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Global practices in teaching English to young learners: Ten years on

Fiona Copland, Sue Garton and Camilla Barnett
with Cristina Banff, Elena Chaika, Maria Ellison, Devet Goodness, Jenny Heo, Adriana González, Mario López-Gopar, Elizabeth Meke, Ming Ni, Xiaofeng Qian, Serdar Tekin, Rida Thabet, Swapna Suryakant Yadav and Chiyuki Yanase

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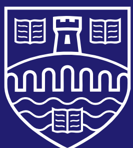

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The research took place as the Covid-19 pandemic began to affect schooling across the globe. We are aware that supporting the project put extra pressure on all the participants. We are sincerely grateful to everyone who took part.

Abstract

This report compares the data collected in 2010 in the Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners project (Garton et al. 2011) with similar data collected in 2020. The 2020 project replicates and extends the 2010 research to examines six key questions:

1. Who is teaching young learners?
2. What are the main learning and teaching activities that teachers use in their day-to-day practices and have they changed over the last ten years?
3. What are the challenges faced by YL teachers? Have these changed over the last ten years?
4. How do teachers teach speaking, manage large classes, practise differentiation, enhance motivation and maintain effective discipline?
5. Which local solutions to pedagogical issues have potential for global relevance?
6. Are recent research findings reflected in how EELL is practised?

We first review the most recent literature in the field, particularly the growing body of research in Latin America, and the emerging research from the Middle East as well as the more well-established field in Asia. We then describe the methodology used in the 2020 study before presenting the key findings. The findings focus on the main similarities and differences between the two studies, drawing on both questionnaire and classroom-based case study data. In the conclusion, we suggest ways forward for research in this field to ensure teaching and learning in the primary sector is both effective and enjoyable.

Letters from U.K Schools

LETTERS FROM U.K

Contents

1. Introduction **9**
2. Literature review **11**
2.1 Macro factors 11
2.1.1 Policy 11
2.1.2 Social inequality 12
2.1.3 Parental pressure 12
2.2 Micro-level factors – the challenges remain 13
2.2.1 Approaches to language teaching 13
2.2.2 Recruitment and training 14
2.2.3 Teachers' level of English proficiency 15
2.2.4 The classroom context 15
2.2.5 Examinations and assessment 16
2.2.6 Materials and resources 16
2.3 Summary 16
3. Methods **18**
3.1 Methodological framework 18
3.2 Research tools 18
4. Findings **21**
4.1 Who is teaching young learners? 21
4.2 Main learning and teaching activities 22
4.3 Key challenges 24
4.4 How do teachers address the main challenges? 25
4.4.1 Practising differentiation 26
4.4.2 Managing large classes/managing effective discipline 26
4.4.3 Enhancing motivation 27
4.4.4 Teaching speaking 27
5. Local solutions with global relevance **29**
5.1 Using question and answer techniques effectively 29
5.2 A translanguaging pedagogy 30
5.3 Age appropriate activities 31
6. EELL research and practice **32**
7. Conclusion **33**
References **35**
Appendices **38**

1

Introduction

Just over ten years ago, a team at Aston University in the UK designed a project, funded by the British Council, to investigate global practices in teaching English to young learners. In 2010, teaching English to children was something of a Cinderella subject in the academic literature, with few books and only a small number of peer reviewed articles published. At the same time, the number of children learning English globally was growing as more and more countries introduced English to primary schools. The team at Aston was interested in this phenomenon and how teaching English to children in schools around the world was practised. Our project (Garton, Copland and Burns, 2011) suggested that while there were significant disparities between contexts in terms of, for example, resources and class sizes, teachers around the world had much in common, including many of the activities they used, as well as a desire for training in teaching English to young learners, struggles with teaching speaking skills and maintaining discipline.

Ten years on, research interest in the field has greatly developed. A number of scholars are now researching and publishing in the area, evidenced by the *Routledge Handbook in Teaching English to Young Learners* (Garton and Copland, 2018), where the breadth and depth of research is showcased in 33 chapters. These include work on pedagogies for teaching children (e.g., CLIL – content and language integrated learning); understanding multilingualism and how it affects how children learn and use languages; and overviews of language policies for teaching English to children in different geographical areas. Another notable change is that ten years ago, policies which mandated English learning in primary schools were in their infancy in many countries. These have now become established, so that, for example, training for teachers of English to young learners is commonplace (e.g., Italy) and teaching English in primary schools is no longer a novelty (e.g., Japan). Nevertheless, many countries continue to struggle to find teachers, especially for rural areas (e.g., India and China) and large classes (often of children of mixed ages) continue to be the norm in both urban and rural areas in state education in many contexts (e.g., Malawi and Bangladesh).

The researchers on this project (two of whom worked on the original Aston research) wanted to investigate what had changed in ten years of global English language teaching to children. Therefore, we kept some research questions from the original project but also expanded our interest to reflect our findings at the time and more recent developments in the field. In this report, we respond to these questions, which were:

1. Who is teaching young learners?
2. What are the main learning and teaching activities that teachers use in their day-to-day practices and have they changed over the last ten years?
3. What are the challenges faced by YL teachers? Have these changed over the last ten years?
4. How do teachers teach speaking, manage large classes, practise differentiation, enhance motivation and maintain effective discipline?
5. Which local solutions to pedagogical issues have potential for global relevance?
6. Are recent research findings reflected in how EELL is practised?

1.2 A brief explanatory note

In this report, we use a small number of acronyms. YL refers to young learners (six- to twelve-year-olds). EELL is early English language learning, i.e., English language learning for six- to twelve-year-olds, usually but not exclusively in primary schools. CLT is communicative language teaching. L1 is the learners' and teachers' home language(s) (although we recognise that this label can be misleading) and L2 is a second language, in our case, English.

We compare data collected in 2010 and 2020 and so we use these dates throughout, although the reports were published in 2011 and 2024.

2

Literature review

This literature review will identify some key recent trends in EELL with an overview of studies most relevant to the research questions addressed in this project. After many years of neglect, there is now a vast literature on primary English and so this review will necessarily be selective. We are particularly interested in what has changed in the research since the original project and what has remained the same, therefore the focus will be on studies published in or since 2011, addressing similar areas to those identified in Garton et al. (2011). We focus on English as a school subject, rather than as a medium of instruction, because that is the context in which the majority of our participating teachers work. Recent research on English as a school subject in European contexts is not included (but see Enever, 2018) because most studies seem to focus on CLIL (see, for example, Ellison, 2018; San Isidro, 2018) and that is beyond the scope of this report.

The discussion below will show that, rather discouragingly, many issues in the policy and practice of EELL identified in Garton et al. (2011) remain. This is in spite of the intervening ten years, new research and the introduction of new reforms and policies in a number of countries. However, there are also a number of shifts and some new trends. We now turn to these.

2.1 Macro factors

The reasons for the early introduction of English have changed very little in the last ten years, perhaps unsurprisingly, and in some cases have been reinforced. The notion that earlier language learning in school contexts produces better results continues to hold sway, even though the evidence remains inconclusive at best (see, for example, Muñoz and Singleton, 2011; Singleton and Pfenninger, 2018). As a result, the last decade has seen three trends: a) more countries have introduced English as a compulsory subject at primary level; b) other countries have further lowered the age at which children start learning English; c) some countries have increased the number of hours of English a week.

2.1.1 Policy

Zein (2017) in a study of language policy in the ASEAN Plus Three countries, notes that English is now compulsory from Grade 1 in seven countries: Malaysia, The Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam (the medium of instruction is also English for around 80 per cent of the curriculum from Grade 4) and Singapore (the medium of instruction for all subjects). It is compulsory from Grade 3 in Vietnam and Laos, from Grade 4 in Cambodia and from Grade 5 in Japan. It is only in Indonesia that English is not compulsory in primary education, although it is an option for schools. In Chile, English was made a compulsory subject from 5th grade in the 2012 reform, but with the possibility of starting in 1st grade, actively encouraged by the Ministry (Barahona, 2016). However, making English an option from 1st grade puts pressure on schools as, given the choice, parents will send their children to primary schools where English is taught earlier (Barahona, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 2012).

Examples of the increase in the number of hours include Malaysia, where the English Language Education Roadmap for Malaysia 2015–2025 increased the number of hours dedicated to English to about six hours a week (Azman, 2016). Colombia's new national English programme has also increased the weekly hours from one to three, although there seems to be little evidence of its implementation so far (Correa and González, 2016).

One issue in the introduction of English or in the increase in the number of hours concerns where

space on the curriculum is found. English will inevitably replace another subject and, according to Kirkpatrick (2012), that is often a local language. Concerns about the impact of English on the survival of local languages, as well as on children's literacy in their local languages, has been raised in a number of contexts, for example, Thailand (Baker and Jarunthawatchai, 2017).

Primary language learning policies are still largely motivated by the belief that citizens with English skills are necessary for economic development, for social mobility and for the participation of both nations and individuals in today's global world (see, for example, Sayer, 2015; Zein, 2017). However, other reasons have also been put forward more recently. Learning the language is considered a cognitive or a life skill (Barahona, 2016; Zein, 2017) and Malaysia's recent reform also focuses on the development of higher-order thinking skills (Azman, 2016). In Chile, EELL is also seen as contributing to understanding and valuing the mother tongue and local culture, as well as affording access to information and technologies, which is reflected in the 2012 curriculum framework (Barahona, 2016).

2.1.2 Social inequality

Concerns over whether EELL can really promote greater equality of opportunity were already expressed over ten years ago (Garton et al., 2011), especially around issues of access to quality English education in rural areas. However, such concerns have become more acute with the realisation that, far from promoting equality and social mobility, EELL may contribute to economic, social and educational disparities and not only between rural and urban areas (see, for example, Butler, 2015; Enever, 2018; Zein, 2022). A number of studies show how EELL has increased social inequalities in countries such as China, Japan and South Korea (see, for example, Butler, 2015; Qi, 2016; Zein, 2017). Chen (2011) identifies disparities between urban and rural areas in China but also disadvantages for children of migrant rural workers in cities who have access to poorer educational facilities.

Compared to ten years ago, there is a growing focus on the role of social economic status (SES) as a factor in inequalities. The links between parental socio-economic status and children's motivation and achievement in English has been researched more widely (see, for example, Butler 2014, 2015; Chen, 2011). Barahona (2016) notes that in Chile, standardised tests show low levels of achievement in general, but better results correlate to higher socio-economic status. While only a third of Chilean students reach an elementary English level at the end of eight years' schooling, that figure is as low as ten per cent when considering children from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds. However, there may not always be a straightforward correlation between parents' SES and achievement and motivation. Chen (2011), looking at the issue from the children's perspective, found that SES did not affect the perceived level of expectation that parents in China had for their children's success.

The gap between public and private schools also seems to be widening with those who can afford private education continuing to get a better education for their children. Zein (2017) sees English as cultural capital with which elites can exploit opportunities outside the public education system. Butler (2015) notes that wealthier families continue to pay for private English tuition regardless of whether it is taught in school. More recently, the trend towards teaching content through English and the growth of bilingual schools can also be seen to exacerbate the public/private divide. Butler (2015) found that in China, bilingual programmes are generally offered in high status schools in wealthy areas, while in Taiwan, they are also experimental and often for 'gifted' children. Correa and González (2016) note that in Colombia, bilingual schools are private, as they are in Mexico (Sayer, 2015).

Some countries have tried to address the inequalities directly. Ramírez Romero et al. (2014) and Sayer (2015) refer to Mexico's 2009 reform as a move from a policy of *elite bilingualism* to one of *macroacquistion* through the introduction of two and a half hours a week of English from kindergarten to 6th grade. The idea was that the programme would offer opportunities for poorer and working-class children to learn English, but there have been a number of challenges (see below), and, as Barahona (2016, p. 17) concludes, 'English as a compulsory school subject has not guaranteed equity and access in a globalised world.'

