Instantiating justice, fairness and inclusiveness in English as an Additional Language/Dialect assessment frameworks: Unpacking the evidence base for the Bandscales State Schools (Queensland)

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Equity and fairness in schooling is embedded in and represented by assessment practices which are inclusive of diverse cohorts. For students who are speakers of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D), fair and equitable EAL/D assessment frameworks must meet a number of key purposes: identification of the full cohort of EAL/D learners, classification of their English language level, acknowledgement and inclusion of students' bilingual/multilingual capabilities, and enhancement of specialist and mainstream teachers' pedagogical knowledge of and responses to students' language needs and language learning contexts. They must also have the capacity to communicate to stakeholders for accountability purposes. Importantly, these assessment tools must be grounded in principles, theory, teacher experience and be evidence informed. This paper will present an overview of the Bandscales State Schools (Queensland (Qld)) for EAL/D learners, the genesis and parentage of the framework, its complementary teacher guidance material and its utilization in research. We will argue that the core goals of equity and fairness are supported by the underlying constructs and design of the Queensland Bandscales, and that it provides a model framework for

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'responsible' EAL/D assessment that might underlie any possible future national reporting of EAL/D learner needs-based resourcing.

Key words: additional/second language assessment, EAL/D Bandscales, English proficiency frameworks, equity, inclusion

Introduction

The measurement of English language proficiency levels and progress by school systems, using a valid tool, is a fundamental equity requirement for English language learners. Now more than ever, school-based formative assessment practices must provide a counterbalance to the homogenising and narrowing effects of standardized testing and assessment tools generated by national literacy testing and other mainstream products. This paper describes just such a formative assessment practice in relation to English language development, where the practice is focused on providing diagnostic support for language development, within the context of classroom content which has been taught and learned (Shohamy, 2022). Where, also, teacher use of a valid, contextual English as an Additional Language/Dialect [2] (hereafter EAL/D) proficiency framework can provide teacher professional learning for a growing cohort of English language learners, given that there is no Australian mandated national policy, and in many cases little else systemically[3], to support their language learning needs. More broadly, the formative use of the assessment framework supports its valid use for summative and reporting purposes, which is vital for enabling communication to key stakeholders like the students, their parents and teachers and school administration concerning the pathways that these language learners take in their schooling; in this role it supports accountability for learning and

[2] We will use the term 'English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D)', the currently favoured terminology for English language learners in most Australian school settings for around a decade, replacing previous terms such as 'English as a Second Language (ESL)', 'English as a Second Language/Dialect (ESL/D)', 'English as an Other Language (ESOL)' etc. EAL (English as an Additional Language), however, is the term used in the states of Victoria and Tasmania. The use of 'additional' explicitly flags the goal of additive multilingualism. 'Dialect' flags the language learning contexts of students who speak an English-related variety which is distant from Standard Australian English and so benefit from extra English language teaching (e.g. "heavy" Indigenised Englishes). EAL/D also encompasses Indigenous students who learn English as a classroom-only language (English as a Foreign Language (EFL)) as the whole community speaks an Indigenous vernacular.

[3] The recent development, however, of an EAL Curriculum in the state of Victoria and its extensive resources such as Tools to Enhance Assessment Literacy for Teachers of EAL (TEAL) is noted (VCAA, 2019).

the provision of appropriate language programs, and also informs curriculum design and instruction (see Wolf & Bailey, 2017).

Given the evidence of the link between student achievement in high stakes mainstream assessment and English language proficiency level (e.g. Strand & Lindorff, 2020; Creagh, 2013), it cannot be overstated how important second language proficiency assessment tools are, despite the literature on their limitations (for example, see Chalhoub-Deville, 1997; McNamara & Elder, 2010). Second language (L2) English assessment receives little systemic support or value within the power hierarchy of assessment in schools (see Morita-Mullaney, 2017; Wheeler, 2016). And yet, as Angelo (2013) points out, the L2 learner status and proficiency levels of EAL/D learners are visible nowhere else. Our aim, therefore, in this paper, is to argue for the positive impact of the use of EAL/D proficiency assessment tools of a particular ilk, namely frameworks which, through an evidence base, can be shown to instantiate fairness, justice and inclusion by providing for this pedagogical and administrative/policy visibility. As an exemplar, we take the *Bandscales State Schools (Queensland)* (Education Queensland (EQ), 2008a, 2008b), henceforth called the Qld Bandscales[4], to illustrate how this framework fulfils these characteristics[5], and how it provides a model for 'responsible' EAL/D school learner assessment.

Surprisingly there has been very limited recent discussion in the Australian academic literature of the concepts underlying the EAL/D proficiency frameworks used in Australia and the features that would best serve fairness and justice for the full cohort of EAL/D learners were there to be national reporting of data on English language proficiency (although see Angelo & Hudson, 2020). The full cohort of EAL/D students is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak traditional Indigenous languages, new contact languages like creole and 'heavy' Indigenised Englishes distant from General Australian English, immigrants from non-English speaking countries, students of refugee backgrounds, children born in Australia of

[4] At the time of writing the Qld Bandscales were publicly available online via a link on this page to the Bandscales State Schools (Queensland): https://education.qld.gov.au/students/inclusive-education/english-language-support

[5] The authors developed this still current version of the Qld Bandscales in 2008, in a Qld departmental project to incorporate this assessment tool, inclusive of all EAL/D learners, into the curriculum and assessment framework being developed at that time for all classroom teachers (see Disclosure statement). The Qld Bandscales were originally called the *Bandscales for English as a Second Language/Dialect (ESL/D) Learners*.

migrant heritage where English is not spoken at home, English speaking students returning to Australia after long periods in non-English speaking countries, deaf children and children of deaf adults who use Australian Sign language (Auslan) and "international" (i.e. fee-paying) overseas students from non-English speaking backgrounds (ACARA, n.d.).

It is into this space that we wish to draw on Messick's (1989) seminal "ethical approach to validity" (McNamara et al., 2019), but following the interpretation of the issues of fairness and justice as described below by McNamara and Ryan (2011). Elder (2021) uses the term "policy responsible" language assessment and gives examples of where language testers have intervened in the "discursive web" (Goldberg 2006) that characterises policy making. Elder describes Lo Bianco and Aliani's (2013) level of rhetoric in the dynamic discursive network of policy planning, where language assessment expertise can be used to interpret and distil policy, and instruments may be offered to operationalise policy intentions. In Australia, policy in regard to the identification and targeted support of equity groups in schools is currently under review by the federal government. While we recognise that this is a space of both pedagogical and administrative complexity, the Australian Government Productivity Commission's 2022 recommendation that EAL/D students be considered for inclusion as a national "priority equity cohort" (p. 116) provides a pivotal opening for such discussion, where language assessment expertise can be used to influence policy development. If an EAL/D priority equity cohort becomes national policy, assessment of their English language proficiency will become highly relevant. Identification of the full EAL/D learner cohort would be prioritised. The measurement tools and methods for collecting language proficiency data would be decided upon. Language proficiency data would be collected, EAL/D student achievement could be disaggregated, and national policies devised to support language needs. There is considerable EAL/D professional and political commitment to the need for national reporting on the EAL/D cohort (see ACTA, 2022; Productivity Commission, 2022; Department of Education, 2023).

