THE IMPACT OF LITERACY-RICH ENRICHMENT SESSIONS ON EAL STUDENTS IN KS1

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Introduction

Background

Working closely with EAL students, I noticed that while many develop conversational English quickly, they often struggle to access academic texts with the same confidence. This distinction between social and academic language is well-documented (Cummins, 2000) and highlights the need for more structured, intentional literacy support. I was particularly interested in how a literacy-rich environment—where reading, writing, speaking, and listening are embedded into daily routines could support these learners. Creating opportunities to engage with print in meaningful, purposeful ways is not only backed by research (Neuman & Roskos, 1997), but has also shown real promise in my own classroom. Building on this, I explored how multisensory phonics and targeted reading strategies could boost both fluency and confidence in students who often feel left behind in whole-class settings (Torgesen et al., 2006).

Research Questions

RQ1: How do structured enrichment sessions influence EAL students' reading progress?

RQ2: What is the effect of targeted literacy sessions on the confidence and attitudes of EAL students toward reading?

RQ3: What elements of literacy enrichment are most effective for EAL learners?

> "It takes 5–7 years for EAL students to develop academic language proficiency (CALP)"
> — Cummins, 2000

Research

Research Action

This study investigates the impact of structured, literacy-rich enrichment sessions on the reading ability and confidence of KS1 EAL learners who are performing below age-related expectations.

Methodology

Approach:
An action research model was employed, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the impact of the intervention.

Participants:
Three Year 2 EAL students identified as reading below age-related expectations.

Intervention Design:
Students participated in three 40-minute sessions per week over one term. Each session included:
- Word Work: Targeted vocabulary building
- Guided Reading: Strategy-based text exploration
- Phonics Streaming: Differentiated phonics instruction aligned to individual needs

Data Collection Methods:
- Teacher observations (ongoing)
- Pupil interviews (pre- and post-intervention)
- Standardised reading assessments (before and after intervention)

Analysis

Thematic Analysis:
Conducted on pupil interviews and teacher observations to identify recurring patterns in student engagement, language use, and emotional response to reading tasks.

Comparative Analysis:
Pre- and post-intervention reading assessment data were compared to measure progress in reading ability and comprehension.
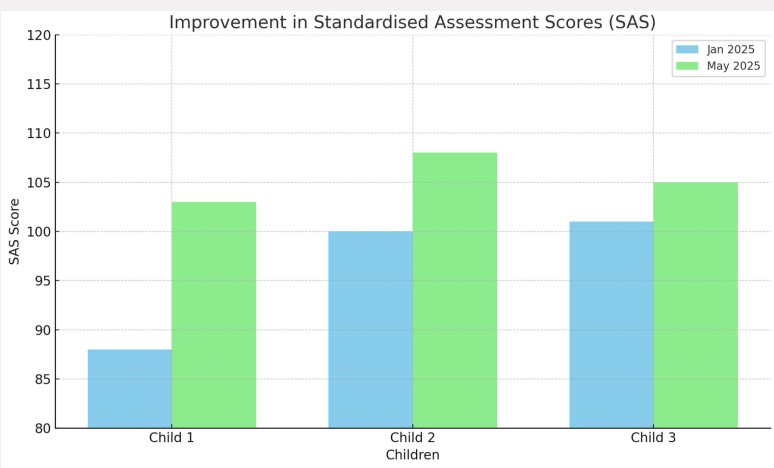
Results

All three participants demonstrated measurable progress in reading, with each student advancing by at least one benchmark level over the intervention period.

In terms of confidence and engagement, notable behavioural shifts were observed. Students began selecting reading materials independently and participating more actively during group reading sessions.

An unexpected yet significant outcome was an observed improvement in students' writing fluency and vocabulary usage, suggesting a transfer of skills from the reading-focused enrichment sessions to broader literacy development.

Improvement in Standardised Assessment Scores (SAS)

> "Reading is easier now. I got books for my birthday and I read them with my Mum every night"
> Student A

Conclusion

Conclusion

The structured, literacy-rich enrichment program had a significant positive impact on EAL students' reading ability and overall confidence. By providing consistent and varied instruction, the intervention enabled students to access language through multiple modalities, supporting deeper comprehension and more meaningful engagement with texts.

Reflections

Strengths:
The intervention demonstrated strong student engagement, with learners showing genuine interest and enthusiasm throughout. Noticeable progress was observed across key focus areas, suggesting that the approach had a meaningful impact on student learning. Additionally, the design of the intervention showed a strong alignment with relevant educational theory, reinforcing its pedagogical value.

Limitations:
Despite the positive outcomes, the study was limited by a small sample size and a relatively short duration (one academic term), which may affect the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, data collection was primarily teacher-led and subjective in nature, potentially introducing bias into the evaluation process.

Recommendations:
To enhance the reliability and impact of future interventions, it is recommended that the study be expanded to include a larger and more diverse sample group. Extending the duration of the intervention would allow for more sustained and measurable progress. Finally, incorporating a wider range of enrichment activities—particularly writing opportunities and digital tools—could further support student growth and engagement.

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