

# Issues that Affect Early Childhood Students with EAL Needs: Exploring Scaffolding Strategies

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## Abstract

*This study examined issues that affect early childhood students with English as an additional language (EAL) needs and explored scaffolding strategies. The research method used was qualitative. The stratified random sampling method was used for data collection. A sample of 7 female early childhood classroom teachers participated in the semi formal interview. Each participant was a teacher of students from Preschool to Grade 1 (3- to 6-year-old). There were three distinct findings in this research. Firstly, the main factors that affect language development for students with EAL, needs are the hidden philosophies of managerial education professionals. The hidden educational philosophies are revealed in educational practices that will either progress towards cutting edge mechanism and programmes to support EAL students. On the other hand, there were educational programmes that do not cater to EAL students in curriculum or structure, they also reveal their philosophy, though it may not be admitted verbally. Secondly, among EAL early childhood education students, there is no relationship between the social, emotional and behavioral issues and limited English language competency. Thirdly, the most effective teaching and learning strategies for early childhood students with EAL students is the 'direct instruction' approach.*

## 1. Introduction

The need to teach English as an Additional Language (EAL) has grown over the last century. Since English is known and accepted as the universal language, it has become a great advantage to be able to speak and understand it. Migration of people to English speaking countries also happens to be a major cause for this. The United States is no exception; actually, it is the migration hub. Yearly, millions of immigrants come to the United States; most of these households would have at least one early childhood student (0 to 8 years old). Therefore, there has been a growing interest in EAL to scaffold such students. As part of the applied academics of this age, the demand

for EAL reaches outside the classroom of English-speaking countries. People in non-English speaking countries are seeking this privilege via online portals. In the United States, there are several EAL online learning opportunities for university graduates to teach English to Chinese students. The market is so huge that teachers alone cannot fill the vacuum; any suitable person with a Bachelor Degree is accepted and trained. Also, there is a large exodus of teachers from the United States to other non-English speaking countries to teach English, China again has the greatest demands. This allows for student teachers to gain the EAL experience that is in high demand.

These concerns have spiraled into research done to facilitate the evolving need for EAL instruction, training of instructors and reflection of our educational institution's ability and readiness to assist in this movement. Many of which were done with university students, this phenomenon has generated a body of research. Studies were done with students of higher education. This is needful, since there is a deliberate attempt to create a diverse cultural population at the university level. Several EAL research were also done with Secondary School students who are able to articulate their needs. However, there are not many studies done with students at the early childhood level. The notion of an additional language acquisition is simpler in the earlier years may have contributed to this lack. Nevertheless, since the developmental areas of early childhood students interconnect, EAL students are affected in more areas than language development/ acquisition alone. This rationale has contributed to the aim of this study as will be mentioned later. There are not many papers done to support early childhood. Reid [1] did a longitudinal, correlation case study with EAL students and monolingual English students in a Grade 1 class to assess their comprehension skills. Dobinson [2] did a qualitative case study to find ways of helping EAL students in the mainstream classroom. Bernstein [3], also did a qualitative case study with teachers of early childhood students as it relates to EAL.

## 2. Research Background

Many studies investigate the needs of EAL students in the classroom. Therefore, the contextual background of this research is the interest developed as it relates to the factors affecting learning in the EAL students in the mainstream classroom after many years of observation. Several opportunities to scaffold these students occurred since 14 of my years as a teacher were spent at an International School. These are schools that consciously and classroom teachers to meet the needs of EAL students in their mainstream classroom. Moreover, at my present job compound a transition and English acquisition, various strategies should be used to lessen or eradicate confusion. The encounter grew as I interface a class of 95% immigrants with EAL needs. Though the language acquisition need is an immediate observation, close scrutiny would reveal that there are other interlocking factors that affect the language developmental benchmark. According to Dobinson et al [2] there are many experiences that are quite complex for EAL students, especially those in the Early Childhood arena. These goals would be extremely difficult to meet if there are not well thought out interventions. Consequently, the need to investigate arises to provide well research informed activities that can make a difference in classroom practice.

