Teachers' perceptions about their work with EAL/D students in a standards-based educational context

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Abstract: *Responding to increased cultural and linguistic diversity of students and teachers, Australian educators have recognised the importance of providing a diverse range of opportunities for social learning, multicultural engagement and support for students learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). However only a few studies examine the experience and work of EAL/D teachers (Cruickshank et al., 2003; Hammond, 2014), especially in reference to the standards framework provided by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). In this case study, teachers' perceptions about their roles as teachers of EAL/D students working in public schools in NSW are explored. Data was collected through both focus group and individual interviews across four sites and the lens of activity theory and expansive learning is used to examine the tensions and conflicts they reveal especially in respect to the APST. It is hoped that this study will raise awareness of the professional learning needs of teachers who work with EAL/D students.*

1. Introduction

In Australia over 350 languages are spoken (Eades, 2013; Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017) and, especially in urban areas, the population is increasingly multilingual with individuals from a range of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Chik, Benson & Maloney, 2019; D'warte, 2014). In New South Wales (NSW), where this research was conducted, around 36.9% of

students come from Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE) (CESE, 2020). Some LBOTE students, especially refugee students and those from socially and economically disadvantaged communities, face challenges such as low academic language proficiency levels and may require specific support in their learning (Cummins, 2000; Laguardia & Goldman, 2007).   All these students need teachers who are able to recognise and build on students' linguistic resources by developing a culturally responsive pedagogy (Dutton & Rushton, 2021, 2020; D'warte, 2014; Morrison et al., 2019).

To effectively support students, teachers need to choose strategies that develop a meaningful learning environment which embrace multicultural values and the diverse linguistic and cultural heritages of their students. All teachers in Australian schools, must meet Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) which provide a framework for assessing both teachers' performance and their professional learning needs (AITSL, 2018, 2022). Additionally, the APST provide a public definition of teacher quality (AITSL, 2018, 2022). These standards define what teachers should know and be able to do, regardless of their disciplines. However, within the three domains and seven standards that make up the APST, teaching EAL/D students is explicitly mentioned in only the one domain of Professional Knowledge in three focus areas of two standards:

- Standard 1: Know students and how they learn
  - 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds;
  - 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and
- Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it
  - 2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In addition, there is little explicit mention of EAL/D anywhere in the APST or indication that teachers have a responsibility to help EAL/D students learn and access content.

In response to the increasing diversity of the contemporary educational context, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) redesigned their standards to assist teachers to map the

detail of ACTA standards onto the national APST (Hammond, 2014). The resulting elaborations of the APST were developed to incorporate the dispositions, understandings and skills of TESOL teachers and an orientation to what Morrison et al. (2019) refer to as a culturally responsive pedagogy. Similar to Morrison et al. (2019), in this study culturally responsive pedagogy refers to "those pedagogies that actively value, and mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship." (p. v).

Given that the APST are used in the assessment of teacher competence at all career stages, they can concurrently be used to identify professional learning goals for individual teachers. This includes educators working with LBOTE or EAL/D students, who need to identify personal professional learning goals which support the development of a culturally responsive pedagogy. By comparing the APST with even the shortened descriptors in the EAL/D Elaborations (Table 1), the latter are clearly more explicit in defining what teachers of EAL/D or LBOTE students should know and do. The EAL/D Elaborations also make explicit reference to important principles, such as "multilingualism, reconciliation and anti-racism" (ACTA, 2023) all of which address aspects of a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Table (1). Comparison of APST Standard 1 'Know students and how they learn' and Standard 2 'Know the content and how to teach it.' (Graduate) with EAL/D Elaborations of the APST

	APST	EAL/D Elaborations of the APST
1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds	Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse, linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.	Demonstrate knowledge of inclusive teaching strategies that respond to EAL/D learner needs and principles of multilingualism, reconciliation and anti-racism. Be aware...

| 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students | Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. | Taking account of the local context, and building on students' learning strengths, implement practices informed by all graduate indicators in the EAL/D Elaborations and refer to the Capability Framework as relevant.

Demonstrate knowledge of ... |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. | Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages. | Demonstrate awareness of how different cultural communities within and beyond Australia perceive and relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as their histories, cultures and languages.

Explore the nature of intercultural competence... |

This comparison provides the foundation for further exploration of EAL/D teachers' perceptions of their work and their professional learning needs within culturally and linguistically diverse contexts. This study aims to address the following research question:

- What perceptions do teachers of EAL/D students have about defining their work and identifying their professional learning needs in reference to standards such as the Australian APST and the EAL/D Elaborations?