Current policy moves which might recognise EAL/D learners as a priority equity cohort are therefore bringing EAL/D proficiency tools into focus again. In Australia, where education has traditionally been a state rather than federal responsibility, most states and territories have produced their own EAL/D assessment tools. Adding to these, in 2011, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) organised for an *English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) Learning Progression*, to be developed as part of a suite of EAL/D resources, accompanying the newly developed Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011/2015).[6] Up until 2015, ACARA's EAL/D resources stated that the ACARA Progression was not intended to replace the EAL/D proficiency tools developed for each jurisdiction, but this detail has been lost in document updates. To date, despite the ACARA Progression being available for more than a decade, there has not been uniform uptake of this scale, with a number of states and territories deferring to their existing tools. It is not possible within the space of this paper to compare or evaluate all the proficiency scales currently used in Australia. However, our intention is to contribute to the "discursive web" with empirically strong and sound arguments about characteristics that determine the suitability of a particular set of EAL/D scales for guiding fair, just and valid EAL/D assessment in the schooling context. We illustrate the constructs, values, research and evidence underlying the Qld Bandscales, as an example of what a fair and just EAL/D tool for national measurement would need to encompass and how policy intentions might be operationalised.

Fairness, justice and inclusion in assessment validity

In applying fairness, justice and inclusion to EAL/D assessment in school contexts, this paper draws upon McNamara and Ryan's (2011) useful distinction between "fairness" and "justice" in language testing and the need for both to be considered in questions about validity. For McNamara and Ryan fairness (an internal quality) "broadly speaking, refers to the technical quality of the test; justice encompasses the values implicit in test constructs, and the social uses to which the language tests may be put" (p.161). In this paper, while fairness in the design of EAL/D assessment tools will be considered, the issue of values and the implementation of EAL/D assessment tools by generalist teacher users, that is, of justice, will be at the forefront.

Fairness, justice and inclusion in assessment are critical values in a context like Australia where there is no nationally mandated policy to identify, assess and provide

[6] The ACARA EAL/D resources do not include a national EAL/D curriculum.

services for all English language learners even though Australian schools deliver the curriculum via the English language[7]. Currently, whilst funding may be allocated for some identified EAL/D students, schools may also have autonomy in their use of these funds and accountability is not specifically linked to language learner progress but to more general mainstream school outcomes, related to national testing outcomes, or mainstream assessment achievement (see Creagh et al., 2023). In most cases, funding has not been targeted for First Nations[8] EAL/D learners, as their recognition as a cohort has never really made progress in policy settings (Angelo & Hudson, 2020). It should be noted that Australia does not have federal or state laws enforcing provisions for EAL/D learners, nor in general does it have standardized English language learner initial entry scanner tests or mainstream education entry tests.[9]

The paper will proceed in the following way. First, we present a detailed overview of the contemporary Queensland Bandscales, including the context of their development, their structure, theoretical foundation and evidence of validity. We then propose four key purposes for a school EAL/D proficiency assessment scale, to ensure justice, fairness and inclusion for EAL/D students and examine these four purposes in relation to the Qld Bandscales. We will argue that the Qld Bandscales framework provides an example of a valid and inclusive policy solution to the recognition of and response to EAL/D learners in Australia – a model for an EAL/D assessment framework that might underlie any possible future national procedure for assessing EAL/D learner needs-based resourcing.

[7] A very small number of schools in remote Indigenous communities are officially resourced as bilingual schools with a dual language approach to education (Devlin et al., 2017). There are also a small number of schools (24) in the capital cities which specialise in immersion in an overseas foreign language and teach some curriculum subjects in an overseas language (https://www.australianschoolsdirectory.com.au/language-schools).

[8] First Nations in the Australian context includes the two broad groupings of Indigenous peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal peoples' lands encompass the mainland and islands outside the Torres Strait; Torres Strait Islanders' islands lie in the waters between the northern tip of Australia and Papua New Guinea. The terms 'First Nations', 'Indigenous', 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' are used interchangeably in this paper, with respectful intent.

[9] International EAL students may be required to show attainment of a level of English proficiency, dependent on their visa requirements for study in Australia.

Overview of the Qld Bandscales

Provenance of 'Qld Bandscales' within the 'NLLIA Bandscales' family

In order to enter the "discursive web" of policy making, this paper takes the Qld Bandscales as an exemplar of how fair, just and inclusive requirements of an EAL/D assessment instrument can be met. These Bandscales reflect almost three decades of L2 proficiency scale development, implementation, reflection and innovation in Queensland (see Hudson & Angelo, 2014, 2020). They are a daughter scale of the pioneering National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) ESL Bandscales (McKay et al., 1994)[10] and its later adaptation, *Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners* (Education Queensland (EQ), 1999/2002).[11] Both are discussed in more detail below. Different iterations of the NLLIA ESL Bandscales are used in the state of Queensland in government, Catholic and Independent school systems, but all iterations can be aligned according to the original NLLIA levels (see Table 1).[12] All members of the NLLIA Bandscales 'family' describe stages of growth in L2 English proficiency via observable learner behaviours in the four macroskills, and all function as a stand-alone tool designed for EAL/D proficiency assessment across-the-curriculum.

The Qld Bandscales consist of two complementary documents, the Bandscales and accompanying guidelines for use. The Bandscales are a summary[13] version of the original NLLIA ESL Bandscales, developed for non-specialist mainstream teachers who have the responsibility for differentiated teaching according to the needs of all learners. They are built into the electronic reporting and administrative system for Queensland government schools, OneSchool. To assist non-specialist classroom

[10] See Moore (1996, 2005) for an in depth interpretation of the development of differing second language proficiency scales in Australian in the early 1990s: the contextualised, developmental NLLIA ESL Bandscales delivered in January 1993; and the subsequent outcomes based Australian Education Council (AEC)-Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS) ESL Scales (Curriculum Corporation 1994) appearing in December 1993. Both sets of scales, however, were published in 1994 (Moore, 1996, pp. 377-8).
[11] See Disclosure statement
[12] Reference in this paper is not made to the NLLIA ESL Bandscales Version 2 (McKay, Hudson, Newton, & Guse, 2007). Although the Qld Bandscales and Version 2 can be aligned, Version 2, unlike the Qld Bandscales, was not written as an update of the Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners and does not incorporate its concepts.
[13] Each age-related set of levels and its descriptors in a given macroskill (Speaking, Listening, Writing or Reading/Viewing) displays as a table on a single page, i.e. Early phase Speaking, Early phase Listening etc

teachers, Curriculum Guidelines for ESL Learners (EQ 2008b) were developed to accompany the Qld Bandscales and provided information about identification of EAL/D learners, theoretical concepts which informed EAL/D (e.g. interlanguage, the importance of errors), classroom and school-based supports for EAL/D learners, and the importance of valid assessment and reporting practices. Documentation which accompanies the current version of the Qld Bandscales includes similar content (DoE, 2018). In the Bandscales tradition, evidence of students' proficiency levels is based on teacher observations and collection of formal and informal samples of work undertaken in class (DoE 2018, p.14).

