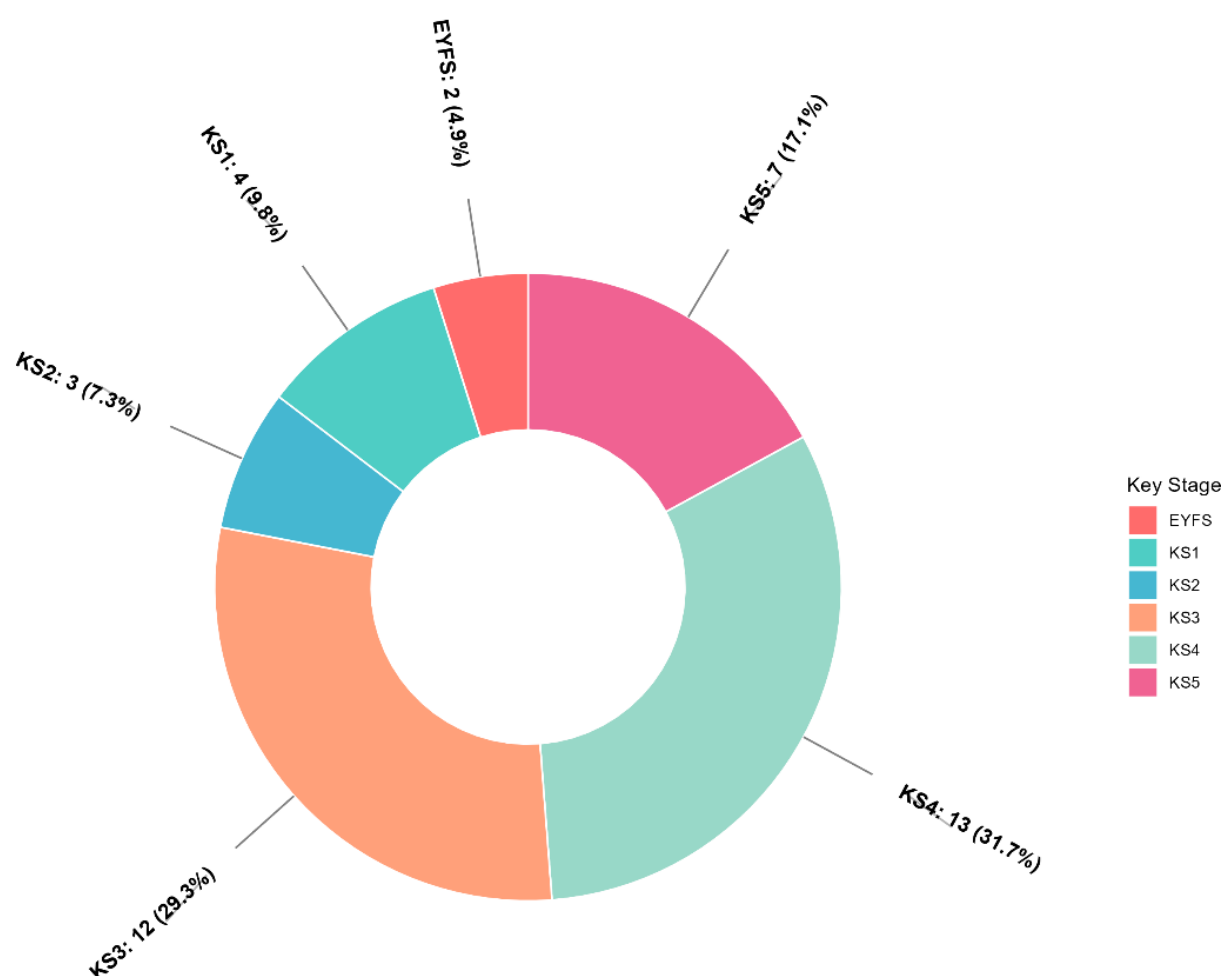


Figure 1 – Key Stages respondents teach in with raw count and percentage – possible to select multiple Key Stages in survey

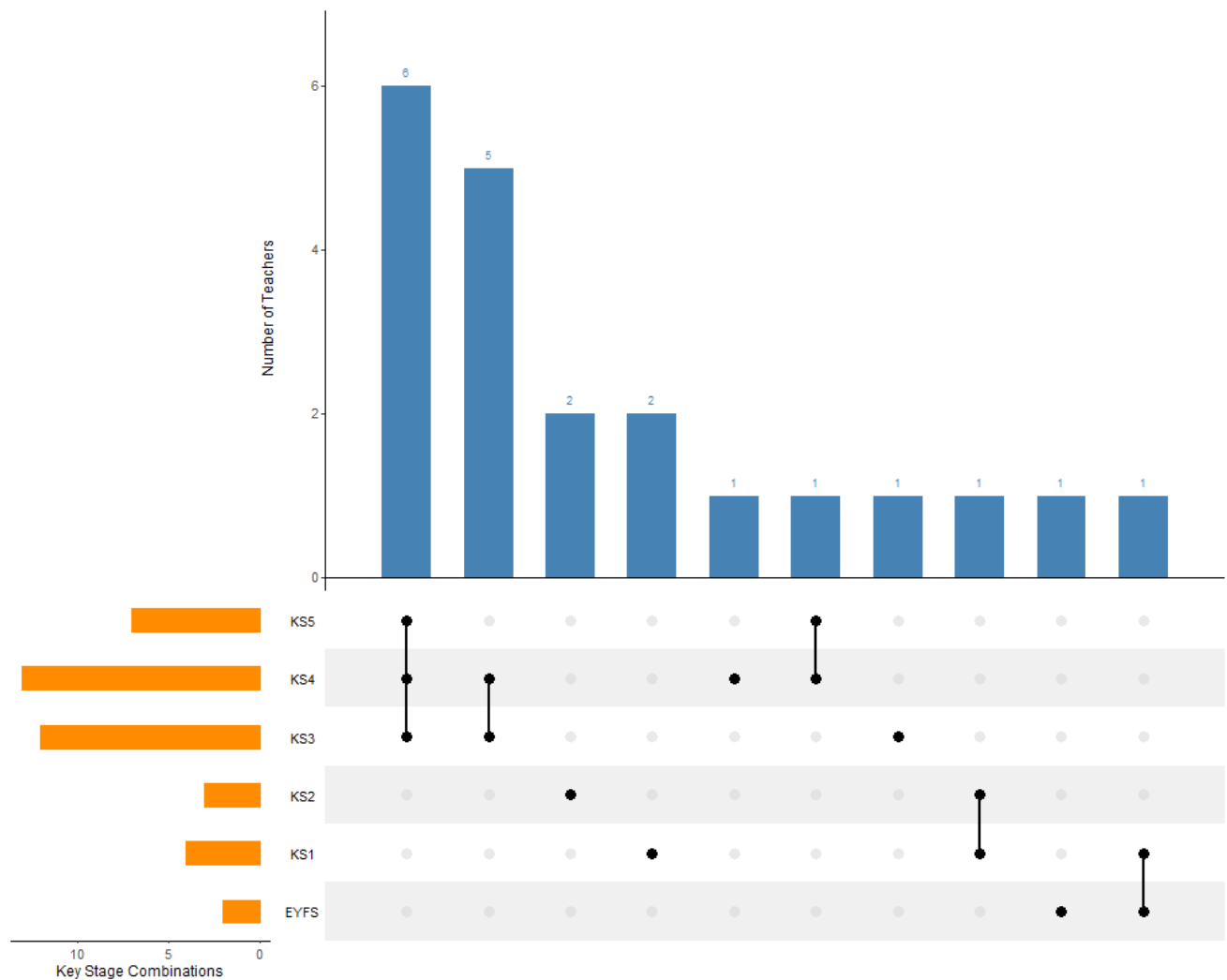


Figure 2 – UpSet plot to illustrate clusters of responses to item 2

- **Item 3: How many years of teaching experience do you have?**

21 responses were collected for item 3. Mean years of experience reported by participants was 9.24 ($SD = 8.07$, median = 6, mod = 5). Visual inspection of the data clearly points to non-parametric distribution, supported by a Shapiro-Wilk test ($W = 0.8259$, $p = .0017$). Data was positively skewed (0.9) and platykurtic (2.47). Teachers with experience up to 10 years are heavily represented within the data, therefore those likely to have qualified to teach from 2015 onwards. None of the respondents have between 11-15 years of experience and one has 15-20 years of experience (19 years), leaving a lacuna within the sample of teachers who likely completed teacher training in the years 2005-2015. Four respondents have more than 20 years of experience (21, 22, 24 and 26).

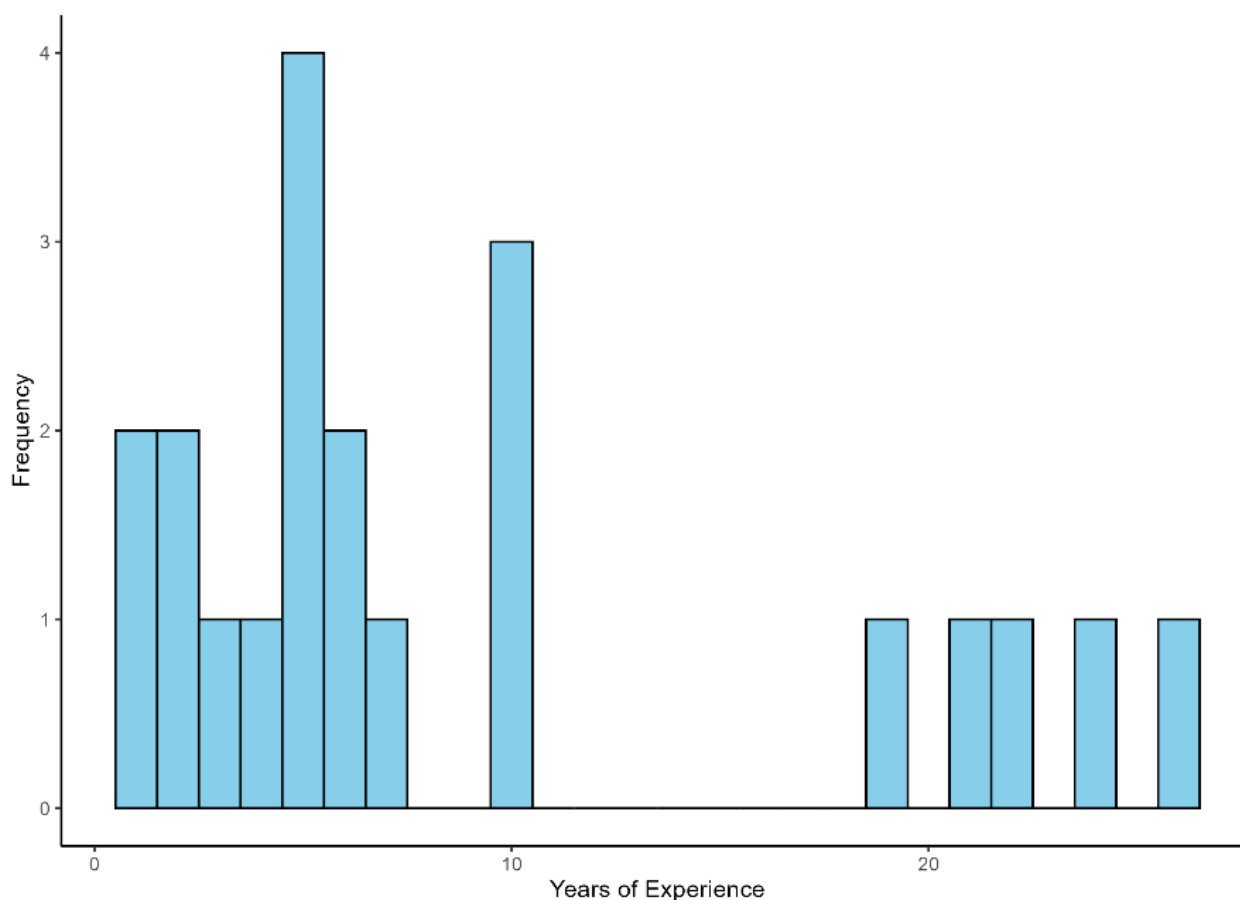


Figure 3 – histogram indicating total responses tp item 3

- **Item 4: Which route did you take to train as a teacher and obtain QTS?**

A clear majority of respondents (14, 66.7%) obtained QTS via university based Initial Teacher Education. 3 respondents indicated they gained QTS via SCITT (14.2%). This compares to the training intakes of 2023/24 and 2024/25 with trainees attending higher education institutes (HEI) being 56% and 50% respectively, and those entering SCITT 30% and 34% (Department for education, 2025a). The academic year 2015/16 saw 57% of trainees attend a HEI (Department for education, 2015). This indicates that participants who obtained QTS via university ITE are over-represented in the data.