2. Literature Review

The increasing diversity of the Australian population (Chik, Benson & Maloney, 2019; D'warte, 2014) indicates that teachers

will be required to support a growing number of students to develop language, literacy and cultural capital (Cummins, 2000 & 2005). Australia's rich linguistic heritage includes Indigenous languages, creoles and pidgins as well as the languages and dialects which are spoken in migrant communities. Supporting students from these communities is best achieved by building on their existing linguistic resources in classrooms, a practice that recognises and acknowledges their heritage and home languages (Allard, 2017; D'warte, 2014; Dutton & Rushton, 2018, 2021, 2022).

Many teachers work in contexts which have high percentages of EAL/D and LBOTE students. In Australia 5.8 million 22.8% of the population use a language other than English at home (ABS, 2021) and in NSW, the state with the largest population, 36.9% are LBOTE (CESE, 2020). The needs of EAL/D and LBOTE students are narrowly defined by standardised tests which solely focus on literacy development in English (Comber, 2012; Creagh, 2014; Cummins, 1981). As a result, the identification of learning needs, and the support offered may not adequately identify nor build on the linguistic and cultural resources of students from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Analysis of the "effective contemporary practice" of Australian teachers is the stated aim of the APST (2018, p. 2), but there are few affordances offered by the standards and descriptors to recognise the professional linguistic or cultural knowledge that a teacher might bring to their work with EAL/D or LBOTE students. This tension is further exacerbated as the specialist knowledge, mentoring and leadership attributes of experienced TESOL teachers (Hammond, 2012) are not able to be easily demonstrated using the APST, even though appointments at all stages of any teacher's career are made using the framework they provide.

Teachers of EAL/D students need to understand and take a plurilingual pedagogical stance (Ellis, 2013; Dutton & Rushton, 2021, 2022) if they are to support rather than undermine the learning rights of language-minority EAL/D students (García, 2013; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013; Slaughter & Cross, 2021). For instance, the term 'translanguaging' (Li, 2014) is used to describe a framework in which plurilingual students are encouraged to use all their linguistic resources and to have their language choices validated and supported (Ollerhead, 2018). The implementation

of a pedagogical theory and approach like translanguaging may lead to the development of all the students' languages or dialects and certainly honours the identities and cultures of students with minority or Indigenous language heritage.

When implementing culturally responsive and translanguaging pedagogies, tension may be generated by a system which assesses and compares students within a stage/age group with little differentiation or consideration for the specific obstacles or learning pathways of LBOTE and EAL/D learners (Cummins, 1986 & 2005). The standardised tests administered from the early years up to and including the examinations in the final years of schooling, confirm the importance of English literacy. These tests are also used to either admit or exclude students from tertiary or post-secondary education (Connell, 1994). This focus on testing foregrounds school practices as ones that are best provided in an English-only classroom. As a result, teaching to the test in a monolingual classroom has now become a normalised part of education at all stages of schooling (Ellis, 2013; Lew & Siffrinn, 2019; Moloney & Giles, 2015).

This normalisation is not supportive of the differentiated learning needed for students who are learning English while they are also learning through and about English (Halliday, 2004). The stakes are high for refugee students or students from socially and economically disadvantaged communities (CESE, 2020). For some of these students, support from home may be non-existent or inadequate due to factors like loss of family, poverty, low levels of education or understanding about how to gain a meaningful education without high scores in standardised tests (Connell, 1994; Vinson, & Rawsthorne, 2015). In the case of refugees and many Aboriginal students, these cultural and social factors may be overlayed with generational trauma and dispossession which further contribute to a disconnection between the home and the school.

The challenge for teachers is to build a connection between home and school to promote student engagement and self-regulation which are widely recognised as vital for educational success (Dutton, D'warte, Rossbridge & Rushton, 2018; Mansour & Martin, 2009), especially for students living with social or economic disadvantage. The provision of teaching and resources which build on cultural and linguistic strengths will contribute to an environment in which EAL/D and LBOTE students can thrive.

Teachers must also be able to reflect on their own knowledge and understandings and whether they are able to effectively identify their students' learning needs, strengths and the strategies that will best support them.