The above information lends itself to detect the research gaps as it relates to EAL early childhood learners. Firstly, there are no studies addressing specifically the issues that are common only to early childhood students. They develop differently from other students and more rapidly. According to Koen et al. [4], early childhood students develop in ways such as Psychomotor, Social-Emotional, Language, Cognitive, and Self-Care Skills.

As a result, the importance and relevance of the research topic are to first detect the true needs of EAL students, arrange these needs in a logical order and skillfully address them so that English language learning can happen smoothly. Since these students are at a critical stage of overall development, other factors will need to be addressed as well. This research recognizes that students' developmental process in the early years happens in five areas, linguistically, socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively. The interesting part of this research is to meet students benchmark or at least get as close as possible. At this developmental stage where separation anxiety and other developmentally appropriate issues can

## 3. Literature Review

It is agreed in some educational circles that students who are learning English as an additional

language need special support to aid in their overall development. However, while the evidence is clear that most educational institutions are quite on their way to providing that extra help, some hold fast to the idea that students will acclimate even without support. Amazingly, this debate exists even among educational institutions for early childhood students. Whiteside and Norbury [5] researched the need for specialized support among English as an additional language learner (EAL) specifically in the early childhood years. Students between ages 4 to 7 were placed into two correlated groups of EAL and monolingual students, totaling 7267 students. They were compared in several areas of development, his findings were that students with EAL needs also have a greater need for support socially, emotionally and in the area of behavior. This research seeks to explore factors that affect learning for students with EAL: strategies to support in early years. Therefore, related studies are hereby examined to develop a more meaningful conversation in hopes of adding to the body of knowledge that exist. It is also a mandate to create more insightful thinking on the parts of educational stakeholders. The studies will be analyzed are a mixture of quantitative and qualitative using the inductive and deductive reasoning according to each research design. There are several data collection methods represented here that goes to show the diverseness of this pool. The fact that these research that will be presented were done in several different countries is also a testament to various world views as it relates to EAL and early childhood.

### 3.1. Catering for EAL/D Students' Language Needs in Mainstream Classes: Early Childhood Teachers' Perspectives and Practices in One Australian Setting

This study by Dobinson and Buchori [2] sheds light on the complexity of English language learning in the early years. It firstly recognizes that students learning English as an additional language have to encounter more than a new language. A small group of Early Childhood Australian teachers from the mainstream setting were chosen for this yearlong study. They each had students who were between the ages four to eight years old. A qualitative data collected is used as four teachers were investigated. It took the form of a small case study with four case studies within it. Two teachers taught K, with five- and six-year-old students, one teacher of Grade one students who were six and seven and one teacher of Grade two with seven- and eight-year-old students. The design was semi-structured interviews, and observations of teaching practices, discussion focuses

on the challenges and dilemmas that mainstream teachers can face in the absence of effective formalized English language teacher education. Recommendations for possible ways forward are made. These teachers were interviewed in relation to their viewpoint and reservations as it relates to their:

- 1) Balancing the use of the home language and the use of Standard Australian English in classrooms
- 2) Enhancing the knowledge of mainstream teachers' knowledge of, and confidence in, using appropriate practices to enhance English language learning experiences for EAL/D students.

The analyzing of the data relied heavily on Credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability. There were loopholes such as inaccuracy of the answer as it relates to specific questions asked. The limitation was that a four-case study paper could in no way incite an overall assumption as it relates to students with EAL needs.

The recommendations were firstly, since early childhood students were at varying levels, there should be an increase opportunity for students to use their home language to help them feel settled. This is expected to create an avenue for students to feel comfortable to use English.

Secondly, teachers should be given the knowledge specifically to deal with blended classrooms with EAL students. If not, there will be reliance on drill and low-level type of recall type of activities. Thirdly, the lack of strategies will result in anxieties transferred to the students. Fourthly, this work did not directly enter into the ongoing debate of whether EAL students should be catered to in the mainstream classroom, or they should be catered to in a separate programme. However, it was recommended that the mainstream teachers need to shift their mindset as it relates to the needs of their entire class as opposed to their English speakers only.

