Second Language Students in English-Medium Classrooms

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A Guide for Teachers in International Schools

Coreen Sears

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Coreen Sears

Introduction

The Overall Aim of This Handbook

This Handbook is for teachers working in international schools. The overall aim is to offer general information and practical suggestions for creating a rich and positive educational experience for emergent bilingual students being educated in an English-medium international school classroom. The reason for producing a Handbook such as this arises from conversations and emails with teachers. On numerous occasions I have been told that teachers in international schools desperately need help and practical support in providing a positive educational experience for all the students in their classrooms. These are teachers of classes where students display the widest possible variety of personal linguistic and cultural diversity, may have had multiple prior educational experiences as a result of their global mobility, and where the classroom contains students at every point on the English-language learning continuum. It is not surprising that teachers in international schools where such classes are the norm have expressed a need for a practical manual that focuses entirely on their particular situation.

The profile of 'emergent bilingual students'

The use of the term 'emergent bilingual' to describe students from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds who are being educated in English-medium classrooms is relatively recent. It is part of the move to emphasise the importance to these students of their continuing development in all the languages in their repertoire. Even where teachers only interact with such students in the part of their lives that is spent in an English-medium environment, it is vital to appreciate the necessity and value to these students of achieving their potential in order to become proficient users of two or more languages. When students are described as emergent bilinguals it keeps this fact in mind and influences the teaching and learning decisions that teachers make in their classrooms.