The professional disposition, knowledge and understanding needed to support the development of a culturally responsive pedagogy (Coleman, 2015; Ellis, 2004 & 2013; Fielding, 2016; Li, 2014; Morrison et al., 2019) is in direct contrast to those built on a deficit model of additional language development. A deficit model places focus on learning a new or additional language or dialect rather than building on linguistic and cultural strengths. The deficit model is confirmed by a regime of standardised testing which only focusses on English literacy. A pedagogical stance which recognises and values linguistic competency is needed if innovative practices are to be effectively implemented for all students. A culturally responsive stance which values all students' linguistic and cultural resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Duarte, 2019; French, 2016) is informed by theory and is intrinsically in conflict with the concept of an English-only classroom focussed on literacy in English.

A classroom which focusses on language as central to learning as it builds cultural and linguistic awareness also benefits monolingual English-speaking students (Fielding, 2016; García & Li, 2014; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Hamman, 2018). Similarly talking and listening as a focus for learning can support all aspects of student learning (Ellis, 2004, 2013; Morrison et al., 2019), especially when the use of all of a student's languages or dialects is encouraged. For example, choosing drama strategies and group tasks which focus on oral interaction have been shown to both build on EAL/D students' existing linguistic resources while promoting engagement, self-regulation and the development of English language and literacy (Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins, Hu, Markus & Montero 2015; Dutton & Rushton, 2018, 2021; D'warte & Slaughter, 2020).

The importance of supporting EAL/D and LBOTE students to maintain and use all their linguistic resources in educational settings has been established in many recent Australian studies (e.g., Dutton & Rushton, 2018, 2021, 2022; D'warte & Slaughter, 2020; Fielding, 2016; French, 2016; Ollerhead, 2018; Slaughter & Cross, 2021) but the impact of the framework of the APST as a tool of the system in determining and describing the work of

EAL/D teachers has not. The foundation of this research is one of the tools of the system in which teachers work, the APST, and the descriptors which describe and define teachers' work. Teachers' perceptions of the APST and how they are enacted within the educational system are explored along with the EAL/D Elaborations of the APST. Subsumed within this investigation is the adequacy of the APST descriptors to define and describe the work of teachers of EAL/D students within the specific Australian context.

3. Research Design and Methods
3.1 Theoretical Framework
Activity theory has been used in a number of studies (e.g., Barab et al., 2002; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009) to explore contradictions and tensions that occur in educational contexts. The exploration of the web of complex social interactions in which the individual teacher and their community are situated are viewed as a collective activity system which "contains and generates a variety of different view- points or 'voices,' as well as layers of historically accumulated artifacts, rules, and patterns of division of labor" (Engeström, 2012, p. 27).

The examination of teachers' work and professional learning in this study is also supported by the use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a lens through which to explore the "multi-voiced and multilayered nature" of teaching (Engeström, 2012, p.26). Drawing on a sociocultural theoretical perspective, Engeström (1987) conceptualises learning as a dynamic social activity embedded in a socially-situated context which is shaped by a larger system of people, tools, rules and activities. Engeström (2007) suggests that an organisation can resolve tensions and internal contradictions by "boundary crossing, knotworking, negotiation, exchange and trading" (p.24) within and across 'activity systems' creating new social spaces for learning.

The complex nature of a multilayered and multi-voiced activity system may produce collective achievement or conflict (Engeström, 2012). By examining individual perceptions within a system, the systemic factors behind personal or individual perceptions may come to reveal the tensions within the activity system. In this study, the APST and the EAL/D Elaborations of the APST are both exemplifications of the tools and rules of the wider educational system in which teachers' work takes place. By

examining teachers' views of these tools and rules and their perceptions of their work and how it relates to standards set out by the APST, the tensions that need to be negotiated to create new social spaces for learning within the larger educational system may also be revealed.

3.2. Research design and context

This study uses a multi-site case study research design to explore the perceptions of EAL/D teachers in a specific context in Australia and was approved by the relevant university's Human Ethics Research Committee (no. 2015/568). Yin (2003) defines a case study as an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life setting and emphasises that a case study is appropriate when investigating what is happening within a specific social context.

In this multiple-site case study, the researchers make a thorough and intensive exploration of a contemporary issue (teachers' perceptions), within a real-life setting (the contexts of EAL/D teachers' practices in one specific place in Australia). Data were collected at four sites which drew teachers from local state schools in demographic areas that are exemplified by socially and economically disadvantaged communities with significant numbers of EAL/D students.