### **3.2. Creating Inclusive EAL Classrooms: How Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Instructors understand and Mitigate Barriers for Students who have Experienced Trauma**

The qualitative action research done by Wilbur [6] addressed the issues of supporting students learning English as an additional language. It looks deeper into the learning environment and deciphers the process of the transition of many EAL students, which includes trauma. Therefore, this work proves that students need more support than that of linguistic help. Interviewing was the method used to gather data. There were three

phrases, individual interviews, focus group interviews and follow up individual interviews. This method was chosen because it lends itself to the investigation of other intricate issues that affect EAL learners. This way would spark a more accurate discussion in finding support for such students. The criteria for selection of interviewees were, teachers in any level of the LINC programme, individuals with a keen interest in the research topic, a representative from the community college, immigrant service agencies and community-based providers and community organization.

Despite the many definitions, in this study, trauma was defined to mean, 'an incident of grave threat to life or one's personal integrity or unexpected or violent death of others.'

Some findings from this study derived from instructors stated that EAL students who were traumatized behaved unusual during class time. Behaviors such as difficulty engaging, focusing, absences from class, no desire to participate, and awkward social skills were noted. There were connections also to learning difficulties and trauma. Violence was found to be the most obvious form of oppression as it relates to EAL students. However, there were other marginalization issues such as racism, sexism, social class, literacy levels and technological skills.

Some recommendations were as follows: instructors alluded to the reformation of policies to properly scaffold such EAL students. Another strong view was the importance of creating a wholesome community in the classroom for these students. Also compassion and open-mindedness as it relates to EAL students in this plight should be seen as part of the values of teaching practice.

### **3.3. Creating the Right Conditions to Develop as Writers, Multilingual Students Must Have Opportunities for Authentic Expression**

Laman and Flint [7] stressed the issue of not only new but also veteran teachers who struggle with finding and implementing strategies that are great for EAL students in the classroom. Though their goal is to meet them, there is a press towards getting those students quickly acclimated to the mainstream classroom. In this way, the teacher can return to their regular teaching and head toward success in assessments and other areas. However, Cambourne seminal work found that these students need to be supported linguistically to become multilingual writers. Since students are prone to learn from demonstration, then those skills can be demonstrated through multilingual interest in the classroom. These can be as simple as the opportunity given to express in

another language to the inclusion of another language in essay or poetry writing. The responses to these efforts should be positive and meaningful. The classroom environment should exemplify multilingualism with demonstrations such as multilingual labels, books, etc.

The 'micro- writing' is a term used to describe the short burst of writing that could be used to encourage EAL students. It is believed that 'quickwrites' are an easier way to develop multilingual writers. These can manifest in such ways as summarization, after students would have watched a video or read a story, etc. Students can be given creative response prompts to build their higher order thinking. In this way they are empowered to learn and express their thoughts and ideas in English better.

### **3.4. The Persistence and Functional Impact of English Language Difficulties Experienced by Children Learning English as an Additional Language and Monolingual Peers**

Whiteside and Norbury [8] in this quantitative research, investigated whether a monolingual normed English language test can identify EAL students with English language difficulties that is liable to affect their functional academic achievement. The students used were ages 5 -8 years old. The teachers completed questionnaires for 7,267 students who attended 161 state-maintained schools. The questionnaire included a communication checklist of strength and weakness of students. Their findings were that students who spoke only English may have some practical value for identifying EAL children who need support with language learning, despite their country of origin of their language adversities.

## **4. Methodology**

A primary source will be used for data collection. According to Seton Hall University (n.d.) [9], primary sources are an interpretation of events based on eyewitness. The teachers of Early Childhood students will be the ones supplying the data. However, there are many reasons that other primary data such as ECE students, and artifacts, will not be used, this ranges from the complexity of data to the accuracy in the interpretation of artifacts. To achieve the desired information, the interviews questions will be somewhat too complicated and therefore cannot be answered by early childhood students. At the Early childhood level, some students are not even aware that they speak two languages. They are cognizant to the fact that there may be some words that they use at school and that at home there is a different way to say the same thing. However, to differentiate between two

or multiple languages will be too advanced for them. The reason for their struggle and ways that these students can be met will be better articulated by an educator who has done teacher preparatory programmes. The second reason why the interview will be used for data collection is that, though the data of students' artifacts was contemplated, the interpretation could have been time consuming. Teachers, who teach Early Childhood students, would have encountered several artifacts such as drawings, recorded conversations, daily questions, parental interaction and many more that enable them to form conclusive reasoning. All this richness will be generated through the interview, for this reason, inexperienced teachers will not be a part of this study. Teachers will range from 2 years of experience and higher. This continuum is important for the cultivation of loaded data from several perspectives.