There are a variety of routes into teaching covered by 'other', including School Direct and Troops to Teach, as well as undergraduate level courses (e.g. Primary Education) which lead to QTS. An improvement to data collection in future would separate this out from other options. However, as only 2 of 3 respondents who indicated 'other' as

their route to QTS at Primary level, the impact on the current study is less significant than it otherwise might have been. The third respondent who selected 'other' indicated they teach Key Stage 5 only, and have 24 years of experience. This indicates that the respondent entered the teaching workforce prior to the introduction in 2008 of the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) qualification. In the open response items this participant indicated they work in Further Education (FE) on a TESOL course. It has not been possible to contact this participant to clarify the nature of their work (or the precise route to QTS they took), as this may indicate they also teach adult learners who have arrived in the UK after the age of 18. It may also be that they teach students who arrived in the UK in KS4, but were not able to develop their language skills sufficiently prior to taking national examinations and are continuing their studies through FE. This being a possibility their response was retained in the analysis.

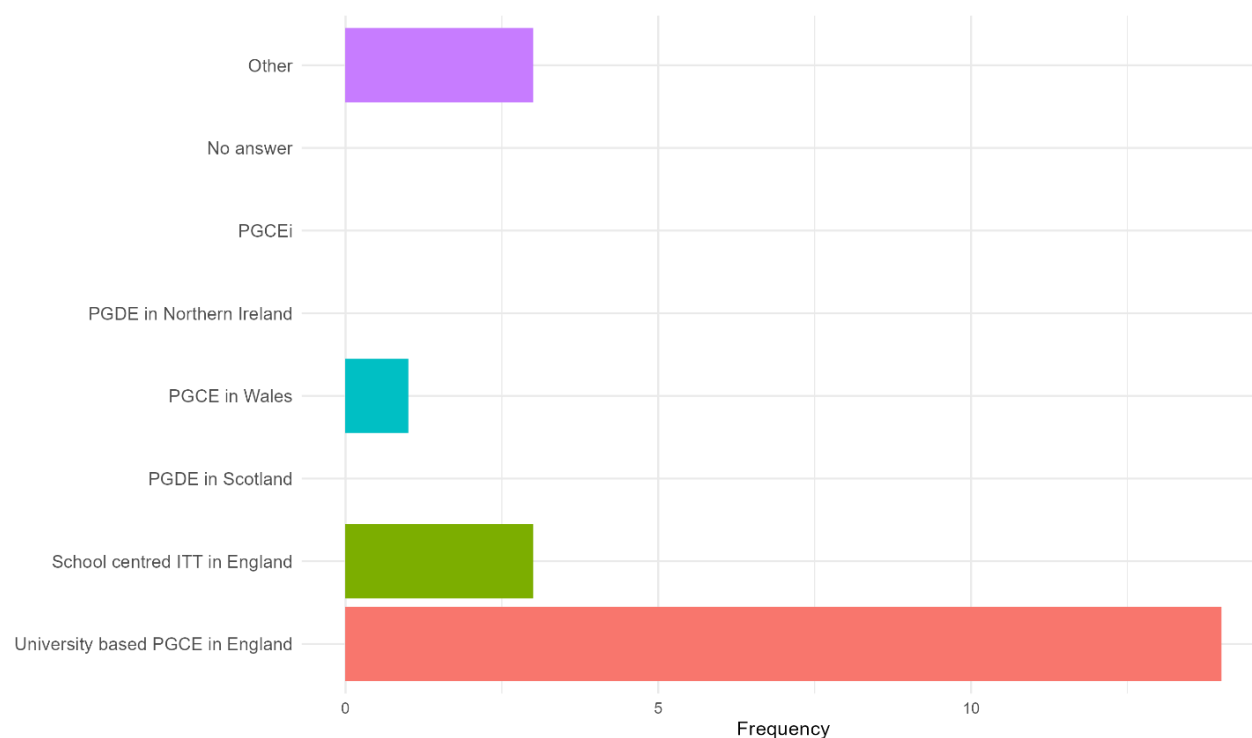


Figure 4 – bar chart of route taken to obtain QTS for all responses from teachers in England

- **Item 5: Across all of your current classes, how many of your students are considered an EAL student?**

There were 19 responses to item 5. Mean number of EAL students was 20.79 ($SD = 22.45$, median = 10, mode = 2, 3, 10, 25). The mean (20.79) and standard deviation (22.45) for all responses are indicative of the wide variety of responses given to this

item. Data for item 5 was positively skewed (1.27) and leptokurtic (3.98). The data was non-parametric ($W = 0.8116$, $p = 0.0017$).

There was some variation in the way survey takers responded to this item, with one England based respondent indicating “80%” (with an additional respondent in Northern Ireland at “65%” and one international school respondent stating “95%”). One additional respondent from England stated “All of them” rather than entering a numerical value. Both of these responses from England were filtered out of analyses involving this item. Given the variety of ways in which participants responded to this item, it was excluded from correlations analysis.

Within the data, 7 respondents teaching in EYFS, Key Stage 1 or 2 reported having a total of 25 EAL students. 14 respondents at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 reported having a total of 370 EAL students in their classes (figure 11 for descriptive statistics), 7 of whom reported having 20 or more EAL students across all of their classes. When reducing the data to two main educational phases – EYFS, KS1 and 2 as ‘EYFS and Primary’, then KS3, 4 and 5 as ‘Secondary’ – the two groups are considerably different from each other. ‘Secondary’ values were mean = 28.46, $SD = 23.44$ (median = 25, mode = 10, skewness = 1.22, kurtosis = 4.27). ‘EYFS and Primary’ were mean = 4.17, $SD = 3.43$ (median = 2.5, mode = 2, skewness = 1.7, kurtosis = 4.06).

The Department for Education (2025) reported average class size for the 2024/25 school year in Primary (i.e. not including EYFS) as 26.4 and in Secondary as 22.5. National data indicates that in 2024 22.8% of Primary school pupils were classified as EAL learners, while for Secondary this figure was 18.6% (Lindorff et al., 2025, p.18). This indicates the possibility that respondents at secondary may have had more EAL learners in their classes (mean = 28.46, mode = 10) than the national average would suggest (average class size 22.5, national average EAL population 18.6%, suggesting average of 4 EAL learners per secondary class on average), while those at primary taught fewer EAL learners (mean 4.17, mode = 2) than the national average would indicate (average class size 26.4, national average EAL population 22.8%, suggesting average of 6 EAL learners per secondary class). This may suggest that the participants at secondary level see a greater need for EAL learner pedagogy.

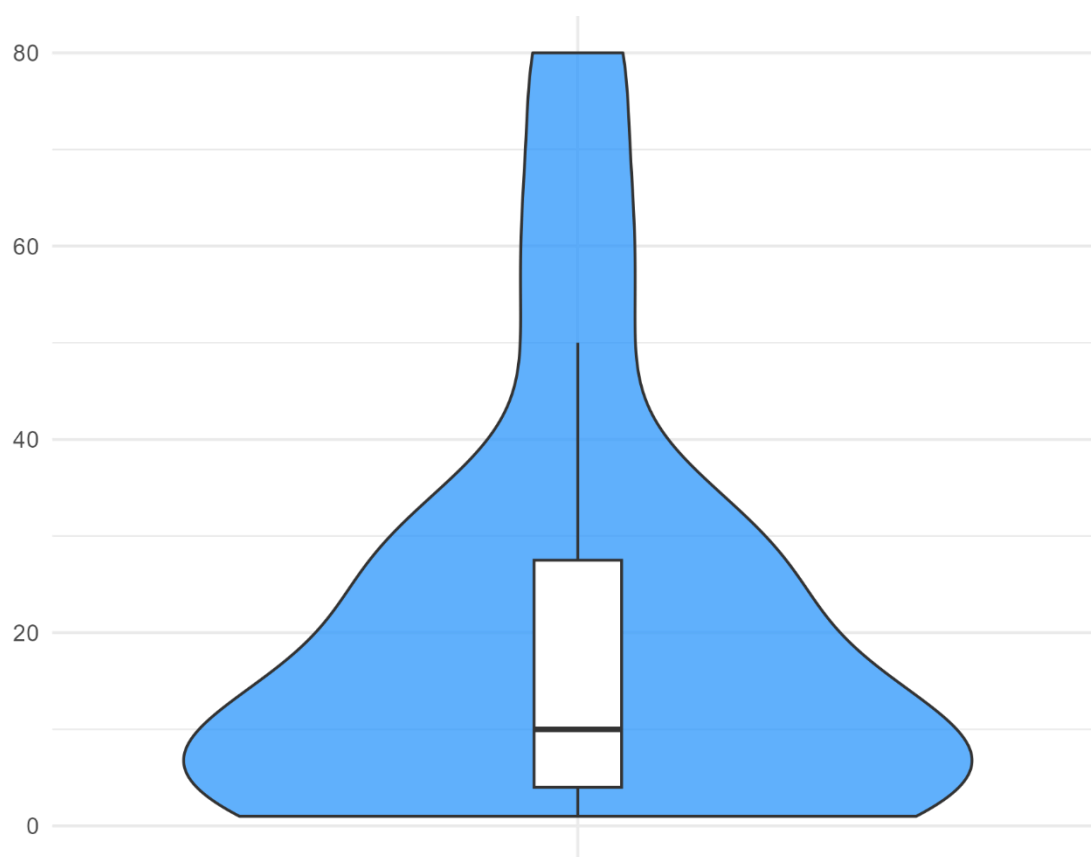


Figure 5 – Violin plot of number of EAL students from all Key Stages

- **Item 6: During your PGCE or ITT, were there any lectures or seminars focused on teaching EAL learners?**

Of the 21 relevant respondents working in England, 11 (52.4%) stated that they recall lectures or seminars focused on teaching EAL learners. Of the 14 respondents who attended a university-based PGCE course, 8 (57%) responded in the affirmative. Of the 3 respondents who stated that they gained QTS via SCITT, only one stated that their training provider offered any directed instruction on teaching EAL learners. One of the respondents working in a school in England acquired QTS in Wales, has three years' experience and did not report receiving training on teaching EAL learners.

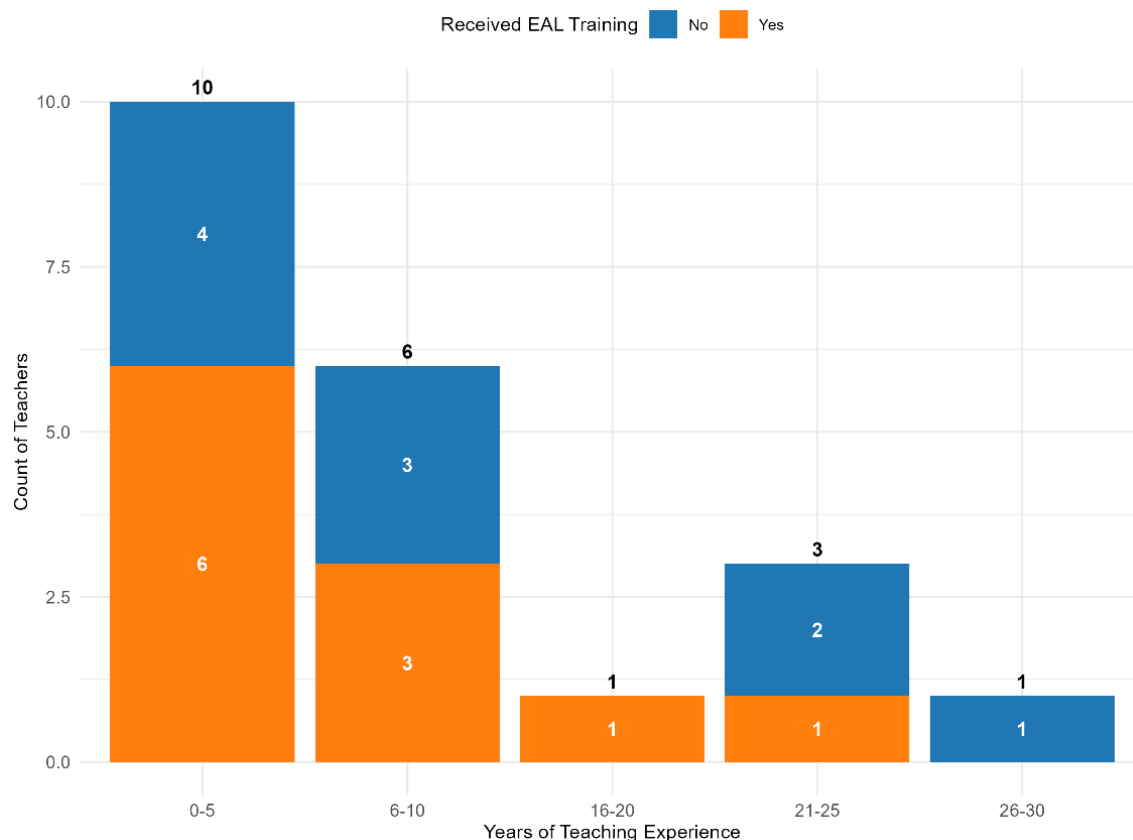


Figure 6 – histogram of responses as a raw count indicating whether or not a teacher recalls having lectures or seminars on teaching EAL learners during ITT, binned for years of experience