3.3 Participants

A total of 21 teachers gave consent to participate in the interviews and focus groups. To ensure anonymity, participants in the focus group interviews were not individually identified and were not asked to identify themselves, their schools or their qualifications, although some spontaneously offered information about their career stages during the focus groups or interviews. The data collected reveal that the participants were at different career stages including some mainstream classroom teachers and some who have tertiary qualifications as specialist EAL/D teachers. Some of those without specialist training had no specialist support or professional development other than experiences shared in their own context.

3.4 Instruments

Data were collected from both individual and focus group interviews, which varied in size (n=1 to n=8) and totalled 3 ½ hours of recording. Individual interviews were undertaken when

the participants wished to be part of the research but were unavailable at the times the focus group interviews were undertaken.

Three semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were undertaken with teachers from professional learning networks for teachers of EAL/D students. These interviews were held at two network sites in Sydney (anonymized as Bati & Algarb) and one in a regional area near Sydney (anonymized as Nan). Two semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were also conducted with a school principal (anonymised as Kelly) and an EAL/D specialist teacher (anonymised as Brigid) at Algarb (n=2) and with an EAL/D specialist teacher (anonymised as Lauren) at Paschim (n=1). As the researchers were working closely with the networks, the participants who offered to participate in individual interviews were personally known.

For the focus groups 8 teachers participated at Bati, 3 at Nan and 7 at Algarb. To uphold anonymity, none of the participants were asked to identify any individual or personal information, and their voices were analysed as contributing to a single group response. For this reason, all contributions in the focus group interviews are identified in the transcriptions as 'teacher @ Nan/ Bati/Algarb, respectively.

Participants were encouraged to discuss and focus on any issues that they felt were of importance to their teaching practices in their particular contexts. The teachers were supported to discuss their work in relation to the following research question: *What perceptions do teachers of EAL/D students have about defining their work and identifying their professional learning needs in reference to standards such as the APST and the EAL/D elaborations?*

The interviewer and focus group facilitator prompts offered participants opportunities to discuss their own experiences and their perceptions of the APST and the EAL/D Elaborations. For instance, prompts relating to their own experience included: *Tell us about yourself and your experience in working with EAL/D students at your school.; What challenges do you think your EAL/D learners face at school?; What areas of professional learning do you need to enhance your teaching of EAL/D learners at your school?; What kinds of support do you need to facilitate your teaching of EAL/D learners?*

Perceptions of both the APST and the EAL/D Elaborations were also addressed with questions such as: *To what extent do you*

think the current Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) support understanding in your context?; How can the ACTA Elaborations: 1. Support a better understanding of the APST in your context? 2. Support whole school plans for professional learning?

3.5 Analysis

Using the lens provided by CHAT (Engeström, 2012) teachers' experiences within the standards-based framework provided by the APST were explored as were the practices and tensions which the subjects of this research discuss in the interviews. Interviews were transcribed and then a thematic analysis was undertaken to categorise the data and examine features and patterns using the lens provided by Activity Theory. Credibility was maintained by ensuring the researchers worked both individually and then collaboratively to develop conceptual themes (Merriam, 2002) and analyse the data. Each researcher individually used CHAT to identify features and patterns. They then met to share their analyses and the themes they had identified and to develop thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the data.

4. Findings

In this paper there is not the scope to discuss all of the themes which were evident in the data, instead it reports on the following three prominent themes that were the focus of discussion at all sites:

- the tensions in defining the EAL/D specialist teacher's role
- differentiation in the language classroom
- the importance of professional learning

While the teachers in this case study are aware of the APST and their use for setting professional learning goals and teacher accreditation, many had not used the EAL/D Elaborations and provided a range of responses when asked about their use. Lauren, an EAL/D specialist at Paschim, states:

> "I have been using the EAL/D Elaborations and they're fabulous however I have had people who have said no don't you use them don't trust them. So, I think there're a lot of people not feeling very confident about using those kinds of elaborations because they're different." (Lauren@Paschim)

Lauren's comment about a lack of confidence or even knowledge of the EAL/D Elaborations is echoed in the comments of many teachers at Algarb and Bati such as:

- *"No didn't know about them."* (Teacher@Algarb)
- *"We weren't given the option to use the EAL/D Elaborations."* (Teacher@Bati)
- *"No, I've never seen them."* (Teacher@Algarb)
- *"I'd like to have another look."* (Teacher@Algarb)

