

**BOOK REVIEW: THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS JOURNAL
COMPENDIUM, VOLUME 1: ESL**

Editor: Edna Murphy

Published 2003 by Peridot Press, a division of John Catt Educational Ltd.

www.johncatt.com

Reviewer: Maurice Carder

Many teachers in International Schools are not familiar with the 'ISJ' – the International Schools Journal. This is, to say the least, unfortunate. It is the only journal which contains articles devoted solely to International Education, and was edited from 1981 until recently by Edna Murphy, who has now taken on the task of producing four volumes of articles written over the years (the remaining three will be on : culture; curricular adaptation to meet the internationalist agenda; and philosophy and definition of international education).

In this first volume on ESL, articles are arranged under the four headings of:

- I, definition of terms or practice in ESL;
- II, the problem of diagnosing ESL students from learning disability students;
- III, testing non-native speakers of English;
- IV, samples of adapting international school programmes for ESL students.

There is a total of 29 articles, comprising in all some 240 pages. The first article, written by Martha Foreman (Haldimann) explores "The effects of bilingualism on cognitive development". It gives a clear overview of research at the time the article was written – January 1981. The check-lists of "the positive effects of bilingualism with adequately developed L1" and "the negative effects of bilingualism without adequately developed L1" show succinctly where international school curriculum design should be heading. Take for example "children will develop higher levels of L2 than those children without an adequate L1 experience (Cummins, 1978)" on page 17; or "when L1 skills are not adequately developed, the development of L2 will be limited (Cummins, 1978a)", on page 18. How many international schools have followed up on this article by introducing mother tongue programmes? And how many students have not been able to work to their full potential, or had their social identities unfulfilled, because of neglect of the key area of Language Development?

Other articles enlarge at length on many other aspects of the ESL student, for example: "Early bilingual growth: an objective of basic education", by Renzo Titove; "Are we creating biliterate bilinguals?", by Maurice Carder; "Foreign language learning and the learning disabled at-risk student: a review of recent research" by Richard L. Sparks and Leonore Ganschow; "Helping the ESL pupil in the classroom: a checklist of ideas" by Emily Schwartz.

There is a supportive Foreword by Virginia Collier (Professor of Bilingual/Multicultural/ESL Education at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA). Many teachers and administrators will know her from her presentations at ECIS Conferences and in-service sessions. Her 18 years of research, with co-researcher Wayne Thomas, based on the analysis of over two million student records of ESL students in the USA has produced conclusive evidence of the advantages of bilingual education (the documentation can be viewed at:

<http://www.ucela.gwu.edu/ucbepubs/resource/effectiveness/index.html>
http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/llaa/1.1_find.html).

Professor Collier makes it clear that “When the demographics of a school population include a multilingual student group with small numbers of each language represented, then mother tongue literacy development for each language group, combined with ESL taught through academic content, may be the best choice for ESL students’ needs”, (page 8). This is the model we aim at in the Vienna International School.

ESL professionals in international schools owe a huge debt of gratitude to Edna Murphy for her dedication to the cause. In 1990 she edited the book “ESL: A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators in International Schools” and has now, in retirement, produced this compendium. Unfortunately, progress in responding to research on the area and advice from professionals has been at most slow, and in most cases non-existent. For starters, copies of the I.S. Journal, which are delivered regularly to all ECIS schools, often get no further than Directors’ desks, a poor example for professionals. It is strongly recommended that ESL teachers purchase this volume (cost £14.95/\$24) and use its content to guide them towards the development of appropriate programmes.