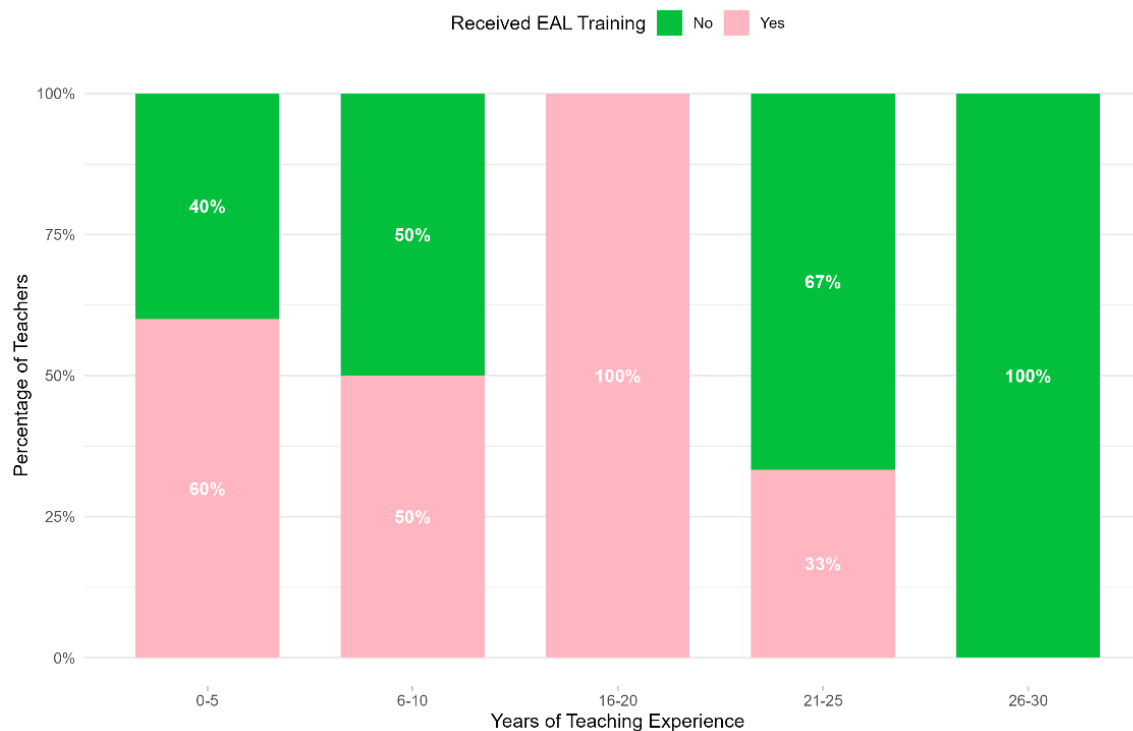


Figure 7 – histogram of responses as a percentage indicating whether or not a teacher recalls having lectures or seminars on teaching EAL learners during ITT, binned for years of experience

- **Item 7: During your PGCE or ITT, how many hours of lectures or seminars focused on teaching EAL learners?**

9 participants gave a response to item 7. Mean hours were 4.556 ($SD = 3.321$, median = 3, mode = 2). Data for item 7 was positively skewed (0.914) and leptokurtic (2.236). The data was non-parametric ($W = 0.759$, $p = 0.007$). Contextualising this data has proven to be difficult. Ideally, this would be compared to the structure of ITT programs across England to indicate how much time was dedicated to teaching EAL learners on the average and different, routes, providers and regions.

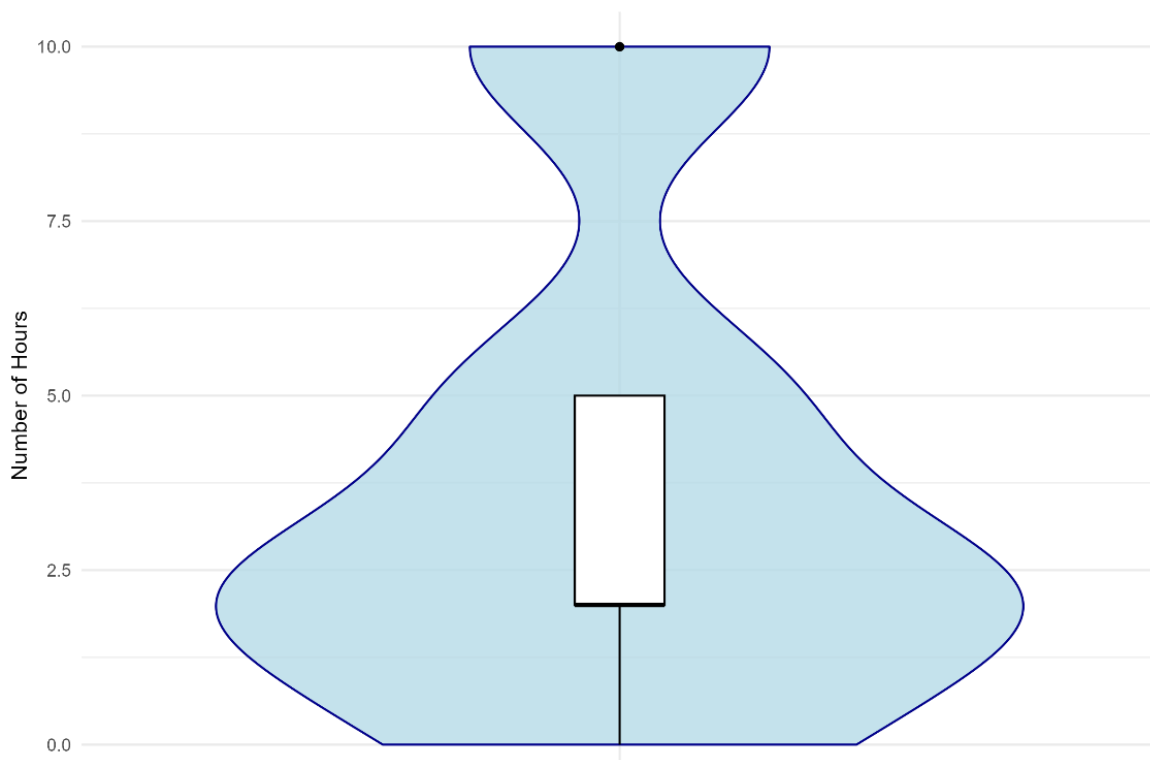


Figure 8 – violin plot of hours of lectures or seminars focused on teaching EAL learners during ITT

- **Item 9: During your PGCE or ITT, how many hours of independent work were you required to complete that was focused on teaching EAL learners?**

There were 10 responses to item 9, two of which were 0. The mean hours reported was 7.6 ($SD = 9.046$, median = 6.5, mode = 10). The data was positively skewed (1.85), and leptokurtic (4.198). The data was non-parametric ($W = 0.762$, $p = 0.005$).

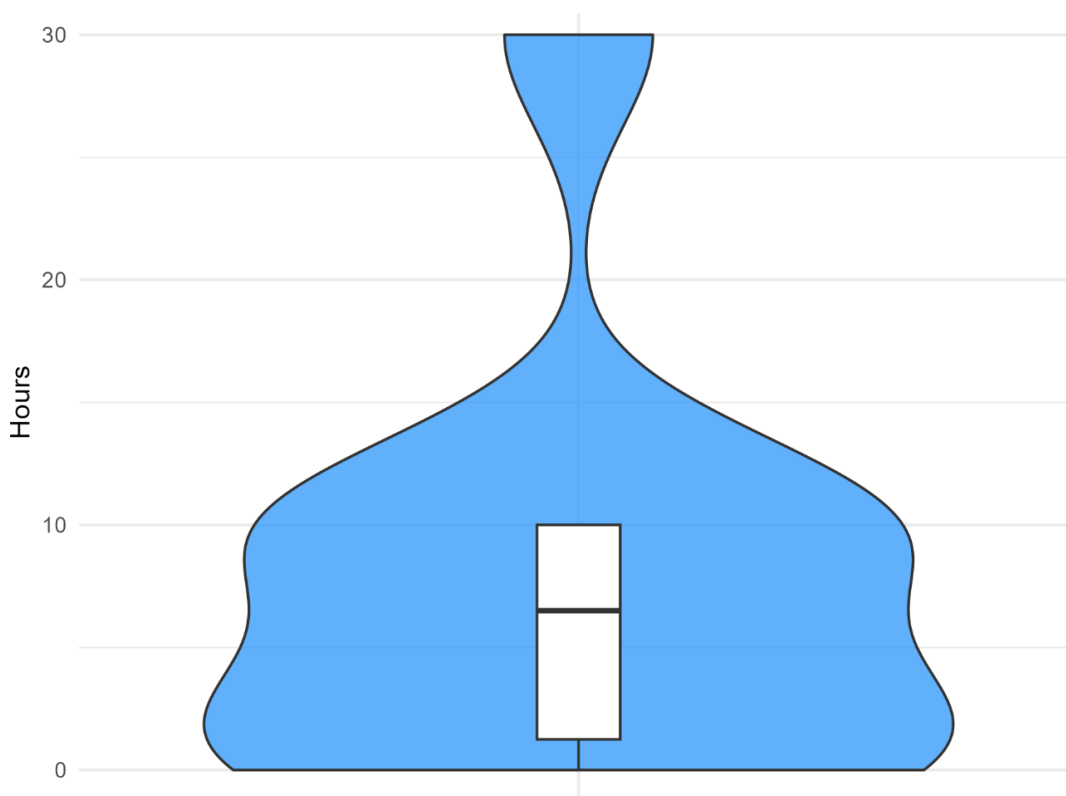


Figure 9 – Violin plot of number of hours of independent work on teaching EAL learners during ITT

- **Item 11: Have you been part of any CPD sessions which included approaches to teaching EAL students?**

There were 14 responses to item 11 in the affirmative. All 7 respondents who responded in the negative reported having EAL students in their classes, including one with 24 EAL students and another with 64 (1 SD and 2.67 SD, respectively, beyond the mean in this sample). 3 of these reported not receiving any lectures or seminars on teaching EAL learners during ITT, one respondent with 2 EAL learners in Key Stage 2, another with 5 in KS3 and 4. The third has 64 EAL learners across KS 3, 4 and 5. The latter respondent is the one who obtained QTS on a PGCE course in Wales, and did not recall receiving training teaching EAL learners, the other two via SCITT. None reported being assigned independent work on teaching EAL learners. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 6 years; the teacher with 64 students had the least experience at 3 years.

- **Item 12: In the last five years, how many hours of CPD have you participated in which included approaches to teaching EAL students?**

There were 12 responses to item 12. The mean number of hours was 3.727 ($SD = 3.495$, median = 2, mode = 2). Once again, the mean (3.727) and standard deviation

(3.495) indicate the variety in responses. Data for item 12 was positively skewed (0.916) and platykurtic (2.596). The data was non-parametric ($W = 0.834$, $p = 0.026$)

The descriptive statistics indicate that, where respondents reported receiving CPD on teaching EAL learners, this was frequently around 2 to 3 hours over a five year period. Two respondents reported participating in considerably more CPD at 30 and 40 hours, averaging 6 and 8 hours per year over five years. This would represent a significant investment of time. Although only one of these responded to item 13 on how useful that CPD was, though they rated this at the highest available option, 7. The teacher with 40 hours of CPD teaches KS3 only and reported 10 EAL learners across all classes. The teacher reporting 30 hours CPD is responsible for KS3 and 4, and reported having 25 EAL learners across all groups. This stands in contrast to the respondents reporting the highest number of EAL learners across their groups, at 80 and 64, with the former participating in 3 hours of CPD on EAL learners over five years, rated as 2 on item 13. The latter, our teacher who qualified in Wales, did not report participating in any CPD at all.

