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THE RESEARCH STUDY

Background of the Research
An interdisciplinary team studied pupil and teacher perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning mathematics and English in Singaporean primary school classrooms. We present the findings that are significant for teaching and learning in Singaporean primary classrooms in a series of three booklets about mathematics (booklet 1), English (booklet 2), and transfer of learning (booklet 3). The exploratory study sought to address the following questions:

- What are pupils’ views about and experiences of learning mathematics and English at school and elsewhere at primary one (P1), three (P3), and five (P5)?
- What are the pedagogic features and learning processes of mathematics and English at school and elsewhere which enable pupils’ learning of the language and concepts of mathematics?
- What are English and mathematics teachers’ practices and perceptions of language teaching, and how in this regard does the subject English function in their English-medium schools?

The Participants
The participants of the study were pupils from P1, P3, and P5, as well as teachers of mathematics and English, that is, teachers of mathematics, teachers of English, and teachers of both subjects. Pupils’ and teachers’ responses and reflections were collected via interviews and surveys. Additionally, an equal number of mathematics and English lessons were observed. These data form the basis of the study.

Important Findings: Dilemmas in Teaching and Learning
Some important findings of the study were as follows:

1. Teachers and pupils observed that pupils experienced difficulty in learning vocabulary, especially vocabulary for school reading and writing.
2. Teachers and pupils were very aware of the benefits of reading for language development. However, teachers felt that some of their pupils were not reading enough, nor did they necessarily enjoy reading.
3. Grammar was taught as rules, as procedures, and for assessments, which tended to remove it from conceptual understanding and meaningful use.

These findings about vocabulary, reading, and grammar teaching and learning in English seemed to present teachers with dilemmas. Each dilemma will be explored from teachers’ and pupils’ perspectives in subsequent sections of this booklet.
Language Profile of Pupils

The proportion of pupils who spoke English predominantly at home was found to be similar to the proportion of pupils who spoke their Mother Tongue (MT) predominantly. English is the main home language of 43%* of pupils, while for 40%, the main home language is their MT. According to pupils, 8% speak English and their MT equally, while 9% of pupils spoke mainly other languages or combinations of languages at home.

According to the Singapore General Household Survey 2015\(^1\), English is the most frequently spoken language at home for 51% of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian resident population aged 5-14. The remaining 49% speak in other languages predominantly.

Thus, pupils’ self-reported language use in our study highlights the multilingualism in Singaporean society and reminds us that almost half of the children said that they do not have a great deal of exposure to English at home.

Pupils’ Home Support

Pupils were asked about the type of help they received with school work outside of school.

The most common form of home support for English was help from parents (41%), followed by tuition (38%) and help from other relatives (22%). Support in the form of other resources such as the Internet, as well as assistance provided in student care centres, made up a small percentage of support - 5% and 1%, respectively.

Comparing the two most common forms of support, that is, help from parents and tuition, by level, P1 pupils were found to receive the most help from their parents, but the least amount of tuition. Parental help seemed to decrease as pupils got older; conversely, the percentage of pupils with tuition was higher at P3 and P5.

Overall, pupils were found to receive more home support for mathematics than English. At P1, 60% of pupils reported receiving help from their parents with English, compared to 73% for mathematics. This difference was greater at higher levels, with 22% of pupils receiving help from their parents with English at P5, compared to 55% for mathematics.

This difference raises questions of whether families are able to draw from their own knowledge of English to guide their children, whether English is viewed as less significant or less technical than mathematics, and whether pupils actually find mathematics more difficult than English and therefore require tutoring, even though many reported that they found it easier than English.

* Note: All numerical data are rounded to the nearest whole number.
The Purposes of Teaching and Learning English

Asked about the purposes of teaching English, the majority of teachers (73%) identified communication as the primary purpose. Asked a similar question about the purposes of learning English, pupils also prioritised communication as the main reason (51%). However, the second most frequent response by teachers, which acknowledged the importance of learning English for use in the Singaporean context (55%), was not reflected in pupils' responses.

