

Reimagining student home languages in mainstream secondary classrooms: Tools for innovation, engagement and connection.

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This paper reports on the outcomes of a Queensland Department of Education Horizon project investigating the integration of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students' home languages into mainstream secondary teaching and learning. The project was undertaken in a rural Queensland school with enrolments of EALD students and teachers who were interested in but unfamiliar with second language pedagogies. The school had a student enrolment of 450 students; the EAL students included Brazilian, Filipino and Pacific Islander students whose parents worked in local industries such as food processing, mechanics and aged care.

The literature underpinning the study argues the link between first and second language learning, and the social, academic and linguistic benefits of translanguaging between first and second linguistic repertoires. The study focused on building teacher capabilities in advancing the academic engagement and success of their EAL students. The specific research questions were:

- What curriculum and pedagogical innovations utilise students' home language resources to establish academic concepts and literacy in English?
- What are the learning and engagement outcomes for EAL students when culturally- and linguistically-inclusive curricula, pedagogy and assessment are implemented?

The project utilised design-based research principles and processes, and our engagement at the research site comprised five workshops across two years with a COVID-related extension. During the workshops, the researchers, five English teachers, eight EAL students in Grades 8 and 11, their parents and a cultural broker contributed to iterative cycles of pedagogical, curricula and assessment innovations that incorporated students' home languages in classroom activities and homework.

The outcomes of the study included the following: the EAL students reported extended understandings of curriculum concepts and participation in class discussions, increased lexical development in the home language, and greater appreciation of their parents' knowledge and potential to assist with schoolwork. For teachers, the outcomes were increased awareness of second language learning, an extended repertoire of activities to include students' home language, and greater explicit engagement with language and culture in lessons and curriculum planning. For parents, the study set out useful steps for connecting with the school and for guiding their children's homework, greater knowledge of the Australian curriculum, and the possibility of contributing to their children's Australian schooling while also ensuring cultural and linguistic links with Brazil.