2.1.3 Parental pressure

Finally, the pressure from parents, who believe that their children will be left behind and unable to compete globally if they do not start English early, continues to underpin EELL (see, for example, Kirkpatrick, 2012). The role that parents play both in influencing government policy and on children's success in language learning has become the focus

of more attention. For example, Indonesia is one of the few countries where English is an elective rather than a compulsory subject at primary level. However, parents are strongly in favour of early language learning, putting pressure on schools to introduce English in their curriculum (Sulistiyo et al., 2020). As Kirkpatrick (2012, p. 337) put it, 'a primary school that did not offer English would be unlikely to attract many students'.

2.2 Micro-level factors – the challenges remain

As we have suggested, many of the micro-level challenges that we identified in Garton et al. (2011), both in the literature review we carried out at the time and in our own research, remain. However, some new trends can be observed, together with some shifts.

2.2.1 Approaches to language teaching

One of the main areas of research ten years ago concerned the gap between policy and practice. Governments were introducing new curricula based on communicative language teaching (CLT) but training was lacking and teachers continued to use 'traditional' teacher-fronted approaches (see Garton et al., 2011).

The gap between policy and practice is still being identified as an issue in different parts of the world (see, for example, Hamid and Honan, 2012; Zein, 2017). This is considered a result of local educational cultures, the back-wash effect of examinations, or a lack of teacher training. Alqahtani (2018) affirms that teacher-centred teaching is part of the educational culture in Saudi Arabia and rote memorisation, translation and drilling remain common activities in primary English classrooms. Zein (2022) notes a contradiction in many ASEAN countries where authorities agree that the goal of English is to develop communication skills, but they expect silent classrooms. The back-wash effect of exams is an issue in China (Chen, 2011) where, in spite of the most recent 2011 curriculum reform, teacher-centred classes continue to dominate because the examination system remains the same. Even if there are no exams at the end of primary school, teachers may still teach to future examinations (Chen, 2011). In Japan, primary school teachers generally receive limited training in how to teach English; indeed, in-service English training has been optional (Machida and Walsh, 2015).

In other countries, the policy-practice gap does appear to be less pronounced, at least in some areas. Barahona (2016) reports on a number of recent studies in Chile that found a preference for teacher-fronted classes with common activities including drilling and Q and A, but activities such as songs, Total Physical Response (TPR) and games were also used. Groupwork was avoided, not because teachers were not familiar with it or did not believe in it, but because of the lack of preparation time, and classroom management and discipline concerns (Barahona, 2016).

Mexico's 2009 programme has sections dedicated to pedagogical approach and teacher guidelines, but Ramírez Romero et al. (2014) found that, while some teachers make efforts to follow the guidelines, others are unable to. Typical activities in these classes were repetitions, dictations, and copying words and phrases. Content was the alphabet, basic vocabulary, phrases and short decontextualised sentences that focused on grammar. However, the researchers also observed many effective practices with dynamic and engaging lessons. Moreover, teachers were positive and wanted to learn, while students and parents also expressed very positive attitudes. Ramírez Romero et al. (2014, p. 1034) conclude:

> 'Therefore English teachers were seen as a creative and innovative group, but some of them fall back on traditional grammar-oriented lessons and struggle to adopt more contextualised and communicative language lessons. This inconsistency of the teachers' methodology seems to be due in part to the uneven training they have received.'

The classrooms described in this study echo some features of those in our own cases studies (see Findings below). We conclude, however, that it may be time to re-evaluate traditional activities rather than to view them negatively, particularly in resource-poor contexts where English is taught as a school subject.

What is evident from the studies reviewed so far is that the policy-practice gap may be different in different areas as a result of the inequalities discussed above. For example, Sayer (2015, 2018) found pedagogies being used in Mexican classrooms according to the social class of the area where the school was located. In more affluent schools, teachers were using role plays, projects and presentations, while in poorer schools, students tended to copy from the blackboard, chant and learn

grammar rules. There may be multiple reasons for this, including the school infrastructure and the resources available, but the teacher's perception of the children and their abilities could also be a factor (Sayer, 2015).

Some counties have also made concerted efforts to support the implementation of the curriculum. In Colombia, for example, the ministry prepared new resources for primary school teachers, such as *My ABC English Kit*, with lesson plans, posters, a Teacher's Guide, CD-Roms and so on, although more recent reforms have not been supported with resource allocations (Correa and González, 2016). The English Open Doors Policy in Chile, initially focused on improving levels of English before introducing a 700-hour Diploma for TEYL in 2007. Teachers have reacted positively to these initiatives, but the gap between policy and implementation remains (Barahona, 2016). Elsewhere, technology has been used to try to close the gap. Parvin and Flint Salam (2015) report on a pilot initiative in Bangladesh to introduce teaching and learning software to support teachers in implementing CLT. While the researchers noted some success, it seems unlikely that the initiative could be rolled out on any scale, given the resources required.

Worthy of note is Vroom and Seaman's (2014) research which responded to criticisms of primary school teachers who did not use CLT. Convinced that the criticism was unjustified, they sent video clips of 14 different activities to teachers around the world, primarily in East Asia and Latin America. The activities were a mix of what are commonly called 'traditional' and 'communicative' and teachers were asked which they were familiar with and which they used. The findings showed that teachers were familiar with most of the activities, but were keen to receive further training to implement both the familiar and unfamiliar techniques in their contexts. Vroom and Seaman (2014) conclude that their study challenges the notion that EELL teachers resort to traditional activities because of lack of interest or of confidence in their own abilities, including their level of English. As Barahona (2016) notes, other factors such as large class sizes and classroom infrastructure may also play a role.

Similar to our original study, one conclusion from the discussion above is that teachers draw on an eclectic range of activities to suit their local context. Vroom and Seaman (2014) note that research is increasingly focusing on locally appropriate methodologies rather than on teachers' inability to apply CLT. While some movement in this direction was noticeable in 2010, there has been a welcome increase in this trend. Beaumont and Chang (2011), for example, argue against seeing a dichotomy between 'traditional' and communicative' activities and instead argue for a continuum. Zein (2022) notes in ASEAN countries there are cases where teacher-centred-learning does not hinder communication and can actually bring joy to the classroom.

2.2.2 Recruitment and training

In many countries, there is still a shortage of teachers who are trained to teach both children and English and solutions are similar to those identified in the original project, with countries using the general class teachers, teachers with little or no English (for example, Chile, Japan, Libya), or secondary school English teachers (for example, Saudi Arabia, Chile) (see Barahona, 2016; Machida and Walsh, 2015; Wedell and Alshumaimeri, 2014). Other recent solutions have seen professionals such as translators or interpreters recruited in Chile (Barahona, 2016), English teachers from overseas (for example, Tunisia and Egypt) in Saudi Arabia (Hamed and Fadhil, 2019) and even remote teaching by teachers in the Philippines of children in Uruguay (https://www.britishcouncil.org.ar/en/plan-ceibal-remote-teaching-rinto-uruguayan-public-schools). Rixon (2013) gives an overview of the various solutions adopted in different countries. The apparent lack of systematic in-service training for teachers in these groups in some countries remains a concern, and even in countries where governments have made concerted efforts to ensure a supply of qualified teachers, there may still be shortages. This is the case, for example, in Chile (Barahona, 2016), and Mexico (Ramírez Romero et al., 2014; Sayer, 2018).

The shortage of qualified teachers is another factor potentially contributing to inequality of access to English. It is particularly acute in rural areas and may result in unqualified teachers being required to teach English in primary schools, or schools not being able to offer English at all (see, for example, Correa and González, 2016; Zein, 2017). Chen (2011) notes that in China, schools in urban areas often start English in Grade 1, but the shortage of teachers in rural areas means that schools in these areas are unable to do so. Sayer (2018) points out that, in spite of a huge investment in recruiting and training teachers in Mexico, there is still a shortage of qualified teachers who speak English especially in rural and indigenous areas (Sayer, 2018).

One issue that appears to have gained more attention in the last ten years is that of the status of English teachers, which can be lower than that of other teachers. Moreover, English teachers are often on the margins and not integrated into the school. Butler (2015) notes that in Korea, specialist English teachers and English conversation instructors are recruited. However, these teachers tend to be isolated and not part of the school community. In Colombia, state secretaries of education have been allowed to hire 'substitute teachers' to compensate for the shortage of qualified teachers, but temporary contracts and unstable working conditions mean these substitute teachers also find difficulties in becoming part of the school community (Correa and González, 2016). In Japan, 'native English speakers' are recruited to support the classroom teacher in primary schools, but as many of these are peripatetic or cannot speak Japanese, they too are not always included in school activities (Takiguchi and Machida, 2020).

Recourse to 'native speaker' teachers (NESTs) continues to be seen as a solution to the on-going shortage of qualified local teachers in a number of countries. Taiwan recruited NESTs especially to teach in rural areas, but the programme was not a success and was discontinued (Butler, 2015) due both to NESTs' dissatisfaction in being in remote areas and to the fact that the programme did not address the shortage of teachers (Chen, 2011). Butler (2015) maintains that NEST programmes continue to be problematic because of lack of clarity around roles and expectations as well as lack of vision as to how to maximise the potential of NESTs in a particular context (see Copland et al., 2016 for a more detailed discussion).

2.2.3 Teachers' level of English proficiency

Teachers' lack of English proficiency was one of the major issues raised in research before 2010, but seems to be less foregrounded since then, although some researchers still mention it as a challenge (see, for example, Hamed and Fadhil, 2019; Takiguchi and Machida, 2020; Zein, 2017). Machida and Walsh (2015) found that, following the introduction of *Foreign Language Activities*, that is, unassessed English language classes, in Grades 5 and 6 in 2011, Japanese primary school teachers were most anxious about their level of English. The researchers noted that, out of seven teachers they observed, only two used English in the class and only for simple expressions.

In a development since 2010, it seems that more governments are requiring minimum English levels either to enter teacher training or to teach in schools. According to Ramírez Romero et al. (2014), the Ministry in Mexico now specifies a minimum profile to teach English in primary schools, including intermediate-level English (as well as teaching credentials), but there is no infrastructure to train more teachers to these levels. *Colombia Very Well! 2015–2025* has introduced the requirement for students studying on a BA teacher training programme to reach (or certify) a B1 level of English (Correa and González, 2016). The measure was intended to address the lack of English proficiency in primary school teachers. However, as Correa and González (2016) note, a high percentage of primary school teachers do not study at BA level and therefore there is no official process to verify their English level. The English Language Education Roadmap for Malaysia 2015–2025 specifies a target of C1 for teacher education (Hussan Sahib and Stapa, 2021). In Vietnam, primary school teachers are required to meet B2 level (Phan, 2021). However, there must be a question mark over how realistic such targets are, especially in countries such as Vietnam where low levels of English proficiency continue to be a reality amongst primary school teachers (Phan, 2021). Related to this point, there is little research into the levels of English that teachers of English as a school subject need to perform their roles successfully. While some researchers continue to suggest that high levels are required (e.g., Enever, 2018), others are more circumspect and suggest that much lower levels are acceptable (Garton and Copland, 2018). More research is needed on this topic.

2.2.4 The classroom context

The classroom context is also a key factor in EELL in many countries. For example, Zein (2022) in his survey of ASEAN countries notes that large classes, lack of basic facilities, poor classroom infrastructure, and lack of technical equipment are common in the poorer countries. Large classes continue to be a challenge. Classes with as many as 40–50 children are reported, for example, in Colombia (Correa and González, 2016), Libya (Hamed and Fadhil, 2019) and Saudi Arabia (Alqahtani, 2018).

Disparities in access to resources also persist both between and within countries. Hamed and Fadhil (2019) note in their observations in Libyan primary schools that teachers had only a whiteboard and a

marker pen. In Colombia, there is a sharp contrast between private and public schools where the former have better infrastructure and access to a variety of materials and technology. In contrast, public schools may lack even basic infrastructure and resources (Correa and González, 2016).