The Qld Bandscales consist of Early Phase (P-year 3)[14] and Middle Phase (years 4-10) scales, in Listening, Reading/Viewing, Speaking and Writing. There are six main classification levels covering beginning through to intermediate levels of language development, which correspond to those developed through research in the original NLLIA Bandscales (Table 1). Extra finer-grained early levels (pre-levels) have been added to account for longer pathways due to factors such as EFL contexts (i.e. classroom only use of English language) and/or where students have a limited background in print literacy in their first language or interrupted schooling. Although in the original NLLIA Bandscales there are one and sometimes two levels above level six, by level six students have fluency in Speaking and have Listening, Reading/Viewing and Writing levels that enable performance at the level and within the range of ability expected at their phase of schooling. The six proficiency levels fit with well-known recognized key stages of L2 acquisition and development. The extra early levels assist with showing 'learning gain' or progress for those for whom there will be a slower pathway of EAL/D development. Four levels after the early beginner levels in Early and Middle phases give scope for showing progress if students are identified and supported.

Table 1 provides an overview of the six levels of the Qld Bandscales, including pre-levels for levels 1 and 2. Each of the levels has a set of descriptors, describing the kind of language behaviour which might be observed for that particular level. For example, at level 2 of the Middle Phase Reading, a student "recognises and gains meaning from

[14] Schooling in Queensland commences with a Prep year for children turning five years old by June 30 in the year they start school. The school year commences in January in Australia.

short texts…which use language that has been recycled in a variety of ways." (DoE, 2018, p. 37).

Table 1. An overview of the levels of the Qld Bandscales

Qld Bandscale levels	Summary level statements (taken from Speaking, Listening Reading/Viewing, Writing)	original NLLIA Bandscales
1 - pre-level 1 in S, R, W (Early) - pre-level 1 in R, W (Middle)	New to Standard Australian English (SAE), new to reading, and writing (in SAE)	1
2 - pre-level 2 in S, R (Early) - pre-level 2 in S, R, W (Middle)	Beginning to comprehend and use familiar SAE, beginning to recognise word and word clusters and to experiment in writing	2
3 - pre-level 3 in W (Early)	Beginning to comprehend classroom SAE, beginning to participate in SAE, beginning to comprehend short familiar texts, beginning to write own short simple texts	3
4	Developing comprehension and use of SAE, applying developing reading skills, applying understanding of texts to own writing	4
5	Consolidating comprehension and use of SAE, consolidating reading skills, developing control over language and text	5
6	Becoming competent in SAE, becoming competent readers and writers.	6
Not included		7-8

Note: Education Queensland (EQ), 2008a, Department of Education (DoE), 2018.
Note. S - Speaking, R - Reading/Viewing, W - Writing

Theoretical foundations of the Qld Bandscales

As stated, the original NLLIA ESL Bandscales, the first comprehensive scales of their kind for school learners with national and international influence, were a parent document for the Qld Bandscales. As such the Qld Bandscales have inherited an approach based on theory and research. Noted for their principled, theoretical basis, the NLLIA Bandscales draw on 1) a communicative language ability (CLA) testing theory foundation (e.g. Bachman, 1990, 1991), which provided a 'map' of the areas of ability to be addressed; 2) concepts of L2 acquisition and development in schools, drawing, among others, on Cummins (1978, 1984) and contributing to their distinctive contextualized nature; and 3) research by systemic functional linguists (e.g Martin, 1992), especially on academic genres which are increasingly a feature of school EAL/D tools in the US (see Wolf et al., 2023). The use of the theoretical basis and the depth of research into issues related to L2 acquisition and L2 literacy development in the school context, as well as the wide specialist teacher and researcher consultation, are detailed in the extensive 'Introduction' to the NLLIA Bandscales (McKay et al.,1994: A1-47; see also McKay, 1995).

A key principle of the original NLLIA Bandscales was to include all English language learners as far as possible; however, the capacity to describe the characteristics of the EAL/D learning of "Aboriginal learners" (sic) fell outside the expertise of that project team and the task was allocated to further research and development (McKay et al., 1994, pp. A5-11). Further adaptations became more inclusive of diverse EAL/D learning cohorts and their learning contexts. The *Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners* (Education Queensland [EQ], 1999/2002), henceforth Indigenous Bandscales, and the Qld Bandscales (EQ 2008a, 2008b) were both adaptations of the NLLIA Bandscales which took up the unfulfilled task of describing this cohort. The development of the Indigenous Bandscales continued to draw on a strong theory and research evidence base, including Shnukal's (1983, 1988, 1991, 1992) research on Yumplatok[15], Berry and Hudson's (1997) work on Kriol speakers in the classroom, and Malcolm and the Education Department of Western Australia's research on Aboriginal English (Malcolm et al., 1999). They also drew more generally on research on pidgins and creoles and the use of creoles in education (e.g. Siegel, 1992, 1998, 1999). While this research emphasised the legitimacy of these rule-governed varieties and the pitfalls caused by semantic transparency in classrooms, the later Qld Bandscales responded to ongoing linguistic research being conducted through the *Understanding Children's Language Acquisition Project* in Queensland schools with Indigenous students (Angelo, 2009) and the increasing awareness of the diversity of Indigenous contact languages in Queensland (see Hudson & Angelo, 2014 for details). The Qld Bandscales also addressed more fully the refugee EAL/D cohort with limited or interrupted schooling background, whose numbers had grown significantly since the publication of the original NLLIA Bandscales in 1994.

[15] Yumplatok is now the recognised name in the Torres Strait for the English-lexified creole language spoken there, but it was first described under the local nomenclature of the time, 'Broken', and then as 'Torres Strait Creole'.