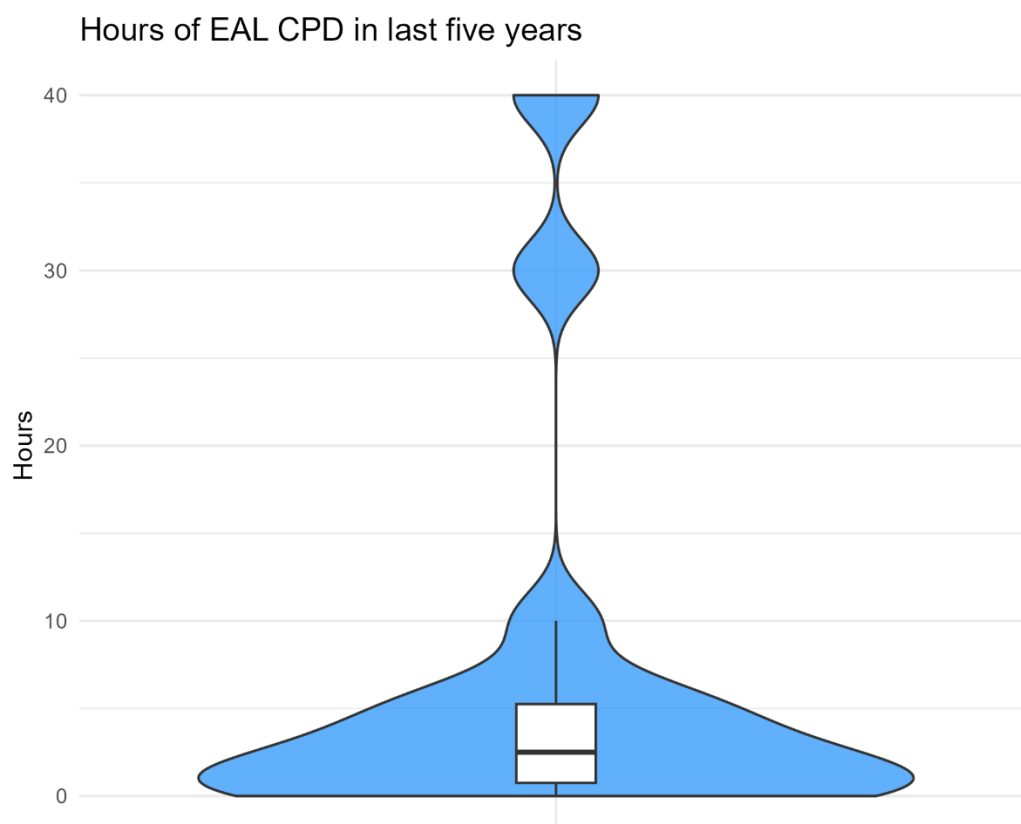


Figure 10 – violin plot of number of hours of EAL CPD in the last five years

- **Item 8: How useful have you found the taught PGCE or ITT sessions on teaching EAL learners in your classroom practice and preparation?**

10 responses were given to item 8. The mean rating was 4.5 ($SD = 1.27$, median = 5, mode = 5, minimum = 3, maximum = 7, $\geq 5 = 60\%$).

Usefulness	N	Percentage
0	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	3	30%
4	1	10%
5	5	50%
6	0	0
7	1	10%

Table 1 – frequency scores of ratings for item 8

Of the 21 respondents, 11 indicated they recalled receiving lectures or seminars on teaching EAL learners. One of these respondents did not give a reply to item 8, leaving 10 responses equally split between those teaching EYFS/Primary and those at Secondary level. The highest rating of 7 (extremely useful) was given by one teacher working at EYFS level, who did not indicate how many EAL learners they are responsible for. The 5 teachers giving a rating of 5 (very useful) varied greatly, reflecting the range of age groups and numbers of EAL learners reflected in the survey responses as a whole.

As can be seen from figure 21, ratings of how useful directed instruction on teaching EAL learners during ITT was perceived were positive, with 60% giving a rating of 5 or higher, with 5 as the median value.

- **Item 10: How useful have you found independent work during your PGCE or ITT on teaching EAL learners in your classroom practice and preparation?**

14 responses were given for item 10. The mean rating was 3.43 ($SD = 2.1$, median = 3, mode = 5, minimum = 0, maximum = 7, $\geq 5 = 43\%$).

Usefulness	n	Percentage
0	1	7.1%
1	2	14.3%
2	2	14.3%
3	3	21.4%
4	0	0%
5	4	28.6%
6	1	7.1%
7	1	7.1%

Table 2 –frequency scores of ratings for item 10

- **Item 13: If you have participated in such sessions, how useful have you found the CPD on teaching EAL learners in your classroom practice and preparation?**

12 participants indicated they had participated in CPD on EAL in the last five years in item 11, however, 2 did not offer a response rating of the usefulness of that CPD for item 13. For 10 responses the mean rating was 4.5 ($SD = 1.72$, median = 4.5, mode = 4, min = 2, max = 7, $\geq 5 = 50\%$).

Usefulness	n	Percentage
0	0	0%
1	0	0%
2	2	20%
3	0	0%
4	3	30%
5	3	30%
6	0	0%
7	2	20%

Table 3 –frequency scores of ratings for item 13

- **Item 14: We would like to know how you develop your practice as a teacher. Do you use any of the following to develop your teaching practice?**

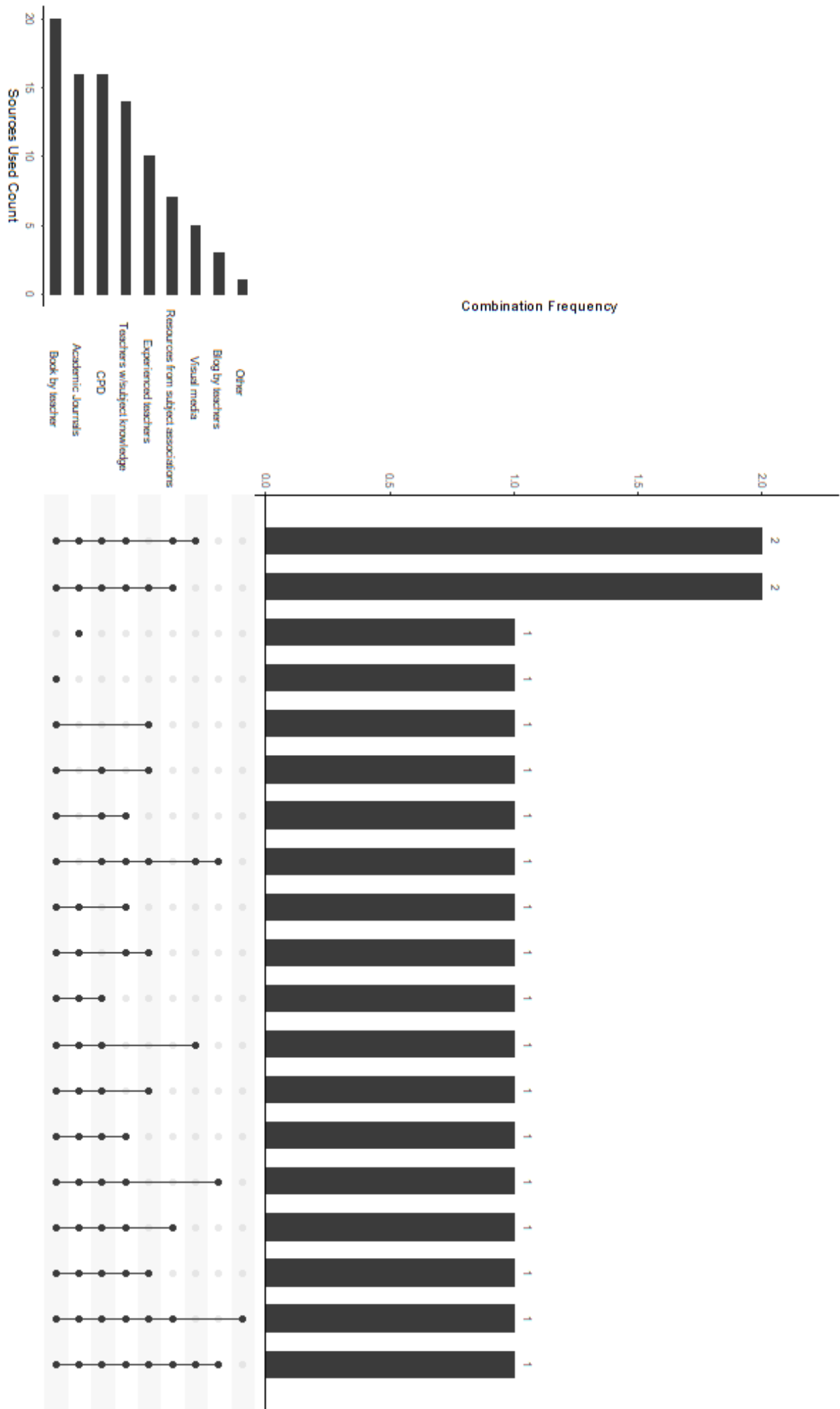
Both individual frequency of option selection, and the frequency with which options were selected in combination, are provided in the UpSet plot in figure 11. For item 14, the most frequently selected combination was ‘book by other teacher’, ‘academic journal’ and ‘continuous professional development’. This was followed by the combination of these three plus ‘teachers with specific subject knowledge’. This is a

pattern of results which might be anticipated for teachers who conceive of themselves in a way that is similar to Winch et al.'s conception of teachers as professionals developing phronesis (Winch et al., 2015). Additional sources reported included NALDIC special interest groups, and the work of Stuart Pryke, Hailee Hughes, and Tom Sherrington.

- **Item 16: If you encounter a challenge or other difficulty in supporting an EAL learner to make progress in your subject, what sources do you turn to?**

Both frequency of individual option selection, and the frequency options were selected in combination, are provided in the UpSet plot in figure 12. There were fewer responses, and fewer combinations of options, to item 16 than in item 14. The option 'book by other teacher' was selected by 19 respondents in item 14, and by 18 in item 16. The option 'academic journals or publications' was selected by 16 in item 14, and by 9 respondents in item 16. 'Continuous professional development' was selected by 16 respondents in item 14, and by 6 respondents in item 16. It seems clear from figure 11 and 12 that teachers referred to a richer variety of sources to develop their teaching practice than they do when encountering a challenge or difficulty supporting an EAL learner. One explanation for this is that these teachers view teaching EAL learners as one limited aspect of their teaching practice, and the richer variety of choices selected for item 14 reflects the greater variety of forms of practice and knowledge they need to acquire or develop for their role. It may also be that this reflects a lack of awareness of what sources they can refer to when encountering challenges in teaching EAL learners, or that a lack of knowledge means they have not identified a gap in their teaching practice, therefore not prompting the need to refer to other sources.

Figure 11 – UpSet plot for item 14 on clusters of sources selected by respondents for how they develop their teaching practice



4.2 Exploratory analysis

In order to identify any correlations between categorical values (e.g. route to QTS and sources used for teaching development) chi squared tests were conducted on participant responses to item 14, sources for teaching development, and item 16, sources referred to when faced by a difficulty or challenge when teaching EAL learners. The intention here is to identify any possible correlations between a respondents' background and the kind of sources they utilise.

- **Years of experience and sources selected to develop teaching practice**

For this analysis, years of experience were binned into 5 year groups. No significant correlations were identified.

Source	<i>n</i>	X^2	df	<i>p</i>
<i>Book written by other teacher</i>	21	2.625	4	0.6224
<i>Academic Journals or publications</i>	21	9.4238	4	0.0513
<i>Teachers with specific subject knowledge</i>	21	4.8	4	0.3084
<i>Resources/articles available from subject associations</i>	21	4.05	4	0.3993
<i>Blog written by other teachers</i>	21	6.8444	4	0.1443
<i>Visual media produced by other teachers</i>	21	9.0563	4	0.0597
<i>More experienced teachers you know/work with</i>	21	2.9591	4	0.5647
<i>Continuous professional development provided by school</i>	21	4.83	4	0.3052
<i>Other</i>	21	2.625	4	0.6224

Table 4

- **Years of experience and sources selected to overcome EAL barriers**

5 year bins of experience were also used for this analysis. 'Visual media produced by other teachers' and 'Other' were not selected by any participants. A significant *p* value was returned for 'Blog written by other teachers'. One participant with 26 years of experience selected this option, along with 'Book written by other teacher' and 'More experienced teacher'.

Source	<i>n</i>	X^2	df	<i>p</i>
<i>Book written by other teacher</i>	21	2.625	4	0.6224
<i>Academic Journals or publications</i>	21	3.0333	4	0.5523
<i>Teachers with specific subject knowledge</i>	21	1.9765	4	0.7401
<i>Resources/articles available from subject associations</i>	21	0.8842	4	0.9268
<i>Blog written by other teachers</i>	21	21	4	0.0003
<i>Visual media produced by other teachers</i>	21	-	-	-
<i>More experienced teachers you know/work with</i>	21	7.3809	4	0.1171
<i>Continuous professional development provided by school</i>	21	2.7067	4	0.608
<i>Other</i>	21	-	-	-

Table 5

-

- **Route to QTS and sources for teaching development**

No significant correlations were identified between route to QTS and sources for development. This result requires caution as teachers who completed a PGCE through a university course were over-represented in the data.

Source	<i>n</i>	χ^2	df	<i>p</i>
<i>Book written by other teacher</i>	21	0.525	3	0.9134
<i>Academic Journals or publications</i>	21	3.2812	3	0.3503
<i>Teachers with specific subject knowledge</i>	21	3.5357	3	0.3162
<i>Resources/articles available from subject associations</i>	21	4.3929	3	0.222
<i>Blog written by other teachers</i>	21	1.5556	3	0.6695
<i>Visual media produced by other teachers</i>	21	4.2	3	0.2407
<i>More experienced teachers you know/work with</i>	21	1.9091	3	0.5915
<i>Continuous professional development provided by school</i>	21	1.575	3	0.6651
<i>Other</i>	21	6.3	3	0.0979

Table 6

- **Route to QTS and sources selected to overcome EAL barriers**

No significant correlations were identified between route to QTS and sources for development. As above, this result requires caution due to over-representation. 'Visual media produced by other teachers' and 'Other' were not selected by any participants.

