



**THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE**

**Evaluation of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme
for Primary Schools in Hong Kong
2004 - 2006**

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Executive Summary

This study examined the effectiveness of the Primary Native-speaking English Teacher (PNET) Scheme in Hong Kong Primary schools. As the name suggests, native-speaking English teachers (NETs) were embedded in schools, sometimes one NET to one school and sometimes one NET to two schools. The project objectives were as shown below:

Project Objectives

1. Determine the effectiveness of the PNET Scheme

A number of key indicators were developed for the evaluation of the PNET Scheme. These were:

- a. Learning outcomes:
 1. Quality of school environment for children to learn English
 2. English learned
 3. Children's interest and aspirations in learning English
- b. Teaching strategies:
 4. Innovative learning and teaching methods
 5. Curriculum emphases and materials curricula
 6. Teaching and learning activities suited to the needs of local children
 7. 'Best' practices in language learning and teaching
- c. School policy support:
 8. School policy development and leadership in promoting English learning
- d. Home background:
 9. Parent support and home resources available to support learning English

2. Measure (cognitive and affective) proficiency of Hong Kong students in English at multiple formative stages of development over three years and examine the relationship to the PNET Scheme and how it is implemented.

This aspect of the project involved the development of *proficiency frameworks and attitude scales* consistent with generic goals of the PNET Scheme and of attitudes relevant to the study of English.

3. Monitor and advise on changes in proficiency and attitudes over time in terms of valued added analyses

This goal was based on the observation that measures over time could be obtained from a series of samples of students using *parallel and linked* forms of instruments. A three-stage data collection was designed to enable a value-added analysis to be undertaken. This also allowed the study to link the roles of the Advisory Teacher (AT), the NET and the Local English Teacher (LET) to be examined concurrently and to examine how these led to changes in English proficiency.

Evaluation Summary

Despite an increased emphasis placed on co-teaching, co-planning and collaboration between NETs and LETs in the deployment guidelines for NETs, individual LETs reported a decrease in frequency of interaction with the NET at their schools in 2006. The size of the student population, and the number of classes across which the NET was deployed, had a negative impact on opportunities for LETs and NETs to collaborate, and this was exacerbated when the NET was deployed in more than one school. Parental pressure also meant that some schools deployed their NETs across every class and year level, so that an individual student might have quite infrequent contact with the NET. In short, deployment policy needs to take into account the size of the student population in a school when deciding whether or not to deploy a NET in more than one school. The deployment of NETs in more than one school has remained unpopular with NETs and LETs, but may be appropriate when schools share a building or are geographically close and have relatively small student populations.

The positive impact on the attitudes of students when their local teachers of English (LETs) had formed supportive working relationships with the Advisory Teacher (AT) assigned to the school was evident. The ATs had clearly developed strong and positive relationships with the NETs in most schools, and most of the NETs valued the support of the ATs, but in many schools this had not been extended to include the LETs. This offered an opportunity for the NET Section and the ATs to effect improvements in the PNET Scheme.

It was evident that, in the more effective schools, the AT was active in developing and introducing new teaching methods. In particular, it was important that the AT clearly supported and promoted innovation in teaching methods and that LETs and NETs recognised and valued the role and contributions of the AT. The difference between more and less effective PNET schools was related to the impact of the AT and the NET and the extent to which the NET was able to meet the expected requirements of their deployment.

The largest impact of the PNET Scheme was at P1 level. It appeared that there were diminishing returns for the PNET Scheme after P1, although overall growth in language proficiency was increasing. The NET Deployment Guidelines recommend that the NET be deployed in schools primarily to work with students and teachers at Key Stage One. Thus, diminishing returns for the PNET Scheme at Key Stage Two could be interpreted as an indication of the successful deployment on NETs in the earlier years of schooling.

While student attitudes to learning and using English were extremely stable over the evaluation period, it was clear that they were related to proficiency. That is the better the student performed in English the more positive was their attitude. The reason for this relationship was not clear. However there needs to be a concerted effort to build attitudes towards learning English after P1. The stability in attitudes suggested that:

- Attitudes are formed before students enter school.
- Attitude development in schools is negligible.
- Those with more positive attitudes were more likely to develop their language proficiency.
- Methods of developing more positive attitudes are urgently needed, at least to the level of valuing English language proficiency.
- The link between opportunities to use English outside school and more positive attitudes suggested that students need to be shown the relevance and importance of English to their own lives. For many students, English has remained simply another subject to be learned at school, rather than a useful skill and one with personal relevance.

On average, students achieved higher levels of English proficiency if they had opportunities to practise their English outside school, as well as access to a large number of books in the home, and parents with higher than average levels of education who expressed interest in their child's English language studies, supervised their English language homework and took time to look at the child's English school work.

Continuity of teaching by a NET over the three years of primary education studied was related to improved outcomes for students from home backgrounds that were less enriched in terms of support for English language studies. In particular, involvement with the PLP-R (KS1) seemed to help overcome the negative impact on students' progress in reading associated with homes in which there were few or no books. This indicated that perhaps a government program aimed at the homes could influence both attitudes and the engagement of students in English language classes. Interviews with LETs and NETs suggested that a major impact of the PNET Scheme for students from home backgrounds in which English was rarely, if ever, spoken, was the improved self-confidence exhibited by children who had regular opportunities to be taught by a NET.

Of central importance for the success of the PNET Scheme and positive outcomes for the students were the attitudes and proficiency in English of the LETs, both as teachers and users of the language. Limited opportunities taken within the broader social environment to engage in meaningful use of English, for teachers specialising in English, suggested the imperative to use English within the workplace and create an English speaking environment around the English Panel, as was the encouragement of teachers to develop their language skills and act as language role models for students.

LETs need to be encouraged, supported and rewarded for taking opportunities to develop their proficiency through cultural and professional activities, overseas and local immersion programmes, and enrichment programmes in language and literature.

Positive collaboration between LETs and the NET was an important factor in terms of student proficiency and development.

Matching LETs and NETs in terms of age and years of experience as English teachers held implications for the frequency of co-teaching and co-planning, and the attitudes that LETs expressed towards the usefulness of their collaboration with the NET.

Different patterns of collaboration were explored, and their potential impact on the morale of teachers and outcomes for students was discussed.

Most LETs and NETs had acceptable access to resources, although there were differences between LETs and NETs in terms of the use they made of those resources. Also, different teaching resources were associated with higher student proficiency levels in different domains of English and different year levels. Teaching resources and practices associated with teaching students at higher levels of proficiency to read in English were not necessarily the same as strategies associated with teaching students verbal skills. This was a positive observation and needs to be reinforced through the professional development program.

Strategies associated with the NET and the PNET Scheme were linked to higher mean achievement for students in P1, P2 and P3, but less so for P4 students. Observations of successful use of teaching resources and practices could be used to target the professional development and encouragement of teachers. From interactive art and media at P1 level, to group work and socially interactive use of language of teachers in P4, there was a discernable shift in teaching strategies associated with higher levels of student language proficiency.

Over the three years of the evaluation, it was clear that co-planning and co-teaching between NET and LETs had become a common practice in schools in which a NET was deployed. Most of the School Heads and LETs indicated that co-planning meetings between the NET and LETs at their school were regularly timetabled within the school day, valued highly by the teachers, and well-structured, with roles shared and rotated between the NET and LETs. The NETs largely agreed with this assessment, although more NETs than LETs viewed the co-planning meetings as unstructured in format. However, the size of the school and NET deployment in more than one school impacted negatively on opportunities for individual LETs to meet the NET and work collaboratively to plan lessons and co-teach.

In most schools, the NET was routinely included in relevant school activities, with many School Heads, LETs and NETs agreeing that the NET was encouraged to participate in and contribute to school events. In a small minority of schools, LETs and NET agreed that the NET had become marginalised and excluded from school life. There was, however, a need to formalise the NET's role and introduce an internal monitoring process within the school. This has been recommended in this report as a standing item in the agenda of the English Panel meeting. The recommended action is that this standing item should address the NET's role and deployment in the school, the conduct of co-planning

meetings, the use by LETs of materials and strategies recommended by the AT or the NET, and the use of innovative strategies for teaching English. This should be minuted and reported to the central project management and signed off by the School Head.

There was evidence of an impact on development of student proficiency in terms of the support of the School Head for the inclusion and integration of the NET, and in particular in the skill areas of reading and writing, and this emphasised a need for all School Heads to be fully informed of the implementation of the PNET Scheme at their school, and to ensure their support, knowledge and understanding of the Scheme and their involvement in the Scheme.

Most NETs and LETs and all School Heads affirmed that deployment of the NET took EMB guidelines into account in terms of classroom teaching, and provision of time for curriculum planning and professional development. A majority of School Heads, LETs and NETs agreed that the school not only acknowledged EMB guidelines for deployment of the NET, but adapted the guidelines to school goals to provide most benefit to teachers and students. However, the qualitative investigation revealed some schools where deployment guidelines were imperfectly understood, or even actively resisted.

The value School Heads placed upon various aspects of their role in promoting English at their school and provision of support for the PNET Scheme was clearly influential. Students at schools where the School Head placed importance upon supporting the leadership role of the NET in the English programme tended, on average, to demonstrate more growth in English proficiency than students in schools where this was not the case. All School Heads need to be reminded of the central role they play in ensuring the success of the PNET Scheme and supporting the development of English language proficiency for their students. Structured monitoring and reporting processes through the English Panel meetings may help this process.

Centralised professional development courses, seminars and workshops provided and led by the ATT were well-attended and supported by teachers and school leadership in 2006. This built upon and extended support for these courses that was evident in the previous years of the evaluation. However, individual LETs reported quite low rates of participation in training and workshops. It is acknowledged that the number of LETs in schools varies considerably, and that many LETs do not have opportunities to work with a NET or take part in training and workshops. Yet the project analysed information about participation in training and workshops gathered only from those LETs whose students were being taught by a NET in the survey year, and who could thus be expected to be involved in the professional development programme. There is an opportunity here for improvement of the implementation of the PNET Scheme through increased participation of LETs in training, with associated opportunities to form stronger working relationships with both the NET and AT and to build confidence as users and teachers of English. Improvements in attitudes to lifelong learning in English will need to start with the local teachers of English, and then in turn motivate similar attitudes in students.

Although the current study was not designed to evaluate the PLP-R (KS1), there were some initial indications that participation in the programme was linked to student progress in reading proficiency in English, and to changed teaching practices by the LETs.

The analysis of school effectiveness presented in Chapter 7 of this report identified variables associated with the differences between effective and ineffective schools. An 'effective' school was one in which average student achievement was above that which could be expected from the type of student intake into the school. An 'ineffective' school was one in which average student achievement was much worse than could be expected given the student intake into the school. The quality of the student intake into the school was measured by a composite home background variable consisting of the extent to which the student spoke English outside the school, access to books at home, the level of the parents' education and indicators of support for language studies.