2.2.5 Examinations and assessment

The negative impact of assessment on EELL continues to be observed, although not all studies make a distinction between primary and secondary English learning. Zein (2017) asserts that assessment still tends to be traditional in ASEAN countries, focusing mainly on reading and grammar, and so teachers focus on these in class. The importance given to assessment also means that students believe the purpose of studying English is to pass exams. As mentioned above, in spite of the most recent 2011 curriculum reform in China, teacher-centred classes continue to dominate because the examination system remains the same (Chen, 2011). Phan (2021) notes that one reason for the persistence of grammar translation in Vietnam is the need to pass exams, which is not only important for students, but is also the basis for teacher evaluations. Finally, in Malaysia assessments still have to catch up with the new CEFR-based curriculum (Azman, 2016).

Some countries are now adopting new curricula and assessments based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This is the case in, for example, Malaysia (Sahib and Stapa, 2021), Chile (Barahona, 2016), Colombia (Correa and González, 2016), and Vietnam (Phan, 2021). In some cases, the level that primary school children are to achieve is stipulated (Malaysia), whilst in others, it is the final attainment over all years of schooling (Vietnam). The argument is that aligning curricula and assessment to the CEFR will boost attainment to international standards (Azman, 2016). However, as Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017) point out, the CEFR was developed in Europe and is based on European language learning traditions. Wholesale application to other contexts is likely to create new challenges and initial CEFR-based assessment results are not encouraging (see, for example, Barahona, 2016, for the situation in Chile).

From a different perspective, and on a positive note, Butler (2015) points to the growing interest in classroom-based assessments in East Asia, but maintains that teachers find it challenging to implement them. This may well be a future direction for both practice and research.

2.2.6 Materials and resources

The lack of appropriate materials for teaching English to young learners is still seen as something of a problem, but perhaps less so than in the past.

In ASEAN countries, some governments, for example, in Vietnam, are still revising textbooks for the new curriculum. In other countries, teachers complain about the lack of locally appropriate materials (Zein, 2017). In Malaysia, the decision to align materials with the introduction of the CEFR through the use of imported textbooks attracted negative feedback from parents and teachers because of the cultural content (Hussan Sahib and Stapa, 2021).

There is also a lack of materials appropriate for lower grades in countries where starting English earlier is an option (Chen, 2011).

2.3 Summary

The discussion above has given a selective overview of research in a number of key areas of EELL since the original project in 2010, and a number of observations can be made. First, there has been something of a geographical shift in the research. While Asia continues to attract a lot of attention, there is now a growing body of research focused on Latin America, probably as a result of the sheer size and numbers of children learning English, but possibly also as a reflection of the two areas where EELL has gained most ground. Moreover, as evidenced in this literature review, attention is starting to grow in countries of the Middle East, too. In many of the latter, English was introduced into primary education more recently, so research is just starting to emerge.

The second observation is that many of the issues of ten years ago remain the same. Moreover, countries that have introduced compulsory English most recently, such as those in the Middle East reported on here, seem to be creating the same challenges that those countries who now have well-established policies faced when they started. It would seem that lessons have not been learnt.

Thirdly, the situation seems more uneven than it was ten years ago, and this is closely related to the growing inequalities in EELL. While common challenges such as lack of qualified teachers and teachers' language proficiency remain, these are now seen to be more of a challenge in rural or poorer areas, while they have been largely addressed in

urban or wealthier areas, at least in some countries and to some extent (see, for example, Sayer, 2018). Inequality of access is perhaps the biggest challenge that English language teaching faces in the 21st century.

Finally, we may also be seeing small signs of a shift away from EELL. While arguments against EELL based on (lack of) attainment are not new, other arguments are gaining attention. Kirkpatrick (2012), for example, calls for primary education in local and national languages, delaying the study of English to secondary schools. He cites the UNESCO report *Education for all by 2015* which sees 'the lack of mother tongue multilingual education as a fundamental cause of primary dropout rates in many of the countries of ASEAN' (p. 342).

At a policy level, the Colombian government's latest national English programme, *Colombia Very Well 2015–2025*, has also focused attention to developing language proficiency in Grades 9–11. This decision was justified with reference to evidence of countries obtaining better results by strengthening English learning at higher levels (see Correa and González, 2016 for details). They did, however, also introduce more hours of English and a longer school day at primary level at the same time, but without the resources to implement the changes (Correa and González, 2016). Even so, the simple fact that a government recognises that shifting attention to improving English in higher grades may be a better investment represents a potentially interesting future development in English as a school subject.

3

Methods

This research project revisited the original project (2010) to investigate what has changed over the last ten years. Our first three research questions therefore focus on changes to practice:

1. Who is teaching young learners?
2. What are the main learning and teaching activities that teachers use in their day-to-day practices and have they changed over the last ten years?
3. What are the challenges faced by YL teachers? Have these changed over the last ten years?
4. How do teachers teach speaking, manage large classes, practise differentiation, enhance motivation and maintain effective discipline?
5. Which local solutions to pedagogical issues have potential for global relevance?
6. Are recent research findings reflected in how EELL is practised?

3.1 Methodological framework

Like the original study, this study falls principally within an interpretivist paradigm with the major goal of gaining an emic perspective (Copland and Creese, 2015a) on the key construct of global practices in TEYL. It is also a replication study (Markee, 2017) in that one of the main sources of data was a survey (see Appendix 1), based on the original 2010 survey (see Appendix 2), and short case studies drawing on teacher interviews and observational data, which were also part of the original study. We used a mixed-method research design as we believe in the productive ways in which qualitative and quantitative approaches can strengthen and complement each other, answering different research questions and providing different perspectives on the phenomena under investigation (see, for example, Angouri, 2018).

3.2 Research tools

The survey asked questions on teachers' perceived practices in TEYL, roles and responsibilities and challenges. It also elicited their views on a range of topics from classroom language use to EELL. The survey was for the main part quantitative, with most questions closed, requiring respondents to answer yes or no, rank or choose the most appropriate item(s). A small number of questions was open, requiring teachers to give their opinions. As behoves a replication study, many of the questions remained the same as in the original survey. However, we also deleted questions which had not provided useful data in the original study, in order to make room for new questions which picked up on issues identified in the research literature in the intervening years (e.g., use of learners' L1 in class and the teachers' attitudes to it).

The original questionnaire was only available in English and this meant that the sample was likely skewed towards teachers with a high level of English. To address this issue, we offered the 2020 survey in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish, as well as in English. The Arabic, English, Japanese and Spanish versions were available on Survey Monkey and the Chinese version was available on Wenjuanxing. The survey was translated and piloted by partners who are expert speakers of both languages and have a background in education, to ensure that the translations were as accurate and relevant as possible. We also ensured that there was a close match between the question types so that the findings in each language could be automatically merged for analysis. Consequently, working in multiple languages was not too challenging and therefore, even for a low number of responses, it is likely a worthwhile investment when researching internationally.

The survey was advertised via our personal networks and via our case study partners. We were also supported by the British Council who promoted it to

their network and we published a blog post on NALDIC and an advert on TEYLT Worldwide. Responses were monitored and efforts were made to ensure all case study countries were represented in the survey. This included targeted marketing of the survey to appropriate groups (e.g., teachers associations) in select countries. It proved difficult to collect online survey responses in Malawi and Tanzania, so our co-researchers in these countries offered paper versions to teachers; the data was input by hand and then merged with the Survey Monkey and Wenjuanxing data in SPSS.

For the survey, we received 1,874 responses from 88 countries compared with 4,696 responses from 144 countries in 2010. Of these, the multilingual surveys accounted for: 13 Arabic; 39 Japanese; 90 Spanish; and 395 Chinese. Despite our efforts to advertise widely, the number of responses is substantially lower this time than in 2010. We believe that this lower response rate was largely a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was affecting countries throughout our data collection window. In many countries, schools were closed and exams cancelled, and online learning put pressure on teachers' time. In addition, there also seemed to be survey fatigue. In 2010, surveys eliciting teachers' opinions were rare and online versions novel, which may have encouraged teachers to respond. In 2020, online surveys are commonplace and teachers are often asked to complete them for a range of reasons.

Nevertheless, five countries provided over 100 responses each. These countries are: Argentina (101); China (409); India (116); Malawi (108); Portugal (143). The Chinese translation of the survey was very popular and, as such, China is overrepresented in our sample compared to other countries and with the previous wave of the data (80 in 2010). Case studies were conducted in all these countries.

Eight countries provided responses of 50 and over. These are: Colombia (51); Japan (53); Mexico (79); Palestine (50); Russia (61); Tanzania (59); Thailand (50); and Turkey (52). Case studies were conducted in all these countries except Thailand. In addition, a case study was conducted in Italy and South Korea in order to mirror the approach taken in 2010.

Survey data was analysed using SPSS to identify general trends in EELL. This involved running frequencies and cross tabulations and producing related graphs. The survey has a repeated cross-sectional design to allow us to consider trends over time. This means we have a snapshot of practices in 2010 and 2020 and the data from each wave was merged to allow for comparisons of repeated questions. The survey in both waves used non-probability 'opportunity' sampling; it should therefore be recognised that they represent reported practices rather than provide conclusions about actual practices.

The 2020 survey data from all countries was pooled and analysed to give general trends to meet the research aim of comparing current trends with those in 2010. However, the numbers of responses from the above countries combined with the qualitative case studies would allow for more in-depth comparisons of country differences: this is an important avenue for future work that the researchers are keen to pursue.

Case study data was qualitative. The data collection closely followed the original study with researchers observing teachers in primary schools and interviewing them. However, for this iteration of the study, we wanted to involve overseas researchers in the data collection: not only did they understand the local educational context better than the UK researchers, they also found it easier to identify teachers and gain access to schools. Furthermore, they provided a different perspective as many were, or had been, practitioners themselves. Another advantage was that this approach was both cheaper and more sustainable than UK researchers travelling internationally to collect data. With this approach, we were able to commission 14 case studies in: Argentina; China; Colombia; India; Italy; Japan; Malawi; Mexico; Palestine; Portugal; Russia; South Korea; Tanzania; and Turkey. We had hoped to also conduct a case study in the United Arab Emirates to allow comparison with the original study (where case studies were conducted in Abu Dhabi, Colombia, Italy, Japan and South Korea). However, this was not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The overseas researchers all worked in their case study country, understood the educational context, and had either a Doctorate or a Master's in TESOL. We asked them to find teacher participants who were highly qualified and experienced, and who were considered to be good teachers by employers, peers, or academics who knew them. The main reason for choosing good teachers was that they would be the most likely to provide examples of effective local solutions to challenges that could be shared globally, as was the case in the original study. In other words, they would offer an illustration of what is possible and feasible in a particular context.

Before the local researchers collected the data, we spent time with them online individually or in groups discussing the data collection process, which comprised:

- completion of an observation schedule, focusing on describing practices (see Appendix 3);
- a commentary by the partner on their impressions of the class to develop understandings of local norms and aspirations in terms of EELL (see Appendix 4);
- recording one or two classes (where possible);
- conducting an in-depth interview in the teacher's preferred language/languages (see Appendix 5).

In the meeting, we also went over both the ethical issues and the information and consent forms. After the data was collected, we asked the co-researchers to write up their data as an analytical vignette (Copland and Creese, 2015), and to draw out the key aspects such as: class size; how the teacher managed the class and practised differentiation; levels and types of student engagement; learning activities (including teaching speaking); challenges teachers faced; and how policy was interpreted in the classroom. We then produced a cross-case analysis (see Khan and VanWynsberghe, 2008), examining key features such as context, description of learners, lesson design and teacher beliefs.

