FEATURE ARTICLE

The Other Third Culture Kids: EAL Learners' Views On Self-Identity, Home Culture, And Community In International Schools

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This article aims to develop a better understanding of the dynamic identity of third culture kids (TCKs) who study English as an additional language (EAL) in an international secondary school in Ukraine. The research focuses on the internal forces of home culture and self-perceived identities as well as the external forces of the school community and the classroom that influence EAL learners in their language acquisition. The article draws on qualitative data from interviews with individual EAL learners. The interviews investigated how EAL learners see themselves in terms of an EAL identity, how social status and community influence EAL learners, and how the home language and culture are influential in the language classroom. As a result of these data, the discussion focuses on the disconnect between the internal and the external forces that TCK EAL learners experience. The article concludes that more integrated collaboration between EAL and mainstream teachers would foster greater understanding of the internal forces and cultural capital TCK EAL learners bring with them to ensure more effective language learning in the external force of the language classroom. The authors conclude with recommendations for further steps.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The incremental growth of global mobility has given rise to a particular kind of learner that feels at home both everywhere and nowhere: the *third culture kid* (TCK). The concept of TCKs, first applied in the 1960s by Useem, Useem, and Donoghue (1963) in a study on how U.S. families behaved in the culture of India, can incorporate children of expatriate families. Typically working overseas as diplomats, in business, or in the military, such families have been described by Fechter and Korpela (2016) as *privileged migrants*. The children of these privileged migrant families that choose to relocate for economic or aspirational purposes learn to adapt expeditiously and cultivate sensitivity to multifarious cultures (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009, p. 762), existing as "global nomads." According to Lijadi and Van Schalkwyk (2014), three cultural statuses embody the profile of a TCK: a country of origin, a different current country of residence or host country, and belonging to a transcultural phenomenon. This third status is transient and less tangible than the first two, and TCKs share this status with their third culture peers, for example, the culture of an English-medium international school. Such a culture invariably requires TCKs to integrate into the learning medium of English as well as the new social constructs of peers from wide-ranging backgrounds.

Despite the privileges and advantages that TCKs enrolled in international schools enjoy, distinct challenges remain. Tanu (2008, p. 3) characterised how these global nomads become "cultural chameleons," adept at developing a high level of intercultural sensitivity, garnering knowledge of languages, mannerisms, and an ability to blend into their surroundings. They can, however, experience identity crises in international schools with an identity in constant flux (Tanu, 2008). The movement between cultures can contribute to identity crises for TCKs; although they are capable of adapting to diverse cultures, they frequently do not reside long enough in one place to wholly understand or acquire knowledge of a culture or develop within one place before relocating. TCKs may ask themselves, "Who am I really? Where do I fit in? What is my place in this world?" (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009, p. 3).

The term *third culture kid* is used in this article as opposed to *cross-cultural kid* (CCK), as the concept of CCKs comprises the all-encompassing umbrella of refugees, children of immigrants, and international adoptees as well as business, diplomatic, and military migrant families (Van Reken & Bethel, 2005). This article focuses on the concept of TCKs because the profiles of the international school participants in this study fit most closely within it. TCKs can include native speakers of English as well as nonnative speakers of English. Although it is common for many nonnative speakers of English at international schools to have sufficient skills in English not to require additional English language support, a significant number of learners can be found in international schools around the world that fall into the categories of both TCK and EAL (English as an additional language) learner. The question therefore arises as to whether an EAL learner is as skilled at adapting as freely to the third culture as a native English speaker and whether international schools enable academic success for such learners. Although there has been a wealth of research on TCKs around the world (Fechter & Korpela, 2016; Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2014), little research has been conducted in international schools regarding the added complexity of how TCK EAL learners view their identity as children who have the additional challenge of learning English (Carter & McNulty, 2012).

2 | INTERNAL FORCES: HOME VERSUS NEW CULTURE AND EAL LEARNER SELF-IDENTITY

The internal forces of a learner have a great impact on EAL teaching and learning. Although EAL learners frequently originate from multilingual background cultures, they can lack

confidence when the medium of instruction is English. Learners have been observed to rely heavily on their home language, for example, via discussion in their first language (L1) with their peers, which might explain why they lack the confidence to speak more English in the classroom (Chaparro, 2014). Despite the use of L1 in teaching and learning becoming more of a feature in the classroom in recent years, EAL learners can feel trapped between two cultures, feeling isolated and lonely when confronting a new culture and language. The cultural barriers (Spack, 1988) that many EAL learners experience can range from the disconnect between a home country learning style and that of a new country (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008) to the prejudice that lack of linguistic knowledge implies lack of academic knowledge and an inability to transfer the home culture to new contexts due to their cultural specificity (Safford & Collins, 2007). All such cultural barriers are prevalent in international schools, which are invariably distinct with their individual and respective core values, goals, and ethos.