## **5. Data Analysis, Discussion and Results**

This study will use the relational analysis, inductive approach. There will be eight (8) semi formal interviews four for Preschool and Pre-K and four for Kindergarten and grade One. Each interview will be read individually, starting with the oldest group. The reason for this is that Grade 1 and Kindergarten are similarly structured in terms of pedagogical content and age. Their interview notes will read, the researcher will identify concepts and ideas from the data. Then these will be coded, and the common codes and redundant codes will be recognized. Codes will be reduced to as little as possible as a way of summarizing each case. Then the researcher will proceed to another case. When all of the Grade 1 and Kindergarten interview notes are reviewed, the next set of interview notes will follow. They will follow the procedure of the first group. Coding will be done as well, then a summary of differences, commonalities and structures will be noted. Some interviews may answer questions that arose in another interview. However, there may be unanswered questions that will be noted in hopes that another type of data will answer. Myths can also be identified at this point.

### **5.1. Analysis of the Data**

The chart above shows the demographics of the teachers who were interviewed for the study. There were seven teachers. Three teachers were from the Grade 1 classroom, two Kindergarten teachers, one Pre-Kindergarten teacher and one Preschool teacher. The participants years of service in the early childhood classroom varies vastly. From the least to the longest serving teachers are as follows, the youngest teacher of

Grade 1, had been teaching for 3 years. The lone Pre-kindergarten teacher had been in the classroom for 7 years. The Preschool teacher has been an Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher 10 years. One of the Kindergarten teachers has a ECE career of 12 years, and the other Kindergarten teacher has a 15 years ECE career. A Grade 1 teacher has been in the classroom the longest, 20 years.

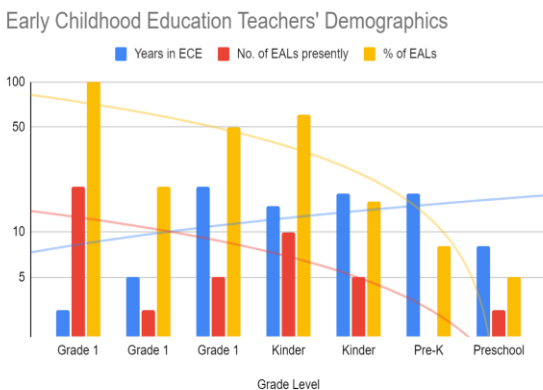


Figure 1. Demographics of teachers who participated in the interview

The data from the interview for the work, 'Issues that Affect Early Childhood Students with EAL Needs: Exploring Scaffolding Strategies.' The raw data was placed into many codes. Some larger headings were created taking the smaller codes into consideration as well as the research questions. Three larger codes emerged; these are Language Development, Support for EAL students and Other Factors Affecting EAL students, which are underlined. The number of EAL students in each classroom shown in green, varies from 6% to 100%. The participants are all female, this is not shown in the above graph.

## 5.2. Language Development

Language development was seen in several different ways in the data. Teachers seem to have their unique belief as to how language acquisition occurs. This aspect of the data also tied into teaching and learning strategies that will be discussed later. Formal language acquisition strategies such as phonics, reading and strategy learning centers, were practiced more than the rather informal acquisition strategies. Language development was determined more by the acquisition and development of speech as opposed to writing, listening and reading. Surprisingly, there were no mention of reading fluency and reading comprehension by any of the teachers. There was also not much mention of accurate language listening

activities.