4

Findings

4.1 Who is teaching young learners ?

In 2020, as in 2010, the vast majority of survey respondents were female (81 per cent in 2020, and 80 per cent in 2010). Again most respondents worked in state schools (73 per cent in 2020 and 68 per cent in 2010) in urban areas (78 per cent in 2020, and 74 per cent in 2010).

The age range of respondents was also remarkably similar to ten years ago with around one quarter being in their twenties, one third in their thirties and one quarter in their forties. Thus the profile of who is teaching and where they are teaching is strikingly similar despite a ten-year time difference.

In 2020, 36 per cent of respondents had fewer than ten years' teaching English experience and 46 per cent had fewer than ten years' experience teaching English to children compared to 55 per cent and 68.4 per cent in 2010. As the age of respondents has not changed dramatically, this suggests that respondents are starting their English teaching careers earlier in life than they did in 2010, probably because early English language teaching is now well established in many countries.

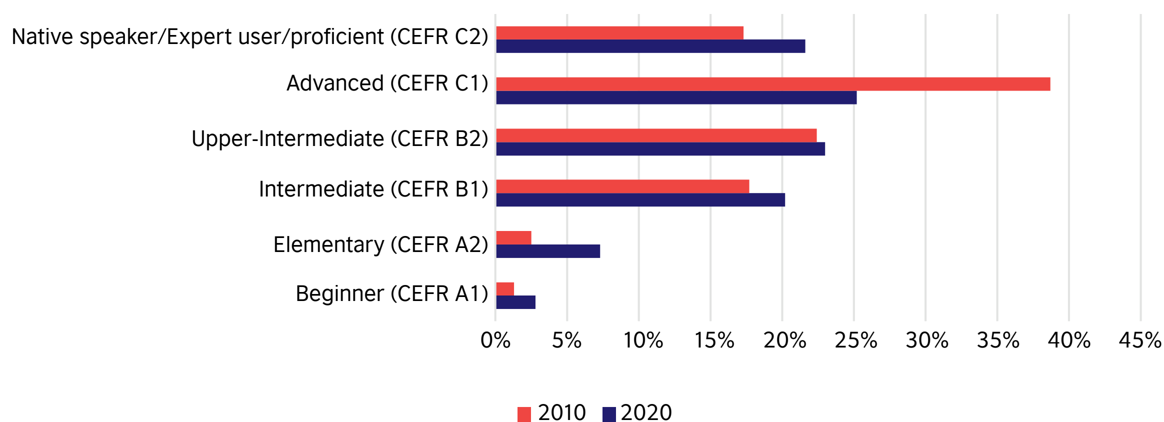
The average number of years' teaching English experience in 2020 was 18 and the average number of years' experience teaching English to children was 16. In 2020, for the first time we also asked what kind of experience respondents had prior to teaching English in a primary school: 40 per cent had no other English teaching experience; 19 per cent had taught adults; 19 per cent had taught in a high school, eight per cent had taught preschool, and 13 per cent had taught in a private language class.

Respondents' highest relevant qualification is very similar in both surveys, with just over 40 per cent having undergraduate degrees and just over 20 per cent having postgraduate degrees in both 2020 and 2010. The number of respondents receiving in-service training has fallen slightly from 73 per cent in 2010 to 63 per cent in 2020. This may be because there is now more specific pre-service teacher training and English language primary teachers are entering schools fully qualified. In 2010, many countries were in the early days of primary language teaching and providing in-service training for existing primary school teachers was a way of addressing the shortage of English teachers.

Despite a high level of education, one quite striking difference is the respondents' self-reported English level (see Figure 1). Unlike the 2010 survey, in the 2020 survey, we did not ask specifically if teachers were native speakers or not, as recent scholarship – including our own (Copland, Garton and Mann, 2016) – discouraged us from making this distinction. Instead, we asked respondents if they identified as expert speakers. In 2020, 22 per cent identified as expert speakers compared with 17 per cent identifying as native speakers or having native-speaker competence in 2010. This year, fewer teachers identified as advanced users (25 per cent compared with 39 per cent in 2010) and higher numbers of teachers reported elementary (seven per cent compared with three per cent in 2010) or beginner (three per cent compared with one per cent in 2010) levels of English. In 2010, we noted two things: that our samples' English proficiency did not reflect that which was reported in the wider literature (that many teachers had low levels), and that the level of English required to complete the survey was high. It may be that translating the survey into multiple languages has allowed more teachers with lower levels to take part and so brought this year's sample closer to the wider picture.

In 2020, we asked teachers what their role was in the school and nine per cent reported being specialist peripatetic English teachers, 37 per cent reported

Figure 1: Teachers' self-ratings of English language level in 2010 and 2020.



being specialist school English teachers, and 19 per cent reported being homeroom/classroom teachers. We also allowed respondents to describe their own role if these categories did not fit: the most common free text response was a leadership position such as headteacher or director. Other roles included: external advisor; private tutor; resource and material creators; exam preparation roles.

4.2 Main learning and teaching activities

In 2010, teachers reported using a large number and wide variety of activities in their classes; ten years on, this finding still holds true. When we consider the most popular activities of 2010 (those reportedly used often or every lesson by more than 50 per cent of teachers), the vast majority of those activities are still used frequently in the majority of language classrooms (see Table 1). A number of 'traditional' activities were and are still popular, including repeating after the teacher, children reading out loud, and filling the gaps (although this has reduced in popularity). However, it does appear that grammar exercises, and children memorising words or phrases have dipped in popularity over time. Watching videos/TV was one of the least frequently used activities in 2010, but its popularity has dramatically increased. This is likely due to growing access to this technology with more widespread availability of computers and TVs in classrooms. The popularity of videos and audio recordings may be due to the fact that, similarly to ten years ago, many teachers reported a lack of confidence in their own use of English and so may wish to provide children with an expert user model via a recording (see, for example, Mitchell and Lee, 2003). Moreover, it is likely that more, and more appropriate, materials are now available to facilitate this. Typical children's activities – singing songs, role play, playing games and chants/rhymes/poems – retain their popularity.

This time, we expanded the choice of activities based on the research literature (e.g., Copland and Garton, 2014) and on the responses teachers had given to open questions in 2010. Of these, language presentations were the most popular and this is borne out in the data from case studies (see below). It is also notable that class tests are carried out in nearly 40 per cent of classrooms, a reality which testifies to the growing establishment of English as a school subject rather than an enrichment activity, that is, an additional but non-central subject on the curriculum.

In 2010, we found lowish prevalence of teachers reading stories in classrooms: only 41 per cent of the teachers reported reading stories every lesson or often; while 17 per cent said they never or rarely read stories. This has stayed remarkably stable with 45 per cent of teachers now reading stories often or every lesson and 20 per cent rarely or never reading stories. We also asked this year about teachers telling stories without a book, and this was even less common with only 35 per cent of teachers often or always doing this and 32 per cent rarely or never doing this. Research continues to support the use of storytelling in language teaching and many reports of early English language learning describe how this can be successfully achieved (see Bland, 2019). More research is needed to understand why stories remain unpopular in many classrooms globally.

In 2010, very few activities were unpopular, with only one activity – translation – being never or rarely used by the majority of teachers. The use of translation has become even less popular with 58 per cent of teachers now reporting they never or rarely use this activity. This was the only activity in which over 50 per cent of teachers report rarely or never using, highlighting that the range of activities used in classrooms continues to be broad and eclectic However, as the case study data shows (see below), many teachers take a translanguaging approach in

Table 1: Proportion of activities used every lesson or often by teachers in 2010/2011 and the proportion using them every lesson or often in 2020/2021

Activity	2010	2020
listening to audio recordings	77%	73%
children repeating after the teacher	74%	65%
playing games	72%	69%
children reading out loud	72%	74%
songs	68%	67%
filling gaps/blanks in exercises	67%	56%
role play	63%	67%
grammar exercises	57%	47%
children memorising words and phrases (rote learning)	56%	41%
spelling exercises	51%	52%
handwriting exercises	51%	54%
chants, rhymes and/or poems	48%	55%
children copying from the book/board	44%	39%
teacher reading stories from a book	41%	45%
making things	36%	29%
dictation	30%	42%
creative writing	30%	30%
reading silently	29%	38%
translation exercises	24%	26%
watching videos/TV	23%	47%
language presentation/explanation	Not asked	64%
whole class discussions	Not asked	59%
group discussions	Not asked	58%
collaborative projects	Not asked	49%
class tests	Not asked	39%
quizzes	Not asked	37%
teacher telling stories without a book	Not asked	35%
drama	Not asked	23%

the classroom (see, for example, García and Li Wei, 2014), moving between languages to support the children as effectively as they can. So while teachers may not be doing traditional translation type activities, using L1 as a learning and teaching tool is adopted and valued.

Other activities that continue to be less popular with over 30 per cent of teachers rarely or never using them are creative writing (was 30 per cent, now 30 per cent), and making things (was 36 per cent, now 29 per cent). In addition, in 2020 more than 20 per cent of teachers report rarely or never using drama (23 per cent). This suggest that creative activities are still less popular in classrooms than other types of activities. While projects such as the Hands Up Project (https://www.handsupproject.org/) demonstrate how effective creative activities can be, other features such as large classes, an emphasis in many contexts on learning English as a subject, and lack of training in how use creative activities to enhance language learning, may all militate against creative classrooms.

Closely connected to the activities used in the classroom is the question of materials, as coursebooks are often the main source of lesson planning. In 2010, we found that the coursebook was

extremely important, as were supplementary materials. In 2020, the vast majority of teachers continue to use a coursebook (94 per cent) and a Teacher's Book/Guide (91 per cent). Over half report using the coursebook every lesson (57 per cent) and a further third (36 per cent) use the coursebook most lessons. Over three quarters of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their coursebook. The Teacher's Book is mostly used for lesson planning (96 per cent), to get ideas for activities (88 per cent), and to learn about new methodologies (72 per cent). These figures suggest that early English language learning in schools is very much dependent on the coursebook material, placing great responsibility on those who design, choose and commission coursebooks to ensure that they are pedagogically appropriate to the context, aligned to the curriculum and engaging and helpful for teachers. This would support the argument that coursebooks should be locally produced and involve teachers in the publication process (see, for example, al Majthoob, 2014).

4.3 Key challenges

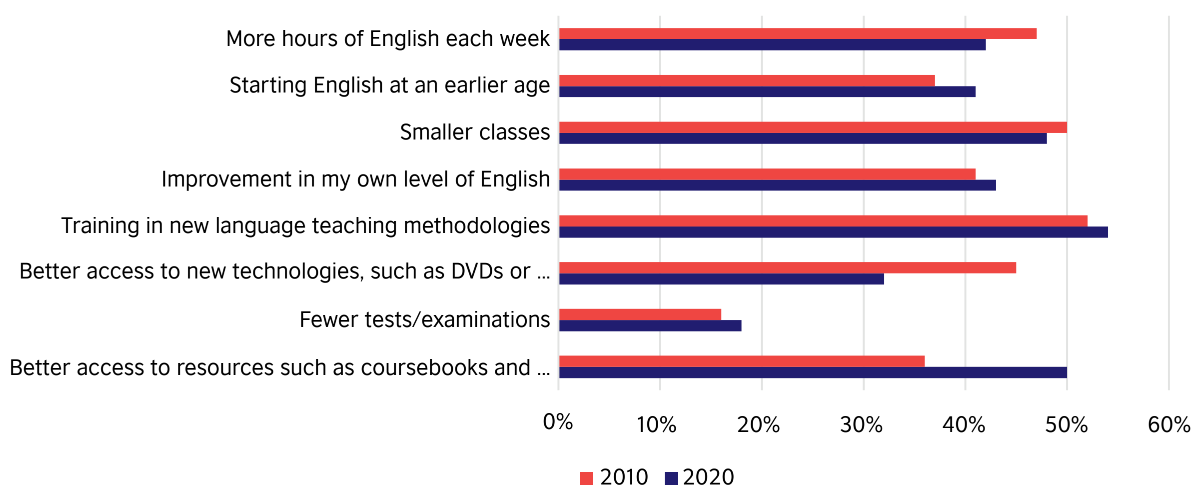
In both years, we asked participants to rank how important a series of changes could be to improving teaching and learning in their classes from one to eight. Figure 2 shows what proportion ranked each item as a three or higher (important) in both years: in most cases, the figures remain fairly stable. The biggest changes have been in access to resources with around half of teachers in 2020 ranking this as important compared to 36 per cent of teachers in 2010, and in access to new technologies, which was ranked as important by 32 per cent of teachers in 2020 compared to 45 per cent in 2010. This likely reflects the greater availability of technologies in schools now compared to a decade ago; teachers who do not have access to them may feel they are missing out. Nevertheless, it is interesting that teachers rank better resources so highly, especially given that most report using their coursebook every lesson and being satisfied with it. Many coursebook 'packages' now include online materials, including video resources, which may explain this finding to some degree. More research into exactly what resources are needed by English teachers would be beneficial.