At some point during the language acquisition process EAL learners also acquire knowledge and understanding of the new culture (Benson, Chappell, & Yates, 2018; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009). In the case of EAL learners in international schools, this may mean not only the cultures of several schools but also the cultures of several countries; a child of a diplomatic or business family might expect to move countries multiple times during their schooling. EAL learners tend to acquire English language skills through assimilation, as described by Watts-Taffe and Truscott (2000), which requires learners to replace some aspects of the native culture with the new one, or through acculturation, which allows learners to learn a new culture while still maintaining their own. Assimilation in international schools frequently manifests itself as losing the home culture and language, taking on the mannerisms of their peers, while acculturation typically occurs as long as a mother tongue programme is developed.

Understanding the identity of the EAL learner is paramount. Hawkins (2005) contended that the identity a learner develops at school is inextricably linked to the learning context. Norton (2010) similarly stated that literacy is not only a skill to be learned, but also a practice that is socially constructed and locally negotiated. Learner identity has multiple meanings and is a concept that is invariably in flux; this is a key feature of how EAL learners are perceived and how they react to their learning environment. Hawkins also asserted that young learners are identified and labelled as early as the fourth grade. Some children negotiate an identity that allows them to be a success, whereas others negotiate one that marginalizes them. There is a danger therefore that young EAL learners can be labelled as failures from an early age if a lack of English language ability is mistaken for a lack of academic ability. Once children take on the identity of an effective learner, they gain increased access to the discourses of the classroom environment; the social status of the child leads to participation, which leads to language development and learning (Hawkins, 2005). Conversely, those children that take on the identity of an ineffective learner risk alienation in the classroom and compromising their access to language development and learning. In this study, the term *social status* is used to refer to how EAL learners feel within the social constructs of the mainstream classroom.

EAL learners' understanding of their identity can crystallise differently, whether through the context of family, community, or the mainstream classroom (Conteh & Meier, 2014). The streaming of students in the U.S. system of education through standardised tests and previous school attainment records means that newly arrived EAL learners are frequently put into low-track classes as these are less linguistically demanding. Harklau (1994) tracked how EAL learners were able to advocate for their own learning, despite low expectations and some hostility from teachers, and push themselves up into higher track classes. Such "pushers" could see the difference in expectations between their higher track maths and science classes and their lower track English

classes and accordingly take responsibility for their language learning in the context of the mainstream classroom. This was observed to be a necessity in the context of the study as it was discovered that there was no tracking system for newly arrived EAL learners as there was for their native speaker peers (Harklau, 1994).

EAL learners frequently endure negative connotations and stigma that come with the label of *EAL learner*, as observed by Ortmeier-Hooper (2008), for example, by being isolated through pull-out classes that can affect their self-esteem. There is a significant distinction between an EAL learner who has arrived during or after high school and one who has been present all through elementary, middle, and/or high schools. However, frequently little distinction is made between such learners, and the identity that is forced on EAL learners can repeatedly be undiscerning. For example, Generation 1.5 students—from a U.S. perspective, students who immigrated in their preteen or teen years who are fluent in social English (Thonus, 2003) or bilingual but less skilled in academic English (Harklau, 1999)—and newly arrived EAL learners in U.S. universities are frequently put into the same EAL class despite their different backgrounds and language needs. The newly arrived students are in many cases stronger in English than the Generation 1.5 students, for whom few elementary and secondary schools are able to provide adequate linguistic support (Matsuda, 2003). Furthermore, some Generation 1.5 EAL university students no longer self-identify as EAL learners (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008) as they have been through the U.S. school system and have successfully graduated despite an ongoing need for English language support. It is therefore important to recognise that there are also significant differences among EAL learners in international schools. Learners should not all be labelled in the same way given their different experiences regarding the number of years and the types of schools they have attended. EAL learners' individual linguistic needs should be better understood, and a more comprehensive understanding of their individual identities is needed to achieve this.

3 | EXTERNAL FORCES: COMMUNITY AND THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Distinct examples of external forces influence EAL teaching and learning. The EAL classroom has been portrayed as a communal platform where EAL learners should be encouraged to share, collaborate, and cooperate (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000). Peer modelling can be a highly effective way for EAL learners to challenge each other's points of view and build on each other's knowledge. Hu (2005), moreover, described how training in peer reviewing can foster a more active role for EAL learners, encouraging collaboration and support among peers. Spack (1988) likewise described how imperative it is for students to learn how to collaborate and how to respond to each other's work. Such classroom structures are vital for improving communication in English; however, the successes of the EAL classroom may not always translate into successful communication in the wider school community.

While EAL learners assimilate linguistically and socially into the school community in which they learn, it is commonly challenging for them to socialise with their peers due to their lack of confidence in small talk and social discourse. Chaparro (2014) contended that critical language awareness teaches students explicitly about language, including its social dimensions. EAL learners frequently do not make social connections with their English native speaker peers, in part because they find it easier to make such connections with students from their own linguistic background. Safford and Costley (2008) expanded on the notion that EAL learners are frequently

isolated and can suffer a period of being "silenced," whereby they do not have sufficient communicative skills and feel psychologically and socially cut off. How EAL learners interact with their peers within the confines of the mainstream classroom could depend on factors such as the seating plan and the possible use of the home language with peers from the same linguistic background. The implementation of scaffolded activities, as investigated by Kayi-Aydar (2013), encourages communication and collaboration between EAL learners and their peers, for example, through conversational models, reflections on the achievements of EAL learners, and explorations of their beliefs with regard to learning.