Acknowledgement of the importance of English on a global level was seen in both teachers’ (18%) and pupils’ (13%) responses. Other reasons for teaching and learning English raised by teachers and pupils, respectively, included developing literacy skills, and the usefulness of English for future survival and employment. Thus, both teachers’ and pupils’ answers are aligned with the way English functions in Singapore. It is an everyday language for some and the language of the workplace for many. The role of English as an international language was recognised as well.

Pupils’ Reasons for Preferring English to Mathematics

Learning English is meaningful to pupils in various ways. The main reasons identified by pupils who preferred learning English to mathematics were:

1. English is easier than mathematics
2. English is useful
3. English is enjoyable
4. Love for reading

The two main reasons for preferring English to mathematics, that English was the easier of the two subjects and useful for other subjects, were identified by 40% and 31% of pupils, respectively. These figures were significantly more than those for reasons related to interest, of finding English enjoyable or liking reading, which were identified by a mere 8% and 6% of pupils, respectively. Thus, pupils appeared to exhibit a largely achievement-oriented view of learning English.

I like English because I like to learn more words and I like to read a lot of things.

P1 Pupil

…math word problems, some [are] very hard … So English is easier than math.

P3 Pupil

English is, is a subject we use every day so … it should be an easy topic to us as we use all these words to communicate.

P5 Pupil
The Importance of English in Singapore

The issue of language is an especially important one in Singapore, a society that is multilingual, but in which English is the medium of teaching and learning for most subjects in mainstream education. As seen from the participant data, over 40% of pupils in the study did not speak English as their predominant language at home. Additionally, many pupils speak a colloquial variety of English outside the classroom, which can also lengthen the journey towards academic English. International research suggests that it takes a minimum of 5 years for children for whom English is a non-dominant language to develop competence in academic English. The dilemma noted by teachers was how to provide pupils with exposure to plenty of English vocabulary and how to ensure that children notice the differences between school-specific language and everyday varieties of language.

Pupils Recognised Words as Challenging in English

The percentage of pupils who said that learning words was challenging for them increased from P1 (17%) to P5 (46%), suggesting a greater awareness of language and cognitive maturity with age. This awareness perhaps develops in relation to the increasing demands of the curriculum.

Difficulties at P1 often occurred at the word level (e.g., recognition, spelling, pronunciation) while those at P5 tended to occur at the text level, in addition to the word level (e.g., understanding, range of vocabulary).

What did Pupils Say about Words in English?

Pupils Recognised Words as Challenging in Learning English

Vygotsky’s theories about children’s learning are likely to be familiar to many teachers. Vygotsky argues that language development and concept development are interrelated. As children learn the more technical, scientific concepts presented in all school subjects, they need to learn the language which encodes these ways of thinking. Naturally, such language is also more technical as it must cope with the complexity and abstraction of the concepts. As both language and concepts become more sophisticated, the language and concepts are removed from the context of the everyday and the here and now. This study gives an insight into the struggles experienced by children as they learn to handle the language of school and become aware that they are doing so.
Teachers Recognised Words as Challenging for Pupils in Learning English

More than half the teachers interviewed (64%) suggested that learning English vocabulary was challenging for pupils. For many pupils in the study, English is not a dominant language. If pupils do not read extensively, they are unlikely to acquire vocabulary through mere exposure to the English language, as they simply will not have enough; hence, the teachers found their pupils’ vocabularies limited. Teachers said that although pupils could not communicate their meaning, many could use a literary or technical register of language\(^6\). This means that pupils’ exposure to specific language input in meaningful contexts\(^7\) has to be maximised by having them notice\(^8\) vocabulary in some way. They have to become metalinguistically aware, that is, conscious of words, word relationships, and word formations, as well as word meanings so that they may efficiently transfer this knowledge to new contexts. They have to be able to not only understand words in context but generate new meanings from the word patterns they have noticed.