In addition, we also asked teachers in an open question in both surveys to describe the challenges they faced. Table 2 below compares the ten greatest challenges that teachers identified in 2010 and in 2020.

Table 2: Challenges in teaching young learners.

	2010	2020
1	Teaching speaking	Differentiation
2	Discipline	Class size
3	Motivation	Motivation
4	Differentiation	Discipline
5	Writing	Teaching methodology
6	Grammar	Resources
7	Class size	Teaching speaking
8	Resources	Professional development
9	Parents	Lack of time
10	Teaching young children	Teaching young children

Figure 2: Changes needed to improve English language learning and teaching



Proportion of teachers ranking improvements to teaching learning as important (1–3) on a scale of 1 to 8 in 2020 and 2010

Figure 2 shows that there are some similarities between the two sets of data but also some interesting differences. In what follows, we discuss the three challenges that are all in the top four across the two surveys, together with teaching speaking (top five in 2010) and class size (top five in 2020).

From the analysis of the 2010 data, we found a number of challenges did not appear in the literature at that time, perhaps either because they were new or because they had not caught the attention of researchers (see Copland et al., 2014). This was the case for teaching speaking, differentiation and motivation in particular. It is interesting that differentiation, discipline and motivation remain in the top five ten years' on, suggesting that these central challenges are not being addressed by teacher education and government programmes.

There is also some contradiction in the data. While smaller class sizes were seen as less important in the ranking question in 2020 than in 2010, they figured more highly in the open question and are the second biggest (up from seventh to second). This may be because more African teachers and classrooms are represented in the 2020 survey, and class sizes are generally large in African countries.

Teaching speaking has dropped from first place to eighth, which could be because teachers have either more guidance in or experience of teaching speaking than previously, or that they are less concerned about this aspect of the syllabus.

4.4 How do teachers address the main challenges?

In what follows, we draw on the case data from 2020 to explore how teachers address the top four challenges listed in the 2020 survey. We also discuss teaching speaking, as we had asked researchers to pay special attention to this in the observations given its prominence in the 2010 survey results.

4.4.1 Practising differentiation

Differentiation was practised by some teachers and not others. The teachers in Argentina, India and South Korea all emphasised a relaxed, friendly approach in the classroom which researchers suggested was motivated by the home backgrounds of the children they were teaching. In Argentina and India, the children lived in poor housing ('a slum' according to the teacher from India) with often absent or troubled parents. The researcher in Argentina reported:

> ***The teacher also has children in her class who fall asleep during class; if she observes this, she gets them to do something physically active, but if this does not work, she lets them sleep.***

This approach demonstrates sensitivity to the needs of individual learners, for whom exhaustion precludes learning.

The teacher in India discussed using different activity types to appeal to the preferences of learners, while in Mexico, the teacher found an opportunity to engage an advanced learner in a conversation suitable to her level. The teacher in Colombia recognised that there are different levels of engagement and motivation, but, like most of the teachers, did not seem to plan explicitly to address the range of different needs in the class. Not including differentiation is likely the result of contextual realities. Teachers in Malawi, for example, have a full timetable, and often travel a long way to get to the schools: this reduces the time for planning. In Russia, the researcher explained, learners are considered a unit/class and differentiation is not considered conducive to engendering a whole class approach. Nonetheless, it was interesting that apart from the South Korean researcher, no one mentioned special educational needs, such as dyslexia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). While the case study class in Italy also did not show evidence of differentiation, the researcher observed a number of other classes where specialist SEN teachers were present alongside the teacher to support children with special needs. In one Grade 4 class, the English teacher, homeroom teacher and SEN teacher were all present with the homeroom teacher supporting a deaf child, including using sign language with him.

4.4.2 Managing large classes/managing effective discipline

In this section, we address managing large classes and effective discipline together as they are often explicitly linked by the teachers and classroom researchers.

In 2010, the authors reported that around 52 per cent of classes had between 21 and 40 students. This figure remains stable in 2020. Worryingly, the survey suggests that more classes now have larger numbers than they did ten years ago: in 2010, around nine per cent of classes had 41+ students while in 2020, over 25 per cent of classes have 41+ students. This result may be skewed slightly by the larger number of responses we received this year from teachers in Africa, where large class sizes are normal. Nevertheless, the data shows that many teachers are managing large classes of young children when teaching English – not an easy combination.

An overwhelming finding from the case study data was that classes were teacher fronted and in most cases, there was little opportunity for pair or group work. (China was notable in that the teacher made a great effort to incorporate pair and group work into the class and the teachers in Argentina and in Italy also introduced controlled pair work.) The advantage of a teacher-led approach is that classes are easier to manage and discipline is easier to maintain. The researcher in Palestine summed up the good behaviour of children in most classes.

> ***Little inappropriate behaviour was observed and dealt with gently resulting in children back on task.***

The case study data reveals that most children in class sit in rows, which again makes a class easier to manage than if sitting in groups (exceptions to this are Palestine, where children sat in groups of six, and Italy, where children sat in a rectangle). Most teachers follow a defined scheme of work, which for many is the coursebook. An exception here was Italy where the teacher said she rarely uses the coursebook, preferring materials from the British Council website, Learn English Kids. If the coursebook takes a traditional approach, as in Russia for example, then it is likely that there are few interactive activities, again

making classroom management easier. In Malawi, the researcher describes how activities are organised in each class:

> ***The kind of activities that the teacher does in her classroom mainly revolve around the lesson cycle where first the teacher demonstrates, then the teacher and the learners do the things together, and lastly the learners do the things on their own. It can be whole class, or in groups or individual activities. The activities may include writing, reading, questioning, following commands, singing, dancing, etc.***

However, while the lesson cycle allows for group, pair and individual work, this was not part of the lesson the researcher observed, relying again on teacher-led work.

4.4.3 Enhancing motivation

Teachers were sensitive to children's moods. Some teachers used songs to energise the students, to punctuate the lesson and to make the class fun. The 'Hello song' and 'head, shoulders, knees and toes' were particular favourites, although other songs were also popular.

Teachers also mentioned a 'stir and settle' approach, and the majority introduced a range of time-limited activities, especially with the younger learners (five to eight years old). As the Palestinian researcher noted:

> ***The lesson demonstrated an understanding of the intellectual, social, emotional development of the children. The activities were short, squeezed and transitions between them were clear.***

Most teachers reported that children in their classes were motivated to learn, but this was not true everywhere. The Malawian researcher explained:

> ***Children think English is hard and need to be motivated by teacher to learn.***

The Tanzanian researcher thought that the threat of punishment prevented children getting fully involved.

> ***Children positive but shy; mistakes might result in punishment***

Two teachers introduced realia to motivate students. In Tanzania, the teacher used different coloured bottles to elicit preferences. The teacher in Palestine had asked children to bring clothing to the lesson which focused on clothes vocabulary. By the end of the lesson, different items were strung up on a washing line to help the students to practise.

4.4.4 Teaching speaking

In terms of teaching speaking, it needs to be recognised that most children in the study had very low English language levels. As the Colombian researcher suggested, there was little spontaneous use of English, except for phrases such as, 'Can I go to the bathroom?'. Other researchers noted that even when the teacher used English a great deal, children tended not to answer in English.

To encourage learners to speak English, teachers used effective question and answer sequences (see below). They also played games, many of which allowed the children to answer in chorus and, in the case of Japan, to 'literally scream the names of the animals' in the Brown Bear Brown Bear story. Drilling was also popular. In Argentina, after presenting the phrases 'I can' and 'I can't', the teacher drilled them with flashcards of different activities (e.g., cook, football, sing) leading to a controlled pair work activity.

Teachers in Argentina, Malawi and Palestine also worked on pronunciation. The Palestinian teacher showed the letters *s*, *h*, *b*, *p*, *i*, *sh*, elicited the names of the letters and the sounds they make and also asked children to do the action. In Malawi, pronouncing sounds was linked to reading words.

Come on Emily... Read the instruction.
Go and look under the bench.
Let's go.
Blue has got an 'e' and red has got an 'e'. So it's 'e'.
Now where?
Go to the house and look behind the door.
It's the letter 't'.
What's the next instruction?
Go and look in front of the fence.
There's the third clue.
It's on 'e'.
Where do we go now?
There's one in flower but two in green. What letter is it?
Go and look next to the statue.
Here's the clue next to the statue.
We've got e, t, e, r.
It's in frog and in rabbit. What letter is it?
It's the letter 'r'.
I know! It's 'tree'. The treasure's in the tree.
There's a message. Congratulations! Here are some sweets! But where are they?
Oh, no. Look! The squirrel's got the treasure!

5

Local solutions with global relevance

In this section, we discuss some of the strategies and activities reported by the case study researchers which seem to be of particular interest. We are not concerned here with 'best practice' (Edge and Richards, 1998; Kumaravadivelu, 2005), but with practices that were used across diverse contexts and could therefore be seen to have global relevance in responding to some of the challenges that teachers face.

5.1 Using question and answer techniques effectively

As noted above, in most contexts, English is taught as a school subject. This has consequences both for what is taught and how it is taught. One pedagogical approach that was common across a number of the case studies was the question and answer sequences. In one class in Tanzania, after a brief presentation of 'prefer', the whole lesson was structured around this technique, building from lower level productions from the students, as in the following:

> *T: Which one would you prefer to see, a lion or a hyena?*
> *Ss: I prefer to see a hyena.*
> *Ss: I prefer seeing a hyena.*

To more complex productions:

> *Teacher writes on the board:*
> *1. Play football/watch movies*
> *2. Eating rice/eating ugali*

Students have to ask each other, for example, 'Which do you prefer, playing football or watching movies?'

While such Q and A sequences are common in classrooms and may appear mundane, the questions can be effective if they require students to think about their answers and to offer a personalised response. In the example above, they are also contextually relevant, drawing on the children's local realities. The teacher in Tanzania asked children to clap for each other when a good response was given, and moved the lesson along at a good pace so that motivation was maintained. The personalised Q and A sequences seem an appropriate response to teaching a class of 45, only half of whom had the coursebook.

Q and A was drawn upon by a teacher in Mexico, who used the game 'Burnt Potato'[1] to engage in extended work on family relationships, the topic of the lesson. Not only are children asked questions in English to which, as per the rules of the game, they had to respond as quickly as possible, they are also asked in English to provide equivalents in Spanish to check comprehension. The teacher in Mexico used 'Burnt Potato' to energise the class when they appeared sleepy, and to provide one child in the class (who had a far higher English level than the other children) with the opportunity to have a longer conversation than others were able to. The teacher turned this conversation into a listening activity, asking the other students what they had understood.