The ten most effective and ten least effective schools were identified and the differences on many independent variables were calculated in terms of the overall standard deviation. The overwhelming impression was that where the NET was able to follow the deployment guidelines set out by the PNET Scheme, and was interacting with local teachers, leading change in teaching and learning strategies, transferring messages, materials and strategies from professional development, attending English Panel meetings that were conducted in English, and generally acting as a fully integrated member of the teaching staff, there were clear advantages in terms of student outcomes. It seemed that the deployment guidelines for the NET were appropriate, and where they were followed in schools the PNET Scheme was effective in supporting the development of language proficiency for students.

The indicators of school effectiveness, in terms of the PNET Scheme, that have been presented in Chapter 7 could be used to motivate and support school acceptance of the ideals of the PNET Scheme. If schools cannot demonstrate that they are making progress towards effective deployment of the NET and support for the LETs and overall English teaching programme, perhaps it would be better to re-deploy the NET in a school that is better placed to make good use of the NET's services.

Finally, it is clear that the variation within class in terms of student language proficiency is considerable. Within any class, students are spread over many levels of development. The field of language instruction has been aware for many years that proficiency levels are important information in determining what kind of teaching and resource allocation to use with instruction. The predominant approach to teaching and learning across the system, as described by the LETs in every year of the evaluation, is whole class instruction from a text book. This is not likely to succeed, with the variation within class so high in terms of achievement. Many times, the data have shown that the better students are developing and developing fast. There is also considerable evidence that students of low proficiency are not developing well, if at all. Some (almost 10%) have lost ground in terms of English language proficiency over the past three years.

These observations signal a need for a change in the mode of professional development and for a change in teaching practices. Text-book dominated, whole-class instruction must be replaced by targeted instruction aimed at the level of language where the student is ready to learn. The best estimate of their readiness to learn, (in Vygotskian terms) is their current proficiency level and the level immediately above. This has further implications.

Teachers must be aware of the proficiency level of their students, not their score on a competency test. Measures of the proficiency level of students, provided by training the teacher to use proficiency scales such as those in the *English Profiles* and directly interpretable from the *ITEL* test, are essential pieces of data that teachers must have available for every student. It is distressing to see a programme such as the PNET Scheme hampered by classroom teaching and learning strategies that make the assumption that “one size fits all,” when it is widely recognised and understood that this simply does not work.

Recommendations

1. Succession planning

How long the PNET Scheme can be sustained is unclear. If the Scheme can be improved to demonstrate clear gains in English language proficiency and attitudes for students, then it may be an investment with substantial returns for the Hong Kong SAR. In order to sustain the Scheme, improvements are mandatory.

- ***An investigation is needed to identify the influence of immigration and the changing economic and ethnic profile of the community on the language goals of the SAR and on the curriculum in the schools.***

2. Collaboration and co teaching, co planning

The importance of collaboration between teachers, and support for collaboration, cannot be stressed strongly enough. The English Panel meetings have to become a central organisational and administrative platform for the implementation and monitoring of change in schools. If the Panel meetings are not dealing with academic matters related to the teaching of English, they should be. If they are conducted in a language other than English and exclude the NET, they must not. These meetings can have a profound influence on the success of the PNET Scheme.

- ***English Panel meetings in schools that have a NET must be attended by the NET. A standing item in the agenda must address the English curriculum and the teaching and learning program. The NET should report on activities conducted during the period between meetings, in terms of:***
 - ***the dissemination of professional development***
 - ***new strategies for teaching English***

- *co-planning activities and the practices implemented as a result of these*
 - *co-teaching strategies and the mentoring that accompanied this practice*
 - *achievement monitoring of students following formal assessments*
 - *gains in language and evidence of shifts in attitudes*
 - *goals and strategies in development and that have been tried as methods to address language development*
 - *classroom management strategies that will aid improvement in every student, whether strong or weak in English*
 - *targeted use of teaching and learning materials and resources*
 - *theoretical underpinnings of approaches that have been trialled.*
- *A formal record of these English Panel discussions should be minuted and copies filed for the Panel, one copy sent to the School Head and one copy to the programme coordination unit.*
 - *Professional development is needed for the NETs in evaluation strategies aimed at monitoring and reporting to the English Panel meetings.*

3. Teaching

- *The deployment of the NET should be determined by the needs of the English programme in the school. It appears that in many schools the NET is regarded as a supplementary teaching resource. Deployment should be decided upon by the English Panel as a result of discussions and on going evaluation in collaboration with the Panel Chair and the School Head. The reasons for the deployment should be documented and reported through the accountability procedures recommended above.*

4. Variation in resource and strategies

It is tempting to recommend that the teaching resources in the classroom should be varied, because it is clear that high performing schools and classes use a wide range of teaching and learning resources. However, an unspecified increase in resource range may not achieve any more than normal gains. Using the same resources for all students, regardless of proficiency or learning needs, may be counterproductive and would result in exactly the kind of increased variation in achievement levels as demonstrated in the study. The best students go ahead, the lower students are left behind. This is the situation in the achievement levels monitored in this evaluation.

- *Resources in English classes should be evaluated by the NET and the English Panel for their appropriateness to the proficiency level of the students and used in targeted teaching for groups of students across the proficiency range in the class.*

5. Assessment

Related to targeted intervention and use of resources is a change in style of assessment. Links are needed with the Hong Kong project studying and developing school-based assessment. But strong lobbying is also required to ensure assessment leads to improvement in learning. This can only happen if the interpretation of the assessment data leads to a clear understanding of the students' readiness to learn and this is rarely the case when the interpretation is expressed as a number or test score.

- *Assessment strategies need to be competency-based and interpreted in terms of the language skills and attitudes that the student is ready to learn. NETs and local teachers need professional development in this form of assessment and its link to readiness to learn for students.*

6. Oral language opportunities for teachers and students

The importance of spoken English practice cannot be sufficiently stressed, but it needs an entire cultural change if such practice is to succeed. Teachers need opportunities to practise English and their proficiency needs to be monitored.

- *Classroom strategies that encourage student to student, student to teacher and teacher to teacher use of English need to be identified and made mandatory for classes, taking into account the different levels of proficiency of both the local teacher and the students. Immediate action is required in this regard and the role of the AT in identifying these strategies and providing the professional development is central to the success of these strategies.*
- *Local English teachers must be encouraged and rewarded for practising English. Prizes and awards for spoken English usage are needed. The Scheme's coordination unit should devise ways of monitoring the use of English and this must start with the language medium of the English Panel meetings involving the NET. Regardless of the difficulty encountered, English teachers must know how to speak the language and must be sufficiently professional that they will practise and act as role models to their students.*

7. Schools

Schools in the PNET Scheme must provide a structured and managed approach to the Scheme. Schools that nurture the Scheme and follow the ideals espoused in the effective schools research and apply these to their school, have been identified as successful in terms of improved student outcomes. School Heads need professional development in managing and supporting the PNET Scheme.

- *A group of School Heads from successful schools should be identified and invited to form a mentoring group for the overall Scheme and for other School Heads. These mentoring School Heads should form a working team, and provided support through discussion groups, leadership and school effectiveness programmes, professional reading programmes and mentor training.*
- *Schools that demonstrate their commitment to the PNET Scheme, and follow the ideals set out for schools in the discussion of effective schools presented in Chapter 7, should be identified and established as Beacon Schools. Resourced appropriately, these schools could disseminate good practice and encourage professional networking opportunities for English teaching personnel.*

8. NETs

The NETs' role is pivotal to the programme. It is a complex role. The NET is responsible for collaboration with the local English teachers in at least one school and in many cases in more than one school. Some NETs need to interact with more than twenty teachers. The role involves co-teaching, co-planning, mentoring, planning professional development, and dissemination of strategies and materials. Most of the impact of the NET on the student is mediated through the LET despite the co-teaching role. The primary purpose of co-teaching is to help the LET to confidently and competently use innovative and effective strategies and materials in their own teaching. Accountability in terms of the role of the NET is not as defined as it might be.

- *The NET should be required to attend English Panel meetings, which must be scheduled for a time when the NET is present in the school to allow for the situation where the NET is shared across more than one school.*
- *At English Panel meetings the NET should be required to report on the topics documented in recommendation 2.*
- *As a result of these requirements, professional development should be provided for the NETs in evaluation strategies and evidence-based decision-making that would enable sound recommendations to be made to the Panel, the School Head and to the NET Section, EMB.*

9. LETs

The LET is the channel through which the impact of the NET, the AT and the PNET Scheme on teaching and learning is mediated. LETs are the major contact for the children learning English and form the most influential role model in the schools.

As such their behaviour, their use of language and their enthusiasm for English will undoubtedly influence the way the children respond to learning English. There is much to do in this regard.

- *The local English teacher must be sufficiently proficient in English to be able to participate effectively in meetings conducted in English.*
- *The local English teachers must speak English in front of the students at every opportunity and make sure that the quality of language demonstrates an appreciation and enthusiasm for speaking English.*
- *The local English teacher must attend professional development programmes both inside and outside the school and the programmes should be delivered by the NET and the AT. The School Head must allocate “timetable space” to allow both NET and LETs to attend professional development.*
- *The local English teacher should be required to report to the English Panel on the professional development, the co-planning and co-teaching activities, and on the use of innovative strategies and materials. Their reports should address staff development needs and effectiveness of each strategy and material use and ought to address student learning and be supported by verifiable evidence.*
- *LETs will need and should be given professional development in evidence-based decision-making and evaluation to enable accurate and defensible reporting of the effectiveness of strategies and materials introduced as part of the PNET Scheme.*

System

There is a range of matters that need to be addressed at the system level.