In addition to EAL teachers assessing their learners' best learning strategies and characteristics (Oxford, 2002), it is imperative for all subject teachers to consider the role the classroom itself plays in fostering effective language learning. Nunan (2002) asserted that the language classroom, which could mean any mainstream subject classroom for an EAL learner, should have a dual focus: Not only should language content be developed, but language learning also should be developed. EAL learners need to negotiate for themselves the identity of a successful learner, which can be achieved through the environment of the language classroom. A key aspect of how this can be achieved involves the recognition and awareness of encouraging the right kind of social structures in the classroom, such as through seating plans and groupings. As Harklau (2000) has discerned, social structures generated in the language classroom contribute to shaping language learners' identity. Subtle, and usually unintended, socialising of EAL learners into the image of individuals who are underachieving academically (Harklau, 2000) can lead to negative social roles. This can have a detrimental effect on learning, and subject teachers need to foster positive social structures in the classroom to allow EAL learners full access to developing their language learning.

This article explores the experiences of EAL TCKs through the relationship between internal and external forces and how they influence EAL learners. The research undertaken focused on understanding how such students experience EAL from the learner's perspective. The questions that derive from the issues surrounding internal and external forces that drive the research are as follows:

1. How do EAL learners see themselves in terms of an EAL identity?
2. To what extent do social status and community influence EAL learners?
3. To what extent are the home language and culture influential in the language classroom?

4 | CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The context for this research was a K–12 International Baccalaureate (IB) World School in a major city in Ukraine with a student population of approximately 500, comprising 47 nationalities. It was founded as a not-for-profit school by a group of expatriate parents. Families at the school typically work in diplomacy, the military, business, and charitable organisations. The majority of teachers at the school are from North America and Europe, with a sizeable number of Ukrainian teaching assistants and language teachers. The medium of instruction is English.

EAL is a subject in both the primary and secondary schools. The term EAL is used rather than ESL/EFL (English as a second or foreign language) as it is a required support subject in addition to the learners' own home language; it is not a graded subject and is not a part of the IB curriculum. New students are placed in EAL for English language support if they have a composite

score (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) below 5 out of a maximum 6 in the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standardised test and are expected at some point to be exited from the EAL programme and to then begin learning an additional language of French, Spanish, or Russian. No updated WIDA level data were available at the time of the study due to the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning, although Middle Years Programme English language acquisition phase levels were updated.

As of September 2020, there were 53 EAL learners in middle and high school from a student population of 175, resulting in an EAL learner population of approximately 30%. The research took place in the middle school with students from Grades 7 and 8 and in the high school with students from Grades 9 and 10. The selection of participants was based on EAL learners from Grades 7 through 10 in order to determine how consistently or differently participants respond to the research questions according to differences in age. Participants were selected according to Lijadi and Van Schalkwyk's (2014) profile description of TCKs. The 18 students who voluntarily participated were Ukrainian students who had been in one or more international schools as well as Russian, Lithuanian, Dutch, Tajik, Israeli, and Polish nationals. There were 18 interviews in total, and all interviews were conducted in English (see Table 1).

I gave each participant a language portrait drawing task (Figure 1), based on a template (see Appendix 1) by Kusters and De Meulder (2019). Language portraits are an effective method (Coffey, 2015; Kusters & De Meulder, 2019; Lau, 2016) to allow learners to construct pictograms of their language profile, potentially including colours representing flags and associated emotions; foreground and background illustrations to represent exterior elements in their language profile, and focus on body parts to represent how each part of the body may play a role in the languages they speak and understand. This tool is an effective method in understanding learner identities (Kusters & De Meulder, 2019) and allows students to reflect on who they are as learners in order to aid discussion while participating in 10- to 20-minute interviews.

The use of language portraits and interview discussions was first piloted with a group of seven multilingual secondary teachers who all completed language portraits and then participated in a group discussion. In this study, the piloting allowed for an understanding of how discussions centred around language portraits would encourage participants to reflect on themselves as language learners and help them respond to interview questions. Once participants had discussed their language portraits, I asked each of them 10 questions (Appendix 2) that addressed the research questions. All interviews were recorded, and the anonymity of participants was preserved. The interview transcripts were coded by tags, and the labelled coded data were then compiled into tables and graphs for the data presentation.

TABLE 1 Summary of total number of participants in the study

Grade	Numbers of males	Number of females	MYP English language acquisition phase level range
7	0	5	3–5
8	2	1	3–5
9	2	4	3–5
10	2	2	5

Note. MYP = Middle Years Programme.

FIGURE 1 Language portrait example

5 | DATA ANALYSIS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The data are presented according to the responses of the 18 participant interviews. Data are presented in three ways to capture the different dimensions of responses to the research questions:

1. Frequency of codes according to responses from all participants
2. Responses that were congruent and consistent in all grade levels
3. Data that show significant differences between middle school and high school participant responses

This method of data presentation highlights answers according to most common frequency codes, comparing them to grade-level frequency codes and making comparisons between middle

and high school participants. In order to ensure the participants' anonymity, student quotations are labelled by their grade level plus a reference number (e.g., G7-01).