Validation evidence for the Qld Bandscales

Importantly, the Qld Bandscales levels have been validated in relation both to teacher allocated grades and to National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (hereafter NAPLAN[16]) scores (Creagh, 2013). Creagh's (2013) research was significant not only in providing evidence from Australia that English language proficiency was a "determinant of a student's schooling performance" (Productivity Commission, 2022), but in also providing validation evidence for the Qld Bandscales, although it should be noted that Creagh's research was confined to EAL/D students of migrant and refugee background only.[17] In a cross-sectional statistical analysis of Queensland NAPLAN performance using multiple regression to isolate the impact of language on learner performance, the Bandscales were used as a measure of learners' level of English (Creagh, 2013). NAPLAN data, enrolment data and Bandscale levels were collected from 247 students who were in year 9 and were being supported as English as a Second Language[18] (ESL) students. The descriptive statistical analysis reported in Creagh (2014b, p.34) indicated that there was alignment between the Bandscale levels, A to E grades reported by teachers in subject English and performance on NAPLAN. In summary, students who achieved a grade[19] of D/E in subject English and were performing below the NAPLAN national minimum standard for year 9 were also classified, on average, as being at Qld Bandscales levels 2 (beginner) and 3 (post-beginner or sometimes called lower intermediate) levels (see Table 1). Conversely, those students who achieved A grades in English had also achieved, on average, NAPLAN results well above the national minimum standards and had reached the highest Qld Bandscales level of 6, considered to indicate becoming competent in Standard Australian English (SAE). There is a similarity of pattern between these

[16] The NAPLAN test is a population test of literacy and numeracy for students in years 3,5,7 and 9.
[17] As Angelo & Hudson (2020) have pointed out, Indigenous background EAL/D learners tend to live in different geographic areas (more remote regions and Indigenous communities) to those with overseas backgrounds and have mostly not been included in targeted funded EAL/D programs serviced by TESOL specialists. As a consequence they have not been as accessible to research by TESOL specialists. Instead, much research has been undertaken by linguists who have worked on describing Indigenous children's language backgrounds –often complex due to effects of language contact– and how this interacts with their classroom learning experiences (e.g. Angelo & Hudson, 2018; Dixon, 2018; Fraser, 2018; Gawne et al, 2017; Poetsch, 2018; Wigglesworth & Simpson, 2008, 2018).
[18] At the time of this study, English language learners and associated programs used the acronym ESL (English as a Second Language). The contemporary term for this group is EAL/D (English as an Additional Language/Dialect) or EAL (English as an Additional language) (cf footnote 1).
[19] Grades in mainstream curriculum areas, such as the Science or English subjects, are ranked according to State criteria requirements from A to E, with A being highest.

findings (despite contextual differences) and those found in the UK by Strand and Lindorff (2020), teacher assessed only, in regard to Key Stage 3 (Yr 9) achievement levels and Proficiency in English (PIE) levels of EAL students in Wales. In a similar vein Creagh's study contributes to the validation argument for the usefulness of the Qld Bandscales.

Using the same group of year 9 ESL students, multiple regression was also used to explore the relationship between a number of potential explanatory variables (English language level, education background and socio-demographic factors) and performance on the year 9 NAPLAN reading test in 2010 and 2011 (Creagh, 2014a). This method was aimed at determining empirically whether English language level, measured using the Qld Bandscales, was associated with NAPLAN performance. This analysis shows that for the NAPLAN reading results for this group of ESL students "the majority of the explanatory power … is coming from the inclusion of the reading Bandscales, and this is maintained, even when controlling for LBOTE[20] status, visa, world region of birth and years of education" (Creagh, 2014a, p.42). English language level, as described by the Qld Bandscales levels, along with A to E grades is a powerful predictor of NAPLAN performance. The analysis contributes evidence that the Qld Bandscales are a valid measure of English language capacity in the school context.

Fit for purpose? The key purposes of school-based English L2 proficiency scales

In the sections below we show that in their use or implementation, school EAL/D proficiency assessment scales need to meet a number of key purposes:

- identification of the full cohort of EAL/D learners
- classification of their English language level
- acknowledgement and inclusion of students' bilingual/multilingual capabilities
- enhancement of teachers' pedagogical knowledge of and responses to students' language needs and language learning contexts.

[20] Language Background Other Than English status, a broad diversity category, is indicated by a 'yes' for students who speak a language other than English or with a parent/caregiver who does.

Like all assessment tools and processes, there is an inherent requirement, as well, that proficiency scales have capacity to communicate to stakeholders for accountability purposes.

While most EAL/D proficiency scales in use would claim to meet these criteria, in the following sections we unpack the distinctive capacity of the Qld Bandscales in each of these criteria, to exemplify how a language proficiency tool satisfies the combined priorities of fairness, justice and inclusion. Where appropriate, we also flag how the Bandscales satisfy accountability expectations.

Identification of the full EAL/D cohort

It often surprises those outside the L2 school sector that Identification features as an L2 assessment issue: it is assumed that learners self-identify through enrolment. In school EAL/D assessment, however, identification is seen as a high stakes and unsettled issue (Abedi, 2008; Angelo, 2013; Hudson & Angelo, 2014, 2020; Lopez et al., 2016; Sinclair & Lau, 2018), since hidden language learners miss out on crucial EAL/D language support (e.g. Angelo, 2012; Gawne et al., 2017). An underlying and distinctive concept of the Qld Bandscales is that they enable identification of EAL/D learners, in a two-fold way, on enrolment and/or in the classroom. Alerts to assist classroom identification are written into the scales. Failure to identify students on enrolment may be due to limited understanding in the school of L2 learner needs, limited/nil school-based provision of EAL/D language support, a cohort's historical exclusion from funded EAL/D programs, parent/caregiver insecurity about EAL/D labelling, or other factors. In these commonly occurring scenarios, the task of identification and assessment falls to non-specialist classroom teachers. Among those EAL/D learners that may be overlooked as early learners of English are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners, as well as other Australian born EAL/D students, refugees and migrants EAL/D students who are outside the timelines of funded New Arrivals programs whose EAL/D identification in school records has lapsed, some Pasifika[21] EAL/D students, and EAL/D students from countries that include some English as an instructional language. Many of these students are easily

[21] Pasifika is a term used in Australia and New Zealand jurisdictions to refer to migrants from the Pacific Islands of the southern Pacific and their descendents. Pasifika students can be overlooked as EAL/D learners when they have spent time in an English speaking country prior to migration, are born in Australia, and/or have a complex language shift background.

missed if EAL/D is conceived in terms of funding program eligibility rather than a learning need. On-enrolment identification processes have also often been developed with New Arrival migrant/refugee students in mind, and so include country of birth, visa categories[22] and time of arrival, which are not relevant to all EAL/D learners and distract from more pertinent language-based criteria, such as understanding that students speak a different language at home (Angelo, 2013; Dixon & Angelo, 2014).

Identification of invisible or unrecognised learners, although not discussed in those exact terms, was a hallmark of the original NLLIA Bandscales, where student cohorts (e.g. learners transferring from primary school, learners from limited literacy backgrounds) were explicitly described in Level 5 (see Table 1) as 'unnoticed' because of their higher general proficiency (especially in speaking), although they needed language support to facilitate progression to the higher levels suited for senior secondary study. With the more inclusive Qld Bandscales, new situations of unrecognised and under-supported EAL/D learners and their learning trajectories have also been addressed. This includes students with early EAL/D levels in mainstream classes, such as Indigenous EAL/D learners who in almost all cases, have never benefitted from targeted EAL/D programs. In such contexts, the post-beginner level, Level 3 (see Table 1) has emerged as a locus for under-identification and negative impact for EAL/D learners[23]. Indeed, in the Qld Bandscales, an advice bar is added for implications of the level which states:

> Some students, for example students who speak creoles, may plateau at level 3 in listening because of the lack of understanding that the language they speak is not SAE. That is, it may be erroneously assumed by teachers that the students are SAE users and therefore they 'should' be able to understand what is being said in the classroom (EQ, 2008a).