- *The NET Deployment Guidelines need to be revised in view of evidence provided by this evaluation, and clearly understood by all PNET stakeholders.*
- *Reactivation of a yearly NET Duty / Deployment Plan or English Curriculum Plan for all schools within the PNET Scheme might encourage clearer professional direction for school-based English personnel, as well as provide better allocation of learning and teaching resources. The NET and the curriculum developer of the school [e.g., the EPC/PSM(CD)] may be then asked to evaluate and build on what has been achieved.*
- *The ATs should target professional development to demonstrate developmental learning and targeted intervention.*
- *The system should define and implement an accountability procedure for PNET schools, NETs and LETs and this accountability should include procedures or reporting as set out in recommendation 2.*
- *Professional development should be provided to LETs and resources made available for this strategy. This requires a shift in professional development as outlined above.*
- *The emphasis on development of new materials might be diminished, and increased attention given to how materials can be used for different students at specific levels of English proficiency.*

11. Professional development

- *Professional development for LETs and NETs must emphasise the targeting of instructional intervention in the classroom and emphasise targeted instruction and evaluation.*
- *Professional development should be provided to the ATs and the NETs on how targeted intervention can be implemented and evaluated; this professional development can take the form of professional reading and discussion groups facilitated by senior staff in the coordination unit.*

School Heads

- *Professional development is needed for School Heads via a form of mentoring on how to successfully manage the PNET Scheme, induct a NET, evaluate the impact on the students and report to the coordination unit.*

13. Long term strategy for PNET Scheme

- *The Education and Manpower Bureau should set out strategies for the PNET Scheme over three, five and 20 years and means of evaluating the Scheme. There may not be any need for further intensive studies such as this evaluation, if the ongoing accountability procedures outlined in these recommendations are implemented.*

14. System monitoring

- *Methods of collecting, collating, analysing, interpreting and reporting the accountability cycle information should be developed and documented.*
- *Reporting guidelines for NETs, LETs and School Heads need to be set out and disseminated with appropriate training for each of these groups.*

Summary

There is a need to reform four key aspects of schools' practices in the PNET Scheme. The first is the curriculum itself, which is represented by the presence of the NET in the school and the infrastructure provided by the NET Section EMB. The second is the assessment and reporting regime of the school and of the system. This needs to focus on proficiency reporting rather than test scores, or even basic competency test results. All testing and assessment needs to be reported in terms of a standards-referenced framework describing the level of language proficiency in each of the four macro skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). The third is the teaching and learning practices in the class room and these are a direct result of the second part of the reform. If teachers are required to report proficiency and language skill acquisition, then the emphasis on the teaching and learning shifts towards skill development and learning - not on grades, scores or test results. The fourth is the infrastructure of the school which included the

school policy and resources. Resource allocation, including time and professional development, is essential if the transitions in teaching, curriculum and assessment are to have an increased effect. There is a need for a curriculum task force within the EMB and the NET Section to explore the aspects of the curriculum transition that are represented by the NET Scheme.

Changes in teaching and learning must involve targeted or differentiated teaching if the within class variation reported in this study is to be addressed appropriately. Teachers need to be provided with professional development on classroom management for multi group or multilevel teaching and learning. This should ensure that each level-group of students is provided with instruction targeted at their level, with resources appropriate to the readiness to learn level of language proficiency. In order to achieve this, Recommendation 5 on assessment is reinforced.

Chapter One: The Setting for the Study

The Hong Kong Education System

Since 1997, education in Hong Kong has undergone a major review which has impacted on all aspects of the system from kindergarten to tertiary. Currently, the average Hong Kong child receives nine years of compulsory basic education sandwiched between three years of pre-school education and four years of senior secondary education. From 2009, a new system will include senior secondary education in the compulsory provision for the first time. Hong Kong kindergartens are also increasingly coming under the scrutiny and control of Government.

The education review, commencing with the *Holistic review of the Hong Kong school curriculum* (Curriculum Development Council, 1999), reaffirmed the importance of language in the Hong Kong curriculum, but placed it in the context of a comprehensively restructured overall curriculum encompassing learning goals and key learning tasks in the context of eight key learning areas (KLAs) where generic and specific skills, competencies and knowledge areas are developed.

Kindergarten Education

At present the kindergarten sector is dominated by private, profit-making institutions providing Chinese medium education. The kindergarten curriculum places a strong emphasis on cognitive and language development which essentially relates to Chinese, but involves an important introduction to English. Upon graduating from kindergarten, children are generally expected to have learned the English alphabet, some basic English vocabulary, some English songs and nursery rhymes and rudimentary social English (Curriculum Development Council, 2006). In recent years, the expectations of primary English teachers have been challenged by the influx of children from Mainland China who may not have attended kindergarten before entering primary school, or may have attended a kindergarten which did not provide this rudimentary introduction to English.

Basic Education

Compulsory education begins at age 6 and, in the 2005/06 academic year was provided by 720 primary schools, 571 secondary schools and 63 special schools for a school age population of approximately 916,000 children¹. Due to a burgeoning population in the 1960s and the shortage of suitable premises, Hong Kong primary schools have traditionally comprised two schools using a single school building in what is referred to as a 'bi-sessional' arrangement. Under this arrangement, the AM school would operate from 8:00am to 1:00pm and the PM school would run from 1:00pm to 6:00pm. Investment of considerable resources into a school building programme has combined with a declining school age population to make Whole Day schooling the norm, but a quarter of primary schools continued to operate a bi-sessional arrangement until 2007.

¹ <http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=92&langno=1>

The curriculum for the nine years of basic education includes a key focus on languages – English and Chinese, including Putonghua – as core subjects comprising more than 30% of study time in the school. This reflects the aims of education which include an expectation that children will be able to ‘engage in discussion actively and confidently in English and Chinese (including Putonghua)’ (Curriculum Development Council, 2002).

Language Education in Hong Kong

The importance of English to the economic prosperity of Hong Kong is axiomatic. Coinciding with the last stages of a shift from a manufacturing to a service industry base, the need to promote English became an increasing preoccupation of the administration from the late 1970s. The colonial Hong Kong Government of the time began a programme of investment in the development of English, which was carried forward by the post-1997 Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The economic priorities of the late 1990s, which had motivated this investment, were further accentuated by global and regional developments in the fifteen years that followed. This included unprecedented growth in the prosperity of Mainland China with associated developments in Shanghai, and in other South China SARs which are now in direct competition with Hong Kong for lucrative tourist, entertainment and retail luxury goods markets.

In the face of regional competition from its Chinese sister cities – Shanghai, Shenzhen and Macau – as well as from more distant tigers in Japan and Korea, Hong Kong retains an undisputed edge in the form of the language competence of its population. Although unable to compete with Singapore on this dimension, and despite repeated alarmist comments about falling standards, Hong Kong’s English linguistic heritage is a prime asset. It is an asset which has been nurtured by Government policy on language in general and on the qualification, training, professional development and support for local Chinese teachers who specialize in the teaching of English.

The language policy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, since its inception, has been a multilingual policy which has maintained a key role for English as well as for Putonghua. ‘Trilingualism and biliteracy’ are reflected in the seven learning goals of the basic education curriculum and in the structure of the KLA language curricula. Alongside this endorsement of the role of multilingualism in post-1997 Hong Kong, the concurrent review of the education system enabled reflection on approaches and methods for teaching language as well as on appropriate standards for those responsible for teaching language.

Significant curriculum development was undertaken by the Curriculum Development Council in conjunction with the Curriculum Development Institute of the Education and Manpower Bureau. At the same time, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications instituted new standards for language teachers which helped address the problem of the significant proportions of English teachers who were underqualified to teach the language. The establishment of the Standing Committee on Language

Education and Research (SCOLAR) enabled constructive review of other system level issues including the Medium of Instruction policy in secondary schools, the appropriate qualifications of language teachers and, in its Review of Language Education (SCOLAR, 2003), the appropriate achievement standards for school students.

Involvement of Native-speaking English Teachers in Hong Kong

The Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme for Primary Schools (hereafter referred to as the Primary NET or PNET Scheme) is an important element of the support for English teaching in Hong Kong. The Scheme is part of an orchestrated policy for the involvement of native speakers in the teaching of English in Hong Kong which stretches back to 1997 and beyond.

One of the measures which heralded the inauguration of the new SAR Government in 1997 was the large-scale recruitment of native-speaking teachers of English. Native speakers of English had played a key role in the schools during the first 150 years of Hong Kong's history (Bickley 1997; Sweeting 1990). However, by 1982, localisation was felt to have led to deterioration in language standards which ought to be "amended so that children in their first years of schooling might be exposed to native English speakers" (Visiting Panel, 1982. III.1.9). Until 1997, the Visiting Panel's recommendation was interpreted to refer to the recruitment of expatriate teachers on local terms. The Government's advisory body on education, the Education Commission (EC), acknowledged the recommendation in the first Education Commission Report (ECR1) which advised that schools be encouraged to employ "locally available native English speakers" (Education Commission, 1984, p.39). As late as 1996, the sixth EC report only recommended that the feasibility of a "scheme" involving external recruitment be investigated and fell short of actually recommending one. The key issue appeared to be that external recruitment and the provision of local housing, essential to attract expatriate teachers, were extremely costly items.

The newly established SAR Government decided that the investment was worthwhile, and in October 1997, in his first policy address, the new Chief Executive undertook to implement a NET Scheme, providing more than 700 additional native-speaking English teachers in order to "make an immediate impact on improving the English language standards of our students" (Hong Kong SAR, 1997).

It is noteworthy that these initiatives were taking place at a time when the place of the 'native speaker' in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language was undergoing critical evaluation worldwide. Scholars like Pennycook (1998) and Phillipson (1992) perceived the global spread of English and the predominance of 'native speakers' in the teaching of ESL/EFL as a form of linguistic imperialism (see also Mair, 2003). Others, including Medgyes (1998) and Luk and Lin (2006), made strong and cogent cases for the role of the non-native speaker in the teaching of the second or foreign language. Significantly, therefore, the Hong Kong NET initiatives have, since 1997, involved

recruitment not only or necessarily of ‘native speakers’ with the ethnic connotations that term carries, but of ‘native-speaking English teachers,’ that is, teachers of English who speak the language with native-like competence. Significant numbers of NETs and PNETs recruited to work in Hong Kong schools fit into this category.

The Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme (NET Scheme) was introduced in 1997 to secondary schools and special schools in the secondary sector. Two separate school organisations received support from two Government funding agencies – the Language Fund and the Quality Education Fund (QEF), to enable them to introduce expatriate teachers into their primary schools during the period 1998 to 2000. Under these two primary school schemes a total of 16 teachers were recruited, and the evaluation of the secondary NET Scheme included these two primary schemes.

In addition, in 1999 two further schemes funded by QEF introduced NETs into the primary schools. The Primary Schools Education Development Scheme (PSED) employed 21 NETs working in 40 schools. The Tsuen Wan English Teacher Support Network (TWETSN) employed up to 16 NETS in the 38 schools in the New Territories district of Tsuen Wan.

The NET Scheme was expected to result in improvement of the professional profile of English language teachers, leading to advances in the quality of language teaching through a system where NETs produced teaching resources, served as models of good practice, effected gains in student language proficiency and were integrated into the life of the school. A team of researchers from the Hong Kong Institute of Education evaluated the NET Scheme, and concluded that it had enjoyed some success, despite difficulty in identifying clear-cut language gains resulting conclusively from interaction with a NET (Storey, Luk, Gray, Wang & Lin, 2000).

Storey et al. (2000) suggested that primary schools offered an excellent context for a unique NET role to be successfully realised because, in the junior primary school, public exam pressure was absent and English content was oriented towards social interaction. In secondary schools, on the other hand, the effects of the NET were seen as less likely to be significant without a cultural shift involving increased professional collaboration between NETs and local teachers, and corresponding changes to the exam-oriented, textbook-based learning culture of most secondary schools in Hong Kong. Storey et al.’s report supported the decision to extend the NET Scheme to include primary schools.

Strong additional arguments for a Primary NET Scheme came from the success of the two QEF-funded schemes. The Primary Schools English Development Project ran from 2000 to 2002 with the implicit aim of serving as a pilot for a full-scale primary NET Scheme. The considerable success of the project paved the way for this to happen (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2002). The Tsuen Wan English Teacher Support Network (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003), which ran from 2000 to 2003, reinforced the belief that NETs could make a significant contribution in primary schools.