What did Teachers Say about Words in English?

They find it difficult. They find language difficult when they come across many of such unfamiliar words.

…because they don’t have a good grasp of vocabulary, so it’s even more challenging for them … to write sentences.

…the vocabulary is rather limited … even if they can write down and construct a story well.

… being able to speak English versus Singlish is very different … whether or not it’s proper English that I can award you a mark … they are two different things.

… in reality we know that the children don’t really speak standard English, it’s more of Singlish and there’s a lot of re-teaching that has to take place in school …

… they write how they speak, so [however] they speak, that’s how they write.

These findings suggest that it is important to focus on developing pupils’ metalinguistic awareness. The teachers observed that P1 pupils write as they speak, reflecting their knowledge of spoken, everyday language in their writing for school. This shows that the children are not yet aware that there is a difference in the grammars and vocabularies of the two modes of speech and writing. The development of metalinguistic awareness can be achieved through providing children with the opportunities to use and notice vocabulary in their own production of language, in their speaking and writing\(^9\). Another way is through comparing everyday vocabulary from spoken varieties and/or the MT with literate English vocabulary through contrastive linguistics\(^10,11\).
Overall, pupils and teachers saw reading as beneficial because it provides exposure to English. The dilemma teachers expressed was that they felt that pupils should read more outside their lessons, yet they noted that many pupils did not like to read. Research\textsuperscript{12,13,14} suggests that motivation for reading has many interrelated dimensions, including choice of material and accessibility, amount of reading, and competence. Intrinsic enjoyment of reading is more motivational than other extrinsic factors\textsuperscript{15}. Thus, perceived language learning benefits may not be as motivational as enjoyment for children.

The vast majority of pupils reported English as their preferred reading language (86%), as opposed to their MT (9%), or reading in a mix of English and MT, or other languages (5%).

The main way in which reading helps with learning English, as identified by 30% of all pupils, was that reading teaches you words and phrases. Other important ways in which reading helps with learning English, suggested by pupils, included:

1. reading teaches you words/phrases
2. reading helps with writing
3. reading gives you knowledge
4. reading helps with grammar

The percentage of pupils who identified reading skills in English as an area in which they received home support (8%) was higher than that of pupils who identified understanding in English as an area with which they received help (3%). Interestingly, this was the reverse of the pattern observed in mathematics, where a significantly lower percentage of pupils reported receiving help with reading skills (5%), compared to understanding (19%). Most of the pupils who reported receiving help with English from their parents were P1 pupils, suggesting a greater need for reading support at the lower levels of learning.

What did Pupils Say about Reading in English?

... reading makes you smarter.

... when you read there's words where you don't understand ... you go check dictionary and remember. You can use it in your compo.

... I probably think in school it's very important to read books so you can ... pass your exams ... But then mostly, plainly ... the reason why they only give us books so, so we can understand English and also we can understand the question.
DILEMMAS IN READING

Teachers Recognised Reading as Important in English

The majority of teachers interviewed (73%) felt that reading is important for learning English, as it provides pupils with exposure to examples of literary language, as well as widens their knowledge. These perceptions largely correspond to the pupils’ views of reading. Reading for leisure was distinguished from reading for understanding by some teachers.

A proportion of teachers (46%) felt that pupils did not like to read, did not appreciate reading, or did not read enough. More than half of the teachers interviewed (55%) said that parents should encourage their children to read, suggesting that the responsibility for pupils’ reading lay both with the home and school, thus expressing another dilemma about the responsibility for children’s reading development.

What did Teachers Say about Reading?