[22] In Australia, visa categories have been a mechanism for allocating EAL/D and other services for migrants. The issue of funding for migrant education is outside the scope of this paper. See Oliver et al., (2017) for more detail.

[23] The Indigenous Bandscales highlighted the tendency for speakers of English-lexified varieties such as Torres Strait Creole and 'Aboriginal English', so described at that time, to be overlooked as early level EAL/D learners, because teachers mistook the L1 communicative affordance of some lexical overlap between English-lexified varieties and Standard Australian English (SAE) in contextualised spoken interactions as students' actual level of L2 EAL/D development. Significantly, research by Angelo (2004, 2006a, 2006b) expanded on the recognition of Torres Strait Creole and Aboriginal English as the only contact language varieties in Queensland, and thus understandings about the potential numbers of unrecognised Indigenous EAL/D learners in classrooms grew further.

On the basis of such misapprehension, teachers would not be alert to the need to intentionally differentiate their pedagogy with explicit English language support, thus inhibiting and delaying EAL/D learner progress. This is further complexified in areas where awareness and recognition of contact languages is not yet advanced, so students with these contact language backgrounds and their teachers may be grappling, unassisted except for guidance from the Bandscales, with an under-recognised and under-researched language situation (see for example Angelo & Hudson, 2018; Hudson & Angelo, 2020).

The issue of 'invisible' EAL/D learners was initially expanded on for Queensland classroom teachers in the *Curriculum Guidelines for ESL Learners* (EQ, 2008b), and then in the department's *Introductory guide to the EQ Bandscales for EAL/D learners* (DETE, 2013), and included in the revised guide (DoE, 2018). A two-fold pathway is represented in graphic form: Identification on enrolment versus Identification in the classroom, as part of a whole school approach (see Figure 1). The process involves gathering background language information, in class observations and language samples, assigning Bandscales levels and determining a support structure.

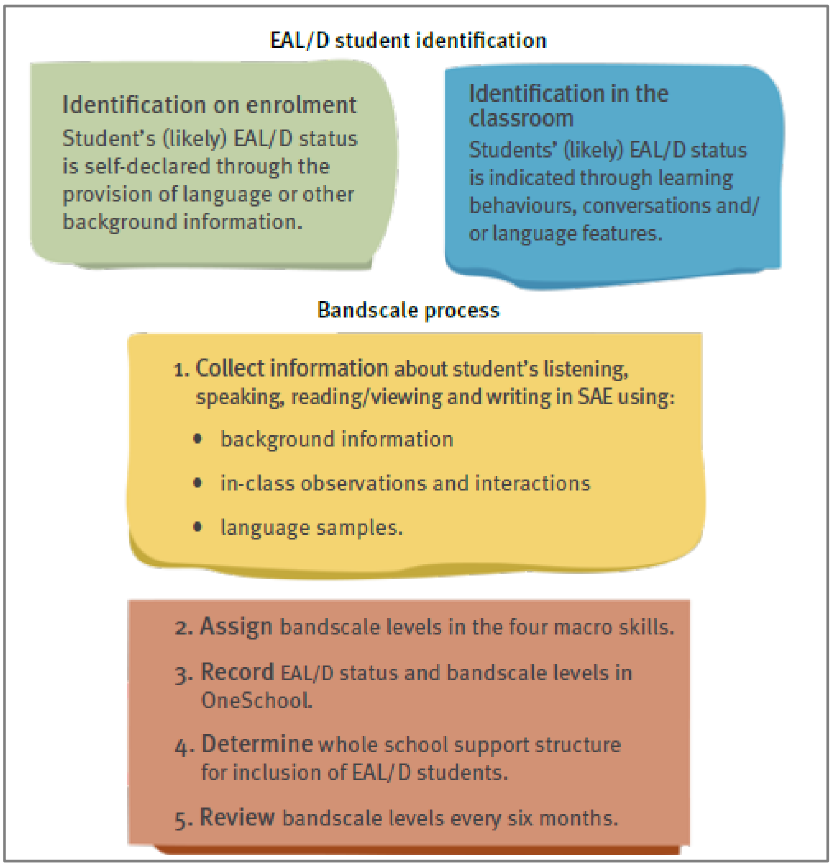

Figure 1. Identifying EAL/D Students
Source: Department of Education (DoE) (Qld) (2018, p. 10)

Additionally to assist teachers in the classroom, descriptors were added to the Qld Bandscales' early levels to indicate how they might recognise an unidentified EAL/D learner, in a curriculum context where literacy is well supported, but recognition of L2 language use would not necessarily be part of the teacher's skill set. At Level 2 (a beginner level) Early Phase Listening: "may appear to understand SAE, but may use non-standard forms of taught formulaic SAE which provide evidence of being an EAL/D learner (e.g. says 'Goldilocks an da tree bear')". An example from Level 2 Early Phase Speaking goes: "makes slight deviations in routine formulaic SAE which indicate that SAE is not first language". At the same time, in Listening, Level 3 Early and Middle Phases, a post-beginner level where students' growing abilities in informal conversations may hide EAL/D needs, there is a message for the need for teachers to take the onus on developing a skill set to identify such learners: "relies on teacher knowing they speak another language".

Classification of English language levels

As with identification, classification is a high stakes issue. Although the Qld Bandcales are a manageable version of the original scales (in length of detail), distinctively, all the original NLLIA levels of EAL/D progress have been retained rather than reduced, up to the point where EAL/D differential classroom support would be difficult to defend. The Qld Bandscales junctures (levels) classify recognizable and significant stages in EAL/D learning trajectories which will be useful to systems and teachers in interpreting performance in curriculum subjects, on literacy learning progressions or in standardized testing regimes. They carry a clear meaning in terms of student progress (learning gain measurement) through the use of descriptors with "progression elements" (Waters, 2019) within the levels, and carefully consistent indications within each level of the degree and kind of EAL/D support students will need to have in order to access the curriculum (a diagnostic purpose). We take as an example the importance of having clear early proficiency juncture points for students who are in the mainstream, rather than an English intensive context where EAL/D support is assured. Since the Qld Bandscales were produced, the authors have carried out research on teacher use of the Bandscales, and on the significance of classification levels for making decisions about differentiated support (Angelo & Hudson, 2018; Creagh, 2023). Two of these studies will be summarised to illustrate the importance of the meaningful and purposeful early proficiency classification level the Qld Bandscales provide.