Asked what they thought an EAL learner is and what the goals of EAL learners are, participants responded in a variety of ways. The most frequent responses were that the purpose of EAL learning was to improve English language skills, helping learners achieve the appropriate level of English to exit the programme or to assist those students who need help in English. Figure 2 shows all responses and their frequencies.

Three dominant themes emerged across all grade levels. First, students described an EAL learner as someone who needs to improve their English: "So EAL is a language, like a second English language in which we improve our grammar and vocabulary skills" (G8-03); "When I'm in EAL I improve my English" (G10-02). Second, further definitions consisted of EAL learners as those students who need help: "An EAL learner is a person who needs help in English" (G7-03); "They still need some help in order to do better as an IB learner in general" (G9-06). Third, EAL was defined as for learners who don't have a high level of English: "I think it's the person ... person, not with really good skills" (G8-02); "But usually I think they need to learn it more because they didn't reach the level of English they could reach" (G9-02). These three themes demonstrate participants' understanding of EAL as a support subject both in terms of the kind of support that is given them as well as the reason they are in EAL class.

When asked how much longer they saw themselves being in EAL, participants responded it would be for another year or that they would be exiting the EAL programme within the year. Table 2 shows the five kinds of responses among participants, with "a year" being the most frequent. The responses indicate that participants viewed EAL as a temporary status.

The next question participants were asked was whether they thought they were different from other students in their class or grade. The most frequent answer was that they did not think they were different. Figure 3 shows further answers and their frequencies, with the next most
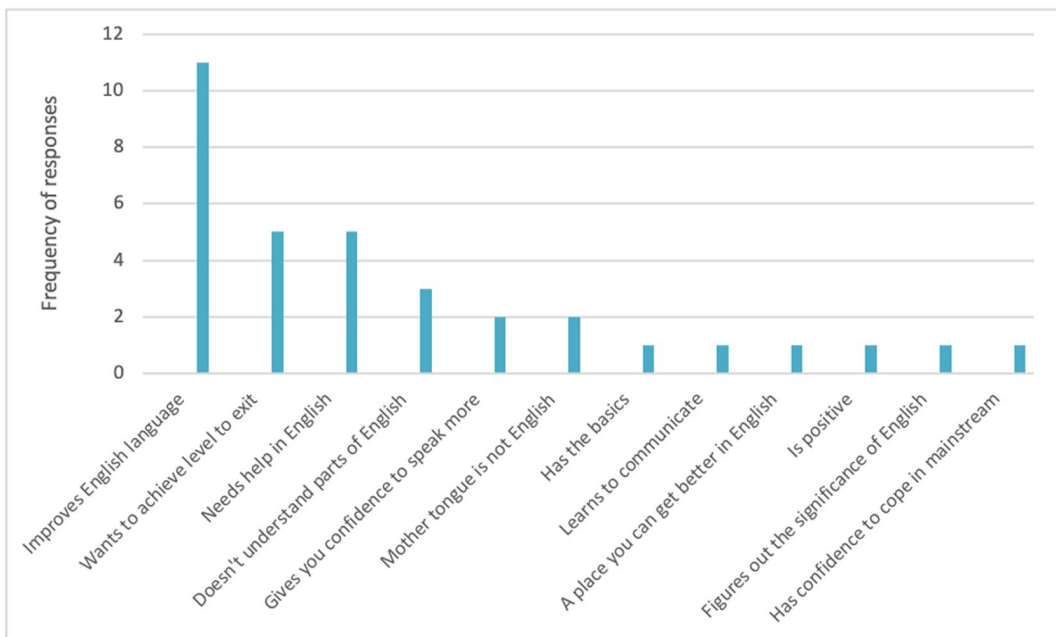

FIGURE 2 What makes an EAL learner?

TABLE 2 How much longer do you see yourself being in EAL?