- ...we see the kids generally reading but we don’t have 100 per cent of them doing that and really being engaged in that reading.
  - English Teacher

- ...some children read and do not understand… they can read and do not appreciate the story at all.
  - English Teacher

- ...phrasal verbs can be quite tricky… Unless you… read a lot and then you are able to see the different kinds of phrases used in writings.
  - English Teacher

- ...it’s very different… reading for purpose versus reading for leisure.
  - English Teacher

- ...how you know when you’re supposed to write in a certain way is when you read really a lot.
  - English Teacher

- ...hopefully, through reading, they can actually subconsciously learn sentence structure, grammar, everything is packed inside.
  - English Teacher

The teachers’ comments about reading exemplify ideas about engagement, appreciation, purpose, and exposure to literate academic language through reading. In order to reap the benefits of reading, children have to read a huge amount at exactly the right level – of language and interest – for them to appear to learn language ‘naturally’. If their reading is limited, disengaged, and sporadic, they will find decoding effortful and lose comprehension. This is worrying, particularly in the primary school where children should learn to read skilfully and fluently by mid primary. If children do not develop fluency, they will have to expend great effort in reading, will neither understand, nor enjoy what they read, and be liable to the 4th grade slump noted in research. Consequently, children may become demotivated and unable to meet the demands of school reading.
How is Grammar Conceptualised in English Lessons?

There were four ways in which pupils experienced grammar in the study: as rules, as procedures, as assessments, and as concepts. However, for many pupils who desire certainty and correctness, there were some difficulties and therefore teaching dilemmas associated with each of the first three approaches.

1 Teaching Grammar as Rules

Teachers taught the rules of grammar at all levels and they usually associated the rules with grammatical metalanguage or terminology, e.g., consonants, countable nouns, quantifiers, to-infinitives.

- ‘A’ when we talk about a noun that begins with a consonant…
- ‘an’ when we talk about a noun that begins with a vowel.
- Now for countable nouns we can use ‘several’…
- for uncountable nouns you have quantifiers like ‘some’, ‘most’, ‘all’, ‘none’.
- You use to-infinitives after some verbs, adjectives, nouns, and wh-words.

Dilemmas in Rules

- Rules may simply be tendencies, as such, there are often exceptions and special cases – e.g., the exception of the third person singular in the regular simple present tense.
- One rule leads to another conceptually – e.g., the use of countable and uncountable nouns is closely related to the use of the quantifiers much and many, as well as to noun phrases.
- One rule leads to another linguistically – e.g., teaching the use of articles necessitates talking about consonants and vowels.
- Rules appear to contradict life experiences – e.g., when speaking of countable and uncountable nouns, the question ‘Can you count money?’ demands the answer no according to the rule, as money is considered uncountable. However, pupils do actually count money and learn that they can do so in mathematics.
- Rules need precise explanations – e.g., it is more precise to say a pronoun refers to a noun than replaces a noun.
- Rules have to be seen in action; that is, in meaningful contexts of use as well as decontextualised for analysis.

2 Teaching Grammar as Procedures

Pupils may be taught grammar as a set of steps to follow, and consequently, focus on learning procedural rules rather than grammatical rules. For example, the conversion of direct speech to indirect speech through changing punctuation and word order, or the conversion of voice from passive to active, or vice versa.

Dilemmas in Procedures

This approach has the advantage of using metalanguage to talk about grammar and perhaps increasing metalinguistic awareness through the manipulation of language. However, the procedural task is often unrelated to communicating meaning in context.
Teaching Grammar for Assessments

Grammar may be taught to pupils as practice for national examinations. As is to be expected, this approach was most prominent at P5.

Dilemmas in Assessments

An advantage, apart from the examination practice, is that pupils are shown that there are choices to be made from their grammatical repertoires and that grammar may be used in more than one appropriate way. However, mimicking examination tasks means that grammar is often presented at sentence level and meaning is not contextualised.

What did Pupils Say about Grammar?

… we have to use the correct vocabulary or grammar and make sure you do not do any spelling carelessness.

P1 Pupil

[English is] confusing because sometimes I don’t get some rules ... types of words like present past tense or past perfect tense.

P3 Pupil

English there’s a lot of rules you have to learn. If you can’t remember for composition you get very low marks.