In 2002, the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) deployed NETs in local schools that were operating a minimum of six classes, with two primary schools sharing one NET. By September 2004, the Scheme had extended to address the goal of having one NET placed in every eligible school (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2006).

A key feature of the new Scheme, which distinguished it from its secondary school precursor, was a structured emphasis on collaboration between participating teachers. The benefits of collaboration among teachers are well documented (Bourne & McPake, 1991; Rosenholz, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Davison, 2006). In reality, however, collaboration is unlikely to take place without a structured mechanism to nurture it.

A rationale for institutionalised collaboration in Hong Kong primary schools between native-speaking English teachers and local teachers can be traced in the documentation of the Primary Schools English Development (PSED) project (EMB, 2002). A key objective of the project was ‘to promote the professional development of all the teacher participants’ (EMB, p.2) and the final report mentions team teaching as a strategy adopted specifically to promote this development (Appendix IX: 3); the original proposal for the project included co-teaching with local teachers, ‘with a view to sharing with them innovative teaching methods’, and ‘lessons learnt’ from the project include the observation that ‘we must promote PSED as a collaborative, creative professional partnership between the NETs and local English teachers’ (Appendix XV: 1).

Evaluation of the Primary Native English-speaking Teacher Scheme, 2004 – 2006

In 2003, the Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) requested that a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the NET Scheme in primary schools be undertaken. It was agreed that this investigation should be conducted over three years, and that it should incorporate both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies.

The research was designed to include repeated measures to assess gains in key variables, while controlling for contextual factors that influence the growth of key indices of effectiveness. EMB also requested that the evaluation begin with students currently in Key Stage One (aged from 5 to 8 years) because this was seen as a crucial and formative stage in the development of language skills.

Major Issues Posed by the Education and Manpower Bureau

The questions that were established at the start of the evaluation, and have guided the investigation, included the following:

1. What were the levels of student achievement in English? What percentages of students reached the different skill levels in reading, spoken language and writing? What were the differences in achievement between boys and girls?

2. What were the characteristics of students? These included their attitudes to learning English, their home background, characteristics of parents and parents' attitudes to English. How did these relate to student proficiency and growth over the evaluation period?
3. What were the characteristics of teachers – both native-speaking English teachers (NETs) and local English teachers (LETs)? How well did the NETs and LETs collaborate and cooperate with each other for the teaching of English? What was the impact of teacher collaboration and cooperation on student outcomes? What were the factors that supported collaboration between teachers?
4. What were the teaching conditions, practices and resources in classrooms and in primary schools where a NET was deployed, and how did these vary across schools? What aspects of the teaching function designed to improve the quality of language education were in place? These included the influence of the Advisory Teaching Team and professional development workshops and training opportunities for teachers.
5. What were the characteristics of teachers, teaching conditions in schools, practices and resources that were most associated with differences between the most effective and least effective schools?
6. What were the contextual or other variables that were most associated with growth or lack of growth in student achievement?

The Design of the Study

The design of the evaluation study was based upon both cross-sectional and longitudinal monitoring of a range of indicators of successful deployment of NETs across three school years from 2004 – 2006. The key indicators of success for the PNET Scheme included measures of:

- Student outcomes in English gathered via teacher observation against descriptive profiles of student achievement and by interview test.
- Student attitude and interest in learning English, and indicators of the foundation of lifelong learning in English.
- The opinions that NETs, LETs and School Heads reported about the provision of a quality environment for children to learn English. This included ideas about appropriate curriculum emphases and materials, teaching and learning activities suited to the needs of Hong Kong students, and “best practice” in language learning and teaching.

- The level of support in schools for the introduction of innovative learning and teaching methods through the contribution of the NETs and the Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) and teacher development courses, seminars and workshops.
- School policy development and leadership in promoting English learning through the NET Scheme.

The quantitative data of student achievement formed the basis of a broader programme of research in the evaluation of the PNET Scheme in Hong Kong schools. The evaluation started from an assumption that development in student achievement, improvement in student attitudes, changes in teachers' attitudes and teaching conditions, and other contextual variables including characteristics of the school, classroom and home background, were inter-related so that over-emphasising one or other of these areas would compromise the value of the research for the provision of policy advice. Measuring change over time in students' achievement and attitudes would not, in isolation, provide evidence of the success of the PNET Scheme. Monitoring change and contrast in variables such as teacher attitudes, practices and access to resources and school leadership enabled these to be related to changes in student achievement and attitudes. This in turn allowed policy and professional development strategies to be identified and recommended to the system and to schools.

In 2005, analysis of the student achievement data indicated schools where relationships between styles of NET deployment and student outcomes suggested the usefulness of gathering more in-depth information through visits to the schools (Griffin et al., 2005). Schools were chosen to participate in qualitative investigations where aggregated data and value-added analyses indicated that students made significantly more or less progress than their similar counterparts in other schools. Twenty-one schools were visited in 2005 and 2006.

Data Collection and Handling Procedures

Sampling

The target population was defined as all P1, P2, P3 and P4 students who attended schools participating in the PNET Scheme. The longitudinal nature of the project meant that not all of the students would be taught by a NET in each year of the data collection. The sampling frame was based on a list of schools supplied by EMB, encompassing primary schools located in a wide range of local districts in Hong Kong. Special schools, English Foundation schools and international schools were not included in the sample. Approximately 15 students were selected at each year level involved in the study in each school. The maximum number of students selected from each school did not exceed 60. The sampling frame for the study was described in detail in the technical appendix to the 2005 annual report of the evaluation (Griffin et al., 2005).

Sample weights

Sample weights were assigned to each sampling unit (i.e., to participating students). The process of deriving weights was also presented in the technical appendix to the 2005 report (Griffin et al., 2005). The purpose of weighting was to maintain the relative balance between sampling units (students) in order to make proper inferences for the target population. The need to produce reliable estimates for sub-groups of a population required that different sampling weights be applied to those sub-groups. More to the point, any difference in achievement levels between two sub-groups could lead to inaccurate estimation of the overall achievement level, over-emphasising the contribution of students in particular schools or sub-groups. The sampling weights restored the proper balance between sub-groups in order to estimate the overall achievement level. Thus, all outcomes shown in this report were based upon weighted estimates.

Data collection

Responsibility for the data collection in each school was assigned to the School English Teacher (SET) whose role included regularly coordinating activities related to the integration of the NET with the school community. In each year of the study, an evaluation package was sent to the SETs of participating schools. The package included an instruction manual for data collection, all questionnaires and data collection materials, and a manual on procedures for moderation of scores. Data collection procedures were consistent across the three years of the evaluation, and have been described in detail in the technical appendix to the 2005 report (Griffin et al., 2005).

Quality assurance procedures meant that only those data that had been checked and confirmed as gathered and recorded by teachers in accordance with mandated data collection procedures were retained in the data set and used as the basis of system-level analyses.

Who were the Major Players in the PNET Scheme?

The PNET Scheme in Hong Kong could be considered as a set of interconnecting roles and relationships between stakeholders, each with responsibility for improving the teaching and learning of English language proficiency in schools. Placing the student at the centre of these relationships and responsibilities, the major players in the PNET Scheme could be summarised as shown in Figure 1.1.

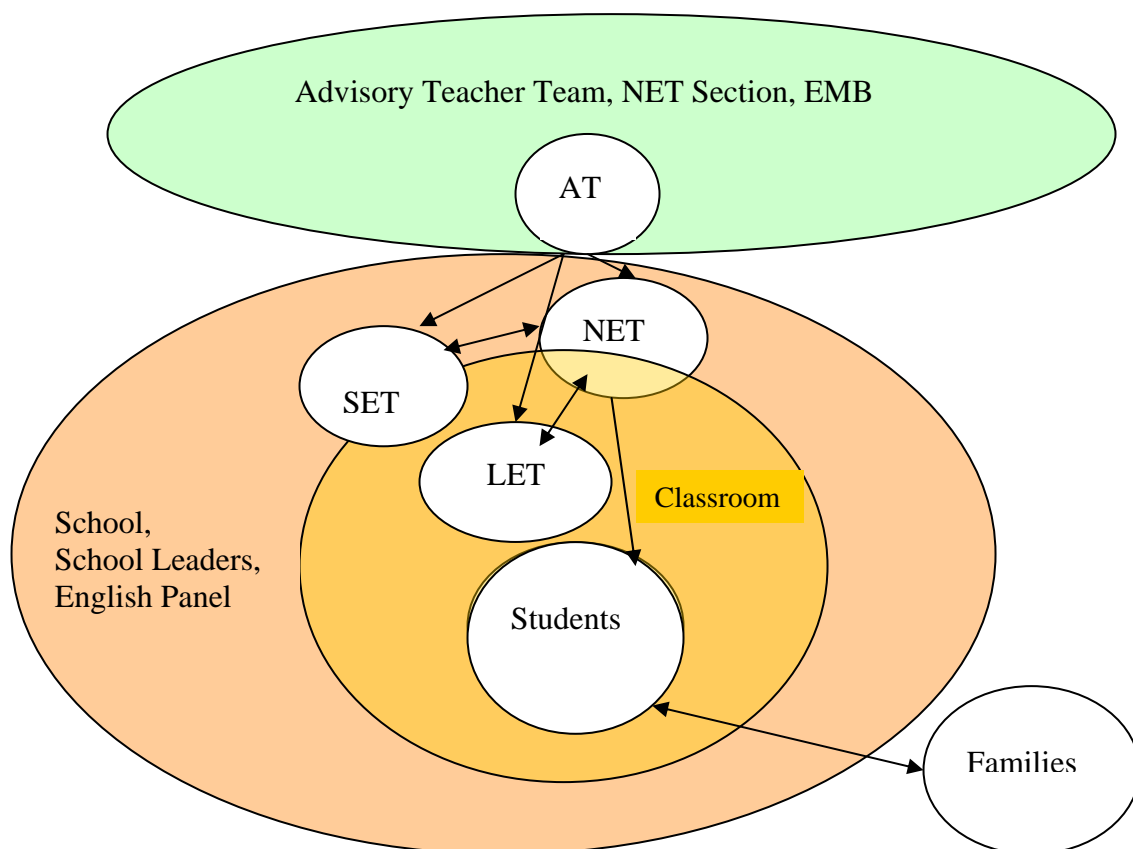


Figure 1.1. Major players in the PNET Scheme.

The intended and perceived contributions to English language learning and teaching of the system-based stakeholders (i.e., the Advisory Teacher Team and the Advisory Teachers) and of the NETs are explored in this section of the report. The role of family characteristics and support for children’s English language studies are presented in Chapter 3, while the contributions specific to classrooms and schools are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, and system-level factors are explored in Chapter 6. Differences in the patterns of deployment observed in the most and least successful schools, in terms of student achievement outcomes, are described in Chapter 7.