Source	<i>n</i>	χ^2	df	<i>p</i>
<i>Book written by other teacher</i>	21	0.525	3	0.9134
<i>Academic Journals or publications</i>	21	7	3	0.0719
<i>Teachers with specific subject knowledge</i>	21	1.2353	3	0.7446
<i>Resources/articles available from subject associations</i>	21	1.1053	3	0.7758
<i>Blog written by other teachers</i>	21	0.525	3	0.9134
<i>Visual media produced by other teachers</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>More experienced teachers you know/work with</i>	21	5.7132	3	0.1264
<i>Continuous professional development provided by school</i>	21	1.9833	3	0.5759
<i>Other</i>	-	-	-	-

Table 7

- **EAL training on ITT and sources selected to overcome EAL barriers**

No significant correlations were identified between sources referred to and whether or not the participant received training on teaching EAL learners during ITT.

Source	<i>n</i>	χ^2	df	<i>p</i>
<i>Book written by other teacher</i>	21	$\sim 2.47 \times 10^{-33}$	1	1
<i>Academic Journals or publications</i>	21	0.035795	1	0.8499
<i>Teachers with specific subject knowledge</i>	21	1.9766×10^{-31}	1	1
<i>Resources/articles available from subject associations</i>	21	0.6441	1	0.415
<i>Blog written by other teachers</i>	21	0.0023864	1	0.961
<i>Visual media produced by other teachers</i>	-	-	-	-
<i>More experienced teachers you know/work with</i>	21	1.9766×10^{-31}	1	1
<i>Continuous professional development provided by school</i>	21	0.38659	1	0.5341
<i>Other</i>	-	-	-	-

Table 8

4.3 Qualitative data

The text responses for items 18-23 provided by respondents were reviewed and subjected to thematic analysis. Two separate individuals were asked to review the thematic analysis for items 18-20 and for 21-23. In part due to the small number of responses, but also the heterogeneity of the responses received, only a small number of themes of more than one occurrence were identified for each item. Those themes with multiple occurrences are provided in the tables 9-14, while the discussion of each item will include isolated themes offered in the responses.

- **Item 18 - Does education research have a role to play in teaching EAL students? (e.g. second language acquisition, classroom pedagogy, material or curriculum development, teacher training) If so, what role?**

The most frequent theme occurring amongst the responses to item 18 were centred around the way in which educational research informed pedagogy and teaching practice, including teaching EAL learners specifically (table 9). Responses to item 18 also included concerns about the limits placed on teachers by their workload and limited time.

“Absolutely, but this needs to be disseminated to teachers in a concise and practical way in order for them to fit it in amongst the overwhelming demands of the job!”

Some respondents went further to question the part educational research could play, with one respondent simply responding with “No”, while another offered a more developed response:

“Yes, but it is not prominent in schools and lots of teachers do not value researchers’ insights as they are viewed as not being able to understand the

current state of day to day teaching...researchers must be willing to show teachers they understand the realities of teaching for research to have an impact on EAL."

There was, however, considerable positivity about the role research could play in teaching EAL students. This included learning about SLA for one respondent:

"it developed my understanding of how second language[s] are learned and the differences between first and second language learning."

One MFL teacher who lead CPD sessions on supporting EAL learners for their colleagues expressed surprise at those aspects of teaching which their colleagues had not considered:

"Yes, more teacher training is needed. As an MFL teacher I am surprised at how little teachers in other subjects think about things like vocabulary acquisition."

Theme	Examples in data	Examples
Informs classroom pedagogy/teaching practice	8	<i>"Definitely informs classroom pedagogy, adaptive teaching, how to scaffold resources", "Yes, it can provide insight into how to adapt your pedagogy" "I am surprised at how little teachers in other subjects think about things like vocabulary acquisition"</i>
More exposure to/engagement with educational research needed	2	<i>"should feature more in training", "yes – would benefit from more info on evidence based strategies for teaching children writing especially"</i>
Exposure to new perspectives	2	<i>"being exposed to perspective such as Asset Based pedagogy help to shape a curriculum and learning environment that is inclusive"</i>
Dissemination to teachers	2	<i>"more should be included in teacher training with regard to supporting EAL students", "needs to be disseminated to teachers in a concise and practical way"</i>

Table 9 – themes identified in analysis of responses to item 18

- **Item 19 - Is education research relevant to your teaching practice? Please indicate a reason for your answer.**

Much in line with the advocacy for research engagement in BERA-RSA (2014), foremost amongst reasons for the relevance of research were ideas around the ways in which society was changing, and the need to be able to adapt to this. Alongside this was the question of developing pedagogy and classroom practice, very much reflecting Winch et al.'s (2015) concept of teacher as professional developing phronesis. Not all responses were positive, or were positive but offered with a caveat, with barriers cited including a lack of time and difficulty in accessing the language academic journals are written in.

Theme	Examples in data	Examples
Education is constantly changing	4	<i>"Education is constantly changing and evolving with society...education research shapes how we respond to this evolution."</i> <i>"Education research is a necessity because of the constant changes that occur within all levels of education"</i>
Time constraints limit access	4	<i>"It is but often time constraints can make it difficult to seek out education research"</i> <i>"Educational research is hard to read. The literature takes time to absorb and process when teaching full time."</i>
It supports pedagogy / practice	4	<i>"Yes, research informs innovation and adaptations to what I do as an educator."</i> <i>"I am interested in education research which has practical implications because I think that teaching and learning can be studied scientifically."</i>

Table 10 – themes identified in analysis of responses to item 18

- **Item 20 - Is second language acquisition research relevant to your teaching practice? Please indicate a reason for your answer.**

Overall, the responses to item 20 were broadly positive, though again caveated by a number of participants. It was notable to find that the most prominent themes related to the ways in which SLA research could inform pedagogy, and the way teachers

considered it more or less relevant based on whether they perceived their school context to have a relatively larger or smaller number of EAL learners. In terms of the present study, it is promising that a number of participants recognised the connection between teaching EAL learners and what can be offered from the body of research on SLA.

Theme	Examples in data	Examples
Informs pedagogy and curriculum	6	<i>"Yes – both in terms of teaching languages and in terms of supporting learners with EAL."</i>
Large number of EAL students in respondent's school	4	<i>"It is very important to me as I have many EAL students"</i> <i>"Yes, in my school we have over 60 languages"</i>
Relevant to subject taught by respondent	3	<i>"Yes, as I teach MFL"</i>
Connection between teaching modern foreign languages and supporting EAL learners	2	<i>"EAL kids are learning English as a second language are here, they exist, so of course second language acquisition research is important to evolving our provision as teachers!"</i>
Language acquisition processes	2	<i>"Understanding how a second language is acquired is important when working with EAL students, as it provides a level of empathy and respect"</i>
Development of EAL writing	2	<i>"It would mainly be how this can affect their writing as they develop"</i>
Few/no EAL learners in respondents' school	2	<i>"It is not an aspect of teaching that I am at all confident with and my school has a relatively low number of EAL students, so no."</i>

Table 11 – themes identified in analysis of responses to item 20

As with items 18-20, the thematic analysis for items 21-23 was reviewed by a peer and feedback discussed. The results of this analysis will follow, however, one notable feature of several responses across all three items was a sense of alienation of teachers from researchers. This was most often expressed as either a lack of trust for researchers, or the belief that researchers were simply too detached from the realities of teaching to be able to offer meaningful or applicable insight. The overall results for

each item were somewhat heterogeneous, though similar themes or concerns recurred in different items. This may suggest that the participants in this survey view themselves in a similar way to those in the study by Tavakoli (2015), with their embeddedness in the day-to-day practice of teaching as key to their professional identity and practice, and potentially also their development. One participant encapsulated this in response to item 23:

“remember teachers deal with a lot of other things than just pedagogy. Safeguarding, pastoral and behaviour issues end up being the brunt of what we deal with along with an ever increasing admin load leaving little room for tolerance when, as the one colleague put it, “those in the ivory tower of the university” tell us we are doing it wrong and need to change.”

Given the earlier discussion of the prevalence of pseudoscientific ideas within teaching – frequently misinterpretations or inappropriate leaps from research findings, mediated through third parties (Dekker et al., 2012; Goswami, 2006) - it should not be a surprise to encounter intense scepticism, if not outright hostility. Antipathy amongst teaching staff towards research was identified as a key barrier to generating research led cultures by Lofthouse et al. (2014), and was discussed by Labaree as potentially being the result of teachers being “trapped...by their own experience-based sense of teaching as a radically particularistic practice” leading these teachers to the belief that “there are no generalities about teaching” (Labaree, 2003). The impression left by the above comment – that teachers ‘tolerate’ intervention from researchers *if* they have the time – certainly suggests the need for considerable effort toward building bridges to cross the teacher-research ‘gap’. Such scepticism regarding research has been noted in previous studies, including Borg (2009) and Kostoulas et al. (2019). This attitude could also be read as perhaps a slight exaggeration of what might otherwise be a healthy, critical stance towards research and the sweeping claims of impact made by some researchers (Chubb & Watermeyer, 2017; Gorard et al., 2020).

On the other hand, it is notable that this participant conveyed the opinion of a colleague who was highly sceptical of research and researchers, rather than that colleague responding to the survey itself. This adds weight to the conclusion offered in Chalmers et al. (2024), that teachers sceptical of research simply don’t respond to these types of survey on research engagement. This warrants further study in order to determine the reasons for this. One possibility is a replication of the study

of the attitudes of primary and secondary teachers in Germany to research by Nägel, Bleck and Lipowsky (2023), which indicated a broader range of possible influences from beliefs about the nature of teaching (an innate skill or set of learnable skills) and academic achievement during initial teacher education.

Item 21: If you don't use educational research to develop your teaching practice, what is/are the main reasons for this?

11 out of 21 respondents supplied a response to item 21. Comments varied in length, and some could be coded into multiple themes. The results of the thematic analysis are presented in table 12 below. Foremost amongst the responses to this item were a lack of time – a persistent barrier to teacher engagement with research identified in studies going back two decades – and a perception that educational research was detached from what actually happens in the classroom.

One participant stated that they were “*heavily directed by SLT as to how the curriculum is delivered*”, indicating a highly prescriptive environment curtailing the scope for professional judgement, with teaching limited to a set of protocols and procedures to be implemented. The priorities of the SLT team designing the curriculum and selecting the pedagogy are not communicated in this survey. However, it seems probable that the impact on Ofsted inspections and national examination results will have been central to the discussion, if not the priority. As Contu and Williams highlight, there are potentially “self-defeating consequences of the imposition of management control” (Contu & Willmott, 2003, p.291). There is a question here of how SLT in this teacher's context would respond if a teacher were to question the validity of the curriculum or pedagogy prescribed by SLT. Even if SLT have based their decisions on evidence made available through educational research, there remains a need for a teacher to critically reflect on the success or failure of a procedure they have attempted in order to learn and develop from this, especially if there is a shared goal of achieving a “self-improving system” (BERA-RSA, 2014). Ideally, the teacher would be equipped to iterate a successful implementation into other contexts and with other students. If early-career teachers are not prepared by ITE to engage with research as a ‘critical consumer’ and utilise that as a basis to challenge working practices, it is difficult to imagine how they can respond to this kind of teaching context except to capitulate to

the imposition of curriculum and pedagogy potentially to the detriment of the students in their care.

Theme	Examples in data	Examples
Lack of time	3	"time constraints"
Educational research is too detached from teaching/learning	2	"Educational research can be too detached from the realities of teaching and learning"
Research is inaccessible	2	"Barriers to access such as institutional logins"

Table 12 – themes identified in analysis of responses to item 21

- **Item 22: Are there any changes you would like to see in terms of the relationship between educational research and practice?**

As with item 21, there was considerable heterogeneity in the responses provided to item 22. Prominent amongst the responses from participants was a desire for research which informed teaching practice, and a greater awareness amongst researchers of the realities of teaching practice.

Theme	Examples in data	Examples
More research informed practice	4	"I would like to see more research influenced practise in regard to supporting EAL children"
A better understanding of the work teachers do	4	"Researchers need to understand the realities of teaching as it currently is, not as it once was or having never actually taught themselves."
Research to be more grounded practical teaching	2	"More students centred approaches to research alongside educational research being grounded in informing and supporting teachers and students."
Change both mode and means of dissemination to improve accessibility	2	"Easier access to academic journals, more teachers as researchers, easily accessed research 'headlines'"

Table 13 – themes identified in analysis of responses to item 22

- **Item 23: What could educational researchers do to make their work more accessible and/or relevant to teachers?**

As can be seen from table 14, a number of the themes align with the barriers or concerns identified in previous studies of this type. One theme which emerged from the analysis was of the desire for research to be disseminated through CPD. Alongside this was the desire for summaries or short form communication of research findings. NALDIC's journal *EAL*, the CCoT's *Impact*, and the websites of the EEF and The Bell

Foundation offer digests, reports or summaries of research. Only a minority of participants made any comment indicating awareness of these sources.