P5 Pupil

Teaching Grammar as Concepts

In their explanations of grammar, some teachers at higher levels (P3 and P5) used the very effective strategy of making pupils aware of root words, demonstrating to them the semantic morphology of words, or how words are made up of smaller meaningful units. This practice offers another potential approach to grammar teaching: grammar as concepts.

Quantifiers, does it remind you of another word that you are familiar with? … Could quantifiers be related to quantity?

English Teacher

‘Eat’ we can make it into ‘eat’ or ‘eaten’, or ‘ate’ … But all these three words come from the word ‘eat’. So, we call ‘eat’ the base, all right?

English Teacher

… preposition comes from ‘pre-’ and ‘position’ … ‘Position’ to tell you your location.

English Teacher
INTERVIEW: DR. MARK FIFER SEILHAMER & MS. HO HSIEH LIN

Dr. Mark Fifer Seilhamer is a Lecturer in the English Language and Literature academic group (ELL/AG) at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. In addition to investigating the language of English and Mathematics classrooms, he has conducted research on attitudes and beliefs about languages and language varieties in Singapore.

Ms. Ho Hsien Lin is an English Language teacher at Ai Tong School. She has a Master’s degree in Applied Linguistics, and has taught in primary school classrooms for 15 years. She was a Subject Literacy Officer at the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS) from 2015 to 2017.

We saw vocabulary being used and explained in the context of reading lessons, but not many actual vocabulary lessons. What do you think is the best way of developing children’s vocabularies?

Dr. Seilhamer: While explicit teaching of particular words and phrases will certainly benefit students, when we consider the huge number of English words available for use, we’re forced to acknowledge that even if we devoted the entirety of every class to vocabulary instruction, we would still just barely scratch the surface.

In my opinion, the very best way for children’s vocabularies to be developed is through massive amounts of voluntary reading. Regardless of whether this reading is done purely for pleasure or for other purposes, the sustained interaction with the printed word will provide invaluable input for learners, both in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Ms. Ho: They must have opportunities to read the words in context as well as opportunities to use the words.

Do you think it’s important that children read?

Ms. Ho: Definitely, they get to internalise language structures and see examples of language use, and are exposed to nuanced meanings of words.

We observed teachers teaching grammar as rules, as procedures, and for assessments. What are your thoughts on teaching grammar?

Dr. Seilhamer: While learners do, of course, need to have some firm guidelines to help them make sense of a system that all too often seems hopelessly chaotic, I feel that the relative flexibility of the English grammar system could be highlighted more by teachers.

Presenting students with numerous examples that include instances of nouns that begin with vowel sounds represented by consonants (e.g., an hour) and consonant sounds represented with vowels (e.g., a university) and asking them to figure out for themselves what the ‘rule’ is regarding use of ‘a’ or ‘an’ would not only increase the likelihood of their internalising and remembering the rule, but also serve to increase their phonological awareness.

I firmly believe that some explicit teaching of grammar is absolutely necessary. Many of the trainee teachers in my Postgraduate Diploma classes (PGDE) at NIE were primary school students in the 1990s, when the worldwide trend was to discourage explicit grammar teaching. The aim was then for children to unconsciously ‘acquire’ grammatical knowledge through implicit exposure to language rather than conscious ‘learning’ through explicit instruction. This likely worked only for the most voracious of readers. For more typical students, the linguistic input they were exposed to was just not sufficient for the unconscious ‘acquisition’ to occur. So the trainee teachers in my classes who were children of the 1990s tell me that they lack a firm understanding of how English grammar ‘works’ and now need to gain this understanding in order to confidently provide their students with clear explanations. For most students, some explicit instruction seems to be necessary to facilitate their noticing of grammatical structures in the language they encounter.
INTERVIEW: DR. MARK FIFER SEILHAMER & MS. HO HSIEN LIN

If a particular context is established as a starting point for presenting the notion of reported speech to students, they can be guided to identify the contextual considerations that would impact their structural and lexical choices in the reported speech situation (e.g., statement word order instead of question word order, tense, use of particular pronouns), thus enabling them to better understand the concept of reported speech. Once the concept and the reasons for its employment in purposeful communication are fully understood, students should be able to make the appropriate structural and lexical choices based on what seems to them to ‘make sense’ in a given situation rather than simply adhering to a set procedure.