Advisory Teacher Team, Native-speaking English Teacher Section

For the duration of the evaluation, the Advisory Teacher Team (ATT), Native-speaking English Teacher Section at the Education and Manpower Bureau was a group of specialist educators, working under the direction of a Principal Inspector, Senior Curriculum Officer, and five Assistant Project Managers (APMs).

APMs were required to be skilled and experienced in the teaching of English and to have experience of teaching in Hong Kong schools. They were recruited on the basis of their experience in working with serving teachers. Within the PNET Scheme their role included providing support materials and professional development to teachers and developing large scale strategies to improve access to resources, particularly for the teaching of reading (the Primary Literacy Programme - Reading for Key Stage 1 was an example of this work). APMs coordinated and supervised the work of a team of Advisory Teachers (ATs) and contributed their particular expertise to the overall objectives of the ATT. The work of the ATT was also supported by an executive team.

This section presents background information on the work of the ATT, as described in interviews with the Principal Inspector and APMs, and examined through the uptake and translation of the relevant aspects of the PNET Scheme initiatives in the schools participating in the evaluation. Other aspects of the PNET Scheme and deployment of NETs, and ways that these were implemented in schools, are discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Role and Contributions of the Assistant Project Managers

In addition to their specialised contributions to the overall objectives of the PNET Scheme, the Assistant Project Managers were responsible for coordination of a team of Advisory Teachers who worked directly in schools with local English teachers (LETs), native-speaking English teachers (NETs), and the school English teachers (SETS) who were local teachers with specific responsibility for liaising with the NETs. Some of the central responsibilities undertaken by the Assistant Project Managers related to:

- Pastoral care of NETs with emphasis upon a managerial role, and visiting schools in order to provide NETs, local teachers and schools with support and guidance in their implementation of the PNET Scheme. In direct support of NETs, the APMs played a role in providing advice on managing interpersonal relationships and modelling teaching; they also dealt with NET contractual issues and any misunderstandings that occasionally arose between the NET and the school.
- Professional development, through workshops that were both centrally organised and conducted in schools. A programme of professional development for teachers was developed around a core selection of workshops (e.g., phonics, curriculum development, collaborative teaching practices), with one APM taking primary responsibility for the overall management of the programme. In 2005, the centralised workshops were opened to all local English teachers, and not restricted to those working with NETs. These workshops were valued by schools for their high quality content, and for the opportunities they provided for networking between teachers. The APMs also advised the ATs on ways to cascade good practice to local schools and teachers through school-based workshops, while remaining mindful of each school's focus and ways to adapt the programmes to fit into the requirements of the individual schools.

- Supervision and support of the work of the ATs in schools. A comprehensive operational manual was developed by the Management Team of the NET Section and supplied to the ATs, and this was used to manage understanding of the role of the AT in schools. The ATs were required to establish a valued and strategic role in the schools, and the Management Team provided guidance and support to the ATs as they developed understanding of the priorities of the individual schools, and ways to encourage a culture of collaboration and co-planning within the schools. For example, ATs were encouraged to ensure that their quarterly reports for schools were informative and useful for School Heads and that they were non judgmental.
- Support for curriculum development in schools through dissemination of ideas and strategies, organising and participating in conferences and expos, and provision of quality materials and resources such as those developed for the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading.

Role and Contribution of the Advisory Teachers

The ATT comprised both local teachers seconded from the schools and teachers who had previously worked as NETs. The role of the Advisory Teachers (ATs), as set out in the Primary NET Scheme Strategic Plan (EMB, 2005), was primarily to:

- Foster English language learning and teaching development in schools.
- Motivate students to learn English through promotion of a rich environment for English language use both inside and outside the classrooms, and development of student-centred learning and teaching.
- Promote school-based curriculum development and implementation through provision of support to English Panels and teachers.
- Raise the professional expertise of English language teachers through provision of centralised professional development workshops, support for school-based professional development sessions, and dissemination of advice and information to teachers during school visits.
- Establish communication frameworks between local primary schools and foster effective networks for exchange of ideas.
- Involve parents in supporting the objectives of the PNET Scheme through provision of information and guidance to schools on ways to establish parental support for student learning.
- Assist schools to involve stakeholders such as School Heads, sponsoring bodies and EMB personnel in supporting the objectives of the PNET Scheme.

Individual ATs were responsible for supporting the development of English language proficiency of students and fostering the positive deployment of NETs in a cluster of schools. Their intended contributions in schools included:

- Suggestion, identification and sharing of effective learning and teaching strategies and methods.
- Development and dissemination of appropriate resource materials.
- Provision of appropriate working guidelines and procedures for NETs and LETs.
- Identification and participation in relevant professional development opportunities.
- Provision of information, advice and support to schools related to optimal deployment of NETs.
- Collection of information about the implementation of the PNET Scheme in schools.
- Provision of appropriate information, advice and support to schools in the conduct of school self-evaluation of deployment of NETs.

The contributions of the ATs to the teaching and learning of English in primary schools were examined through the perceptions of the School Heads, NETs and LETs. These perceptions are summarised below.

School Heads' perceptions of the role and contributions of the ATs

In 2006, the School Heads reported an increase in the frequency of their meetings and discussions with the ATs in comparison with the previous two years of the evaluation. Over 90% of the School Heads responded that they had met on one or more occasions with their AT during the previous school term in order to discuss staff development and other matters related to the teaching of English at their school. By contrast, in 2004 almost 20% of School Heads reported that they never, or at most once per year, met with their school's AT, and in 2005 this proportion had increased to 45% of School Heads who responded that they never or only rarely met with the AT.

In 2005, 87% of School Heads reported that they wanted the AT to visit their school more frequently. In 2006, the proportion of School Heads who indicated that they would like more frequent visits by their AT had dropped to 78%. This may have reflected an improved satisfaction in the level of support and visits by ATs, in conjunction with an ongoing desire by School Heads to increase the frequency of interaction between ATs and teachers at their schools and to draw more often upon the advice and support provided by the ATs. This question was not included in the 2004 surveys.

Most of the School Heads in 2006 (94%) perceived their meetings with the AT as an integral part of their responsibility to support the professional development of English teachers at their school. This question was not asked in the 2004 and 2005 surveys.

NETs' perceptions of the role and contributions of the ATs

In 2006, most NETs (81%) met regularly and frequently with their AT to discuss lesson planning and staff development, and 53% of NETs rated these meetings as effective or very effective in terms of improving English teaching and learning at their school. By comparison, in 2004 76% of NETs responded that they met their AT on a regular basis and only 40% rated their meetings as effective. In 2005, 87% of NETs met regularly with their AT and 48% of NETs rated the meetings as effective.

In 2006, most NETs (83%) were pleased with the level of support given to them by their AT. This can be compared to 2004, when 74% of NETs gave this response, and 2005 when 89% of NETs were pleased with the support from their AT.

Ninety percent of NETs surveyed in 2006 incorporated teaching materials recommended by the AT in their classroom teaching, and 86% used teaching strategies suggested by their AT. By comparison, in 2004 73% of NETs reported that they used teaching materials suggested by the AT and 74% used strategies recommended by their AT. In 2005, 88% of NETs used AT-recommended teaching materials and 89% of NETs used AT-recommended teaching strategies. There had been a clear increase, since 2004, in the proportion of NETs who were regularly using materials and strategies supplied or suggested by their AT.

As in 2004 and 2005, most NETs in 2006 perceived the role of the AT as primarily to provide support for development of new teaching methods for English, to recommend new teaching materials, to disseminate good teaching practices, and to support co-planning and co-teaching.

Most NETs did not perceive a strong role for the AT in terms of supporting parent education programmes, providing feedback on the teaching of the local teachers, discussing curriculum content, or encouraging professional contact with teachers in other schools. These patterns of expectations were relatively stable from 2004 to 2006.

Local teachers' perceptions of the roles and contributions of the ATs

Less than 40% of 2006 local teachers (LETs and SETs) were meeting regularly with their AT, although most of the LETs who were meeting with the AT described those meetings as effective in terms of improving English teaching at their school. By comparison, approximately 60% of the 2004 local teachers and 50% of the 2005 local teachers were regularly meeting with their AT. This seemed to reflect the targeting of support from the AT to teaching at Key Stage One (KS1) level, so that the ATs were most likely to be working with the local teachers of students in P1 and P2 in each year of the study.

School English Teachers (SETs), with responsibility within schools for liaising with the NETs, were more likely than other local English teachers to meet with the AT. In 2006, 55% of SETs and 35% of LETs met their AT on a regular basis, and this pattern was consistent across the three years of the evaluation.

In 2006, 63% of LETs incorporated teaching materials recommended by their AT into classroom teaching of English, and 64% used teaching strategies suggested by their AT. This pattern was stable from 2004 to 2006.

In 2006, most LETs agreed with the NETs that the role of the AT was to support development of new teaching methods, recommend new teaching materials, disseminate good teaching practices, and support co-planning and co-teaching. These expectations had not changed from earlier years of the evaluation.

In 2004, 2005 and 2006, most LETs viewed the AT as responsible for monitoring the effective deployment of the NET in the school.

In 2006, relatively few LETs perceived a strong role for the AT in terms of supporting parent education programmes, providing feedback on the teaching of the LETs, discussing curriculum content and clarifying educational objectives, or encouraging professional contact with teachers in other schools. Similarly, in earlier years of the evaluation relatively few LETs responded that it was an important part of the AT's role to encourage professional contact with teachers in other schools, review or develop curriculum materials, or discuss curriculum content with local teachers.

In 2006, there was a relationship between the LETs' perceptions of the effectiveness of their meetings with the AT, in terms of improving English teaching at the school, and how much their students had improved in their English proficiency from P1 to P3, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. A similar relationship was not observed for students who had progressed from P2 to P4 over the three years of the evaluation.

