

QATESOL Presentation – Saturday 11 March 2017

How long does it take to achieve academically in a second language? Investigating variables that impact academic outcomes for EAL learners in Queensland schools.

This presentation addresses a topic that we raised with QATESOL members in 2015: How long does it take EAL learners to achieve academically on par with same-age, first language peers? Since 2015 we have completed a research study drawing on DET and NAPLAN data as well as interviews with high-achieving migrant students, EAL teachers and a school leader at a Queensland high school. The study was designed to elicit findings on EAL student academic trajectories across NAPLAN tests from Years 3 to 9 as well as investigate students' views on what works to promote with academic achievement in a second language.

An additional aim of the study was to develop research methodologies to investigate the How Long question. To date the most commonly-cited data are from North American studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We wanted to update the methodology and also generate findings relevant to the contemporary Australian context. In this presentation we share our findings on the How Long question and discuss the implications for DET, teachers and schools in terms of EAL support and school-based EAL initiatives.

Bios

Dr Margaret Kettle is a Senior Lecturer in TESOL in the Faculty of Education, QUT. She teaches and coordinates the MEd TESOL and researches second language education in schools, higher education, and communities.

Dr Jennifer Alford is a Senior Lecturer in TESOL at QUT. She coordinates and teaches units in the Bachelor of Education related to English as a first and second language and literacy learning. Her research interests are EAL/D teacher knowledge, EAL/D policy and policy enactment, and classroom pedagogy with a special interest in critical literacy.

Dr Sue Creagh is a research fellow at the Institute for Social Science Research and TESOL lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Queensland. She lectures in the Masters of Teaching (Primary) and the Graduate Diploma of Education programs in the field of teaching English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D), bringing many years of ESL teaching to this role. Her current research interests are in the educational experiences and outcomes of disadvantaged young people, with a particular interest in students of refugee background.

Professor Barbara Comber