The first study by Angelo and Hudson (2018) illustrates the challenges for mainstream teachers posed by EAL/D learners who seem to have L2 conversational ability but are in fact at an early level of L2 proficiency. These students may be assumed to be at an inflated level of EAL/D Speaking proficiency, misleading teachers about the amount of intensive language support that is required for access to curriculum learning. Angelo and Hudson (2018) studied a mainstream teacher's interactions with a young Aboriginal student in the first year of schooling in a semi-rural Far North Queensland school. The student was a speaker of an un-named and un-researched English-lexified contact language. The study was part of the Queensland EAL/D teacher capacity building project, Bridging the Language Gap, in which 87 schools took part. The student in the study was not identified as an EAL/D learner on enrolment and had not been assessed on an EAL/D proficiency tool. In the study the teacher records a one-to-one conversation with the student about an Early Years curriculum topic, Safety, which had been the focus in the classroom for six weeks.

Analysis of the interactions showed that the student was only able to convey limited information about the taught topic of Safety in the classroom medium of instruction, SAE, in a typical classroom question and answer routine, which in this case was seeking generalisations about safe behaviours as per curriculum guidance. Student utterances were limited to a few short, repeated phrases ("We learn about safe", "Stay way from fire"). Interactions led by the teacher about the taught curriculum topic were also characterised by long pauses on the part of the student. Similarly, the teacher could not easily follow interactions initiated by the student on topics not supported by the here and now context (e.g. an incident witnessed at a beach in the holidays). This seemingly contrasted with communicative success in the initial part of the interaction when the student was enthusiastically quizzing the teacher about a new item on her desk ("Whadda you call with that?"), so the teacher was not prepared for the communicative impasses in their Safety interactions. Whenever a rich and shared context scaffolded their interactions (objects on the teacher's desk; illustration from the much-discussed class picture book on Safety), communication was achieved; without this scaffold communication faltered and stalled. The teacher's inflated expectations of this student's level of Speaking had arisen because the student was an L1 speaker of an English-lexified language variety, which has some lexical overlap with SAE, and had not been identified as an EAL/D learner. For this reason, in the Qld Bandscales the beginner (Levels 1 and 2), post-beginner (Level 3) and more confident intermediate (level 4) early proficiency levels in Speaking are distinctly differentiated. Clear classificatory space above the earliest level is provided so that students in the early levels, who can communicate (briefly) within the limits of a mutually shared context, will not be misrecognized as not requiring extensive EAL/D support in classroom learning.

Clear differentiation of early proficiency levels is also necessary for other (non-Indigenous) EAL/D cohorts. In a recent study utilizing the Qld Bandscales, the English language development of young people, newly arrived in Australia, was tracked whilst they attended an intensive English language secondary school program in Queensland (Creagh, 2023). Utilising school-based and enrolment data collected across the duration of enrolment in this school, a bespoke dataset was created which mapped the language development of 232 students. The progress of these students was disaggregated on the basis of educational background and visa category. English language progress was tracked using Bandscale data, as the school allocated a Bandscale level for each student on arrival and on exit from the intensive program. The analysis found that some students, primarily students of migrant background with educational opportunities prior to arrival in Australia, were able to reach a level of academic English in this intensive setting sufficient to enable them to exit to the next stage of their schooling, in a mainstream setting, with continued though reduced EAL/D support. The majority of this group were able to achieve this level within one year. These students were exiting the program mostly on Bandscale levels 4 or 5 (See Table 1, sometimes called middle or upper intermediate). Some students, predominantly of refugee background, needed longer in the program, on average up to 10 weeks (the equivalent of a school term), and exited the program on a level of English that would require continued high-level support in the context of a mainstream classroom (levels 2 and 3). Aside from identifying school-based practices which are responsive to the heterogeneity of newly arrived EAL/D students, this study established that, even after considerable time in a program with the most intensive of support, some students, particularly of refugee background, continue to require high levels of support once in mainstream schooling. These are students exiting this program on Bandscales levels 2 or 3 (beginner or post-beginner levels). This research shows the relevance of these classification levels. Without these clearly demarcated classification spaces the needs of learners at different stages of L2 development could easily be obscured.

Clear classification of significant early L2 proficiency levels matters. There are consequences for schools that must support EAL/D learners who are at Bandscale levels 1, 2 or 3 in mainstream contexts, and for the EAL/D learners themselves. All students at these L2 proficiency levels need intensive support in mainstream classrooms, whether they are exiting from English centres or have entered mainstream schooling directly, such as Indigenous students at the beginning of their schooling. The described levels are designed to help mainstream schools recognise learners' EAL/D status and the significance of their language proficiency learning needs, so it is clearly understood that in the case of levels 1, 2 and 3 that intensive language support needs to be provided for engaging with learning and assessment expectations. Even at level 4 (intermediate), substantial support will still be needed for access to the curriculum. Clearly classified, significant junctures (levels) should guide the degree and kind of support response required from school leadership and classroom teachers. To recognize and meet such high language learning needs in English instructional mainstream settings, non-specialists including school leaders and classroom teachers, will require professional development for valid use of the EAL/D tool (see Hudson & Angelo, 2020) and concomitant differentiated pedagogical responses.

Acknowledging and harnessing EAL/D learners' multilingual capabilities.

Applied linguistic fields are increasingly aware that multilingualism is the norm for the world's population, not monolingualism (May, 2013). From the original NLLIA ESL Bandscales through to the Qld Bandscales, the first language (L1) or home language (HL) abilities of EAL/D learners have been acknowledged and included in the descriptions. This would not now be unusual in EAL/D proficiency tools. However, what is noteworthy is going beyond standard references to multilingual EAL/D strategies to more inclusive, complex understandings of EAL/D learners' heterogenous L1 backgrounds and needs. The NLLIA ESL Bandscales avoided any 'native speakerism' (McKay et al., 1994, p. A-29), with the goal of a student being an effective 'bilingual'. The Qld Bandscales refer to SAE, not because of an emphasis on the 'standard' or 'accuracy' (for example, accent and pronunciation are not referred to, rather communication of meaning), but to follow the lead of the Indigenous Bandscales to be inclusive of the notion that there are many 'Englishes', recognizing both Aboriginal Englishes and Standard Australian English, and distinguishing between them (e.g. Eades, 1983, 1992). Indeed, the 2008 Curriculum Guidelines accompanying the Qld Bandscales refers educators to the fact that Queensland courts had identified failure to recognise Aboriginal English speakers as a cause of serious injustice (EQ, 2008b, p. 13).