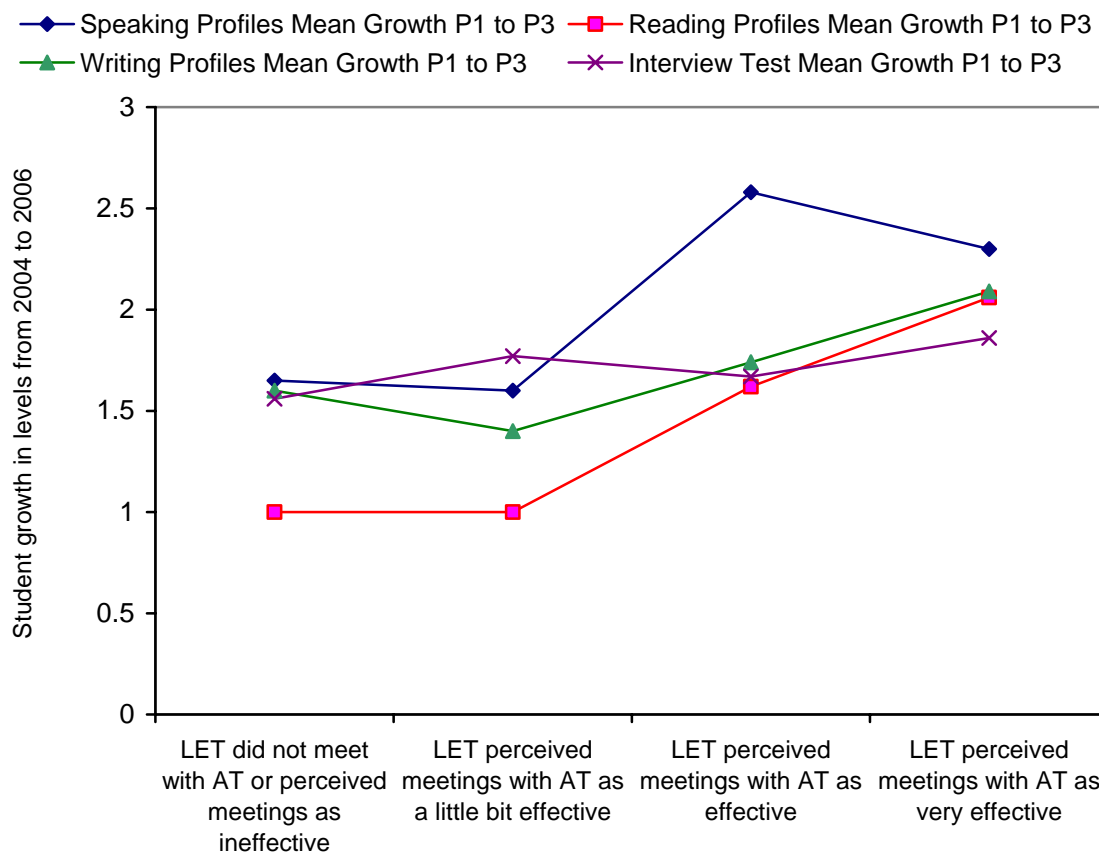


Figure 1.2. Relationships between LETs' perception of effectiveness of meetings with their AT and average improvement for the students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

Figure 1.2 illustrates that the students of LETs with more positive perceptions of the value of their meetings with their AT tended, on average, to improve more than students whose LETs did not share these positive perceptions. This was particularly noticeable in terms of the Profiles of Reading and Spoken English. When the relatively low incidence of regular contact between LETs and ATs is combined with the indications of benefits for students illustrated in Figure 1.2 of a positive relationship between LETs and ATs, there is a clear opportunity for an improvement to be made in the current implementation of the PNET Scheme. The ATs have been very successful in establishing good working relationships with the NETs, but these should be actively extended to include the LETs in more of the schools.

Relationships between NETs' perceptions of the effectiveness of meetings with their AT and P1 – P3 student outcomes were positive, but less clearly marked. This continued trends observed in 2005, indicating that the strongest teacher-based influences on student outcomes were mediated by the responsiveness of the local teachers of English to their collaboration with NETs and ATs.

Schools were visited as part of the qualitative investigation, and respondents in focus group discussions and interviews were asked about the PNET Scheme as a whole and the support of the Advisory Teaching Team.

NETS invariably spoke in positive terms about the support of the AT. Some NETs mentioned that they had offered professional development workshops in collaboration with the AT.

In discussions with LETs, the AT was rarely mentioned spontaneously, although, when prompted, LETs generally remarked in positive terms about the AT as someone whose work had supported that of the NET. Nevertheless, there were instances of LETs with negative views and NETs who had not been able to implement ideas proposed by their AT. Examples of remarks representing these views included the following:

NETs

- I think the materials provided by the ATT are very useful. I have not been able to use them because of the school culture. I don't have chance[s] to share any ideas with the English Panel. I can only talk to the teachers who are teaching the same level with me.*
- The AT's pretty good. She's come by, and she's helped a lot. She's helped me establish at least one level do co-teaching and co-planning. And more teachers show up for those meetings and contribute [because they feel] "Oh the EMB's sitting in ..."*
- I also did a PD workshop with my AT, I've had a very, very good AT who's very proactive and we have done, co-planned and presented PDs over the last two years in various aspects, asking the school what they wanted, but guiding them towards what we felt they needed and they've been good.*

LETs

- The EMB's courses are quite good. The quality of the workshops organized by the PNET Scheme is better than for those organized by other EMB's sections ... Also, there is an Advisory Teacher that can help the NET and our school. I think it is effective ... The Advisory Teacher gave us a lot of ideas and suggestion. We find it quite useful ... The Advisory Teacher also shares the experience of other schools to us. It is useful too ... The PNET Scheme can provide an opportunity, not only for us, but all the local teachers to share our teaching experience.*
- Actually, the AT has not much support to us. She held a workshop to teach us how to do guided reading, and also on classroom management. She had a demonstration on classroom management. As the NET had just arrived, the AT needed to have a demonstration for the NET ... She just talks to us at the time when she writes a report, about whether the Scheme in our school is effective or not ... I don't know what supports are given by the AT.*

Role and Contributions of the Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs)

In 2006, the expected roles and responsibilities of the NETs in primary schools (EMB, 2006) included:

- Recognition of the need to establish partnerships with the local English teachers.
- Teaching, and developing and implementing good teaching practices and curriculum materials.
- Engagement in co-planning and co-teaching with the local English teachers.
- Provision of support for the English Panel, including contributions to school-based curriculum development and school-based professional development sessions.
- Development and implementation of good learning and teaching strategies and curriculum materials.
- Development of an effective bank of resources which includes lesson plans and teaching materials.
- Organisation and conduct of extra curricular activities related to English learning and teaching.
- Attendance at monthly professional development activities organised and conducted by the ATT and dissemination of information from these activities to the English Panel.
- Sensitivity to local culture and the needs of local children.

These requirements of NETs demonstrated a development of thinking about the optimal role and contribution of NETs in schools, with some consistency and some change over the evaluation period from 2004 to 2006. In 2004 and 2005, the role of the NET was described as:

- Undertaking teaching duties and trying out good teaching models/practices related to the teaching and assessment of English.
- Organisation and conduct of extracurricular activities related to English learning and teaching.
- Provision of support for the English Panel, including school-based curriculum development and professional development, as well as preparing and developing learning and teaching materials.

- Acting as an advisor on language teaching and learning, and as a language resource person.

While the expectations of the role of the NET have remained relatively constant over the evaluation period, and the NET was tacitly expected to act as a language advisor in the schools, the 2006 deployment guidelines placed increased emphasis upon the positive role of the NET in the establishment of effective teaching partnerships with the local teachers of English, in dissemination to the English Panel of ideas from professional development and training, and engagement in co-planning and co-teaching with the local teachers. This was a positive shift in emphasis, which recognised the pivotal importance of LETs in terms of student achievement and progress that had been noted in a previous evaluation report (Griffin et al., 2005). LETs spent a great deal more time working with individual students than was possible for the NET, and so it was to be expected that their influence was fundamental in terms of student achievement. The 2006 EMB guidelines set out a role for the NET that acknowledged the importance of collaborative partnerships between the LETs and NETs, and could be expected to strengthen the capacity of LETs in the teaching of English.

The contributions of the NETs to the teaching and learning of English in primary schools were examined through the perceptions of the School Heads and LETs, as summarised below. The impact on student outcomes of NET characteristics and contributions is detailed in Chapter 4 of this report.

School Heads' perceptions of the role and contributions of the NETs

In 2006, almost 7% of the participating schools did not currently have a NET working with the students, and 67% of the students were in schools that were sharing their NET with another school. In previous years of the evaluation, all participating schools were employing a NET and almost all schools were sharing their NET with another school. The following perceptions of School Heads relate only to those schools in which a NET was deployed in the year of the evaluation.

A majority of 2006 School Heads (95%) met with the NET at their school at least once or twice per term to discuss student performance, staff development or related matters. By comparison, 90% of School Heads responded that they met with their school's NET at least once per term in 2004, and 75% of School Heads made this response in 2005.

In 2006, most School Heads perceived that the NET's role as primarily to collaborate with the local English teachers, act as an English language resource for students, encourage students to practise their English language skills, observe and discuss lessons with the LETs, organise extra-curricular activities related to the teaching of English, develop resource materials for the teaching of English, introduce new strategies for teaching English, and assist in the school-based professional development of local English teachers. Relatively few School Heads responded that it was part of the NET's role to monitor and report on the teaching of the LETs, or to monitor student progress in English. These patterns of expectations had remained stable over the evaluation period.

Five School Heads were interviewed as part of the visits to schools and qualitative investigation. The views expressed below on the role of the NET in the school were broadly representative:

- *As a foreign teacher, I expect that she can help to promote an English environment in our school so that students use more English to communicate. As she is a foreigner, I think her pronunciation is better. Her teaching method may be more active. The NET can lead the pair work and group work. Also a reading culture. That is, reading English books. Children naturally read comics or Chinese books. If we have a foreigner to come and promote the English subject, the chance for the pupils to read English book will be increased ... You can't say the NET is the leading person. After all, the NET is a member. Our teachers should be stronger ... Of course, the NET can bring some new ideas to us. We can collaborate and learn from each other ... It can't be the case that the NET comes and becomes the leader. It is impossible ... After all, our teachers know what our curriculum is. They also know what students need to learn in different learning stages. They know it better.*

As illustrated in this extract, the School Head expressed a perception of the NET as a member of the English Panel who made a valuable and specific contribution to the teaching and learning of English to complement the mainstream role of the local English teachers. In the schools investigated in this part of the evaluation, this was a common view. The NET was not perceived as taking on a leadership role except in relation to specific curricula areas where he or she had the relevant expertise or in cases where an experienced NET prepared and delivered professional development workshops for local teachers and took on a leadership role in that context.

School Heads expected NETs to contribute to the English teaching programme more as a subject 'leader' in the sense of injecting new ideas, energising teachers and helping to motivate students through interesting activities and different methodology. Such a view is summarised in the following comment from another School Head:

- *I think the teaching method is rather interesting and it... First it helps the children to arouse their interest and it also gives some insight for other teachers. So I think it's good for teacher education too. As in the lessons I observed, I think the NET teacher introduced some kind of new teaching strategies and sometimes some games, rather interesting and they can arouse the interest of the children to speak in English. And the atmosphere of the classroom is quite, quite good and they like to learn English. And by learning in such a good atmosphere, I think they can have some kind of improvement on the generic skills. In the lessons I have seen there seems to be an emphasis on collaboration, group work, activities... There are a lot of student and student interaction. This is what we are expecting in the teaching ... we ask the NET teacher to have phonic with our children, because we think that if they can have phonic skill, when they read the word they haven't seen before, they know the skills how to pronounce it. And it also helps them in the dictation and after reading the sounds may help them to keep in the mind,*

[remember] the words and it may also help them to speak in English. And so for our emphasis at first for the lower primary, we think that for the NET Scheme, we want to have her strong ability in speaking to help the children to learn to speak and also the skills in phonics.