However, those teachers who were familiar with the EAL/D Elaborations of the APST found them useful. As Kelly, the school principal at Algarb states:

> "I'm using them to evaluate ... it gives us more information... because supporting EAL/D students is... in our school plan... part of one of our strategic directions, so these will help me to evaluate how we are going." (Kelly@Algarb)

4.1 Tensions in defining the EAL/D specialist teacher's role

As career progression is mapped by the APST in general terms, there is tension in differentiating and describing the roles of EAL/D educators, especially the mentoring aspect of the role of the specialist EAL/D teacher. For example, the role may be perceived as just a generalist support role:

> "I was an EAL/D teacher mentor... for 5 weeks last term, and there are a lot of teachers being appointed with new arrival funding with no EAL/D training at all. I think the natural thing for them to do is to give learning support." (Teacher@Nan)

Common modes of teaching such as team-teaching or the withdrawal of EAL/D students from mainstream classrooms may contribute to the view of the EAL/D teacher's role as a support to the mainstream teacher.

> "I feel like quite often I'm doing the job of an SLSO (School Learning Support Officer). Sitting next to the student helping him with the work then and there... While others they come to me and they say how about we split the room... and use me as a resource, as they should. I think that's a challenge." (Teacher@Nan)

The role of classroom teachers who are teaching EAL/D learners, either as mainstream classroom teachers or in specialist EAL/D roles, but without specialist knowledge, was also of concern.

> "I found the biggest challenge at my school is the apparent lack of training that mainstream teachers have, in catering to the needs of EAL/D students, particularly early career teachers. Considering the majority feed into South West Sydney, we have such a high percentage of EAL/D learners in the area, I am a little bit concerned that so few have, I mean some do choose some TESOL electives which is great, but a lot don't." (Teacher@Bati)

There is tension around recognition of the roles of EAL/D teachers, including the importance of their specialist knowledge and pathways to leadership. This is exemplified when teachers without specialist knowledge attempt to identify the needs of newly arrived EAL/D students.

> "If you're *(a new student)* arriving and your literate in a different script, you'll be put in the learning support group learning phonics... If you *(a teacher)* don't know what EAL/D is, or if you know what it is but you don't know how to do it, you'd just go straight to learning support... and put him in the phonics group and leave him there." (Teacher@Nan)

The role of the EAL/D teacher may also be seen as that of a specialist mentor, providing cognitive, cultural and social support for EAL/D learners and mentoring mainstream staff but without recognition as Highly Accomplished or Lead as identified by the APST.

> "I've finished my Master's degree in educational leadership... apart from delivering the TELL *(Teaching English Language Learners)* course and the Teaching Refugees course, with me being the facilitator, there isn't anything there for me to learn other than stepping into leadership positions." (Teacher@Nan)

4.2 Differentiation in the language classroom

Another theme identified in the data is the need to differentiate to meet the needs of EAL/D students. As Lauren at Paschim states:

> "Everybody is so preoccupied now with all this documentation ... they don't know... how to think about differentiation ... You need to think differently about what you're doing for it to be effective for them." (Lauren@Paschim)

Lauren, an experienced qualified EAL/D teacher, also noted that in fast-paced learning not enough attention is paid to the social and emotional impact on students acquiring a new language in a new cultural context. In the classroom they are also expected to learn through the medium of English while they also learn English and about English (Halliday, 2004). Therefore, students who are learning English are simultaneously learning about English, about the relationships, languages and cultural expectations of the school and the wider society. This means differentiating learning for individual students requires opportunities to learn about the contexts in which learning takes place.

> "One of the biggest issues is the speed we expect kids to be successful across the plan markers and the literacy continuum. You know they've been in the country for just a few weeks, a month and suddenly we expect them to get everything. Not just to get the curriculum but to get all the subtle nuances of living in a new country, a new community without their parents really understanding. So, I guess all that social dimension of being in Australia." (Lauren@Paschim)

It was also recognised that an emphasis on standardised testing has resulted in English-only classrooms with a focus on teaching to the test (Creagh, 2014; Ellis, 2013; Lew & Siffrinn, 2019; Moloney & Giles, 2015) rather than responding to the needs of students.

> "And on top of that, the literacy deficit in the home language that we are very aware of ... that has a huge impact on the acquisition of the second language." (Teacher@Bati)

The loss of the first language, i.e., subtractive bilingualism (Collier & Thomas, 2009), is also recognised by the participants as an obstacle to language development.