What kind of influence do you think speaking a non-standard variety of English or Mother Tongue at home would have on children’s development of English in school?

Ms. Ho: They end up borrowing the language ‘rules’ of this non-standard variety!

Dr. Seilhamer: I think there are plenty of children (and adults) who are genuinely unaware of many of the differences between our Singapore Colloquial English and Singapore Standard English, and I believe it could be very helpful to employ a contrastive analysis approach in which differences between how things are expressed in the two varieties are explicitly explained.

When do you think there is a good case for teaching metalanguage?

Ms. Ho: It’s a judgement call. Is it age-appropriate? Do you need the metalanguage to explain complex language rules? If the answer is yes, teach it.

Dr. Seilhamer: If teachers believe, as I do, that some explicit teaching of grammar is necessary, then some grammatical metalanguage becomes necessary for that explicit instruction. Some language will be needed to talk about language, and attempts by teachers to avoid established metalinguistic terms (e.g., referring to verbs as ‘doing words’ or ‘action words’) ultimately tend to make the grammatical system more confusing and impenetrable for students. Metalanguage provides an efficient shorthand with which to discuss the relationships and patterns in language, so I would say that metalanguage should have a place in all English classrooms. Teachers must take pains, however, to ensure that all students are on the same page in their understanding of the terms and carefully consider which metalinguistic terms are appropriate to introduce to students at particular age levels, scaffolding the metalanguage instruction accordingly.
We found that some teachers taught grammatical rules, especially at the lower primary. However, rules have exceptions, and this raises the question of whether such rules will sustain children at higher levels, when they encounter more complex texts. What are your thoughts on this?

**Professor Myhill:** I think in general, the fact that rules have exceptions is problematic. I also think that the idea of transfer into learning is really hard with rules. The fact that some children are taught rules, can repeat back the rules, but do not use them in their writing questions the learning value of rules. But there may be rules that are really helpful to particular groups of students. So although I say I’m sceptical, I wouldn’t say no.

**What do you think a teacher needs to know in order to give good explanations about grammar?**

I think they’ve got to have extremely good subject knowledge of the grammatical terminology that’s considerably above the level of the explanation that they’re trying to make to the class. If you look at the main commercial grammar books, actually they often avoid giving a definition. And one of the things that we found in England is that because teachers realise that the kinds of definitions that they do find, if they find any in grammar books, are too hard for children, they invent their own ones that are proxies. So in England they will say things like a verb is a ‘doing word’, or adverbs end in -ly, or adjectives are ‘describing words’, and all of those actually lead children down a blind alley, conceptually. So I think that giving a good explanation in grammar really requires first of all that good subject knowledge, and then the capacity to show it through clear, visually-presented examples of the target structure. I would not even attempt definitions because I don’t think definitions work.

**When would you say there is a good case for teaching the metalanguage of grammar?**

I think that the value of the metalanguage is that it gives you a language to talk about language. But I would say that in terms of classrooms, teachers have to make a judgement call on whether the metalanguage is getting in the way of the learning they’re trying to achieve. The trouble with grammar, in some ways it’s a bit more like math, in that conceptually, it’s very interrelated knowledge. So if you’re starting to explain a subordinate clause, you nearly always have to be also talking about verbs. And you need to be talking about finite and non-finite verbs, and conjunctions. It all interrelates, so I think that we’ve underestimated the idea of grammar as conceptual understanding, and we need to think more about how to build that conceptual understanding so the metalanguage is something that really works for the learner.