LETs' perceptions of the role and contributions of the NET²

In 2006, LETs whose students were currently being taught by a NET responded that the central roles and responsibilities of the NET at their school were to:

- Co-plan English classes with the local teachers
- Act as a co-teacher with the local teachers of English
- Support and contribute to the classroom teaching of the local teachers
- Monitor children's interest in English
- Act as a language advisor in the school

Many LETs also considered that the NET played an important role in suggesting new ideas and teaching methods, recommending new teaching materials, and organising extracurricular activities for students related to the teaching of English.

Approximately 20% of LETs placed importance upon the NET's contribution in terms of clarifying educational objectives and discussing curriculum content with the LETs, developing curriculum materials and providing information for professional development of LETs. However, less than 10% of LETs perceived a central role for the NET in terms of providing local teachers with in-service training, arranging professional development opportunities for local teachers, or encouraging contacts with teachers in other schools, although almost half of the LETs viewed these responsibilities as activities the NET could be expected to undertake at least some of the time. It could then be asked whether, in some schools, the provision of in-service training and professional development was viewed as the role of the AT rather than the NET, and this seemed to be the case. Fifty six percent of LETs responded that their AT was taking a leading role in the provision of professional development, with the NET providing some support for these activities in the school.

NETs in 2006 varied in the amount of time they spent per week working with individual classes of students, and this was related to the size of the school, whether or not the NET was working in one or two schools, and the age group of students, with most NETs spending more time working with students at P1 and P2 level.

² The LETs' perceptions of the contributions of the NET in their school described only the responses of LETs whose students were currently being taught by a NET.

In some schools, NETs spent no more than one hour per week working with any one class, with an average for the NETs of two and a half hours spent with each class across all schools and classes. The NETs spent an average of 14 hours per week co-teaching with the LETs, but this could range from one to 30 hours for individual NETs.

From the perspective of the LETs, some LETs co-taught every lesson with their NET while others did not co-teach with the NET at all. This was related to the size of the school and whether or not the NET was deployed in two schools. Similarly, some LETs met with their NET more than ten times per month to discuss student performance, lesson planning and other related matters, while other LETs did not have opportunities to meet with their NET. Again, the frequency of meetings between NET and individual LETs was related to the size of the school, deployment of the NET across one or two schools, and whether or not the NET was currently teaching the students of the individual LET.

Figures 1.3 and 1.4 illustrate change and continuity over time in terms of frequency of co-teaching and meetings between NETs and LETs for those LETs whose students were being taught by a NET.

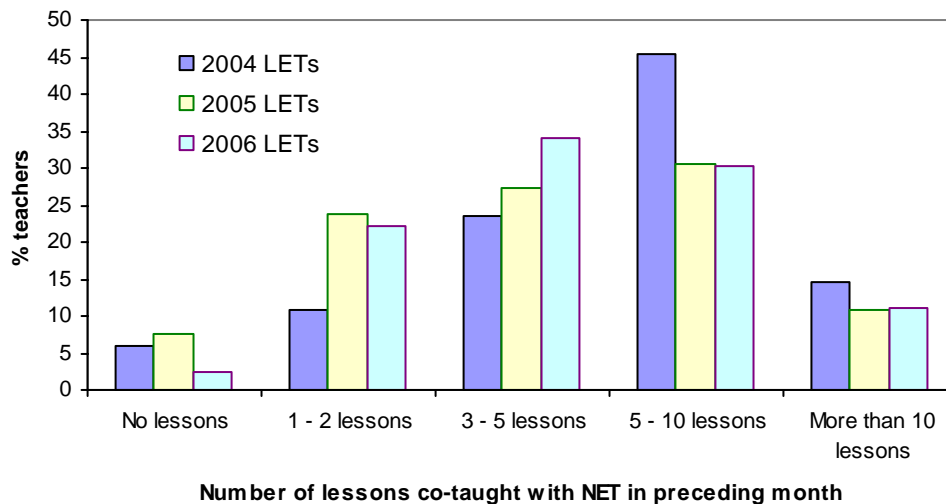


Figure 1.3. Comparison of LETs' perception of frequency of co-teaching with NETs in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

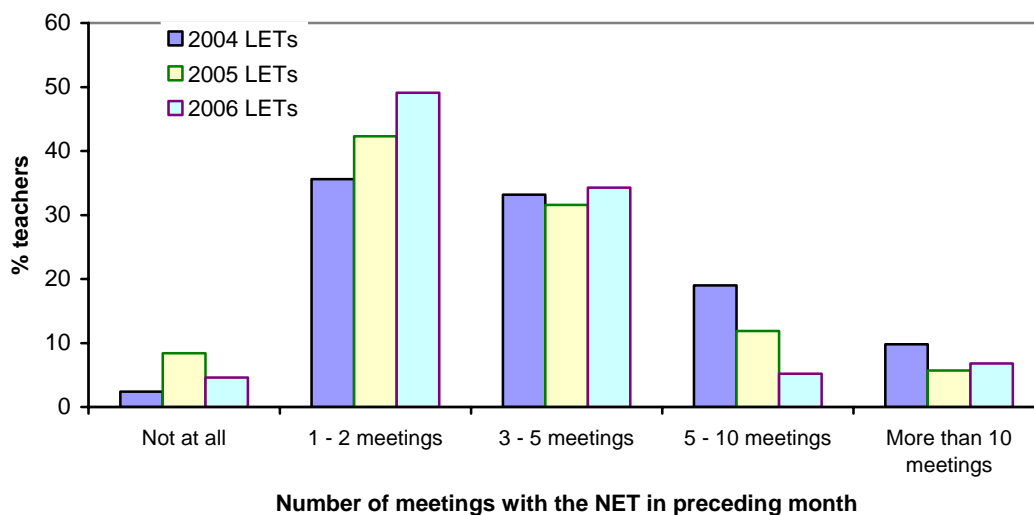


Figure 1.4. Comparison of LETs' perception of frequency of meetings with NETs in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Immediately apparent in these graphs is the drop in frequency of co-teaching with a NET for individual LETs over the period of the evaluation, and a corresponding shift to fewer meetings between NET and LETs. This is puzzling. It seems that a shift towards emphasis upon co-teaching, co-planning and collaboration between NETs and LETs in the deployment guidelines for NETs corresponded to individual LETs actually experiencing less frequent interaction with the NET at their schools.

Although Figures 1.3 and 1.4 compare only the frequency of co-teaching and meetings between NETs and those LETs whose students were being taught by a NET in that school year, it was possible that the inclusion in the 2005 and 2006 samples of LETs who were teaching P3 and P4 students, compared with the 2004 sample in which all LETs were teaching either P1 or P2 students, may have contributed to the differences in LETs' perceptions. Figures 1.5 and 1.6 illustrate comparisons of the frequency of co-teaching and meetings between NETs and LETs of only P1 and P2 students in 2004 and 2006.

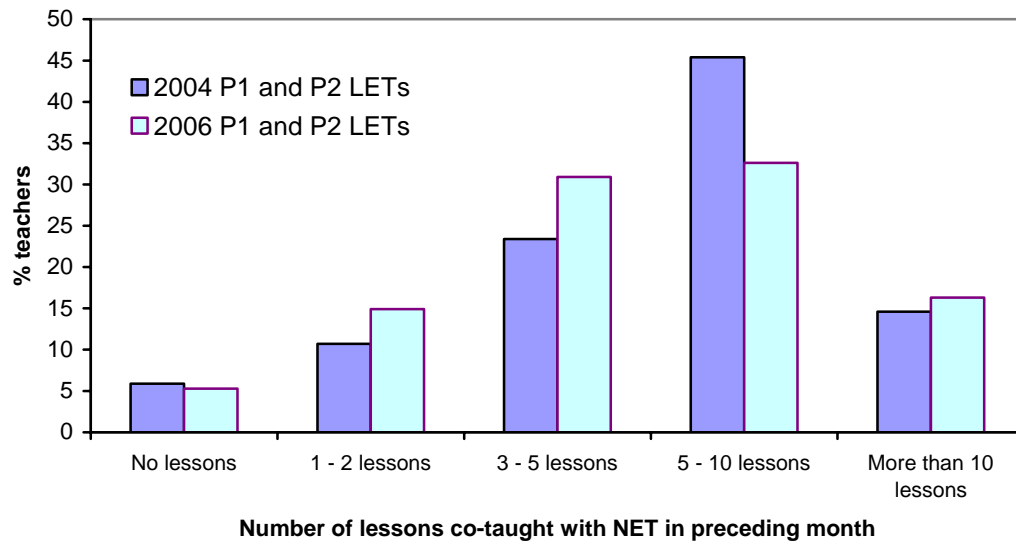


Figure 1.5. Comparison of P1/P2 LETs' perception of frequency of co-teaching with NETs in 2004 and 2006.

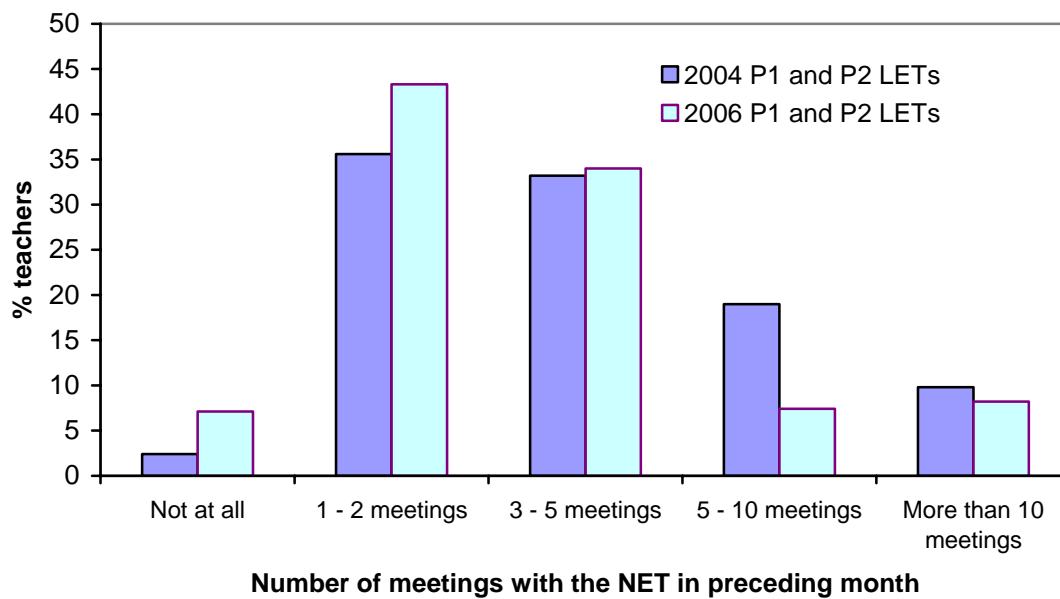


Figure 1.6. Comparison of P1/P2 LETs' perception of frequency of meetings with NETs in 2004 and 2006.

