

Bilingualism and CIS.

By Maurice Carder

Introduction

International education is an area where bilingualism might be expected to flourish because it provides for students from many nationalities speaking many languages. This article will investigate to what extent the CIS encourages, promotes, and rewards bilingualism in CIS accreditation documentation. Conclusions will be drawn about the extent to which the positive aspects of bilingualism are recognized and encouraged, and evaluated to see how the CIS accreditation instrument measures up to the following criteria:

1. to what extent bilingualism is recognized (i.e. at a basic level – is it mentioned; and how much);
2. to what extent bilingualism is explained – i.e. advantages (of additive bilingualism) and disadvantages (of subtractive bilingualism);
3. to what extent bilingualism is encouraged;
4. to what extent provision is made for bilingualism in the structures of the CIS;
5. to what extent bilingualism is rewarded;
6. to what extent the rewards for bilingualism are fair and consistent.

The CIS produces a Guide, 'The CIS Guide to Accreditation', which serves as an instrument for school evaluation. On the front cover to the 6th edition, ECIS, June 1997, amended September 1999, it states "School improvement through accreditation" and this can be seen as the aim of the accreditation exercise: improvement of all aspects of the school's programme. (NB: at the time of writing, 2004, the ECIS had just transformed itself into the 'CIS – Council of International Schools'. A new draft CIS 'Guide to Accreditation – 7th edition - was published in April 2003, and this will be addressed later. First the ECIS 6th edition will be reviewed for reasons that will become clear). The guide is divided into two parts. Part One is brief – 14 pages. The Foreword states the desire of the writers, which is to foster excellence and to encourage school improvement.

The purpose of the exercise is stated clearly as being to improve the quality of the education offered at the school through self-examination and then an objective external appraisal made possible by a Team Visit.

The extent to which bilingualism can be addressed in the Guide will now be reviewed.

(E)CIS accreditation and bilingualism: Early Childhood

Each school is measured for accreditation purposes against its own 'Philosophy and Objectives'. Thus a school with a statement that 'This is an American School with an American curriculum for American students' will be judged accordingly. The ECIS is not prescriptive, but its accreditation instrument is aimed at being broad enough to cover all eventualities, while perhaps coaxing member schools in a particular direction.

Section D of the Guide is 'Early Childhood Program'. There is no mention of bilingualism, ESL, or mother tongues in the standards for this section. ('Cultural, racial and gender' get a mention in brackets). Under 'Effective Practices' there are thirty-two entries: of these only one, number 21, concerns bilingualism, and it states 'provisions are made for those students whose mother tongue is not the basic language of instruction'.

Under Step 5 (the factual description statement) there are ten points listed which may be used as a guide in writing the statement. One of these is 'bilingual or ESL aspects of the program'. This point is repeated under Step 5 for the equivalent sections in Elementary, Middle School, and Secondary.

How can these two mentions be evaluated according to the six criteria listed in the introduction?

1. Bilingualism is mentioned – as a reminder. It is suggested that provision can be made for students whose mother tongue is not the basic language of instruction.
2. Bilingualism is not explained; no indication is given of its value, or of the advantages or disadvantages associated with poorly drawn-up programmes.
3. Bilingualism is mentioned, but hardly 'encouraged'.
4. It can probably be said that provision is made for bilingualism.
5. Bilingualism does not appear to be rewarded.
6. Therefore this category does not apply.

Since most of the research and writing on language development and bilingualism emphasizes the importance of appropriate guidance and instruction in the early years of child development, it is surprising that there is not more awareness in the Guide at this stage. It has always been the recommendation of the ECIS ESL and Mother Tongue committee that far more weight should be given to the language factor and its crucial role in each child's development than one 'Effective Practice' out of 32.

Elementary School

There is no mention of bilingualism, ESL or mother tongues, or of the importance of language development, in the standards for this section. Section E4 is on 'Language Development', which is defined as comprising four aspects: Language Arts, English as a Second Language, Host Country or Foreign Language, and Mother Tongue Support. It then states that it is considered effective practice for International Schools to be aware of

each of these aspects and to make every effort to ensure that the staff and curriculum in each of these areas support the overall development of the student.

There are then seven statements of 'Effective Practices' for the Language Arts Program, nine for ESL, six for Foreign Language, and three for Mother Tongues.