Theme	Examples in data	Examples
Teachers need practical strategies/interventions	3	<i>"Teachers need realistic strategies they can add to their practice"</i>
Remove financial barrier to accessing research	3	<i>"Provide easy and free access to their work"</i> <i>"Lobby the DfE to allow all teachers to attend conferences"</i>
Deliver findings in a short form report	3	<i>"a short digest / newsletter / pamphlet style report with practical recommendations"</i>
Deliver findings via CPD or workshops	3	<i>"Do workshop"</i> <i>"CPD opportunities"</i>
Disseminate via more accessible media	2	<i>"Make synopsis and key points easily accessible, easier to find, perhaps all within one platform"</i> <i>"Add them to newsletters and Facebook groups / LinkedIn"</i>
Teachers need examples of implementation of research findings	2	<i>"Educational researchers need to ensure they are providing practitioners with actionable targets"</i>

Table 14 – themes identified in analysis of responses to item 23

4.4 Interview responses

10 participants volunteered to participate in a follow up interview. All 10 were contacted using a personalised form of the email in appendix D, along with an additional consent form for the follow-up interview (appendix B). Of these 10, only one returned the consent form and arranged a time to participate in the interview. Although it is unfortunate that only one interview was conducted for this study, it was nonetheless highly informative. The insights garnered from the interview are particularly relevant to some of the lines of thought emerging from the literature review section of this paper, and the research questions themselves.

As brief context, the teacher who was interviewed is in the fifth year of teaching since obtaining QTS. There was also a pre-existing relationship between the teacher and I, as we both attended the same teacher education course to achieve QTS, but have not had opportunity to discuss our teaching experiences since leaving the course. In addition to being a teacher myself, this allowed me to take up a position as somewhat of an insider.

The interview was conducted via Microsoft Teams and recorded on the same platform. The interview was then transcribed, with sensitive information redacted. As discussed in the methodology, a semi-structured interview approach was adopted to allow scope for the interviewee to develop their thinking and for myself to probe areas of interest identified from their survey response or from topics brought up by the interviewee. From this point, the interviewee will be referred to as Teacher S. A copy of the transcription was provided to Teacher S so they could confirm the transcription accurately reflected their words, and that they were satisfied that sensitive information had been removed. All quotations from the transcription are provided verbatim.

It is worth noting that during the interview Teacher S spoke about their experience in two secondary schools, the first (School A) in a large urban centre where 72% of the students in the school were classified as EAL learners with 168 different languages spoken outside of school, and the second (School B) which is in a smaller town in a significantly more homogenous linguistic environment, where a small minority of students are classified as EAL. Teacher S was employed as an EAL teacher within a dedicated EAL department in School A, working there for two years, before moving to School B where they have worked for three years as a mainstream English teacher.

Although EAL was abolished as an independent subject in the 1980s and students mainstreamed, there are schools which adapted to the needs of their students by establishing groups of teachers with direct responsibility for EAL provision (e.g. Prentice, 2022). There appears to be a dearth of research on current practice on whole school level provision for EAL learners within schools in England, and it is therefore difficult to assess whether or not such EAL departments or working groups function systematically in the same or similar ways, or if they are more *ad hoc* in nature, and how long they have functioned for. This is highly problematic in the sense that a great deal of work may be unnecessarily replicated – essentially a series of siloed CoPs (or even isolated teachers) reinventing the wheel (Labaree, 2003) in terms of best practice and pedagogy for EAL learners – with the potential that when core members of the CoP retire or change schools the knowledge developed within this group is not disseminated to new contexts, but is instead dissipated along with the institutional memory of the EAL department/group. As was indicated by Teacher S in the interview, the result of their moving schools was dissemination of knowledge and practices, rather than dissipation.

In order to explore the interview a thematic coding analysis was implemented. The following themes were identified in the interview and are listed in the order of how frequently ideas connected to these themes occurred during the interview.

- Pedagogy and materials
- Impact of community/family attitude to education and school
- Ways in which interviewee and colleagues adapted/developed practice for the needs of EAL learners
- Impact of prior learning on EAL students' academic performance
- EAL students demonstrating stronger academic performance than monolingual peers
- Social integration of EAL students
- Types of difficulties/barriers experienced by EAL learners
- Assessment procedures for evaluating needs of EAL learners and setting

In line with much of the literature, practical questions of pedagogy and materials featured prominently in the interview, along with assessment of EAL learners. School A – the first Teacher S worked in after obtaining QTS - had a very well established group of teachers working together on the needs of the relatively large proportion of EAL learners (72% compared to national average of 20.5% in the 2024-25 school year – Department for Education, 2025a). Teacher S offered particular praise for the materials used extensively in School A, especially those which enabled the school to conduct assessments of learners' language skills and knowledge, which were produced by the Bell Foundation and Twinkl:

“...we'd probably get two or three a month for, come to join the school, to come over from Romania or Slovakia, and we'd do the EAL assessment on them using the Bell Foundation materials and, er, criteria...the most useful thing was being able to do those EAL assessments where we had a standard EAL test when any student come in.....Then we, at least we knew what we were dealing with and then we could then put them into smaller sets within the EAL classes...”

Teacher S went on to reiterate the role that material published by the Bell Foundation played in the teaching practice of School A, stating:

“...the main focus was around the Bell Foundation. Within my last school, you know, everything, everything revolved around it, along with knowing the students...”

As indicated above, when Teacher S changed schools, they endeavoured to disseminate the practices and knowledge acquired there to School B:

“I mean, a lot of staff room talk, I mean, when I first got to this school I, I brought a lot of materials from the last school into this one, you know, and I spread it around, you know, the English department for them to use and internally may have got spread around. But informally, there’s not been a lot of need for it here...”

Implicit in this latter are the differences in characteristics between the EAL learners in both schools, not simply in number but also in terms of their ability to thrive (or otherwise) academically in a school and wider societal context where English is the medium of very many aspects of life. Teacher S indicated that, in contrast to School A, in School B they are responsible for approximately 150 students of whom around 6 would be considered EAL. The student population in School B includes EAL students from Ukraine, Romania, China and Nigeria. They continued:

“...it’s very, very low in EAL. But what’s happening recently in this...in this area is whenever we’ve got a new student who’s coming from out of the area, that is normally an EAL student. Obviously, with what’s going on in the world, we – it’s getting more and more so....what I do find with the EAL students we do get, they’re usually very bright and they actually perform much better than the UK students we’ve got.”

A significant part of the success of the EAL students in School B is their prior education experience, particularly those from Ukraine:

“....the Ukrainians are - they learn English in their own – in their own country, and they come with, you know, a good knowledge. The thing is, with the EAL students, what come into this school, they’re very, very keen and they’re picking up the language really, really, really quickly, you know....They’ve got an interest, they want to learn. That’s the main difference we’ve got with the EAL students.”

Teacher S drew on the example of one student from China who came into School B with a strong grasp of English:

“I’m off into a RAG meeting¹ following this, and that student I’ve got down as extremely high ability, the top of the class compared to the rest. And again, I don’t know if it’s because she’s keen, her parents got high expectations, but there’s not, not really a problem with EAL students when it comes to language. Now, that particular class is split into two. So I take the language side and my head of department takes the literature side and I, I see the language side and I can just see that student excelling all the way through.”

¹ Red, Amber, Green meeting – a regular discussion of student progress by their teachers across subjects to evaluate the student’s academic progress and identify needs for support or challenge

“...she joined sort of probably a year and a half ago but it was quite strong then. She was put into a middle set, but I strongly believe that she needs to move into the top set now.”

Immediately prior to this, Teacher S also relayed how in their first year at School B, they were responsible for a bottom set of 10 students, three of whom were EAL students. These three “did equal or better than the rest of the class in the bottom set.” While notable, this latter point perhaps needs to be caveated. It is possible that this was an example of a concerning practice in some schools for setting EAL students, and they were erroneously placed in the bottom set as a result of inappropriate or inaccurate assessment of their academic ability and needs. A parallel to these was observed by Prentice (2022), where EAL students in one of the schools studied were placed in lower sets with students who required other forms of support where the one teacher must adapt for some students with SEN, some presenting challenging behaviour alongside those who are EAL status and refugees (Prentice, 2022). It is perhaps also possible that the reason these three made progress was Teacher S was better prepared to identify and address their particular needs as a result of their prior teaching experience, but less able to do so for the other students in the group.

The part of the interview discussing School B and students there stands in particular contrast to those of School A. When Teacher S joined the EAL department in School A, the use of materials from the Bell Foundation was already well integrated into the work the school did, and Teacher S was ‘apprenticed’ into this. Within the survey, Teacher S indicated that in the space of two years they participated in approximately 30 hours of CPD focused on teaching EAL learners, including leading a small number of sessions, and rated this at the highest point on the scale in terms of usefulness. Compared to the mean rating of CPD usefulness (item 13, mean = 4.5) and mean number of hours of CPD (item 12, mean = 3.727) in this survey, this was particularly high in both the rating and the amount of time given to CPD on this particular area of teaching. Teaching EAL learners was, of course, the focus of Teacher S’ role so the time dedicated to this should not be a source of surprise.

Perhaps more noteworthy are the lengths to which the EAL department in School A went to in order to understand the needs of their students, essentially undertaking an ethnological study in the field in order to better understand their students. A high proportion of their EAL students were from the Roma community in Romania, and

there was particular difficulty in the school in terms of not only integrating these students into school life, but also addressing the perceptions and attitudes of the teaching staff:

“So we needed to understand a lot about that [the Roma community]. So we couldn’t just purely get that from Bell Foundation, we actually sent teachers out to Romania, to the communities where these – these pupils was coming from and they were coming from two particular areas in Romania. And these areas, there’s so much deprivation, it was unbelievable. So, they had to go out and see it first hand for themselves and bring that information back to the school.”

Given the financial and time pressures on schools and teachers, this is a considerable investment of time and resources. In this instance it was not the linguistic needs of the students which prompted this approach, but the social-emotional needs of the students. The students in question, it seems, had presented particularly challenging behaviour in the school – behaviour possibly compounded by negative stereotypes about Roma communities:

“I mean, these children were getting beaten up in school [in Romania], it was normal and they couldn’t understand, within this school [in England] why they weren’t getting beat up? And because that was normal life for them back in Slovakia and in Romania. So, we had to make the – the staff understand, you know what they’re used to back in the hometown, you know, it makes us realise why they’re acting and pushing boundaries because they can suddenly get away with these boundaries, what they couldn’t do before, you know.”

“...although a lot came from the Bell Foundation, a lot of it came from internal and school research and physically going to the places where these people have come from, you know to – to get a – for understanding and then deliver it and just show people what things are like. The photographs you know, the lifestyle and – and everything about the Roma Gypsy community.”

As it is not clear if their findings were made public, the project described by Teacher S would not necessarily meet the definition of research used for this study. Teacher S did, however, use the word ‘research’ to characterise this, suggesting Teacher S understood this to mean an in depth study of a topic, including the gathering of data in the field. If it were made public as a direct engagement *in* research, and as a project in the field to understand the cultural background and perspective of their students, it is certainly impressive. It is also indicative of how seriously the teaching staff took the question of the social and emotional needs, and integration of the students who were also designated as EAL learners. While this may not meet the definition of research used in the literature, it goes far beyond the conception of either teaching as ‘craft’ or the teachers as executive technician. It would have made for an ideal opportunity for

researchers to enable teachers by allowing them to conduct the main project, then advise the teachers on the process of preparing a report for peer review and publication.

Amongst the ways to support EAL learners Teacher S reported using during the interview were bilingual dictionaries, access to a tablet in order to use Google Translate, and the use of dual coding (the use of text/verbal instruction along with images) for both classroom routines and subject content. Solomon and Wilson (n.d.) advocate for the use of Google Translate in the classroom to support EAL learners, but do not offer empirical support for its use.

There have been a variety of studies in other contexts. These have generally been qualitative or exploratory in nature, and have not to my knowledge covered the use of machine translation in live classroom situations as described by Teacher S, where a student uses the translation in real time with lesson material. These studies have cautioned about the danger of becoming reliant on the use of machine translation and its use without specific strategies to overcome the limitations of the tool in translating idiomatic expressions or larger bodies of text (e.g. Alharbi, 2023; Boukhelef, 2024; Jolley & Maimone, 2015; Nair, Ling, Salleh, Rajendran, Rani, and Apolonius, 2025; Pham, Nguyen, Tran, Huynh, Le, & Huynh, 2022; Sun, Yang & Liu, 2022).