**Teachers are worried that pupils do not read very much for pleasure, even though they do well in tests. Do you think this is a cause for concern?**

I think that that is a real worry, because so much of the models for good language use are in the reading texts that they do. And we’re also in a society where the prevalence of digital modes of reading is huge, and I think in a way, young people are reading and writing more than ever before, through digital modes: reading messages, blogs, SMS, websites where you can jump around… What they’re not doing is that more sustained reading. Particularly narrative or well-written non-fiction where they have to have reading stamina, and enjoy that pleasure of being transported to a different world when you’re reading a book. So I think there is huge value in the reading for pleasure, and you learn a lot. You know, you learn a lot about yourself and your place in the world.
IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOMS

Perceptions of the Purposes of Teaching and Learning English

Perceptions about the purposes of teaching and learning English centred on language as a means of communication. Participants also recognised the value of English in the pupils’ future work, showing their recognition that in Singaporean society, English functions as a lingua franca and the language of economic endeavor. However, these views are essentially pragmatic and, in a way, historical. They acknowledge language neither as aesthetic, nor cultural, nor as a means of intellectual development.

General implication. We can deepen teacher language awareness, specifically, knowledge about how English is involved in children’s aesthetic and intellectual development.

Classroom Implications of Dilemmas in Teaching and Learning English

1. Teachers and pupils observed that pupils experienced difficulty in learning vocabulary, especially vocabulary for school reading and writing.

   This dilemma reflects the very real tensions in providing children with exposure to vocabulary when school is their source of input and they do not read widely. Additionally, the relationships among colloquial varieties, Singapore Standard English (SSE), everyday and academic languages, MT and English, and between the modes of speaking and writing play out differently for every individual child as they learn English.

   Implication 1. We can interest children in the language through consciousness raising in addition to wide reading. For example, we can teach vocabulary to develop word consciousness, emphasising word relationships, etymologies and patterns of formation to enable pupils to generate similar patterns in new contexts. Another example is to use contrastive linguistics to help children notice differences among languages and varieties. This will help them to develop metalinguistic awareness of the choices they have in their own writing and speaking, increasing the relevance of language for them.

2. Teachers and pupils were very aware of the benefits of reading for language development. However, teachers felt that some of their pupils were not reading enough, nor did they necessarily enjoy reading.

   There is no doubt that reading voraciously in a language helps children readily learn that language. However, the benefits of extensive reading for language learning will not be felt if children read sporadically without pleasure.

   Implication 2. We can highlight to children the joy of reading rather than the value of reading. In other words, we can emphasise the aesthetic experience rather than the language-learning benefits of reading. It is important to give children time and space to choose their own books and to talk about books with their peers, that is, to engage in cultured reading. Extensive reading will help to develop the fluency necessary for children to become skillful and motivated at each level of reading.

3. Grammar was taught as rules, as procedures, and for assessments, which tended to remove it from conceptual understanding and meaningful use.

   The dilemma of grammar teaching is how to build up children’s knowledge of grammar and grammatical metalanguage such that they can draw on it in meaningful use. Teaching strategies which concretise and proceduralise grammar may be efficient in the short term yet may not sustain pupils’ learning of the abstract concepts of grammar in the long term. Pupils’ confusion about grammar rules and the fact that teachers and pupils mentioned writing as problematic suggests that simply knowing grammatical metalanguage does not ensure the transfer or application of grammatical knowledge into children’s writing or speaking. Knowing grammatical metalanguage does not necessarily lead to metalinguistic awareness.

   Implication 3. We can teach grammar in a more flexible, conceptual way, recognising that it provides children with tools for complex, sophisticated thinking. Children should be able to put grammar into action appropriately and effectively according to context and purpose. We therefore should give children opportunities to articulate grammatical knowledge through exploratory talk and interesting writing activities. As children produce language, they notice its forms and functions, try out their own hypotheses about language use and effect, and receive feedback on how far their choice of grammar has assisted their linguistic purpose.

In sum, these findings suggest that the time is right to reinvigorate the teaching and learning of English, and rediscover its potential for joy, interest, and intellectual development.
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