The ESL statements refer to a well-designed ESL program, qualified ESL staff, the need for individualization, incorporating content material, liaison between ESL and regular teachers, age-appropriate material, developing the four skills, stocking appropriate reading material in the library, and 'including songs, nursery rhymes, games and stories of Anglo-American cultural heritage to enrich the student's understanding of that culture and the colloquial usage of its language'.

The mother tongue statements refer to advising parents on the benefits of using and supporting the development of the student's mother tongue, providing books and materials in various languages in the school library, and organizing mother tongue classes, either directly or through enlisting parental support.

In step 5 the same statement about bilingual or ESL aspects of the program is given as under 'Early Childhood'.

Here then, is rather more mention of language issues than previously. For the criteria drawn up:

1. Bilingualism is not mentioned per se, but there is a greater recognition of the need for specific programmes. ESL has several statements (which may or may not be used in the self-study report – any teacher is at liberty to place NA – not applicable; and an 'I' for 'ineffective' may receive scant notice in the greater context of a Guide of 214 pages). Mother Tongue is mentioned for the first time.
2. There is the opportunity for teachers to talk to parents about the issue, as one of the statements reads 'advising parents on the benefits of continuing to use the mother tongue'.
3. It can therefore be said that bilingualism is to a certain extent encouraged.
4. Provision for bilingualism may also be said to be made.
5. No reward is suggested.
6. N/A

Here, then, there is some indication that not all students are fluent speakers of the school language of instruction. (It is interesting to note that it is taken for granted that this language will be English – 'encouraging the use of Anglo-American stories . . .'; also the mention of 'overseas' schools – from which perspective?

Middle School

In the standards (revised on 1.8.99) there is a sub-section to standard 11 which states that educational experiences shall facilitate learning in Language and Literature (second language).

'Effective Practices' section F9 is devoted entirely to English as a Second Language. The introduction to this section states that 'for the purposes of the Guide English is assumed to be the main medium in which all subjects, except other modern languages, are taught'. It also states that schools who accept non-English speaking students should provide a program of instruction to bring these students to a level of competency in English where they can 'cope' with the school's curriculum. Coping skills, of course, are different from skills whereby students can perform successfully.

Under 'curriculum' there is reference to the need for a relevant programme of studies, a course description, the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and content area texts.

Under 'strategies' the need for correct placement is emphasized, as is the need for small groups. A good programme of assessment, and the need for all school programs to be accessible to second language learners are emphasized. A longer statement stresses the need for a clear distinction between ESL and SEN students; another entry underlines the importance of ESL staff liaising with mainstream staff, and then a reminder is given to encourage ESL students to study all subjects in their native language whenever possible.

Under 'staff' emphasis is placed on fluent speakers, relevant qualifications, keeping abreast of developments 'in ESL and bilingual education' and employing teachers who are interested in language and languages. The final entry under 'parents' advises ESL staff to make parents aware of how they can help by continuing their children's education in their mother tongue. There is again the reference to bilingual and ESL aspects of the program in the factual description section.

There is clearly far more detailed attention given to bilingualism in the Middle School section. As regards the criteria:

1. Bilingualism is mentioned in 'effective practice' number 45 (p. 98), and by implication in the various references to ESL and maintaining students' mother tongues (or native languages).
2. The advantages of bilingualism are not explained directly, but various statements point out the advantages of maintaining the mother tongue while developing the second language.
3. Thus bilingualism is also encouraged.
4. Provision is, to a certain extent, made for bilingualism.

5. Bilingualism is not rewarded directly.

6. N/A

Secondary School

As regards ESL and Mother Tongue the Secondary section largely reproduces the Middle School section. There are two additions/variations in 'effective practices'. One relates to the importance of not studying another foreign language for students who are not considered linguistically able to cope until their English competence is sufficient 'to permit reasonable functioning in the school's mainstream programme of instruction' (p. 135), the other stresses the need for guidance staff (SEN staff) to work closely with instructional staff in placing ESL students.