In the Qld Bandscales, to purposefully combat Australia's infamous "monolingual mindset" (Clyne, 2005), EAL/D learners' first language is treated as an asset through which students can express their full capacity, as in Level 4 Speaking Early and Middle phases, "explores more complex ideas in HL (home language[24]) with HL speaking peers and adults". Certainly, in line with Cummins' theoretical basis (Cummins, 1984, 2008; also Collier, 1989), the L1 is also described as a resource for L2 development in schools through cognitive transfer, as in Level 1, Reading/Viewing, Early phase: "progresses more rapidly through this level if they have first language print literacy background (up to level 4)". The L1 resource is an "observable" that assists on-the-ground teacher understandings about EAL/D learning development, particularly about different rates of progress depending on prior L1 educational experiences. There are also descriptors which give messages to educators about involving both L1 and L2 in learning, as in the Early Phase, Level 3, Reading/Viewing: "retells stories in HL with guided questioning and prompting from the teacher (e.g. Teacher asks 'what happened then? What did they do then?')". Or in Level 3, Listening, Early and Middle Phases: "may rely on HL with peers for clarification around classroom tasks", and then in Level 4: "benefits from HL helper". Again, in Level 4, Writing, Early Phase: "may be innovative with genre and language models and/or follow own socio-cultural text structures which should be valued as a sign of language and literacy development".

[24] 'Home language' (HL) came into use in Queensland via the Indigenous Bandscales as a preferred non-technical term that encompassed all language types, inclusive of Indigenous contact languages at different stages of recognition and often without standardised nomenclature. It has been maintained in the Qld Bandscales because it assists to focus educators on how language use in the home for EAL/D learners will be unlike the SAE classroom.

The human rights and social justice aspects of students' L1/HL are explicitly supported in the Qld Bandscales, for example in the message "requires an interpreter for important communication within school or between school and family (up to level 5)", in pre-Level 1, Speaking Early and Middle Phases. Respect for EAL/D learners' lived experiences in their L1/HL is actively encouraged, as in "needs respect for age and HL socio-linguistic competence", in Level 1, Listening, Middle Phase. Specific descriptions focusing on strategic use of L1 dictionaries/topic texts are, however, avoided in the Qld Bandscales level descriptions, because they can create classroom teacher expectations about availability of such resources. There are many EAL/D learners from backgrounds without print literacy resources applicable to classroom curriculum, including students from some refugee and Pasifika language backgrounds and most Indigenous students.

The theme of informing educators about EAL/D learners' L1 backgrounds is a constant one, running through the Qld Bandscales and associated documents. The first frontispiece[25] to the Qld Bandscales and the accompanying Curriculum Guidelines (EQ, 2008a, 2008b) played an important role in bringing Indigenous EAL/D learners to the attention of the TESOL fraternity in Queensland, as well as for non-specialist classroom teachers. These documents provided careful background information with up-to-date research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' language backgrounds. This carefully differentiated traditional languages, creoles and dialects, their importance for identity, their respective socio-cultural niches, the histories of oppression of traditional languages and the origins of the English-lexified varieties, as well as the variable trajectories of awareness and recognition and potentially negative attitudes that might attend them. Educators are informed about the specific challenges for EAL/D proficiency assessment of speakers of English-lexified varieties as semantic transparency/lexical overlap gives a potentially enhanced communicative facility in some English contexts which can also misdirect EAL/D proficiency assessment, hence the need for building language awareness for teachers and students. This is flagged in various ways directly in Level 2, Listening, Middle Phase: "is developing awareness (if creole speaker) of differences in language varieties (i.e. SAE v HL) and needs

[25] The Qld Bandscales were originally available as a standalone A3 document with explanatory material in a frontispiece. Initially this was four pages in length in order to introduce the new scale in 2008, but over time it has been reduced to a basic two pages, partly as a result of the scale subsequently also being included in an extensive introductory guide to the Bandscales (DETE, 2013; DoE, 2018).

assistance from teachers to expand these early understandings to avoid the student adapting HL rather than learning SAE"; or in Level 3, Listening, Middle Phase: "relies on teacher knowing they speak another language". This recognition of English lexified contact language backgrounds is still ground-breaking, as policy-led processes are yet to be instigated in Australia (Angelo, 2021).

Building educators' EAL/D knowledge and responses

Another key purpose of the Qld Bandscales is their professional training purpose, a characteristic shared with the original NLLIA Bandscales and the Indigenous Bandscales. The Qld Bandscales distinguish L2 English language learning from the mainstream subject of English and the curriculum content of other subject areas, as well as from L1 literacy development frameworks (e.g. National Literacy Learning Progression Version 3, (ACARA, 2020)). The Qld Bandscales make the fact of EAL/D learning and the EAL/D learning journey tangible and distinctive compared to the design of mainstream curriculum and assessment as-if-you-already-speak-English. This goes directly to EAL/D learners' need for (all) their teachers to intentionally support them so they can access the curriculum.

Although not a curriculum, the Bandscales descriptions contain "EAL/Dness" messages for teachers about EAL/D practices. It is the rich contextualization of the Qld Bandscales descriptions that is distinctive and goes to policy responsible language assessment, to justice for EAL/D learners in the mainstream and to a prioritizing of an ethical approach to validity. Although teachers receive strong systemic support for literacy and curriculum assessment at many levels, there is less for EAL/D assessment, even though there is an increasing tendency for generalist teachers to be given the responsibility of identification and differential teaching for EAL/D students (see Creagh et al., 2023). Clearly, initial and ongoing professional training and moderation exercises would be preferable for generalist teachers to use an EAL/D tool with confidence. This is usually patchy and sometimes even non-existent, so the EAL/D assessment tool might potentially have to function as standalone teacher guidance. There is risk in leaving generalist teachers to their "perceived constructs" (see Hudson & Angelo, 2020; Knoch & Macqueen, 2020; Macqueen, 2022) about the meaning and use of EAL/D assessment tools. On these grounds, it serves fairness and equity in the use of the EAL/D tool by not only making the tool manageable in length, but by giving descriptions that are contextually rich, with consistent guidance at each level on the required teaching support to allow equitable access to curriculum learning. The rich contextual information also provides understandings of EAL/D learning that underpin a rationale for the EAL/D extra support.

The social dimension of classroom assessment (McNamara & Roever, 2006) and an understanding of L2 learning and assessment as a mediated process (Lantolf, 2000) are tenets of the Qld Bandscales. In the NLLIA ESL Bandscales tradition (Moore, 1996), this EAL/D assessment tool moves more towards an interactional and less to a developmentalist and individualistic model of proficiency (McNamara & Roever, 2006, p. 551). Non-specialist mainstream teachers are given prompts in the descriptions about their active role in enabling the student's (language) learning and academic performance (Hudson & Angelo, 2014, p. 68), given there is no fit between the demands of mainstream curriculum tasks and level of L2 development. For example, Level 3, Middle Phase, Reading/viewing states: "reads, with support (e.g. scaffolding the text, introduction to new vocabulary and concepts) short teacher-selected information texts (e.g. animal report) on a familiar topic on information geared to the mainstream curriculum but at a less complex language level".

