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AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

National Education Panel

Implications of COVID-19 on education for students from refugee and migrant backgrounds

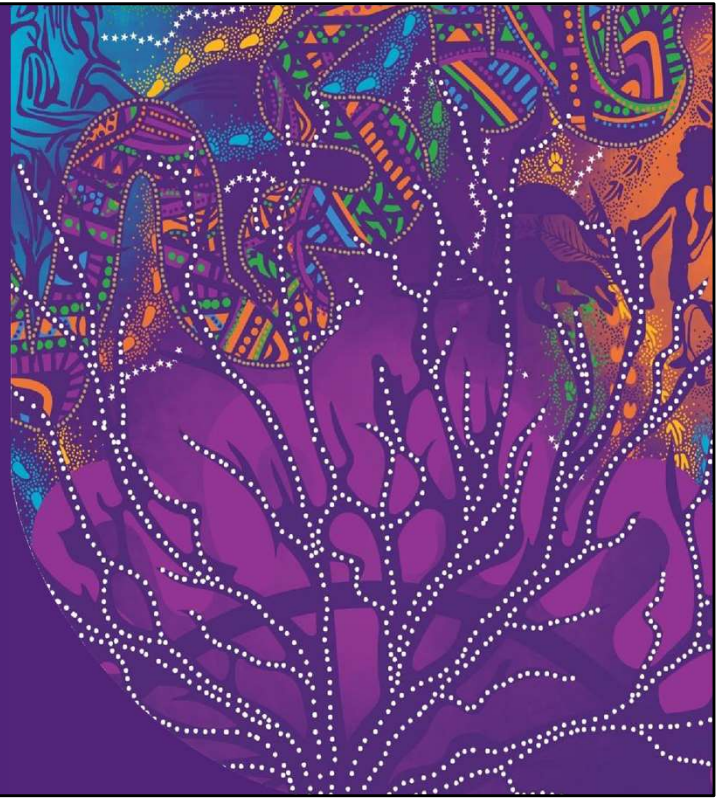
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Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we meet.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.



Language learners – what we need to know as teachers

1. Language vs Literacy

Language is the tool that enables communication to occur. **Literacy** is the manifestation of those communications—our written and spoken texts. The effectiveness of our literacy—our communicative effectiveness—is dependent upon our efficacy with language, our repertoire of language tools. The smaller our language repertoire, the less efficient and effective our literacy practices. (Naidoo, Wilkinson, Adoniou and Langat 2018)

2. There is a difference between daily communication skills and academic language

The language of school is cognitively demanding, is context reduced and takes a number of years to acquire **and requires appropriate language support to do so** .

3. Academic language is best supported through classroom-based, scaffolded discussion

In studies within mainstream classrooms, Hammond (2015) found that students did not have opportunity to provide information, arguments, reasoning – in other words, **engage in deep discussion about curriculum concepts**. So they were exposed to the high-challenge but not to the levels of support which would enable them to understand and engage at a deep level.

Naidoo,L., Wilkinson, J., Adoniou, M. and K.Langat. (2018). Access and Participation in the Transition from School to Higher Education: The Role of Language. Springer Link
Hammond, J. (2015) *Teaching and learning practices with at-risk EAL students*. In
Hammond, J and Miller, J. (2015). *Classrooms of possibility: supporting at-risk EAL students*.
Newtown: PETAA

Pre-COVID - research

- Migrant and refugee students in the school system tracked in NAPLAN via the LBOTE category. 'Statistical problem' of showing homogeneity, with LBOTE as strong as, or stronger than English speakers. (All years, all tests). The most disadvantaged students are of refugee background and are 'hidden' in the data. LBOTE high achievers are those with many years of education in equivalent education systems.
- It is not about being a refugee, but about prior opportunities for education for refugee youth and their parents. Traumatic experiences can also impact on capacity to be present for school learning.
- To address educational disadvantage, more time is needed with intensive specialist programs (60-80 weeks) PLUS continued language support in mainstream classrooms.
- Best educational response would be to improve counting and identification processes, apply language pedagogy for longer time, and professional development for **all** teachers for long term language support in mainstream settings.

But what about on-line delivery of learning??

See Creagh 2014.

Creagh, S. (2014). A critical analysis of problems with the LBOTE category on the NAPLAN test. *Australian Educational Researcher*. 41:1, 1-23.

During COVID – Teacher Perspectives re online learning

Interviews with Queensland EAL teachers in primary, secondary and AMEP (21 teachers)

The current state of schooling is marked by requirements to abide by health guidelines and is underpinned by the necessity of being able to transition to online learning should there be further outbreaks of COVID-19. Thus far, this has occurred at the level of single schools, but necessitates a condition of ‘readiness’ should it be required more widely. It also means that schools must maintain capacity to deliver education on-line into the foreseeable future.

- **How did EAL/D school learners engage with learning during the recent school closure?**
- **What teaching and learning approaches were most effective for engagement of learners?**
- **What teaching and learning approaches enabled progress of academic English language skills?**
- **What challenges are evident for EAL/D learners in situations where learning is delivered through modes outside of face-to-face classroom settings?**

Preliminary findings

Pluses

- Schools audited technology needs of students, and where possible provided laptops/devices
- Some schools had already been using online platforms, made transition less challenging
- Closer connections built with families and EAL teacher (particularly in primary schools)
- Closer connections within class groups (particular in AMEP setting)
- Flexible attitudes with technology, finding things that worked, accepting some failures and evolving
- Many schools allowed most at-risk students to attend during lockdown

Challenges

- Some students missing, disengaged, or difficult to reach over phone
- Limited home support with technology challenges, internet access, too many students, not enough devices in the home
- Learning much more unstructured – difficult if still trying to learn about how Australian schooling works
- Exhausting challenge of trying to help everyone by designing language appropriate tasks, getting work from students, generating new work (especially for newer students) on daily basis
- Limited opportunities for spoken interaction – not able to simulate classroom discussion
- No one platform uniformly used, so difficult to identify best options
- Engagement with home learning/on-line depleted after 5 weeks – students not completing work, disengaged (particularly secondary)



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Thank you

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