> "In my school my concern is with the loss of the first language, it is so evident with our parent group they want

English, English, English. When we get to the older grades, I work with year four, that impact their learning, the loss of first language, subtractive bilingualism." (Teacher@Bati)

Similarly, the importance of oral interaction in the development of English language and literacy is emphasised in the data, which links directly to the APST Standard 3 "Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning":

"Unless we have support for them through differentiation, scaffolding through speaking, listening activities through action times, whatever means we have, they won't learn... we have 94%. They make up the bulk of our classrooms the EAL/D kids, it's not like we're working with a small group we're actually working with a majority. That's how we teach, our classroom teaching." (Teacher@Algarb)

The participants are aware that student engagement and learning are supported when students are encouraged to use all their linguistic resources (Ellis, 2004, 2013; Morrison et al., 2019) At the same time, they indicate tensions related to the pedagogical choices that teachers make when working in a standards-based context with EAL/D students.

4.3 The importance of professional learning

The importance of professional learning in providing all teachers with ideas and strategies for supporting EAL/D students was seen as important for teachers in all schools, even those with low numbers of EAL/D students:

"... we don't have teams of 4 or 5 teachers there's just me, there's just us. We're losing that network of support we've lost that network of support that we used to have." (Teacher@Nan)

In NSW, the state in which this research was conducted, 36.9% are LBOTE (CESE, 2020) and many teachers work in contexts which have high percentages of EAL/D and LBOTE students. However, as the quote suggests, teachers do not all have access to the mentoring support of colleagues with specialised knowledge and experience.

Information about the role of EAL/D teachers was also seen as important in informing school leaders about professional learning for their staff:

> "I think the Elaborations would give those principals a little more support in recognizing the needs of the qualified and or unqualified EAL/D teachers." (Teacher@ Bati)

The participant in this quote indicated that the EAL/D Elaborations, as opposed to the APST, perhaps provide an explicit, detailed description of the professional disposition, knowledge and understanding needed to support the development of a culturally responsive pedagogy (Coleman, 2015; Li, 2014; Morrison et al., 2019).

It was also noted that in some settings, mainstream teachers were carrying almost the entire load of support for EAL/D students but without any professional learning or support from a teacher with specialist knowledge. For example, Kelly, the principal from Algarb states:

> "I think even in a school like ours where we have 1.8 teachers, there is still a lot of teaching that needs to be supported without a specialist teacher... The classroom teachers have to do it, the specialist teachers are there to advise and to support and to model ... but it's the actual teachers that have to do it. How often are they getting that specialist support? Once or twice a week." (Kelly@ Algarb)

The data also indicates that evaluation and implementation of classroom practices necessary in the provision of differentiated support is dependent on both pre-service and in-service education and the mentoring support that a teacher has experienced. With high levels of EAL/D students, mainstream teachers, who do not necessarily have the specialist knowledge to understand the diversity of EAL/D needs are having to take on responsibility for their education:

> "Mainstream teachers think EAL/D students are new arrivals and they neglect the fact that they can be... beginning, emerging, consolidating or developing ... It is the mainstream teachers who are doing the brunt of the EAL/D education especially with a school with ... close to 100%." (Teacher@Bati)

In a context, where standardised tests reflect so personally on teachers and their classrooms, strategies which are perceived to slow the pace of learning are often replaced by tasks which can be graded and benchmarked.

"Teachers are so busy in the classroom and when you do a TPL (Teacher Professional Learning) based around what kind of things you should do with your EAL/D learners all the teachers are really excited about using those ideas but when they go back in the classroom, they get bogged down with all the work and the assessment and the data collection they have to do it's kind of the first thing that flies out the window cause there's not enough time." (Teacher @ Bati)

Without the detailed understanding of language development which professionally accredited EAL/D teachers possess, the commitment to implement innovative pedagogical change is challenged by the pressure to teach to the test that teachers experience in contemporary classrooms.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this multiple-site case study, 21 teachers shared their perceptions about their work in a contemporary standards-based educational context. The APST and the Elaborations of the APST are both examined as tools and rules of the educational system in which teachers work. By focusing on teachers' perceptions within a system, the systemic factors behind individual perceptions and the complex "multilayered and multi-voiced nature" (Engeström, 2012, p.26) of an activity system are revealed. Analysis of the data identified three key themes: tensions in defining the EAL/D specialist teacher's role; differentiation in the language classroom; the importance of professional learning.