In a very well-resourced class in a private school in Portugal, the teacher used Q and A to check that children had learnt pet vocabulary, taking the opportunity to ensure children could give a personalised answer, e.g., 'What's the name of your fish?' The Q and A turned into a guessing game when

[1] 'Burnt Potato' or 'Hot Potato' requires the group to pass round a potato (or something representing a potato, for example, a ball). The aim is to get rid of the potato as quickly as possible. If the teacher asks a question, the person holding the potato must answer and then can offload the potato to the next person in the group.

first the teacher, then the children, mimed different pets for the class to guess.

These approaches shared a number of characteristics: they were whole class activities (a feature of much of the teaching reported in the case studies); they were well-paced; and the teacher aimed to give children the opportunity to personalise their answers. They also served a number of purposes: presenting, practising and reviewing language; energising the class; providing opportunities for strong and weaker students to participate; and providing listening opportunities to the class.

5.2 A translanguaging pedagogy

The survey data revealed overwhelming support for an English-only classroom. In the classroom data, the ways teachers and students used languages were more nuanced. While only one teacher taught through the home language almost exclusively, seven used English almost exclusively and six adopted a translanguaging approach.

The bilingual teacher in Italy, who was also the homeroom teacher, wove English into some of the subjects she taught in addition to teaching English. The researcher reported:

> ***This particular teacher spoke almost only English during the class and it was noticeable that the children seemed more comfortable with English compared to other classes. They were more intuitive and willing to guess and have a go. For example, initial exchange with me:***
>
> ***How old is your brother?***
>
> ***Silence***
>
> ***You are eight years old, right?***
>
> ***Yes***
>
> ***How old is your brother?***
>
> ***14***

The teachers in China and Argentina used English almost exclusively, 'even to reprimand' according to the Argentinian researcher, while teachers in Malawi and Russia also conducted the class in English for the most part. In Palestine, where the teacher used English to deliver the class, the researcher reported the teacher as saying:

> ***Speaking in the native language is the most noticeable issue. It's very easy for the kids to communicate in their native language (Arabic).***

The teacher speaking mainly in English but the children often using their first language was a pattern observed in many of the classrooms and has been previously reported in the literature (e.g., Copland and Neokleous, 2011).

In many of the classrooms, teachers (and students) were more fluid in their language choice, using what is becoming understood as a translanguaging pedagogy (see García and Kano, 2014 for details). Some level of translanguaging was apparent in most of the classes observed, with some teachers explictly adopting translanguaging as pedagogy. The researcher in India reported that:

> ***Teachers are like warriors in the war in their English class, juggling with mother tongue and English and yet making sincere efforts to teach the foreign language.***

And the researcher in Colombia explained:

> ***The constant translanguaging helps the teacher communicate more effectively with her students in instructions and explanations.***

Translanguaging was also popular in Europe. In Portugal, the researcher observed that children used both Portuguese and English. When she asked the teacher about this afterwards, the teacher said that she would not expect young children to be silent once they had finished an exercise and would prefer them to talk among themselves. In Turkey, the teacher increased the amount of translanguaging towards the end of the lesson as children became tired, and used both Turkish and English to praise the students. In South Korea, the teacher used English and Korean for different functions, with Korean being used for: directions or instructional comments; questions (checking comprehension, etc.); word or

sentence explanations; managing students' behaviour; and compliments or confirmations. For a full discussion of translanguaging in this project, see Copland et al., 2022.

5.3 Age appropriate activities

As reported in section 4.2, the survey data and case study data both showed that teachers are using a range of activities in the English language classroom. As well as providing linguistic input, well-chosen activities can energise, motivate, engage and challenge young learners. Sixty-seven per cent of teachers in the survey reported using songs, and songs were utilised in half of the case studies. The 'Hello song' was ubiquitous in the seven classrooms (although several versions of this seem to exist!) as a way to begin the class and to focus children on learning English. Other songs such as the 'Weather song', the 'Alphabet song' and 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes', were used to practise weather vocabulary, phonics and body parts. From the data, it was notable that songs were less used with children ages nine+ than with the five to eight age group. Including songs, therefore, seems to be age sensitive; perhaps children move from enjoying singing to feeling embarrassed by it, but for younger learners songs seem to be indispensable (see the British Council for a range of fun and involving songs https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/songs).

Teachers in China and Russia provided activities for 10–11-year-olds which were challenging and at a language level beyond that which other young learners in the study were exposed. In Russia, the lesson was based on a story – Goldilocks and the three bears. The story was treated as a vehicle for language work and it was presented in segments rather than as a whole. A video of the story was played and children also had to read the text. The researcher commented:

> ***The impression [was] of any other school subjects taught, without this special feel of shared activities of various kinds which combine opening new knowledge and having fun at the same time.***

Nonetheless, the lesson demonstrates that it is possible to engage children cognitively and academically with English and that classes can be intellectually rigorous.

In China, the focus of the lesson was reading skills and was divided into pre-, while- and post-reading stages. The lesson included a jigsaw text and a role play. The lesson ended with the teacher posing questions to the children using the third conditional, e.g., 'If you were Tiger, what would you do?'. The researcher noted that activities such as role play and jigsaw reading 'are still quite unusual in China', a reality which may account for the 'naughty children' who were disruptive and did not take part in group work.

Some researchers have been critical of a diet of games, songs and discrete vocabulary often served up to primary aged children (e.g., Gaynor, 2018), which results in children knowing very little when they move on to high school. Others have criticised poor transitions between primary and high school leading to repetition of learning and consequent demotivation (see Burns et al., 2013; Garton, 2014; Zein, 2022). These classes demonstrate that it is possible for young learners to reach quite impressive language levels and engage in sophisticated tasks, particularly when the context is supportive and congenial. What is more, like the teachers in Kasprowicz and Marsden (2018), the teachers in China and Russia have demonstrated that children of nine+ years are very capable of bringing cognitive skills to language learning. Those with responsibility for setting language curricula in primary schools might look at these examples to plan an approach which challenges as well as engages young learners.

6

EELL research and practice

In this section, we compare some of the key findings from recent research in the field of EELL with our own findings. In common with other research, our findings show that many of the challenges faced by primary school teachers in 2010 remain today. This is the case both in countries where EELL policies have been in place for some time and countries where they are relatively new. Continuing challenges include lack of appropriate resources, lack of appropriate and sufficient training for teachers and large class sizes.

One key difference is that research tends to report negatively on EELL teaching. Teachers' lack of experience and qualifications are highlighted by research (e.g., Rixon, 2013) as is teachers' lack of confidence in, or knowledge of, using communicative approaches (e.g., Sahib and Stapa, 2021). In contrast, in our survey, respondents are generally qualified and experienced. In addition, case study data from rural and urban areas and from classrooms in both high and low income countries, shows that teachers use what resources and skills they have to create lively and caring classrooms. Many do not use what we might consider modern pedagogies, and this may explain why teachers ranked 'training in the new teaching methodologies' highly in terms of what would improve their teaching. However, as Zein (2022) suggests, rather than criticising teachers for not attaining an ideal, researchers could instead be identifying how 'traditional' activities are done well and how teachers can effectively adapt their pedagogy to local contexts. Our data on the activities used in class confirms that most teachers take an eclectic approach and adapt their pedagogy to the context, whatever the curriculum guidelines say. And we suggest that this indicates that they are effective rather than ineffective teachers.

Research also suggests that many EELL teachers have low levels of English themselves (Zein, 2022), and some researchers believe that this is detrimental to excellent English language teaching (e.g., Enever, 2018). Our survey data reiterates that basic skills in English are relatively common. However, our case study data suggests that this is not necessarily an issue. In these classrooms, as in most classrooms globally, English is taught as a school subject, with a focus on assessment and knowledge about English rather than how to communicate in English. This kind of teaching does not necessarily require high levels of English, as is the case in the Tanzanian case study.

Our results also show something of a disconnect between academic debates and the lived experiences of teachers. While researchers continue to question the wisdom of introducing English at ever younger ages, the teachers in this study strongly believe that this is the right thing to do. Similarly, while academics may challenge the added value of English for children's life chances, particularly for children from low-income countries and areas, our respondents strongly believe that English improves the life chances of the children they teach, despite the contexts in which they work. However, they also agree with researchers that if English is to start early, then maximum exposure is important. The question as to where the space is to be found on the curriculum remains an issue.

7

Conclusion

This study has sought to compare the experiences and practices of English language teachers in primary schools in 2010 and 2020, and to uncover what, if anything, has changed. The results show that much remains the same, with the challenges that teachers face in lack of training and classroom conditions such as large classes all broadly similar. However, teachers in this study seem to be better prepared at pre-service level for the specific context of primary schools than those in 2010, although in-service opportunities for teachers appear reduced. This may be a consequence of the sample, and it would be interesting to compare the preparation of teachers where EELL has been in place for some time and those where it is more recent. While both the 2010 and 2020 survey showed that teachers were taking an eclectic approach in the classroom, there is also some evidence in the 2020 survey of respondents using an even greater variety of activities.

Importantly, in the 2020 study, we included nine extra case studies from across the world and this data suggests that English as a school subject is taught in broadly similar ways. Classes are mostly teacher-fronted, with children sitting in rows and traditional activities such as question and answer, repetition, songs and games remaining popular. In some contexts, there is evidence of activities that derive from communicative approaches in adult classrooms, but they are not common. Likewise, pedagogies that have been championed for children, such as storytelling, drama and creative activities, are not much in evidence. Unsurprisingly, large classes, an emphasis on covering the curriculum, teachers' English language levels, children's home lives and educational culture all appear to affect to some degree what happens in early English language learning in primary schools. There is strong evidence, too, of teachers' dedication both to the children in their care and to ensuring children have the opportunity to learn English from an early age: teachers believe early English language learning is good for children, providing them with important life chances.

Teachers balance a range of imperatives in young learner classrooms: teaching English; developing children's confidence; ensuring learning is enjoyable; and paying attention to children's well-being, amongst other things. To do so, many take a translanguaging approach, ensuring that children feel included, can understand and can make progress. Translanguaging challenges some pedagogical advice that recommends a target language only (or majority) classroom: it also recognises that teachers with low levels of English can make an effective contribution to teaching English to primary school children (see, too, Copland, Garton and Barnett, 2022).

While there is some evidence from our study that EELL has improved since 2010, progress appears to be slow. Some challenges remain unsolved in countries where primary English was introduced many years ago, while countries who have introduced it recently seem not to have learned the lessons of those who went before them. In spite of evidence that EELL might not be effective (Singleton and Pfenniger, 2018), it seems unlikely that governments will change their policies, especially given the pressure from parents. Research, therefore, has an essential role in informing effective practices at primary level. Focus should be on answering the following questions:

- How can the challenges identified in this report be alleviated?
- What pedagogies are effective in state-funded primary schools, particularly when class sizes are large?
- How can English language learning be improved in poor and marginalised areas?

- What level of English do teachers need to be effective in a school environment?
- How can teachers get access to CPD where this is not provided by governments?

They are not easy questions to answer, and many of the responses will be contingent on local contexts. Nevertheless, if we wish to move forward and support teachers to provide more effective and enjoyable classroom experiences, researchers need to address these challenges.

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Appendix 1

1. Introduction

Dear Primary School Teacher

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on global practices in teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) aged 7-11, funded by the British Council. This survey is part of a research project being conducted by a team led by Professor Fiona Copland at the University of Stirling and Sue Garton at Aston University, in conjunction with the British Council. It should take approximately 25 minutes to complete.

Background, aims of project
The study will investigate global practices in teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) aged 7-11 from macro and micro perspectives. Key aims are to: investigate and map the major pedagogies that teachers use; better understand teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, including the challenges they face; identify how local solutions to pedagogical issues can be effective and how these may resonate globally.

We conducted a similar study ten years' ago and we aim now to compare how practices and approaches have developed and changed.

Wherever you are in the world, if you teach young learners aged 7-11, your experiences and opinions are very important to us.

Thank you for taking part.

Fiona Copland and **Sue Garton**

Please read through these terms before agreeing to participate below.

Do I have to take part?
No. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty by pressing the 'Exit' button / closing the browser. You are free to decline to answer any particular question for any reason.