## 5.3. Practice influenced by teacher demographics

Many of the teachers, who taught for ten years or more, were inclined to use both, 'direct instruction and 'play based' learning strategies in their mainstream classroom. They seemed to be open to students learning through play was but staying close to the more traditional way of teaching. Direct Instruction seems like a safety catch as the teachers were interviewed. Some seemed to use 'direct instruction as a sure and faster way of bringing EAL students to the English language level of the rest of the class. This is a familiar trend of thought, it was also seen in the literature review that teachers seem to rush the acclimation process of EAL students so that they do not have to provide prolonged specialize instruction in the mainstream classroom. One teacher mentioned that the faster EAL students reach the level of the others, is the better for the mainstream classroom dynamics. There was an inconsistency of strategically planned lessons to teach language in her classroom, however, all of the examples provided were 'direct instruction' examples, but referred to them as 'play based' learning. This provokes the thought of how many teachers actually know the difference or are they just familiar with the jargon? However, one long serving teacher, differ from the others by reporting that students should determine which strategy works best for them. There was no specific distinction between teachers of oldest students (Grade 1) and teachers of the youngest class (Preschool). In fact, it was such a revelation to note that teachers of Preschool students were also speaking of strategically planned lessons to teach language to their young students.

The teachers' personality constitutes to the strategies that were used for EAL student's language acquisition. Though most activities came under two very specific headings, the actual activities gave great insights into the teacher's personality and philosophy of education. There were clear signs of teachers who were reflective and used their belief in reflective practice to upgrade learning activities. Secondly, creativity was acknowledged in some strategies mentioned. It was clear that some of the activities mentioned were student based and fun, outside of the norm. They came purely from the heart of thoughtful teachers. There was also an instance where a teacher struggled to find strategies to mention. Her body language and awkwardness indicated that EAL students were not always thought of during her lesson planning, or execution. Such red flags trigger a series of questions in relation to whether this attitude reflects

only her ignorance or that of her school management as well.

#### **5.4. Language Diversity VS Language Confusion**

An argument that arose from the data was that of 'language diversity VS language confusion.' This came to bear from the response to the question of whether students are allowed to use their mother tongue in the classroom. Participants straddle both sides of the spectrum as it relates to the question of whether students should be allowed to use their first language in the class. There were strong reasons on both sides. Self-expression for EAL students is stressed as a valid reason. Enrichment is another reason, was presented as the art of making an entire class bilingual. The desire to build competency in students for both languages was also named. The researcher hoped to use the age-appropriate efficiency of the first language to help in the flagging of language learning disability. On the other side of the argument is that their mother tongue use in the classroom is not acceptable if the teacher does not know the language. This trend also has its roots in Vygotsky's constructivist approach [10] to education that will be discussed later. Even more passionate was the idea of language confusion being caused if students spoke more than one language in the classroom. This argument was rooted in the fact that each classroom should have a single target language and work only towards the acquisition of that language.

#### **5.5. In-Class Scaffold VS Specialized EAL Program**

Most of the data ascribed to the belief that EAL students should be catered to in the classroom as well as in specialized programmes. However, the argument arose as it relates to the periodically pulling students from the mainstream classroom to engage in EAL specialized programmes. There is a notion that students are not being able to move on with their peers. Programmes for EAL students seem to solve one issue but causes another.

On the contrary, the literature review also revealed that, according to Axlrod [11], some mainstream teachers would rather EAL students be educated in a specialized classroom with specialized teachers so that they can better focus on English monolingual learners. Both trend of thoughts will have their repercussions. If EAL students are not pulled out periodically of the mainstream classroom, they may stand the chance of not achieving their individual language acquisition goals. On the other hand, if they are pulled out

altogether, their absence will drastically change the classroom dynamics, creating a lack of diversity and peer scaffold in the area of language.

#### **5.6. Support for EAL Students**

**5.6.1. Teaching and Learning Strategies.** Two questions were asked about learning strategies. It is understood that the teaching strategies would complement the learning ones. The strategies explored in this work are 'direct instruction' and 'play based learning.' Nevertheless, learning strategies came forth during the answering of other questions as well. One participant refers to how students learn best by analyzing their age. As it relates to play based or direct instruction, it was mentioned that their age will determine which strategy will work best for them. Their teaching strategies should follow suit. Another participant saw the 2 strategies as important despite the age though she did not explicitly say so. Another participant believes that the strategy that works best depend wholly by the student, if the student is playful, language will learn best through play. If the student is more studious, then language can be better learnt by direction instruction. Another participant sees direct instruction as a predecessor of play-based learning. In this interview, it is perceived that direct instruction must happen first, then play based learning will follow to aid the students understanding. Another participant states that direct instruction is needed to model language, while play based learning is needed to practice the language learnt. Another participant believes also that the strategy that works best depends on the percentage of EAL learners in the classroom, therefore resorts to direct instruction since her class had over 50% of EAL students.