The emphasis on the input from 'guidance staff' is significant. It appears important for subject area heads to have input into correct placement of each student. There is thus a suspicion that a reference only to guidance staff is a throw-back to the time when second language learners were seen as having learning problems. Cummins (1984, 2000) has pointed out the dangers and misunderstandings this can cause. Second language learners need a well devised programme of language instruction; if this is not given at every stage of their development, especially in the early childhood years, then things may well go wrong, but they will be based on language problems, not learning problems (of course one will affect the other). A better wording for this entry would be 'a well-devised system for placement of all students to the school should be drawn up by the school to ensure language needs are well catered for'.

CIS Guide

In 2003 the CIS brought out a pilot guide under its new name and named it the 7th edition. There is a glossary of various terms; 'special needs' is defined as 'includes provision for students with learning difficulties as well as those with exceptionally high ability or talents'. As in the previous Guide there are forms for gathering data on nationalities, but still nothing on languages.

The indicators which can be said to refer in any way to issues concerning bilingualism are 5a 'Local cultures are incorporated into the curriculum in appropriate ways', 5b 'The cultural diversity of the community is used to enrich the curriculum' (p.35), which both come under standard five: 'The curriculum shall utilize the cultural diversity of the host country and the school community to enhance the educational experiences of students'. In addition indicator 8d states: 'Teaching methods provide appropriately for students for whom English is not the first language' (p.36).

How do these terms meet up to the criteria established in the introduction to this chapter?

1. Bilingualism is not recognized or mentioned. ESL is mentioned once – for the entire school curriculum. ‘Cultures’ and ‘cultural diversity’ are extremely loose terms which carry no specific curricular obligation.
2. Bilingualism is not explained in any way.
3. Bilingualism is not encouraged. ESL is mentioned.
4. No provision is made for bilingualism – only the one mention of ESL.
5. N/A
6. N/A

The new Guide appears to be a major backward step as regards recognition and promotion of bilingualism. The previous Guide at least had its 29 or so indicators for ESL which included references to encouraging the tuition of students’ mother tongues.

There is, however, another change. Section E is devoted to ‘student support services’. In the introduction (p.62) it states: ‘A variety of services are necessary to support school programmes and to enhance student opportunities for learning. These include provisions for addressing learner needs, including identified disabilities or other special needs, *the need for English language support* (author’s italics), and attention to nurturing exceptional talents or achievements’.

In Step One – collect information, four of the procedures concern us: the first asks for a listing of all the special needs services that are offered by the school; the fourth has a request for the timetables of the Special Education and English Language Support Departments’ timetables; the fifth requires the names of all teachers and other specialists and support staff who work in the Special Needs Department and English Language Support areas; and the sixth asks for a description of the services that are available for English Language Support.

Under step two, writing, the descriptive profile point 4 is: ‘What provisions exist for addressing the English language needs of students?’ Step three, rating against indicators and standards, is focused principally on students with special learning needs. There are ten standards and thirty-three indicators. One standard, standard five, is devoted to *English Language Support* (author’s italics) and there are five indicators: ELS staff has specific preparation in the teaching of English as a Second (or other) Language; all staff members are assisted with strategies to accommodate students who need English Language Support; the programme of studies in ELS is so designed that students learn the skills necessary to participate fully in mainstream classes; there is a programme of assessment of student development and accomplishment in the English language, the results of which are used for placement and exit decisions as well as for analyzing and strengthening the ELS curriculum; and emphasis is placed on the use of the English

language as the means by which other subjects may be learned, while encouraging students to maintain skills in their native language whenever possible.

These all relate to Standard Five, which states: 'If students whose native or first language is not English (and whose English is not sufficiently developed to follow the full school curriculum) are admitted, the school shall provide English Language Support ELS'.

Bilingualism, ESL, mother tongue: these are now relegated to a small slot of Student Support Services, a section openly committed to those students who need 'support'. The dangers of relegating and joining ESL with students with special learning needs have been addressed, principally by Cummins (1984, 2000). The issue was also addressed in the Middle School and Secondary School sections of the ECIS Guide, 6th edition, stressing the need for a clear distinction between ESL and SEN students.