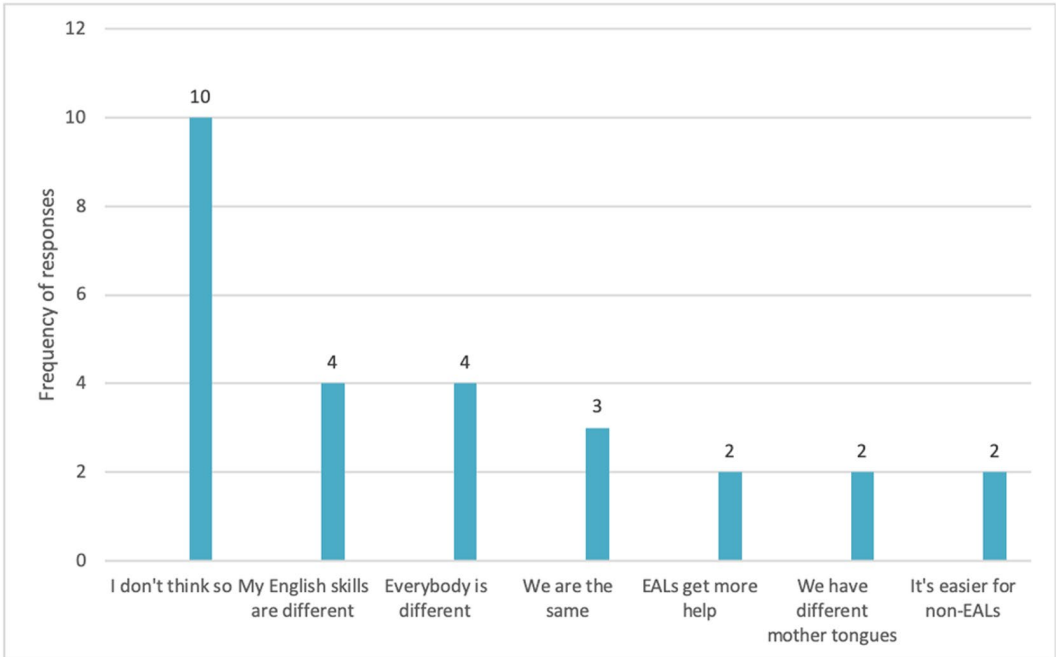| Response	Frequency of code
A year	11
Not long, hoping to stop soon	2
It depends	2
A couple more months	1
This semester	1

FIGURE 3 Do you think you are different from other students in your class or grade?

frequent answer being that participants thought they had different language skills and that everybody is different.

There were 13 different types of responses from participants, six of which had a frequency of only one, regarding how differently they thought of EAL compared to their other classes. Figure 4 compares responses from both middle school and high school participants. Only middle school participants responded that EAL was for basic English and was more fun for nonnative speakers. Only high school participants responded that EAL was a class where work was not always graded, they did their best in EAL, it was a class where they were able to ask questions about other classes, there was more thinking and reflecting, EAL helps you with other classes, and there was no difference between EAL and other classes.

Regarding other things in school that help EAL learners develop their English language skills, a frequent answer across all grade levels was that all classes help to develop their English language skills. Table 3 demonstrates how those responses were expressed in four ways, with "I think every subject helps" as the most frequent.
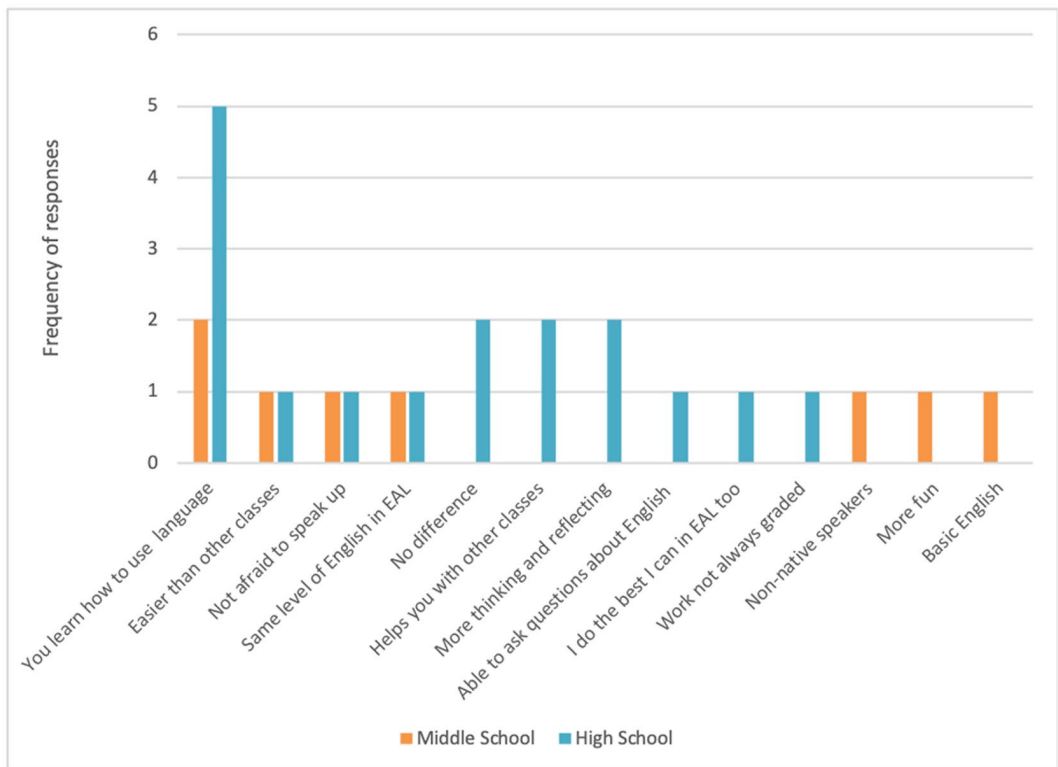
FIGURE 4 How is the EAL class different from your other classes?

TABLE 3 What other things are there in school that help you develop your English language skills?