**5.6.2. Educational Theorists.** There are several educational theorists that are noticeable in the philosophy of the teachers that were interviewed. Some of this data was brought to light by the teaching and learning strategies that were explored and some were brought just by expressing indirectly contents of their educational philosophy. The idea of students learning a particular way because of their age is one subscribed by Piaget. According to McLeod [12], Piaget stated in his theory of cognitive development, there are four stages of cognitive development, Stage one 0-2 years- sensory motor development, Stage two 2-7 years pre-operational, Stage three 7-11 years concrete operational and Stage four 11 and up advanced stage. Direct instruction by the teacher being a compulsory way of teaching noted by the response of some participants is also a concept that Piaget holds dear. His classroom lacks social interaction and highlights the teacher as the reservoir of information.

Another theorist that dominated the data analysis was Vygotsky, who believes that children can learn best socio-culturally as stated by Myers [10]. He holds fast to the notion that adults as well as a competent peer can scaffold a child. In this distribution of data, there were many mentions of group activities ascribing to peer scaffolding, such as learning centers, group projects etc. Great emphasis was also placed on sociocultural learning, where the environment is either prepared for the learner or the learner is taken to the relevant environment. The participants who were instrumental in disseminating knowledge to their EAL students also showed attributes of Vygotsky's recognition for the zone of proximal development and accurate scaffolding. These attributes were recognizable in every interview, some more than others.

Howard Gardner's 'theory of multiple intelligences' [13] was indirectly but positively acknowledged in every interview. Each support strategy could trace back to some of the various learning styles made popular by Howard Gardner. There were significant favours shown to some types of learners than others. Linguistic learners were the most catered for since phonics and speaking took preeminence. The interpersonal intelligence was also supported since there was a strong reliance on peer or group learning either in the mainstream classroom or in the specialized EAL groups. There was some mention of learning games and free play centers that would cater to the bodily kinesthetic learner. Interestingly, there were no mentions of music or songs, catering to the musical learners. There were also no mentions of classroom activity support for the interpersonal learners who could at times learn quietly by themselves. The natural/ nature learner was also not considered in these interview responses.

The interesting findings were the acknowledgment of the eclectic approach that each participant showed, as it relates to various educational theorists. The responses showing this detail would be too intricate for a single researcher to unravel, yet it would create a beautiful academic Kaleidoscope that is evident to the complexities of teaching and learning dynamics present in any given classroom.

**5.6.3. Parental Support.** There is a general notion that parental support in the area of the students' language development has strong correlation to whether or not their parents have mastered the English language themselves. However, the idea of parental support was constructed differently by some participants. 'The parents not having access to their child academic material in their language posed issues for parental support' reported one participant. 'Students who are more versatile in English than their

parents create a notion that the student is smarter, hence parents revert to shyness,' reported another participant. Another mentioned 'There is a notion that language learning is deemed as easier for the students when their parents are ahead in language learning process. There was no mention of separation anxiety or abnormal / lower than age appropriate emotional behavior.'

## 5.7. Other Issues that Affect EAL Students

There were attempts to discover other issues other than those of language that affect students who are learning English as an Additional Language.

**5.7.1 Social Issues.** Many participants reported that students surprisingly play well despite their lack of relevant English articulation. It was also said among the youngest group that children play speechlessly when they lack communication skills. Another participant reported that some EAL students will use their mother tongue during play, despite the other students are unable to understand them. Less than half of the interviewees stressed socializing as an issue for EAL students. Among those, it was suggested that there was a relationship between the English Language deficiency and awkward social behavior such as pinching, pushing, and bullying. However, there were also some acknowledgements that these behaviors were not found only in EAL students but in monolingual students as well. This inconsistency created a debate as to when social struggles in early childhood linked to language deficiency and when it's not.