ECIS Subject Committees and Conferences

Important features of the ECIS (since 1.7.03 the CIS) are the setting up of subject committees and the holding of subject conferences. The 'ECIS ESL Committee' was first set up in 1983 at the ECIS annual November conference in Rome. The author was a founding member. Over the years various conferences were held, and influential figures in the world of 'language matters' were invited as speakers

Meanwhile, the committee changed its name, with approval from the ECIS, to the 'ESL and Mother Tongue Committee' in order to reflect the bilingual nature of its work. There was a subject conference in Leysin in 2002 (they were held every two years, recently changed to every three years). The overwhelming response of the 280 participants, enthusiastic in their field, eager to improve things at their schools, was one of frustration that ESL (let alone mother tongue programmes or 'bilingualism') was simply not recognized enough and that students' needs were not taken seriously.

The CIS is well aware of the work of this committee, which in fact had much input into the 'old' ECIS Accreditation Guide (1997). Indeed, the ECIS, through a fellowship awarded to the editor, sponsored the writing of the 1990 ESL 'handbook' (Murphy, 1990). Since 1983 there has been a sense that the work of the ECIS ESL and Mother Tongue Committee was making progress and improving programmes for second language learners around the world.

The CIS Guide (2003) Revisited

It is thus extraordinary that no input was requested, apparently, from any subject committees to the new CIS Guide. The present ESL and Mother Tongue committee would have rejected any placing of their subject area under special learning needs, as they would have rejected the title 'English Language Support'.

The wording of the five indicators is also problematic: the first one uses 'ELS', which is not a term that is generally used and relegates second language students to the status of

the infirm, who need 'support'. In the second one staff members should not be 'assisted with strategies to accommodate students' but rather have specific training. And second language students need 'support' **and** instruction. In the third one (5c) much more needs to be said than simply 'learning the skills necessary to participate fully in mainstream classes'. Second language students need parallel content classes, content given in the mother tongue, etc. In 5d all students are assessed for progress, and second language students are naturally a part of this process: second language students need careful monitoring over long periods and assessment by portfolio work and teacher judgement. Finally, much more needs to be said about students' mother tongues than 'encouraging students to maintain skills in their native language whenever possible'. A proper framework needs to be established.

The wording of the standard comes across as dismissive: 'If students whose native or first language is not English . . . are admitted, the school shall provide English Language Support'. This is doubtless meant as an admonition to the school 'they must provide a programme' but there is first the 'if', then again the term 'support'. It also implies that a minority of students will be ESL students – this is no longer the case in many schools.

The way ahead

The ECIS ESL and Mother Tongue Committee responded vigorously to the new CIS Guide. Members of the ECIS ESL and Mother Tongue Committee met and produced an alternative document with various standards, each with indicators. A well argued case was given for not using the term 'ELS', and not including ESL students under the Special Needs section. A short sentence was therefore added by the CIS stating: 'ESL (and Mother Tongue if appropriate) can be treated as a full curriculum subject under Section B, but Section E must also be completed'.

Part One of the Guide could have a section devoted to the issue of the multilingual population that makes up the international community. It would focus on the fact that while English has become the global language, the majority of the world's population speak other languages, and with increasing mobility there are likely to be more and more bilinguals – fluent and literate in their own language and English (see Graddol, 1997)

The section would point out the importance of having an educational programme in place from the early childhood years which addressed bilingualism: it is at this stage that the right programme is vital. The various stages of development would be outlined through the elementary, middle, and secondary school. A joint panel of researchers, and qualified practitioners from International Schools could be called on to present their recommendations.

Part Two of the Guide could have a section devoted to Bilingual Language Development (and the ELS entry in Special Needs would be removed). In this way the issue of students who do not have English as their best language can be dealt with in a positive, educationally productive way. Otherwise bilingual/ESL students will be permanently sidelined, undervalued, their potential not achieved, and in some cases destroyed.

ESL students make up over 50% of the student enrolment in many International Schools, and CIS marginalizes them at their peril. To say that 'no other subject has a section of its own' is to ignore the underlying, permeating role that language development, and the need for a clear policy on bilingual issues, plays in international education.

References:

Bilingual Family Newsletter, Multilingual Matters Ltd. Clevedon: U.K.

Cummins, J. (1984) *Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (2000) *Language, Power and Pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Graddol, D. (1997) *The Future of English?* London: The British Council.

Murphy, E. ed. (1990) *ESL: A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators in International Schools*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Maurice Carder is the Head of the Secondary ESL and Mother Tongue Department at the Vienna International School. He has written various articles for International School journals, and has had chapters published in books, on issues to do with bilingualism in International Schools.