Response	Frequency of code
I think every subject helps	8
For example, in Individuals & Societies and Science we write a lot of essays	1
Every class and every break	1
The whole community	1

A dominant theme across all grade levels highlighted writing as something in school that helped participants develop their English language skills: "For example, in Individuals & Societies and Science we write a lot of essays there and it improves our writing, grammar and those, in terms of writing" (G9-01); "And definitely Science helps as well to expand my knowledge of English because we have to write lab reports" (G10-01).

With regard to how the home language and culture of EAL learners are influential in the EAL classroom, the most common answer across grade levels as to whether they thought that there is a difference between a Ukrainian EAL learner and, for example, a French one, was agreement that there was a difference. Participants answered that due to different mindsets and backgrounds of EAL learners, there is a difference: "Maybe, because we have all different mindsets and accents, and they all need improving" (G7-03). In addition, a common answer was that some participants believed that some native languages are quite similar to English: "So maybe

it's easier in some languages because the words can be the same in English" (G8-03). These data hint at the variety of ways participants responded to the question. Table 4 shows the highest frequency answer overall: that students thought there is no difference. However, the differences mentioned are presented in the table with 11 types of responses as to how different national backgrounds demonstrate differences among EAL learners. Ten coded responses from participants demonstrated that their native languages and English were completely different, with a further nine responses across grade levels demonstrating that participants did not think their native language skills helped their English language development. Table 5 shows the frequencies of both responses across all grades.

Figure 5 presents all the responses and their frequencies. In comparison to the responses recorded in Table 4, six response types supported the idea that native language ability helps in English language development. Three participants responded that some words are the same. Two participants responded that their mother tongue ability helps with learning other languages. Further responses demonstrated ways in which native language skills help with English language development: two participants responded that translating helped them, two that they make connections between the languages, one that grammar helps, and one that the native alphabet was similar.

Figure 6 demonstrates differences between middle school and high school responses. Only high school participants responded that native language ability can help English language development through translating, making connections between the languages, the grammar helping, and the alphabet being similar. Regarding the question about whether native language ability

TABLE 4 Differences among EAL learners

Response	Frequency of code
I don't think so	5
Different mother tongues	4
How prepared they have been	4
Those who speak Latinate languages have it easier	4
Different accents	3
Everyone is different	3
Different approaches to learning	2
Different for those who speak the local language	2
Different interpretations of English	2
Different mindsets	2
Different knowledge of English	1
Nationality plays a role	1

TABLE 5 English language development and native language ability

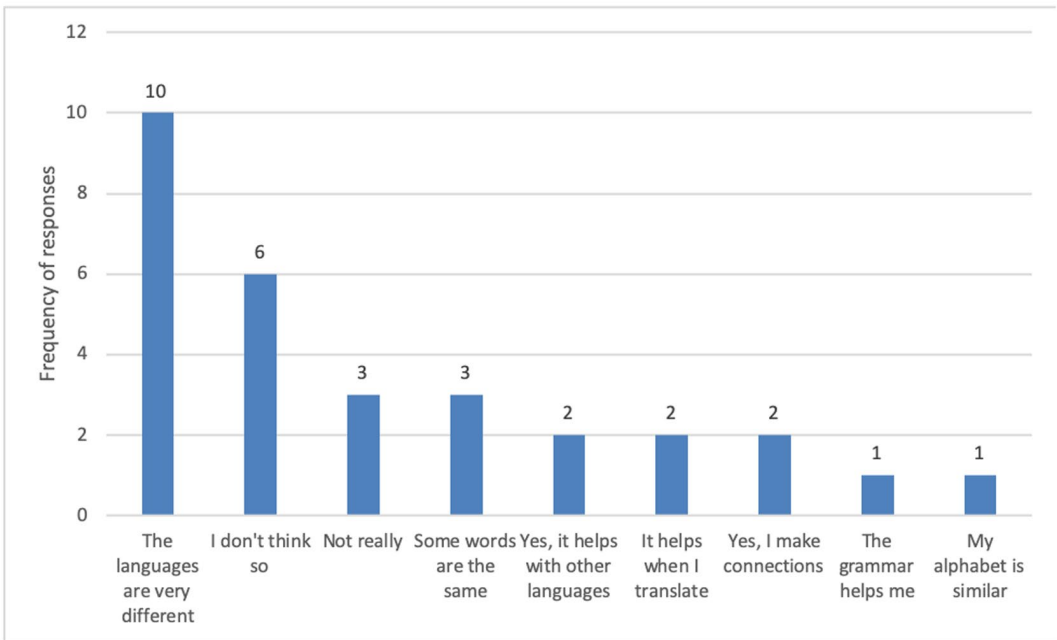| Response	Frequency of code
The two languages are completely different	10
I don't think it helps/not really	9