Lee's (2023) systematic review identified some problems with Google Translate which need to be accounted for if utilised for pedagogical purposes:

- decreasing translation accuracy with increasing linguistic distance (particularly Arabic-English and Japanese-English)
- the impact of the quality of input on the quality of the translation output (i.e. effective use of Google Translate may be dependent on the EAL student already having developed L1 literacy, including punctuation and grammar)
- weaknesses in translation of colloquial language, nuances of formality, and cultural or interpersonal expectations

Although the use of Google Translate, or other forms of machine translation, may be a prevalent strategy for supporting EAL learners, the lack of research specifically in primary and secondary school contexts in England is a cause for concern given the limitations indicated above. This warrants study of its use and impact within these contexts with EAL learners to enable teachers to make evidence informed decisions.

Towards the close of the interview, Teacher S posed a problem in teaching practice they had considered from their own experience:

“I wonder if other teachers do as much as what I do... would it occur to them to think about some of these problems or would they be able to understand or conceptualise what... what problems an EAL student has? Or experiences?”

Indeed, this gets to the very core of the motivation for conducting the present study.

5.0 Discussion

As indicated above, the participants in the survey instrument were primarily teachers with 10 years' experience or less, indicating that this group were over-represented in responses compared to those with more than 10 years' experience. The sample size is also small at $n = 21$. This calls for caution when interpreting the results.

While a number of respondents expressed positivity towards educational and SLA research, and reported using academic journals as a source to inform their teaching practice, it was not possible to identify from qualitative data what impact these had on their practice, nor what these teachers had gleaned from this engagement with research. The interview clearly indicated that The Bell Foundation was an important mediating source of SLA research, informing the practice of the interview participants which they had acquired through participation in an existing CoP focused on supporting EAL learners in a school where there was high demand for this type of pedagogy.

- *RQ1 - Which sources do teachers turn to inform and develop their classroom practice?*

The option 'book by another teacher' was selected by almost all participants for both items. Almost half of the participants reported the use of academic journals in response to item 16 (sources referred to when encountering challenge teaching EAL learner) and 80% reported using academic journals in item 14 (sources for developing teaching practice). In line with previous studies, 70% of participants reported referring to a teacher with subject knowledge to develop their teaching practice (Hennesy and Lynch, 2019; Tavakoli, 2015; Williams & Coles, 2007). This reported engagement with academic publications is somewhat unusual when viewed in the context of previous surveys in the literature, where participants often expressed a preference for referring to other teachers within their CoP, or in some cases limited to no engagement with

academic journal publications (Borg, 2009; Tavakoli, 2015; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012). One interpretation of this may be that those completing the survey generally entered the profession around the time the turn back to an emphasis on research informed practice was carried out, and identify themselves as research engaged professionals. Though they might not use the term 'phronesis', they would likely recognise themselves in the description offered by Winch et al. (2015) of the professional teacher, developing their practice both within a CoP and through engagement with research. It is entirely possible that this was the basis on which they self-selected into responding to this survey.

Moreover, it is notable that even where participants expressed strident criticisms of the barriers to accessing research, or even the content and foci of educational and SLA research, the same participants reported referring to academic publications to develop their teaching practice (item 14). This suggests that these participants may have at least partially developed a 'critical consumer' stance towards research of the type advocated by Goldacre (2013) and BERA-RSA (2014).

The principal combinations of sources teachers reported in item 14 to develop their teaching practice included 'books written by other teachers', 'academic journals' and 'continuous professional development' (chosen in combination by 11 participants out of 21, 52.4%). These three options plus 'teachers with specific subject knowledge' was the next most frequent combination (8 of 21, 38.1%).

When asked what sources they refer to when encountering challenges teaching EAL learners, the pattern of choices was less consistent. The most frequent combination of choices was 'book by another teacher' and 'academic journal' (5 of 21, 23.8%), with the second most frequent combination being 'book by another teacher', 'academic journal' and 'continuing professional development' (2 of 21, 9.5%). It is perhaps indirectly indicative of the current state of knowledge regarding EAL practice in participants' schools that 'teachers with specific subject knowledge' and 'more experienced teachers' were each selected 3 times (but not by the same participants), while 'book by other teacher' was selected by 20 of 21 respondents. One possible explanation for this is that these participants are seeking guidance from other teachers on teaching EAL learners and are unable to obtain this from their CoP. They therefore

refer to sources outside of their immediate CoP. The frequency with which this option was selected for both item 14 and 16 may also suggest that this source is preferred, or offers something the respondents cannot gain elsewhere e.g. the ability to engage with knowledge of another practitioner in a way which allows greater depth of engagement, time to process what is read and a source to refer back to after trialling an activity or strategy.

- *RQ2 - What are teachers' views on the role research should play in informing and developing teaching practice?*
and
- *RQ3. What are teachers' views on the relationship between research and their own classroom practice?*

Participants expressed generally positive opinions about the role research could play, particularly with regards to classroom pedagogy, echoing similar attitudes expressed in previous studies (Bas & Kivilcim, 2017; Macaro, 2005; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Tekin, 2023; Williams & Coles, 2007). Some participants reported that engagement with research – including SLA research – helped them develop their ability to scaffold resources for EAL learners, to anticipate misconceptions and misunderstandings, and to shape the curricula they use to create a more inclusive learning environment. One MFL specialist expressed surprise at how little thought is given to vocabulary acquisition by teachers in other subjects, suggesting the value of teachers of different subjects coming together to share what they learn from research.

A number of participants commented on the important role research engagement could play in the context of an evolving society, with educational research offering a means to respond to this evolution. Another expressed the opinion that research informed innovations and adaptations to their work as a teacher.

Echoing sentiments found in earlier studies, some teachers held negative attitudes towards research expressing doubt about its relevance or the extent to which it was practical (Bas and Kivilcim, 2017; Borg, 2009, 2010; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Vanderlinde and van Braak, 2010).

- *RQ4. Where, if at all, do teachers access findings and recommendations from research?*

Findings for this research question were more equivocal. I was not able to garner information on any particular academic journals, or texts to which participants referred, even though a number of participants stated that they engaged with academic journals to inform their teaching practice. One participant made specific reference to a researcher in education who has a public profile and engages in public events. A number of teachers referred to various subject associations as important sources for developing their practice (e.g. ARLT, Classical Association), echoing the findings in Williams and Coles (2007). Two associations specific to EAL learners were cited as sources teachers engaged with – NALDIC and The Bell Foundation. As evidenced by the interviewee, one school made extensive use of the resources made available by the Bell Foundation. These latter organisations offer a medium for the transmission of research to teachers, with the NALDIC journal *EAL* offering condensed articles which either report original research in schools, or are informed by research.

In the interview with Teachers S, their first school – School A - conducted what the interviewee categorised as research in order to gather the information on the lives and backgrounds their students came from in order to inform practices and policies within the school.

- *RQ5. What do teachers perceive to be the key challenges in accessing research evidence?*

A variety of barriers to accessing research were identified by participants. Primary amongst these is a lack of time, reflecting findings of a variety of previous studies (Borg, 2009, 2010; Hennessy & Lynch, 2019; Vanderlinke & van Braak, 2010; Williams & Coles, 2007). The various demands of the role and the increasing workload leave teachers with very little time to engage with or in research. Some participants indicated that they found educational and SLA research to be too detached from the realities of the classroom and school life to be relevant or useful. Financial barriers, such as the cost of accessing journal articles was cited amongst reasons for not accessing research. Another teacher stated that the classroom environment, especially with various challenging behaviours, made embedding new practices or strategies stressful

and demanding. Two participants referred to whole school policies which mandate, or strongly encourage, certain pedagogical approaches which can limit attempts to apply what they have learned from research, echoing findings in Borg (2010). Another teacher cited the expectations of parents and the whole school ethos as limiting factors. A number of teachers expressed that they wanted practical examples of research findings being applied for them to emulate. Others stated a preference for summaries of research or for research reports to be presented in short form.

6.0 Limitations

This study is limited first of all in the small number of participants at $n = 21$. These participants were also relatively homogeneous, primarily being teachers with 10 years of experience or less, and working in secondary school phases. Additionally, the channels used to distribute the survey have likely skewed the type of participants towards those who are engaged with educational research.

In item 5 participants are asked to indicate how many EAL students they teach across all of their classes. A flaw in the survey design here is that respondents are not asked for sufficient information to determine how this compares across their entire workload/number of students for whom they are responsible. Participants responded to this item in differing ways, indicating the lack of clarity. Future studies may benefit from using a limited response option, possibly asking for participants to indicate what percentage of all of their students are considered EAL learners, with options binned as 0%, 1-5%, 6-10% etc.

7.0 Conclusion

As with the previous quarter century of research into teacher research engagement, many of the old barriers remain in place – lack of time, financial barriers, perplexingly verbose academic articles, and a certain antipathy towards research and researchers amongst some teachers. However, participants were broadly positive – even enthusiastic – about the relevance and role of educational and SLA research.

There is some evidence – adding to that developed by Prentice (2022) amongst others – that there are schools and teachers going to great lengths to integrate EAL learners into their schools. The point remains that not only can more be done, the means to achieve this are within reach, but requires us to bridge the gap between teaching practice and both educational and SLA research.

The findings of this study indicate that there remains considerable scope for the cross-fertilisation of pedagogy and practice informed by SLA research into the body of practice used by mainstream teachers and EAL specialists. The results suggest a potential way forward for increasing teacher engagement with research, particularly SLA research for teaching EAL learners. The books on teaching EAL learners by Chalmers and Bennett (2022), and Leung and Creese (2010) with NALDIC offer existing, research informed resources created by experienced teachers for other teachers, and may offer a fruitful model to overcome the practice-research gap through a medium teachers already report making wide use of.

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Appendix A

Participant information for online survey

Survey of EAL teachers' engagement with research

CUREC Approval Reference: EDUC_1266991

General Information

The aim of this research is to gather data on the receptiveness of in-service teachers to pedagogical research, particularly regarding approaches to teaching EAL learners.

We appreciate your interest in participating in this questionnaire. You have been invited to participate as you are an in-service teacher working in a school teaching to the UK national curriculum. Please read through this information before agreeing to participate (if you wish to) by ticking the 'yes' box below. You may ask any questions before deciding to take part by contacting the researcher (details below).

The Principal Researcher is Gavin Jackson, who is attached to the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. This research is being completed as part of anMSc in Applied Linguistics under the supervision of Dr Robert Woore.

Participants will be asked to complete a survey on their teaching practice. This should take about 6-8 minutes. We hope to understand how teachers develop their classroom practice regarding EAL learners, if and how teachers engage with pedagogical research, and what barriers teachers experience in accessing research. The data will be used to complete a research dissertation and to write up as a study, and will be deposited in the Oxford University Research Archive.

Do I have to take part?

No. Please note that participation is voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you may withdraw at any point for any reason before submitting your answers by pressing the 'Exit' button / closing the browser. Upon completing the survey, it will not be possible to withdraw any data entered as it will be anonymous, and therefore not possible to link data entered back to you.

We have included a 'Prefer not to say' option for each set of questions should you prefer not to answer a particular question.

How will my data be used?

We will not collect any data from the survey that could directly identify you.

Your IP address will not be stored. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure that data remain confidential. Your responses are anonymous. Any write-up of this study will be anonymous, so no participants can be identified.

At the end of the questionnaire, we will ask you whether you are willing to take part in a follow-up interview. In this case, we will ask for your contact information. This will be stored separately and securely from the survey responses. We will contact you separately with an additional consent form, if you should decide to participate in an interview.

The responses you provide will be stored in a password-protected electronic file on University of Oxford secure servers and may be used in academic publications, conference presentations, reports for external organisations. Identifiable information (your contact details, if you choose to leave them) will be deleted as soon as it is no longer required for the research. Research data will be stored for at least 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

If you agree to participate in a follow-up interview. An audio recording of the interview will be made at the time of the interview. This will be transcribed, with any identifying information removed, as soon as possible. Once transcribed, the audio recording will be permanently and securely deleted.

Who will have access to my data?

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data and, as such, will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

The data you provide may be shared with the research supervisor as appropriate to support this project. The results will be written up for an MSc degree.

We would like to use the data in future studies, and to share data with other researchers (e.g. in online databases). Data will have identifying information removed before it is shared with other researchers or results are made public.

Who has reviewed this research?

This research has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee EDUC_1266991.

Who do I contact if I have a concern or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact me (gavin.jackson@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the University of Oxford Research Governance, Ethics & Assurance (RGEA) team at rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk or on 01865 616480.

Please note that you may only participate in this survey if you are 18 years of age or over.

☐ I certify that I am 18 years of age or over

If you have read the information above and agree to participate with the understanding that the data (including any personal data) you submit will be processed accordingly, please tick the box below to start.

☐ Yes, I agree to take part

Appendix B

Study of EAL teachers' engagement with research – follow-up interviews

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: EDUC_1266991

Version 1.2. - 1st May 2025

Thank you for completing our questionnaire about your engagement with research as a teacher of EAL students. Thanks also for indicating your willingness to take part in a follow-up interview. I am contacting you now to give you more information about this strand of the study and to invite you formally to take part. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part. If you are happy to take part, please complete the attached consent form, and send this back to me. Please use an institutional (e.g. school) email address.

Why is this research being conducted?