**5.7.2 Emotional Issues.** Allowing EAL students to use their original language in the classroom was a method used by the teacher to show validation and offer emotional support to EALs. It also develops the rest of the class to become support group for the EAL students.

**5.7.3 Cultural Issues.** The only mention of cultural issues that was brought to the forefront was broken homes stemming from migration. This however, was not a generalization but the experience of one participant.

## 6. Results

This result will attempt to answer the three research questions relating to the topic, 'Issues that Affect Early Childhood Students with EAL Needs: Exploring Scaffolding Strategies'. The analysis and discussion produced new information that helped to formulate the results. As the research questions were

examined, there were also emphases on the hypothesis testing.

### **6.1. What are the main factors that affect language development for students with EAL?**

From the analysis and discussion, it can be clearly seen that the main factors affecting language development for early childhood students with EAL needs are educational philosophies and teaching and learning strategies. These two factors feed each other. The educational philosophies are the viewpoints of the Education Board, School Management and Classroom Teacher. Educational philosophies are deeply riveted into practice as in the case of Vygotsky and Piaget [10] and other philosophers/ theorists. Similarly, the hierarchical school systems have their practice as part of their hidden curriculum. Teachers who participated from early childhood centers that are privately owned are not familiar with specialized support for EAL students, The private schools represented in this work do not have those specialized programs. This goes to show that these school systems believe that naturally blending EAL students with monolingual students is sufficient to scaffold EAL students. Government schools on the other hand have specialized programmes geared towards EAL students and it appears to be a continuous conversation about EAL students among school personnel from early childhood centers that are privately owned. The classroom teaching and learning strategies are hinged to the philosophies above. Direct instruction is provided and paid for by government school beliefs that are evident in their practice as part of their hidden curriculum. Teachers that participated districts because they believe in it. Therefore, it is provided as a special programme by the specialized teachers and the mainstream teachers do their version of direct instruction also. The direct instruction provided by the private early childhood centers is done wholly by the mainstream teacher.

### **6.2. What are the important emotional / behavioral and/ or social problems for students with EAL?**

This research did not find any emotional, social, behavioral or cultural issues that is directly related to or associated with early childhood students from Preschool to Grade 1 with EAL needs. However, it is evident that there is a need for more communication between the parents of EAL students and teachers. Since there is a lack of communication, there has been lots of assumption, for example, 'EAL students do not receive adequate support from their parents.' There is

certainly a gap here that can be filled by future research suggesting ways in which schools can tighten the partnership between teachers and parents of EAL students.

### **6.3. Which are the most effective educational approaches to support students with EAL in early years?**

The most effective general approach to scaffold early childhood students with EAL needs is proven to be 'direct instruction. Direct instruction, for example phonemic awareness and phonics, focus on speaking, it helps to take shyness away and is the precursor to other ways of language expression. According to Dobinson and Buchori [2], 'a strategy that worked well for students with EAL is Micro writing, it is a short burst of writing that is helpful to encourage EAL students. Since this writing strategy is so concise, it tends not to frustrate the EAL students who already have limited vocabulary etc. That method in itself has several different strategies/activities such as the teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, reading writing etc. The methods are also endless such as repetition, puppetry, read aloud and so on.

Direct instruction strategies such as phonemic awareness and phonics focuses on speaking, it helps to take away shyness and is the precursor to other ways of language expression. According to Dobinson and Buchori [2].

The hypothesis suggested behavioral, emotional and social issues for EAL students due to limited English language mastery. This did not stand, the research proved no sign of those issues whatsoever. The hypothesis also suggested that 'direct instruction' may cause learning gaps for young EAL students since play is usually encouraged at this stage. However, this hypothesis did not stand either since 'direct instruction' was found to be the best way to teach young EAL students.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study entitled, 'Issues that Affects Early Childhood Students with EAL Needs: Exploring Scaffolding Strategies,' set out to provide a unique enrichment to the pool of information already available to education officials, educators and parents. Its title gives an insight into its focus. Since English as an additional language (EAL) students are more prominent in the mainstream classroom than ever, this study has done some justice exploring the aims and objectives to answer the research questions and despite limitations have produced insightful recommendations



with implications for further research, theory and practice.