FIGURE 5 Is there anything in your native language ability that helps you in EAL/ English language development?
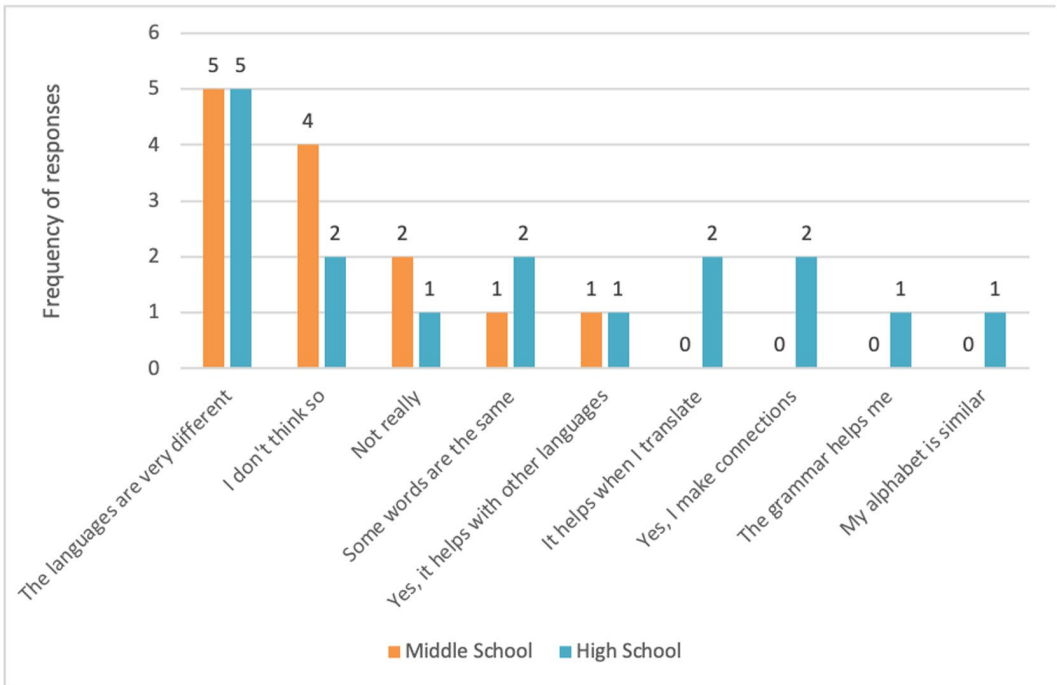
FIGURE 6 Differences in high school and middle school responses to whether native language ability helps in EAL/English language development

TABLE 6 The need for a separate English as an additional language (EAL) class

Response	Frequency of code
Improves your English language skills for other subjects	9
Necessary for beginners/those with low level of English	3
EAL learners feel more at ease in an EAL classroom	3
Focus on EAL in mainstream lessons would be a distraction for the non-EAL students	3
The EAL teacher knows how to teach English better than subject teachers	1

helps with EAL, only one middle school participant and one high school participant responded affirmatively.

Regarding the need for a separate EAL pull-out class, participants across all grade levels supported the need for a separate EAL classroom, with the most common reason being that it is necessary in order to improve their language skills for other classes. Table 6 shows the different ways in which support for a separate EAL classroom was voiced.

6 | DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In response to the first research question, as to how EAL learners see themselves in terms of an EAL identity, the data indicate that students interpret completing the EAL programme as heading towards a higher level English language course. The data similarly imply that, as well as a distinct understanding of what EAL is for (i.e., to improve their English skills), there is a connection between learner identity, as Hawkins (2005) stated, with the learning context in the manifestation of their beliefs as EAL learners that they need to exit and "move up" to the next level. The data indicate a recognition of aspirational motivation among the participants that EAL is a step up to this next level and that their time in EAL is not only transitory but also short term. Further research into the more intricate characteristics of the profile of TCKs could indicate whether aspirational motivation is a key asset to understand about TCK EAL learners.

Regarding the second research question, as to how social status and community play an important role for EAL learners, the data show little indication that participants felt particularly different from their peers in terms of social status. Participants asserted that everyone is different in an international school and that if they do feel different it is not in terms of social status or general academic ability but purely in terms of the differences in their English language levels. The participants seemingly conformed to Tanu's (2008) description of *cultural chameleons* who are able to adapt quickly to the culture of international schools. The definition of TCKs by Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) as *global nomads* supports the notion that the participants considered themselves as equal members of the school community. One cultural barrier (Spack, 1988) that they did not experience is that of isolation due to the status of being EAL learners, possibly due to their equal status as *privileged migrant* peers (Fechter & Korpela, 2016).

The data also demonstrate that high school participants responded differently from middle school participants regarding how EAL class differs from their other classes. High school participants alluded more to the specifics of how an EAL pull-out class functions, in terms of being a chance to review their English language skills, as opposed to the middle school participants'

more generalised opinions of EAL class existing for learning basic English. The high school responses relate more to the specifics of language learning, which Kayi-Aydar (2013) alluded to in terms of EAL learners taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Given that the data are not conclusive, further research is needed in order to understand precisely how the needs of EAL learners change the older they get and the longer they are in an EAL programme. The interview data strongly indicate that participants understood the value of being in an English-medium school and the access they had to improving their English in all classes and in their English-speaking social community. Reflecting on Nunan's (2002) and Harklau's (2000) discussions about subject teachers and the role their classrooms play for EAL learners, there is a great need for further research into how mainstream programmes and EAL classes could complement each other more effectively in order to take full advantage of the role that the wider English-medium community can play in maximising learner input potential for language acquisition.