This study is being conducted by me, Gavin Jackson, as part of my Master's degree in Applied Linguistics at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. This research is being completed under the supervision of Dr Robert Woore.

The study is intended to gather data on in-service teachers' engagement with pedagogical research, particularly with regard to approaches to teaching EAL learners. We hope to understand how teachers develop their classroom practice regarding EAL learners, if and how teachers engage with pedagogical research, and what barriers teachers experience in accessing research. The interviews are designed to gather more detailed information than can be gathered via a survey.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We are inviting some teachers who have completed the online survey to take part in the follow-up interviews. I am contacting you about this because you indicated that you might be willing to take part in an interview.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research, without giving a reason, by advising us of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is 27th June 2025. Any data collected will be held for no more than three years, unless you ask us to delete data collected.

What will happen if I take part in the research?

Interviews will be conducted via video conferencing (MS Teams) and will take approximately 15 minutes. For the interview, we would like to audio record you because this will allow for further analysis of your responses and ensure an accurate account of how you responded. Any part of the interview reported in the research will be anonymised.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?

There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks to taking part. All parts of the survey and interviews will be anonymised when analysed. The data collected will be handled according to relevant data protection legislation at every stage.

Are there any benefits in taking part?

While there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the research, it is hoped that this study will lead to research focused on areas of particular need for in-service teachers, and to identify means by which research can be shared with teachers in ways which can be translated into classroom practice.

What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?

We are interested in your experiences of teaching EAL learners and your views on pedagogical research. The information you provide will help us better understand how teachers develop their teaching practice with respect to EAL learners, and whether and how they engage with research on pedagogy and second language acquisition.

The researcher and academic supervisor will have access to the research data. This will be stored digitally and password-protected by the University of Oxford for a minimum of three years, following university policy. The data will be pseudonymized, meaning that you cannot be identified directly from the data.

Audio recordings will be securely and permanently deleted as soon as they have been transcribed. Research data and consent forms will be stored on the University of Oxford OneDrive system within the Department of Education for three years.

Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?

The findings from the research will be written up as a master's dissertation. No personal identifying information of participants will be used in the write up of this research.

We would like your permission to use direct quotations in any research outputs.

A copy of my dissertation will be deposited online in the [Oxford University Research Archive](#) where it will be publicly available to facilitate its use in future research.

Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance website at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

Who has reviewed this research?

This research has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: EDUC_1266991).

Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like any further information about this study, or if you have any questions, please contact me (gavin.jackson@education.ox.ac.uk) or my supervisor (robert.woore@education.ox.ac.uk) and we will be happy to answer your questions.

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact me or my supervisor using the email addresses provided above. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal

complaint, please contact the University of Oxford Research Governance, Ethics & Assurance (RGEA) team at rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk or on 01865 616480.

Many thanks for your interest in this study and I hope to meet you online soon!

Gavin Jackson

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference: EDUC_1266991

Purpose of Study: *The study is intended to gather data on the receptiveness of in-service teachers to pedagogical research, particularly with regard to approaches to teaching EAL learners.*

**Please initial each
box if you agree
with the
statement**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet version 1.2, dated 1st May 2025 for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until **27/6/2025**, without giving any reason.

I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

I understand that I will not be identifiable from any publications or presentations.

If I volunteer to participate in a follow up interview, I consent to being audio recorded.

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option):

a) I do not wish to be quoted. **or**

b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable.

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

I agree to take part.

☐

_____	<u>dd / mm / yyyy</u>	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature

_____	<u>dd / mm / yyyy</u>	_____
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix C

EAL and education research survey

Start of Block: Consent

Please download the participant information form via the Dropbox link below. If you are happy to participate please select the boxes below to confirm you are 18 years old or older, and you agree to take part. Participant information

☐

Yes, I agree to take part and I certify that I am 18 years of age or over

☐

No, I do not agree to take part

End of survey Thank you for your time. You may now exit the survey.

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Section 1

Q1 Where is your current/most recent school located?

☐

England

☐

Wales

☐

Scotland

☐

Northern Ireland

☐

International school outside of the UK

☐

No answer

Q2 What Key Stages do you currently teach? (choose all that apply)

☐

EYFS

☐

Key Stage 1

☐

Key Stage 2

☐

Key Stage 3

☐

Key Stage 4

☐

Key Stage 5

☐

No answer

Q3 How many years of teaching experience do you have? (please round to the nearest year)

Q4 Which route did you take to train as a teacher and obtain QTS? (select appropriate route if currently working towards QTS)

- ☐ University based PGCE in England
 - ☐ School centred ITT in England
 - ☐ PGDE in Scotland
 - ☐ PGCE in Wales
 - ☐ PGCE in Northern Ireland
 - ☐ PGCEi
 - ☐ No answer
 - ☐ Other
-

Q5 Across all of your current classes, how many of your students are considered an EAL student? (a pupil exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English – Department for Education)

Q6 During your PGCE or ITT, were there any lectures or seminars focused on teaching EAL learners?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't recall
- ☐ No answer

Q7 During your PGCE or ITT, how many hours of lectures or seminars focused on teaching EAL learners? (please estimate if unsure - you can leave this blank if your last answer was 'no' or 'don't recall')

Q8 How useful have you found the taught PGCE or ITT sessions on teaching EAL learners in your classroom practice and preparation?

Not at Slightly Moderately Very Extremely Not
all useful useful useful useful Applicable
useful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Move the slider to indicate your answer



Q9 During your PGCE or ITT, how many hours of independent work were you required to complete that was focused on teaching EAL learners? (e.g. reading journal articles or whole books, preparation for written assignments) (please estimate if unsure - you can leave this blank if your previous answer was 'no' or 'don't recall')

Q10 How useful have you found independent work during your PGCE or ITT on teaching EAL learners in your classroom practice and preparation?

Not at Slightly Moderately Very Extremely Not
all useful useful useful useful Applicable
useful

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Move the slider to indicate your answer



Q11 Have you been part of any CPD sessions which included approaches to teaching EAL students?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't recall
- ☐ No answer

Q12 In the last five years, how many hours of CPD have you participated in which included approaches to teaching EAL students? (please estimate if unsure - you can leave this blank if your last answer was 'no' or 'don't recall')

Q13 If you have participated in such sessions, how useful have you found the CPD on teaching EAL learners in your classroom practice and preparation?

Not at all useful Slightly useful Moderately useful Very useful Extremely useful Not Applicable

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Move the slider to indicate your answer



End of Block: Section 1

Start of Block: Engagement with research



Q14 We would like to know how you develop your practice as a teacher. Do you use any of the following to develop your teaching practice? (select all that apply)

- ☐ More experienced teachers you know/work with
- ☐ Teachers with specific subject knowledge you know/work with
- ☐ Resources/articles available from subject associations (e.g. National Association for the Teaching of English, Association of Teachers of Mathematics, Association for Language Learning)
- ☐ Academic journals or publications
- ☐ Blog written by other teachers (please specify below)
- ☐ Book written by other teachers (please specify below)
- ☐ Visual media produced by other teachers (e.g. Youtube channel, TikTok videos – please specify below)
- ☐ Continuous professional development provided by school
- ☐ Other (please specify below)
- ☐ No answer

Q15 Please add any additional information for the previous question here:



Q16 If you encounter a challenge or other difficulty in supporting an EAL learner to make progress in your subject, what sources do you turn to? (select all that apply)

- ☐ More experienced teachers you know/work with
- ☐ Teachers with specific subject knowledge you know/work with
- ☐ Resources/articles available from subject associations (e.g. National Association for the Teaching of English, Association of Teachers of Mathematics, Association for Language Learning)
- ☐ Academic journals or publications
- ☐ Blog written by other teachers (please specify below)
- ☐ Book written by other teachers (please specify below)
- ☐ Visual media produced by other teachers (e.g. Youtube channel, TikTok videos – please specify below)
- ☐ Continuous professional development provided by school
- ☐ Other (please specify below)
- ☐ No answer

Q17 Please add any additional information for the previous question here:

Q18 Does education research have a role to play in teaching EAL students? (e.g. second language acquisition, classroom pedagogy, material or curriculum development, teacher training) If so, what role?

Q19 Is education research relevant to your teaching practice? Please indicate a reason for your answer.

Q20 Is second language acquisition research relevant to your teaching practice? Please indicate a reason for your answer.

Q21 If you don't use education research to develop your teaching practice, what is/are the main reasons for this?

Q22 Are there any changes you would like to see in terms of the relationship between educational research and practice?

Q23 What could educational researchers do to make their work more accessible and/or relevant to teachers?

Q24 We would like to discuss your feedback in further detail where possible. If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview directly related to this survey, please leave a contact email address below. We anticipate the interview to take 15-30 minutes. In return for volunteering to participate in the follow up interview, we would be happy to offer a CPD session on the subject of supporting EAL learners for your school. This session will be lead by the MSc student conducting this research.

End of Block: Engagement with research

Appendix D

Good afternoon,

Thank you so much for completing the EAL and education research survey, and for volunteering to participate in a follow-up interview. There have been many informative responses, and I'm confident these will prove to be very valuable! I apologise if this email seems impersonal - at this stage I only have access to the email address and not your name.

I have included a letter outlining your rights as a participant and a consent form. Please take a moment to read this document. When you are satisfied, please complete the consent form and return it to me.

I realise that there are many demands made of teachers and pressures on your time. I would like to begin interviews from 20th May 2025. If you would prefer an earlier date, then I would be happy to accommodate this. The interview will take place via Teams, so there is flexibility about times and days. Please let me know what fits your schedule and I will make arrangements accordingly.

As promised, I would be happy to arrange for a CPD session for your school in return for your participation in the interview. Details for this can be agreed after the interview.

If your circumstances have changed, and you are no longer able to participate, then you can of course withdraw.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Jackson
MSc Applied Linguistics
Department of Education
University of Oxford

Appendix E



EAL and education research survey

Calling all UK trained teachers!

We want to hear about your experience of working with EAL students!

Please complete the survey using the QR code and share with your colleagues!



Interview schedule

Introduction:

- Welcome, request consent to record
- Reminder interview will be transcribed and shared with interviewee for confirmation of redaction of sensitive information
- Brief overview of main topics to cover

Background:

- Can you give me overview of your school context, some of the characteristics of the school, the EAL students?
- What kind of linguistic backgrounds do the students come from?

School life, subject and pedagogy:

- Are there any particular barriers that you notice tend to come up with EAL students or students from particular backgrounds?
- Are there any particular barriers that you're aware of in terms of other subjects, science, math, etcetera?
- How do EAL learners do relative to the to the UK students in terms of that language side of the subject?

Teaching practice and experience with EAL learners:

- Can you tell me some of the things you have learned for teaching EAL students and how you learned it?

Continuing professional development:

- You mentioned for EAL CPD you've had about 30 hours, for that and you grade it as a seven to say you found that extremely useful. Can you talk to me a little bit about that?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the content of the CPD and where you source that information from?
- Is there anything you have learned from teachers you work with that you have found really useful or important, whether or not it was in formal CPD?

Role of research in school and interviewee's teaching practice:

- In the survey, you were quite positive about the relevance of educational research and SLA research for you as a teacher – could you talk a little about that?
- Is there any particular researcher, or any particular thing you have read, that has stuck with you? Maybe changed the way you think about something or the way you work with students?

Concluding remarks:

- Is there anything that you feel we should have talked about today?

Appendix G

Applicant: Gavin Jackson

Principal Investigator: ROBERT WOORE

Department: Education

Study title: Research and practice in EAL teaching: an exploration of teachers' attitudes and engagement

(Version: 1.0)

Ethics reference: Education (Educ) DREC - 1266991

Dear ROBERT WOORE,

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that the above research study described in the application and other supporting documentation submitted to the committee has been carefully considered on behalf of the Education (Educ) DREC in accordance with the University's regulations and policy for ethics approval of research involving human participants, human tissue and/or personal data. The opinion is as follows:

Opinion of Research Ethics Committee: Favourable Opinion

Subject to the following conditions:

Decision Date: 17 Apr 2025, 01:20

Opinion End Date: 17 Oct 2026

If favourable, insurance-provided indemnity arrangements will be in place between the decision date and opinion end date and you may now commence your study activities. Should you plan to continue the research beyond the end date above, it is your responsibility to ensure that you request, and receive, an extension (via amendment) from the committee for indemnity to remain in place. You may be required to provide a justification.

Please note the following:

Amendments: Should there be any subsequent changes to the reviewed study, applications for amendments can be made via the Oxford Ethics Application System (Worktribe Ethics).

Reports: Studies considered by OxtREC are expected to submit an *annual progress report* on each anniversary of study approval, until the study is completed. An end of study report is also required.

Audit: This study may be selected for audit at the discretion of the Research Governance, Ethics and Assurance Team.

Data safety: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all data collected during the course of the study is stored and transferred safely and securely in accordance with University requirements. Further guidance and advice are available from the [Research Data Team](#). Additional information is available at <https://researchsupport.web.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics>

Yours Sincerely

Education Ethics Officer