What happens to the data I provide?
Your answers will be completely anonymous, and we will use all reasonable endeavours to keep them confidential. Your data will be stored in a password-protected file and may be used in academic publications. Your IP address will not be stored.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating further. If you choose to provide contact information such as your email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

Your answers are completely confidential and will only be used in summaries. No individual's answer can be identified. However, if you are willing to be contacted by us for a follow-up discussion, please give your details at the end of the questionnaire.

If you have any questions, please contact Fiona Copland (fiona.copland@stirling.ac.uk)

2. About you

1. Your nationality:

2. Your gender:

- ◯ male
- ◯ female
- ◯ non-binary/third gender agender
- ◯ Other
- ◯ rather not say

3. Your age:

- ◯ Younger than 18
- ◯ 19-29
- ◯ 30-39
- ◯ 40-49
- ◯ 50-59
- ◯ 60+

4. Country where you work:

3. About your experience and qualifications

5. Years of experience teaching English:

- ◯ 0-4
- ◯ 5-9
- ◯ 10-14
- ◯ 15-19
- ◯ 20-24
- ◯ 25+

6. Years of experience teaching English in primary/elementary school:

- ◯ 0-4
- ◯ 5-9
- ◯ 10-14
- ◯ 15-19
- ◯ 20-24
- ◯ 25+

7. What English language teaching experience did you have before you started teaching in primary school?

- ◯ teaching children in a private language school
- ◯ teaching pre-school/kindergarten
- ◯ teaching in a high school, ages 12-18
- ◯ teaching adults
- ◯ none

8. What is your level of English, in your opinion?

- ◯ Beginner (CEFR A1)
- ◯ Elementary (CEFR A2)
- ◯ Intermediate (CEFR B1)
- ◯ Upper-Intermediate (CEFR B2)
- ◯ Advanced (CEFR C1)
- ◯ Expert user/proficient (CEFR C2)

9. What is your highest relevant qualification in teaching in primary/elementary school?

- ◯ School certificate/diploma
- ◯ College certificate/diploma
- ◯ Government training programme
- ◯ University undergraduate degree (e.g. BA)
- ◯ University postgraduate degree (e.g. MA)
- ◯ No qualification
- ◯ Other (please specify)

10. Have you received any in-service training (training while at work) in teaching English since you began teaching English in primary/ elementary school?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

11. If you have answered 'Yes' to question 10, please state what training you have received.

4. About your school

12. Type of primary/elementary school you teach English in most often:

- ◯ Private
- ◯ State
- ◯ Other e.g. mission school
- ◯ If other, please specify:

13. Location of your current school:

- ◯ Rural (village/countryside)
- ◯ Urban (town/city)

14. How many children are in your classes on average?

- ◯ Under 10
- ◯ 11-20
- ◯ 21-30
- ◯ 31-40
- ◯ 41-50
- ◯ 50+

15. Who teaches English in your school?

- ◯ The homeroom/class teacher
- ◯ A specialist English teacher
- ◯ A co-teacher together with the homeroom/class teacher
- ◯ Other (please specify)

16. At what grade do children start learning English in your school?

- ◯ Pre-primary
- ◯ Grade 1
- ◯ Grade 2
- ◯ Grade 3
- ◯ Grade 4
- ◯ Grade 5
- ◯ Grade 6

17. Do you think this grade is

- ◯ too early
- ◯ about right
- ◯ too late

18. In your opinion, what kind of socioeconomic background are children in your class from:

- ◯ high socio economic backgrounds (top 30%)
- ◯ middle socio economic backgrounds
- ◯ low socio economic backgrounds (bottom 30%)
- ◯ a mixture of different socio economic backgrounds

19. Are children in your class

- ◯ Very interested in learning English
- ◯ Quite interested in learning English
- ◯ Not really interested in learning English
- ◯ Not at all interested in learning English

20. How about the parents/caregivers of the children in your class. Are they:

- ◯ Very happy their child is learning English
- ◯ Happy their child is learning English
- ◯ Neither happy nor unhappy that their child is learning English
- ◯ Not happy that their child is learning English
- ◯ Very unhappy that their child is learning English.

21. Do you think learning English in primary school improves the life chances of children you teach?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

22. Please explain your answer to Q21:

5. About your classes

When answering questions 24 - 36 in this section, please refer to the class you teach most often.

23. How old are most of the children in the class you teach most often?

- ◯ 7
- ◯ 8
- ◯ 9
- ◯ 10
- ◯ 11

24. Which language do you mostly use in your English classes?

- ◯ Mostly English
- ◯ Mostly the students' home language(s)
- ◯ A mix of English and other languages

25. Is there official guidance (from the government, ministry or school) on using English and mother tongue/other languages in class?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

26. If you answered yes to question 25, please explain the guidance.

27. Do you agree or disagree?

	agree	disagree
Children in my class participate more actively if I use their first language to teach English.	◯	◯
Children are demotivated if I use English all the time.	◯	◯
I feel guilty if I use the children's first language in the English class.	◯	◯
It is important to create an English language environment in the classroom by speaking English as much as possible.	◯	◯
The English class should be a multilingual space where the children can use all their languages.	◯	◯
The children's level of English is low. I must use their first language to help them to understand.	◯	◯

6. About your classes continued

When answering this question, please refer to the class you teach most often.

28. Here are some activities that are used in primary schools. How often do you use these activities in the class you teach most often?

	every lesson	often	sometimes	rarely	never
children copying from the book/board	○	○	○	○	○
teacher reading stories	○	○	○	○	○
children memorising words and phrases (rote learning)	○	○	○	○	○
songs	○	○	○	○	○
children repeating after the teacher	○	○	○	○	○
role-play	○	○	○	○	○
reading silently	○	○	○	○	○
listening to audio recordings	○	○	○	○	○
teacher telling stories	○	○	○	○	○
playing games	○	○	○	○	○
making things	○	○	○	○	○
translation exercises	○	○	○	○	○
quizzes	○	○	○	○	○
whole class discussions	○	○	○	○	○

7. About your classes continued

29. Below are some more activities that are used in primary schools. How often do you use these activities in the class you teach most often?

	every lesson	often	sometimes	rarely	never
chants, rhymes and/ or poems	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
drama	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
watching videos/TV	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
handwriting exercises	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
grammar exercises	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
children reading out loud	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
language presentation/ explanation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
creative writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
filling gaps/blanks in exercises	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
spelling exercises	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
dictation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
group discussions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
class tests	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
collaborative projects	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Are there any other activities you use regularly?

8. Your opinions

30. Which of the following do you think would improve teaching and learning in your classes?

Please put them all in order of importance from 1 to 8
1 = most important and 8 = least important

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Better access to resources such as coursebooks and materials	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fewer tests/examinations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Better access to new technologies, such as DVDs or computers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Training in new language teaching methodologies	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Improvement in my own level of English	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Smaller classes	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Starting English at an earlier age	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More hours of English each week	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

31. Please explain your choice of the most important

32. What aspect or aspects of your job as an English teacher do you find the most challenging?

33. In your opinion, Is the introduction of English into primary school a positive or a negative educational development?

○ Positive

○ Negative

34. Please explain your answer to Q33

9. Resources

35. Do you use a coursebook/textbook? If no, go to Q41.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

10. Resources

36. How often do you use the coursebook/textbook?

- ◯ Every lesson
- ◯ Most lessons
- ◯ Fewer than half the lessons
- ◯ Occasionally

37. Do you have a teacher's book/guide for the coursebook?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

38. What do you use the teacher's book for? Tick all that apply

- ☐ to check the answers to exercises
- ☐ to plan lessons
- ☐ to learn about new methodologies
- ☐ to get ideas for activities
- ☐ to support differentiated teaching
- ☐ to improve my own English
- ☐ to find explanations for grammar and other language use
- ☐ Other (please specify)

39. What is the name of your coursebook(s)

40. How satisfied are you with your coursebook?

- ◯ Very satisfied
- ◯ Satisfied
- ◯ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ◯ Dissatisfied
- ◯ Very dissatisfied

41. What technology can you access in your school? Tick all that apply

- ☐ a computer in my classroom
- ☐ a computer room for children to use
- ☐ a digital projector in my classroom
- ☐ internet access in my classroom
- ☐ tablets for children
- ☐ a portable DVD/CD player
- ☐ a television
- ☐ an interactive whiteboard/smartboard
- ☐ access to a photocopier
- ☐ an overhead projector
- ☐ a smart phone
- ☐ none of the above
- ☐ Other (please specify)

11. Your comments

42. Which aspect, or aspects, of your job as an English teacher gives you most satisfaction?

43. Which aspect or aspects of your job as an English teacher would you most like to change?

44. If you have any more comments about any aspect of being a primary/elementary school teacher of English, please add them here.

12. Further contact

45. If you are willing to be contacted by e-mail or phone for a follow-up interview, please give your contact details: Thank you very much for taking the time to answer the survey. The final report will be available from the British Council website late 2020.
Fiona and Sue

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer the survey. The final report will be available from the British Council website.
Fiona and Sue

Appendix 2

Investigating Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners

Dear Primary School Teacher,

The School of Languages and Social Sciences, Aston University, UK, in conjunction with The British Council, is carrying out a survey of teaching English in primary/elementary schools in different countries around the world. We are very interested in finding out about primary school teachers' experiences of teaching English, the activities they use, and the challenges they face.

Wherever you are in the world, if you teach young learners aged 7-11, your experiences and opinions are very important to us.

We would like to invite you to complete this questionnaire, which should take you about 20 minutes.

Your answers are completely confidential and will only be used in summaries. No individual's answer can be identified. However, if you are willing to be contacted by us for a follow-up discussion, please give your details at the end of the questionnaire.

You can find out more about the project at:
http://www.aston.ac.uk/lss/

If you have any questions, please contact Sue Garton (s.garton@aston.ac.uk) or Fiona Copland (f.m.copland@aston.ac.uk).

About you

1. **Your nationality:**

2. **Your gender:**

- ◯ male
- ◯ female

3. **Your age:**

- ◯ Younger than 18
- ◯ 19-29
- ◯ 30-39
- ◯ 40-49
- ◯ 50-59
- ◯ 60+

4. **Country where you work:**

5. **Years of experience as an English language teacher (tick one):**

- ◯ 0-4
- ◯ 5-9
- ◯ 10-14
- ◯ 15-19
- ◯ 20-24
- ◯ 25+

6. **Years of experience teaching English in primary/elementary school (tick one):**

- ◯ 0-4
- ◯ 5-9
- ◯ 10-14
- ◯ 15-19
- ◯ 20-24
- ◯ 25+

About you qualifications

7. Highest level of education (tick one):

- ◯ Secondary/High School
- ◯ Post secondary/high school e.g. college
- ◯ Bachelor's (1st level degree)
- ◯ Master's (2nd level degree)
- ◯ Doctorate (PhD)
- ◯ Other

8. What is your level of English, in your opinion? (tick one)

- ◯ Beginner
- ◯ Elementary
- ◯ Pre-Intermediate
- ◯ Intermediate
- ◯ Upper-Intermediate
- ◯ Advanced
- ◯ Native speaker competence
- ◯ Native Speaker

9. What is your highest relevant qualification in teaching in primary/elementary school? (tick one)

- ◯ School certificate/diploma
- ◯ College certificate/diploma
- ◯ Government training programme
- ◯ University undergraduate degree (e.g. BA)
- ◯ University postgraduate degree (e.g. MA)
- ◯ Other (please specify)

About English teaching in your country

10. At what age do children start English in state primary/elementary schools in the country where you work? (tick one)

- ◯ younger than 5
- ◯ 6
- ◯ 7
- ◯ 8
- ◯ 9
- ◯ 10
- ◯ 11
- ◯ older than 11

11. In your opinion, this is:

- ◯ The right age
- ◯ Too young
- ◯ Too old

12. When did English become compulsory in primary/elementary school in your country? (tick one)

- ◯ Less than 1 year ago
- ◯ 1-2 years ago
- ◯ 3-6 years ago
- ◯ 7-10 years ago
- ◯ More than 10 years ago
- ◯ Don't know
- ◯ English is not compulsory

About your school

13. Type of primary/elementary school you teach English in most often (tick one):

◯ **Private** ◯ **State** ◯ **Other**

14. Location of your current school:

◯ Rural (village/countryside) ◯ Urban (town/city)

15. How many children are in your classes on average? (tick one)

◯ Under 10 ◯ 11-20 ◯ 21-30

◯ 31-40 ◯ 41-50 ◯ 50+

16. How is English teaching organised in your school? (tick one)

◯ One teacher teaches all subjects, including English

◯ One teacher teaches all subjects except English

◯ A different teacher teaches each subject/group of subjects

◯ Other

17. If you have answered 'Other' to Question 16, please describe how English teaching is organised in your school:

18. Did you receive any training in teaching English before you began teaching in primary/elementary school?

◯ Yes ◯ No

19. Have you received any training in teaching English since you began teaching English in primary/ elementary school?

◯ Yes ◯ No

20. If you have answered 'Yes' to question 18 or question 19, or both, please state what training you have received.

About your classes

21. When answering questions 21-28 in this section, please refer to the class you teach most often. 21. How old are the children in the class you teach most often? (tick one)

- ◯ 7
- ◯ 8
- ◯ 9
- ◯ 10
- ◯ 11

22. Which language do you mostly use in your English classes? (tick one)

- ◯ Mostly English
- ◯ Mostly the students' first language
- ◯ A mix of the two.