Rather than presenting a deficit picture, the contextualised indicators describe successful performance, in the context of the teacher providing the required amount of EAL/D differentiated teaching support. This fills in the gaps in de-contextualized outcomes-based descriptors (McKay, 2000; Moore, 1995), which create a picture of proficiency development focussing on the child alone (Angelo & Hudson, 2020). An exclusively developmentalist approach might suit EAL/D specialists who are well-versed in the type of support required by EAL/D learners with different levels of proficiency, but it is not suited for classroom teachers. The descriptors in the early four levels of the Qld Bandscales therefore unpack the kind of EAL/D support that would be given to students in an intensive EAL/D learning context. In the reading/viewing macroskill these include: the role of a familiar topic to support comprehension; a focus on taught language; the need to recycle new language to internalise it and reproduce it; adding language teaching into the teaching of reading in addition to learning to decode; and the role of L2 spoken proficiency in early L2 reading.

The Qld Bandscales do not assume that non-specialist teachers will have knowledge about L2 acquisition and development, about EAL/D as an area of learning, or about EAL/Dness in classroom teaching and learning. In this, again, they are distinctive. Rather than providing descriptions of de-contextualized "behaviours" on their own, the Qld Bandscales, in the characteristic NLLIA Bandscales tradition, as far as is possible, present observable "cameos" of EAL/D learners in the mainstream context on a scale of L2 acquisition development. The teacher as actor is part of L2 performance, along with L1 educators and peers. The salient features of each level are described, linked to key contextual influences such as, among others: the language and learning background; the role of a print literacy background to explain the rate of EAL/D learning; the features of early levels such as the move from formulaic expressions to generating own language and the need for an enriched context and supportive, accommodative partner in spoken interactions (face to face versus difficulties of group interaction). Three examples illustrate key understandings about L2 acquisition and development written into the Qld Bandscales descriptors, for teachers who come to EAL/D assessment tools and read them through their knowledge of L1 development and/or literacy progression outcomes.

Firstly, there are important understandings about L2 development that underlie the positive inclusion of "errors" in the L2 descriptors. The interlanguage, the interim language approximations actively constructed by L2 learners progressing with EAL/D, in evidence-based L2 acquisition terms, are a natural part of L2 development. Thus errors are described in the descriptors as part of positive, active progress and are not related to deficit understandings of EAL/D learners.[26] The messages in the descriptors relate to the importance of a context where risks can be taken, and mistakes made are a sign of progress. Indeed, as EAL/D learners move from correct, formulaic use of language to generating their own language and attempting more complex language to express more complex thoughts, the "mistakes" will increase. The following descriptor contains the progress to expressing complex thoughts, but also provides the teacher with key EAL/D "extra" knowledge. Level 4, Middle phase, Writing:

[26] The inclusion of errors, where necessary, to capture as clearly as possible the "natural path for second language development", while avoiding as far as possible deficit descriptions, was followed and discussed in the original NLLIA ESL Bandscales (McKay et al., 1994, p. A-11).

> expresses complex thoughts (e.g. explanations, arguments) but in doing so, the text may become less coherent and less accurate (a sign of language growth) and requires more on the part of the reader to comprehend intended meaning. This risk-taking is to be encouraged as it enables progress. (EQ, 2008a)

Secondly, messages are given to teachers about expecting linear, expeditious rates of progress for all students. There are slower pathways for some in the Beginner level. These messages may allay panic and recourse to a range of unnecessary non-EAL/D testing (see Barker in this issue). An early silent period in the beginner level, where students are learning the L2 but are not ready to speak, is described as part of a "normal but not necessary phase of 'active' language learning". Similarly, for those "overwhelmed with the new learning situation, impact of trauma"…., there may be a "social and emotional 'orientation phase'" (Level 1, Early and Middle Phases, Listening; Level 1, Early and Middle Phases, Speaking).

Lastly, in the tradition of the NLLIA Bandscales, listening is distinctively treated as a separate mode, recognizing its significant role for the EAL/D learner. Listening in L2 is different from Listening in L1 and descriptors alert teachers to barriers to L2 understanding and to teaching responses that support understanding at different L2 levels. In the Qld Bandscales, Listening is not described in terms of "appropriate" behaviours, common to literacy learning progressions and even some EAL/D assessment tools. For example, being quiet and paying attention may often not be a sign of more advanced L2 Listening. Indeed, teachers are alerted to students' strategic use of 'appropriate' Listening behaviours, where at Level 4, Middle Phase, EAL/D learners may save face and mask a lack of comprehension in instruction, e.g. "nodding, smiling" . Rather, level of Listening ability is described in terms of crucial contextual features that influence the ability of the L2 learner to understand instruction: contextually enriched or reduced; familiarity of text; face-to-face or the L2 challenges of groups; speed; noise; time allowed for processing thoughts and formulating utterances in L2; length; language complexity; language density; conceptual abstraction of texts; and cultural load.

Conclusion

Within the discursive web of policy responsible language assessment, our purpose is to advocate for the recognition and support of all EAL/D learners. The paper, however, is more targeted in its scope. We have, in the main, focused on describing the distinctive features of a principled EAL/D proficiency framework, the Qld Bandscales, and not attempted to assay pedagogical and assessment activities, EAL/D moderation processes (though see Angelo & Hudson, 2020), nor have we examined the relationship to jurisdictional mainstream curriculum areas or the need for a national EAL/D curriculum. Nor have we explicitly discussed comparability of constructs and principles with other such tools used in Australia, or argued for substantial revisions in the light of this paper. Nor have we proposed the use of the Qld Bandscales levels as a basis for a short reporting scale (designed somewhat along the lines of the Proficiency in English (PIE) scale used in Wales (see Strand & Lindorff, 2020)) for national reporting of needs-based resourcing, reporting to stakeholders. All of these are vital topics but they must wait for future academic research papers. In this paper we have strived to illustrate how it is possible for an English L2 proficiency tool to satisfy requirements for fairness, justice and inclusion in the recognition and support of EAL/D students. At the forefront have been issues of justice: the values in the tool's constructs and the uses by teachers in mainstream curriculum contexts. This is timely, given the broadly conceived notion of inclusion is being enacted in classrooms across Australia, requiring mainstream classroom teachers to address the needs of all learners, with declining specialist support. In the push for appropriate recognition of EAL/D learners, and the desire for national reporting of English language proficiency, the selected tool(s) must have the capacity to identify the full cohort of EAL/D learners, based on contemporary research evidence, particularly in relation to Indigenous learners. The proficiency tool(s) should also provide solid guidance on learner progress, with sufficient clarity about key learning junctures or moments of progress, such as for example when learners shift from memorised production of text (Level 2 in the Qld Bandscales) to taking risks and making valuable "errors" as they begin applying their language knowledge in creative ways (Level 3 in the Qld Bandscales). This guidance should be provided in a way that recognises the linguistic diversity of the full EAL/D cohort and values their first or home languages, while also enabling students to add SAE to their language repertoires. Important also is the framing of the language learning pathway in positive rather than deficit terms, given that all other standardised assessment tools in schools are premised on the idea of L1 English underpinning a linear age-related experience of schooling and academic achievement. Finally, the proficiency tool(s) should offer guidance to teachers, rendering EAL/D learners and their L2 support needs visible and offering professional understandings which enhance classroom practice.

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