Regarding the third research question, as to the extent to which the home language and culture are influential in the EAL classroom, the data indicate that many EAL learners were divorced from the notion that the cultural capital of their home language is useful in their EAL studies; participants mainly did not believe that their mother tongue ability supports their English language learning. Only two students in the study specifically mentioned the knowledge that strong language skills in the mother tongue can support language learning. Further research is needed to know whether acculturation is taking place in the TCK context (Watts-Taffe & Truscott, 2000) given that this study's participants may or may not be keeping up their mother tongue. The link between having strong mother tongue skills and being an effective EAL learner has already been established in research studies, and it is important to understand how aware of this link learners and teachers in international schools are as well as how school policies reflect relevant practice. A better understanding of why the message of strong mother tongue skills is not getting through to students, and is perhaps not reflected in classroom practice, is required. Despite the existence of a mother tongue programme at the school and the dissemination of information to parents regarding its importance, further research is crucial in order to understand whether multilingual and multicultural policies of international schools truly reflect the realities that students experience.

There is general consensus in the data that EAL learners appreciate the pull-out space of the EAL classroom. Many participants stated that EAL is for improving English skills for their mainstream classes and is appreciated and required specifically for that purpose. This supports Watts-Taffe and Truscott's (2000) considerations of the EAL classroom being a communal platform where EAL learners are encouraged to share, collaborate, and cooperate to improve their English. However, these data also point to a need for further research in understanding how language content and learning function in the mainstream classroom (Cenoz, Genesee, & Gorter, 2014) as well as how to foster greater confidence in the mainstream classroom for those EAL learners who feel more comfortable speaking and communicating in the pull-out EAL classroom.

7 | CONCLUSION

The issues surrounding TCK EAL learners in international schools are quintessentially different to those of EAL learners in, for example, the United States or the United Kingdom; the specifics of those differences—for example, not experiencing isolation as EAL learners, with an understanding of how EAL functions as a step up to another level of English—are evident from the

data in this article. Although there are limitations to a study as small as the present one, the findings indicate that the participants experience a positive sense of a transitory and supportive EAL programme, with a self-identity that is not marginalised by the stigma or negative social status of being an EAL learner, as mentioned by Ortmeier-Hooper (2008). However, there appears to be a significant disconnect between the internal forces that EAL learners bring with them to school, in terms of their own linguistic and cultural identity, and how purposive or valued they consider that capital to be in the external forces of the classroom and the wider school community. Although there is much cultural capital TCK EAL learners can draw upon, and their privileged family backgrounds afford them equal social status and strong aspirational learning instincts in the third culture of an international school, participants predominantly had little understanding or experience as to how that capital could be directed to English language learning.

An awareness of the varying pieces of the EAL jigsaw exists in international schools, which usually manifests itself in a school's language policy. Clearer understanding of how EAL and the mainstream classroom can be integrated is also needed; fostering a more coherent and collaborative community with all component parts working together would benefit EAL learners greatly, particularly with a view to imbuing greater confidence in the mainstream classroom. Further research should focus on how EAL teachers could co-plan and collaborate with mainstream subject teachers to ensure that language is explicitly taught and to develop EAL learners' confidence. Greater understanding of the nature of how EAL learners change as they progress in years through international secondary schools is also needed. The data in this study begin to demonstrate that older EAL learners have more detailed knowledge of the specific linguistic support that EAL gives them, for example, as a mechanism for thinking and reflecting on the language of mainstream subjects and a platform to ask questions and gain support for those classes. This may demonstrate that their maturity in years forces on them a greater responsibility that is not reinforced with support from EAL and mainstream educators working in collaboration. As Harklau (1994) mentioned, much research indicates that self-advocacy is frequently what drives EAL learners to greater success. For older EAL learners who have fewer years to perfect their academic English skills, it is crucial to receive focused and coordinated support in the EAL and mainstream classrooms.

Finally, there is an urgent need to understand how international school language policies reflect the reality that students experience. Further research is needed to understand how such schools can harness students' cultural and linguistic knowledge in order to promote effective English language learning. For the TCK EAL learners in this study who did not consider themselves social outsiders and yet recognised their linguistic and cultural differences, it is vital that international schools ensure that these learners utilise their linguistic cultural capital to gain access to academic success.

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APPENDIX 1

Student language portrait template (Kusters & De Meulder, 2019).

APPENDIX 2

Interview questions

1. What makes an English as an additional language (EAL) learner? What is an EAL learner in your own words?

2. How long do you see yourself being an EAL learner? For how much longer?

3. Do you think you are different as an EAL learner to other students in your class/grade?

4. How is the EAL class different to your other classes?

5. What other things are there in school that help you develop your English language skills?

6. Do you think there is a difference between a Ukrainian EAL learner and, for example, a French one?

7. How does your EAL class here compare to that of your English language class back home/in other schools you have been to?

8. Is there anything in your native language ability that helps you in EAL/your English language development?

9. How much responsibility lies with the EAL learner and how much with the EAL teacher in terms of making progress in English?

10. Is it necessary to have a separate EAL class rather than more support in mainstream subjects?