The first objective was to find out the connection between language deficiency and social, emotional and behavioral areas of development, this was met partially. It was discussed in the literature review and the analysis sections. The literature review has two conflicting views about social issues in EAL students. Wilbur [6] claimed that early childhood students that participated in his studies suffered trauma in their country, hence their social issues. Whiteside and Norbury [8] on the other hand found a link and therefore ascribed the social, emotional and behavioral challenges to insufficient English language proficiency.

The analysis and discussion of this research, on the other hand provided evidence in this research to show that language deficiency does not contribute to social, emotional, behavioral and social issues. However, there were some reservations because of the aforementioned, more established study that proved differently. While this study may not be sufficient to convince or shift a paradigm, there is need to follow up on this objective. This objective was partially met because the interview questions supported this investigation only partially. There could have been more follow up questioning to ascertain that there are truly no other issues affecting EAL students. This aspect was not interjected into the interview deeply enough to create a discussion.

The second objective was to find the correlation between EAL early childhood students and English monolingual students. This objective was somehow related to the first objective. This objective was met in the literature review which noted that EAL students are similar to English monolingual students in their likes and dislikes though they have specific needs. The literature review also suggest that early childhood engage in hybrid language despite their background. issues as it relates to EAL and English monolinguals. The third objective was to find ways to scaffold EAL early childhood students holistically in the classroom. This objective was fully met. It was in the literature review, the analysis sections of the research. It was explored under two basic headings, 'direct instruction' and 'play based learning' strategies to investigate which ones would best scaffold the students with English as an additional language need. The literature review showed valid research that 'direct instruction' showed more success in effectively scaffolding students than 'play based learning.' It also discovered and presented a particular direct instruction strategy called 'micro writing' that has proven to help students express themselves in writing. Several other creative strategies that fall under 'direct instruction' and play based learning' were determined during the data

collection and were analyzed in the analysis section of the research. This objective was fully met because much attention was given to searching for literature that examined effective strategies to activate learning among EAL students. Another reason this objective was met is that the design of the interview with specific questions that would meet this objective. Some questions were, 'do you believe that EAL students learn best through play or direct instruction?' and 'what are some strategies that you use to provide play based or direct instruction or both to EAL students? Much information was also gleaned because of the semi structured approach where follow up questions were encouraged to better understand these strategies. It seemed quite generic for these strategies to dominate the interview process; therefore, strategies were also coded from several parts of the interview and discussed in the analysis. The literature review, data analysis and discussion all agreed that direction instruction is a more effective strategy to help scaffold students with English as an additional language need in the early childhood.

## 7. Limitations

This work had several limitations, without which could have changed the results of the research. There were the limitations of new environment, finding people to interview, methodology restraint and time restraint.

Firstly, there was the limitation of an unfamiliar environment. This area of the United States is a new environment to me. Therefore, getting acquainted with the school system has certainly limited my scope to research my topic. The ethical values in the U.S. are very detailed and close to discouraging as opposed to the more familiar environment. Having knowledge of this, contributed to a change in research topic from 'The impact of Diversity on Learning' that would have demanded interaction with test scores, classroom observation sessions and meetings with parents. Instead, the topic reverted was to, 'Issues That Affect Early Childhood Students With EAL Needs And Ways to Scaffold Them' The method was deliberately unobtrusive as possible, where teachers would be the one to determine their desire to be interviewed. Also, the teachers' years of classroom teaching experience was the focus not only their present classroom. Finding teachers/participants to interview was another limitation that stemmed directly from being in a new environment. Though, the interview was made as short as possible, and was explained to participants, there were lots of unwilling people who declined. In a society where time is seen as money all the time, most research work has a gift component attached to it. However, this research work was proposed as free

with no financial or gift gains, therefore this could have been a deterrent to prospective participants.

It was preferable to have a research with more than one data collection avenues, however, this paper was limited because it was realized that more personal data collection strategies would mean more scrutiny time before consent is granted. If there were many avenues there would have had to be a synchronizing of willingness from several stakeholders for example school district boards, teachers, and parents. Also, it would make a huge difference between participants agreeing or refusing to help with the study. Since time was also a pressing issue, making the process as uncomplicated as possible was the preferred direction.

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