23. I try to correct my students': (tick one in each row)

	always	sometimes	rarely	never
pronunciation mistakes				
grammar mistakes				
spelling mistakes				
handwriting mistakes				
vocabulary mistakes				

How do you decide when to correct mistakes?

24. Here are some activities that are used in primary schools. How often do you use these activities in the class you teach most often? (tick one in each row)

	every lesson	often	sometimes	rarely	never
copying from the book/board					
teacher reading stories					
children memorising words and phrases (rote learning)					
songs					
children repeating after the teacher					
role-play					
reading silently					
listening to tape recorder/CD					
children telling stories					
playing games					
making things					
translation exercises					
rhymes and/or poems					
activities on the computer					
watching videos/TV					
handwriting exercises					
grammar exercises					
children reading out loud					
project work					
grammar explanations					
creative writing					
filling gaps/blanks in exercises					
spelling exercises					
dictation					

Are there any other activities you use regularly?

25. As a regular part of your job, do you:

	Yes	No
prepare class tests?		
prepare final examinations?		
mark tests and/or examinations?		
prepare your own lessons?		
choose your own course book?		
prepare supplementary class activities?		
give the children homework?		
mark homework?		
pay for resources (eg batteries)?		
organise out of school activities in English?		

About your planning

26. How useful are the following in planning your lessons? (tick one in each row)

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Not applicable
National curriculum/ syllabus from the government/ministry					
School syllabus/ curriculum guidelines					
Examinations syllabus					
Class syllabus/ scheme of work					
Lesson plans					
Textbook/coursebook					
Supplementary materials/worksheets					
The availability of classroom equipment					
The way you learned English					
Your pre-service teacher training					
Attendance at conferences					
In-service teacher training courses					
Your English teaching colleagues at school					
Your membership of professional organisations					

Other (please specify)

Your opinions

27. Which of the following do you think would improve teaching and learning in your classes?

Please number them in order of importance from 1 to 8.
1 = most important and 8 = least important

- ◯ Better access to resources such as textbooks and materials
- ◯ Fewer tests/examinations
- ◯ Better access to new technologies, such as DVDs or computers
- ◯ Training in new language teaching methodologies
- ◯ Improvement in my own level of English
- ◯ Smaller classes
- ◯ Starting English at an earlier age
- ◯ More hours of English each week

28. In your classes, which of the following do you think are most important for children in your class to learn?

Please number them in order of importance for you from 1 to 7.
1 = most important and 7 = least important

- ◯ Writing
- ◯ Pronunciation
- ◯ Reading
- ◯ Grammar
- ◯ Speaking
- ◯ Vocabulary
- ◯ Listening

29. Which aspect, or aspects, of your job as an English teacher gives you most satisfaction?

30. Which aspect, or aspects, of your job as an English teacher do you find most challenging?

31. Which aspect or aspects of your job as an English teacher would you most like to change?

32. If you have any more comments about any aspect of being a primary/elementary school teacher of English, please add them here.

Further contact

If you are willing to be contacted by e-mail or phone for a follow-up interview, please give your contact details:

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report on the project, please leave your contact details here:

Please return the completed questionnaire to:
your local British Council Office
(addressed to John Knagg)

or to:

Sue Garton
School of Languages and Social Sciences
Aston University
Birmingham B4 7ET United Kingdom

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.
Your help is invaluable and we hope to publish our results with the British Council in early 2011.

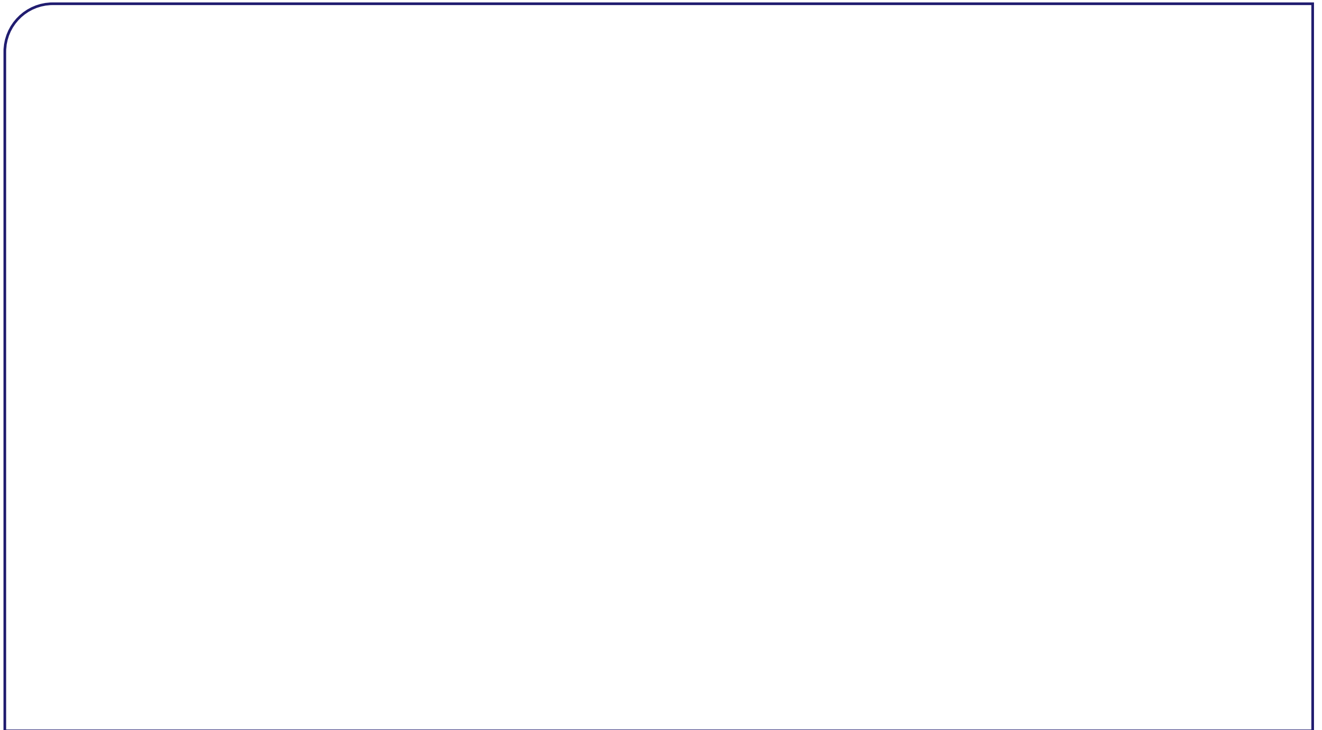
Sue, Fiona and Anne

Appendix 3

Observation schedule

Observer:		Country:	
1. Location of school (urban/suburban/rural)		2. Type of school (state/ private/religious/day/ boarding etc.)	
3. Approximate number of children in the school		4. Socio-economic background of children	
5. Facilities available (gym/ computer labs etc)		6. Approximate number of teachers (known)	
7. Grades taught in the school		8. Any other information	
The class(es)			
9. Grade(s) and level(s):		10. Age of students:	
11. Number of children		12. How many girls/boys? Who sits where?	
13. Number of teachers and roles:		14. Name of coursebook and level:	
15. What languages do the children speak (Mother Tongues)?		16 .What languages does the teacher speak?	
17. Class time and length:		18. Does the class start and end on time? Are there interruptions?	

19. Sketch of the class including layout, resources, wall displays, type of furniture (photograph if permission)



20. **Time**	**Classroom activity.** What is the teacher doing? What are the children doing? **Comment on:** engagement, motivation, classroom languages; types of activity; interaction; language/skill focus; classroom management; use of classroom space; resources. *How does the class start and end?*	**Things that interest you**

Appendix 4

Guidelines for writing the vignette (approx. 2000 words)

Thank you for agreeing to write a vignette summarising your interviews and observations. Below are some guidelines to help you. We've indicated the sections we would like you to follow. We've also indicated the observation schedule sections and interview questions that we think will give you the information for each part of the vignette. However, these are only suggestions – please put the information where you think it is most appropriate. Word counts are also only indicative, please adapt as you see fit.

We have asked you to write an introductory paragraph in the spirit of researcher reflexivity. We believe that it is important for researchers to make their assumptions explicit. As we are thinking through this project, we may want to refer to this paragraph (anonymously, of course) but we will not use any of it without getting explicit permission from you.

If you have any questions, do get in touch.

Vignette outline

1. **An introductory paragraph** – please write this BEFORE any interviews or observations (about 300 words)

   An introduction to you as a researcher. Your affiliation, job title and research interests. Your personal view of the following:

   a. early English language learning in your context

   b. use of languages in the classroom

   c. appropriate pedagogies for teaching English to young learners

   d. challenges primary English teachers face in your context

2. **Background information about the school** (about 200 words)

   Sections 1 to 8 in observation schedule

   interview questions 4, 7, 8, 11, 18, 19

3. **Background information about the teacher** (about 200 words)

   Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 9,

4. **Background information about the class** (about 200 words)

   Sections 9-19 in the observation schedule

   Interview questions 8, 15, 16, 17, 20

5. **The teacher's experiences and opinions** (about 400 words)

   Interview questions 5, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, 21

6. **A description of the class(es) observed** (about 400 words)

   A summary of section 20 in the observation schedule

7. **Your observations and interpretations /points of interest** (about 300 words)

Appendix 5

British Council questions for interview

Pre-observation questions

1. Tell me about how you became a Primary School teacher.
2. What experience do you have?
3. How did you learn English?
4. How is teaching English organised in your school?

5. What do you like most about teaching English?
6. What do you like least about teaching English?
7. What kind of activities do you do in your classroom? (prompts eg. Drills/writing and so on, refer to questionnaire)
8. Why?
9. Is there a government syllabus you have to follow?
10. Are there things you don't do that you would like to do?
11. What things are you responsible for in the school? (eg exams/after school activities)
12. Do you like doing all these things?
13. What has changed, if anything, since you started teaching English?
14. What challenges do you face with your class/in the school?

1. Tell me about the class I am going to observe? (how long learning English)
2. What are you going to do in the class and why are you going to do it?
3. How are you going to do it?

About the British Council

We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together, we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world. We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

www.britishcouncil.org

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