A limitation of the study is that the data only represents the perceptions of a particular group of teachers at a moment in time in four specific contexts. However, the APST and EAL/D Elaborations are relevant to all Australian teachers and this research could be replicated in many more sites across Australia. Indeed, the tensions and disjunctions which are revealed in the data are worthy of further research as they reflect issues which are more wide-ranging than an individual teacher or site. While the APST provide a framework for describing the work of teachers, at the same time the growing number of LBOTE and EAL/D students in Australia (ABS, 2021) and in NSW (CESE, 2021) implies that the work of many teachers will increasingly include working with EAL/D students.

The wider implication of these findings is that mainstream teachers need support from specialist EAL/D teachers as both

colleagues and mentors. A deficit model of language development confirmed by standardised testing and narrowly focussed on literacy in English (Comber, 2012; Creagh, 2014; Cummins,1981) is intrinsically opposed to a culturally responsive stance which values students' linguistic and cultural resources (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Duarte, 2019; French, 2016). Standardised tests which focus on literacy development in English (Comber, 2012; Creagh, 2014; Cummins,1981) do not adequately support identification of the needs of EAL/D and LBOTE students. Rather to meet APST Standard 1. "Know students and how they learn" teachers must be able to identify and build on the linguistic and cultural resources of their students. Through the mentoring of specialist EAL/D teachers, mainstream teachers could be supported to develop these understandings and implement innovative pedagogy.

While this research found that the EAL/D Elaborations are not widely recognised or used, when teachers identified their use of the EAL/D Elaborations, they were recognised as a useful tool for negotiation with the system (Engeström, 2007). The EAL/D Elaborations offer detailed descriptions of an EAL/D teacher's role at every stage of career development, which assists in professional development planning. In contrast, the APST do not allow for the demonstration of the specialist knowledge and attributes of experienced TESOL teachers (Hammond, 2012). In a contemporary context where the numbers of EAL/D students are increasing, it is of vital importance to be able to describe the "effective, contemporary practice" of Australian teachers in any context (APST, 2018, p. 2).

Differentiating learning for EAL/D students is built on an understanding that students, especially language-minority students, have the right to learn using all their languages or dialects (García, 2013; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013; Slaughter & Cross, 2021). As standardised tests solely focus on literacy development in English (Comber, 2012; Creagh, 2014; Cummins, 1981), teachers need support to make innovative pedagogical choices that will support all students and will concurrently support differentiated learning for EAL/D students. The provision of such support would assist in addressing the issue of subtractive bilingualism highlighted in the data and ensure that students are supported to use and maintain all their linguistic resources. The differentiated learning necessary to help students explore and use all their linguistic

resources requires a teacher to have specialist knowledge of EAL/D students and of suitable strategies to support learning (Fielding, 2016; García & Li, 2014).

If teachers are to build a connection between home and school in an increasingly diverse Australian population (Chik, Benson & Maloney, 2019; D'warte, 2014) they must also be able to reflect on their own knowledge and understandings in identifying student needs and strengths. Strategies that build on the linguistic and cultural resources of students will recognise and respond to students' linguistic repertoires (Allard, 2017; D'warte, 2014; Dutton & Rushton, 2018, 2021, 2022) and support them to thrive.

The data also revealed that professional learning is required for all teachers of EAL/D students if they are to meet the needs of EAL/D students. Teachers need to be able to develop a culturally responsive pedagogy (Morrison et al., 2019) to support learning. Similarly, understanding language development (Fielding, 2016; García & Li, 2014) is the basis for making effective pedagogical choices. An understanding of the strategies which build on oral language and encourage the use of all of a student's linguistic resources is necessary to support learning (Dutton & Rushton, 2018, 2021, 2022; D'warte & Slaughter, 2020; French, 2016; Ollerhead, 2018; Slaughter & Cross, 2021).

In conclusion, the findings of this research highlight that all teachers could use the EAL/D Elaborations to accurately set professional learning goals for their work with EAL/D students. As opposed to the APST, the EAL/D Elaborations provide the detail necessary to support the creation of new social spaces for differentiated learning for EAL/D students and the introduction of an innovative culturally responsive pedagogy (Dutton & Rushton, 2022, 2021; Li, 2014; Morrison et al., 2019).

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