Figure 1.5 shows that more of the 2004 P1/P2 LETs were co-teaching with a NET for five or more lessons per month (or more than one lesson per week), when compared with their counterparts in 2006. Similarly, the 2004 LETs of P1/P2 students were more likely than their 2006 counterparts to meet more than five times per month (or more than once per week) with their school NET.

Of more importance than student year level for the frequency of co-teaching and meetings between NETs and LETs was the sharing of NETs across two schools. In previous years of the evaluation, teachers had cited the sharing of a NET as a major barrier to their ability to meet the ideals of the PNET Scheme. These relationships are summarised as follows, and illustrated in Figures 1.7 and 1.8:

In 2006 the LETs in schools that shared a NET with another school were twice as likely to say that they did not co-teach with their NET at all in the previous month, or that they had only been able to co-teach one or two lessons with their NET.

LETs in schools with their own NET were three times as likely to have co-taught ten or more lessons with the NET in the previous month.

LETs in schools that shared a NET were almost twice as likely to say that there were no meetings in the previous month, and much less likely than LETs in schools with their own NET to say that they had met more than five times per month.

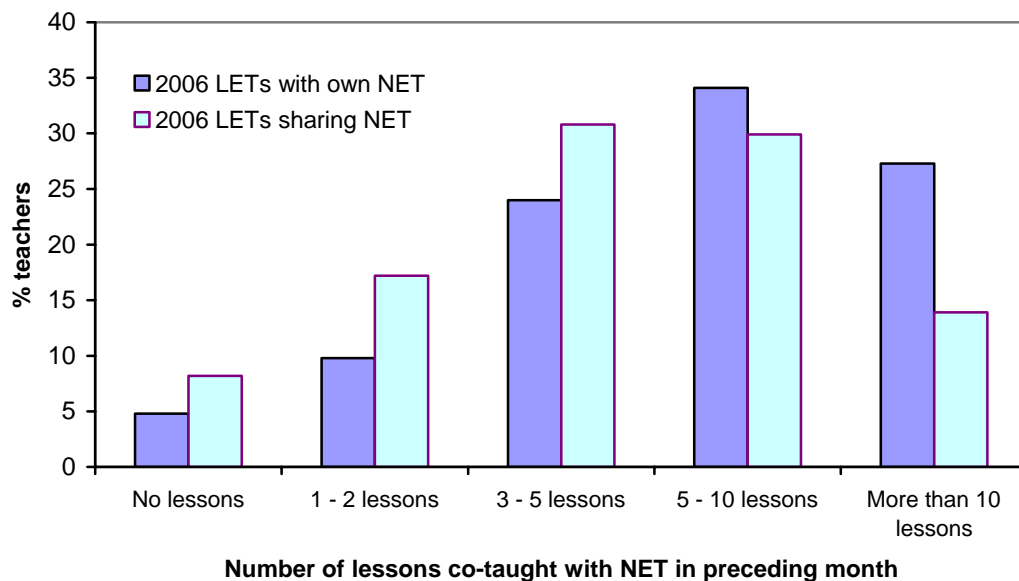


Figure 1.7. Comparison of LETs' perception of frequency of co-teaching with NETs in schools with own NET and schools sharing a NET.

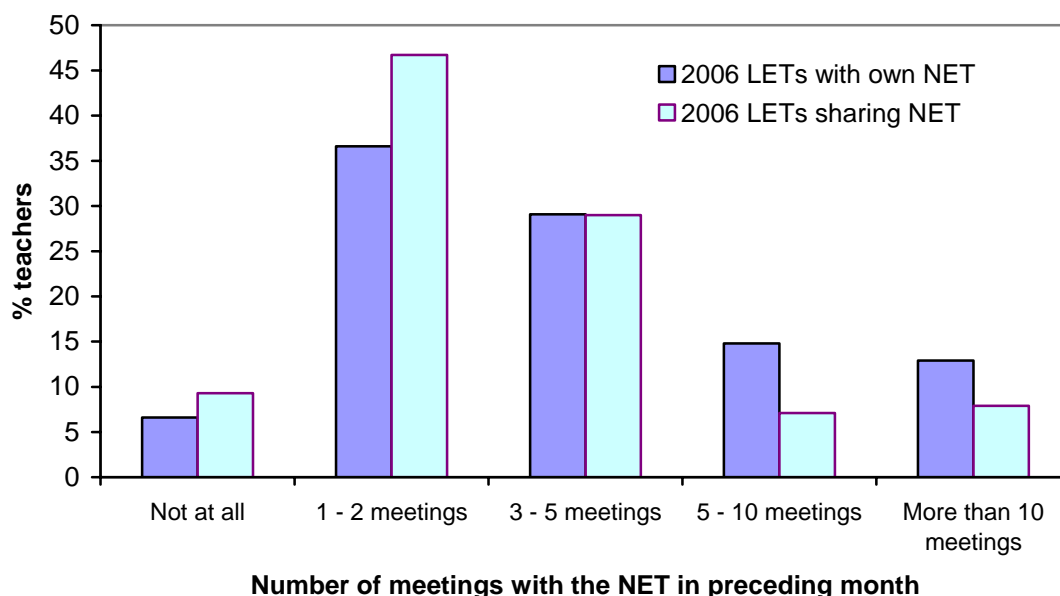


Figure 1.8. Comparison of LETs' perception of frequency of meetings with NETs in schools with own NET and schools sharing a NET.

Local teachers described their experience of working with NETs in interviews conducted during visits to schools. It was apparent that while LETs had general expectations of the role of the NET in enhancement of the language environment, providing a focus on reading and Phonics, introducing new teaching methods, and engagement in extra-curricular activities, additional roles were often taken up by individual NETs which were generally highly appreciated. Some examples of the comments LETs made are included below:

- *I cooperate with the NET in the extra-curricular activities ... generally speaking, the NET brings a more global perspective input into the group, maybe our vision is localized ... the NET can introduce students with something about her home country, about her culture ... then, the students' interest in learning increases as they find the things interesting. We organized a large-scale activity in Halloween and thus we can introduce western culture to the students.*
- *The NET can help me since BCA has a lot of vocabulary, it is not enough if we just base on the textbook ... she can also help students in listening. The reason is that students always listen to her speaking in English.*
- *The NET can help students to prepare for the BCA since students can talk to the NET in a real environment. The sound and pronunciation of the NET are different with us. Students can listen to a speaking by a real foreigner.*

- *The NET can help to create a language environment. Basically, when students see the NET, they have to speak in English since the NET will not talk to you in Cantonese. Thus, students can master the requirement of the curriculum.*
- *I have prepared some materials for P1 students ... the NET was very helpful. For example, in Phonics, the NET made some PowerPoint which helped reinforce students' understanding of the letters. He also prepared some photos for teaching vocabulary so as to arouse students' interest in learning ... Besides, he prepared some Phonics materials.*
- *Take P1 for example, NET usually teach the area on reading and phonetic. For the grammar and the rest in the content of the textbook, it will be taught by the local teacher.*
- *For our case, the NET mainly focuses on reading ... and may teach some vocabulary ... The teaching method of the NET is very different from the local teacher. The NET stresses that students must learn some basic things and ignores the textbook. For instance, when the NET started to teach P1, he taught students to use their fingers to point at the words ... he teaches a lot of pronunciation and thinks that it's very important, he teaches it whenever possible. The NET thinks that if students don't know phonics, they cannot learn words.*

LETs who were sharing a NET with another school invariably recommended having a single NET dedicated to working in their school. There were NETs who were content to teach in two schools, the reasons for their satisfaction included being able to experience two different school cultures, and the fact that they had developed a coping strategy for using similar resources in both schools which reduced the workload. There were also NETs who looked forward to a future one-NET-one-school allocation and recounted some of the disadvantages of the base school-partner school mode of operation:

- *Well, it's difficult to get a sort of a continuum in what you are doing. I mean I quite like working in the two schools because you see two different pictures of how things are working. But as far as continuity of the programme, it is difficult because you rely on the teachers and the classroom teaching assistants when you're not there. And I mean they do a fabulous job I'm not criticizing them but when you come back again, you have to pick up every week you're picking, picking up again rather than having a real feel for what's going on.*
- *Oh, yes and I have colleagues who work AM/PM, and they are actually in the same building and that works. But my schools are... occasionally I've had to travel to a meeting at the other school when I've been here. And it's an hour, hour and a half between schools... But it's mainly the logistics of being able to do a whole job in half the time. The first year I was here I actually worked half a week in each school. That was mega stressful. But the Principal, my employing Principal wanted weekly contact for his children with the NET. I could understand what he was getting at but three days in one school, two days in the other, then swap the Wednesdays the second term. It was mind blowing.*

Summary

This chapter presented the background to the evaluation of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme for Primary Schools in Hong Kong (PNET Scheme), the design of the study, an overview of the PNET Scheme and description of intended and perceived roles and responsibilities of major players in the Scheme.

Despite an increased emphasis placed on upon co-teaching, co-planning and collaboration between NETs and LETs in the deployment guidelines for NETs, individual LETs reported a decrease in frequency of interaction with the NET at their schools in 2006. This was most evident in schools that were sharing a NET.

Evidence was presented of positive benefits for students when their local teachers of English (LETs) had formed supportive working relationships with the Advisory Teacher (AT) assigned to the school. The ATs had clearly developed strong and positive relationships with the NETs in most schools, and most of the NETs valued the support of the ATs, but in many schools this had not been extended to include the LETs. This offered an opportunity for the NET Section and the ATs to effect improvements in the PNET Scheme.

Chapter Two: Student Achievement and Attitudes

The Language Assessment Instrument

All assessment instruments were designed to be administered with minimum disruption to teaching and maximum teacher input. They were relatively short, but provided sufficient information to gain profiles of proficiency.

Profiles in English as a Second Language

The *Profiles in English as a Second Language* (Griffin, Smith & Martin, 2003) were descriptive scales that illustrated progress in learning English. They involved direct observation of student behaviours from which teachers inferred progress in learning and recorded their inference in terms of the descriptions provided in the profiles. They provided a common reference frame for teachers to talk about student learning. These features indicated that the *Profiles in English as a Second Language* were expected to foster cooperation and collaboration between NETs and local teachers.

Interview Test of English Language

The *Interview Test of English Language (ITEL)* (Griffin, Tomlinson, Martin, Adams & Storey, 2003) continued work that began two decades ago with the design of a test to support the placement needs of the British Council in Hong Kong and then extended to the development of a parallel test for the migrant education services in Australia.

The test was published by Profiles Publishing International, and a licence was obtained for its use in the Hong Kong project. It had been shown to support a variety of English language programmes offered in a range of settings; these included its use in the refinement of teachers' broad assessments of students on language proficiency scales (e.g., The International Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ISLPR) and the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages Proficiency descriptions (ACTFL)).

Background Questionnaires

The sample design was a multi stage, cluster sample. Stages were identified as schools, classes and students. While the unit of analysis in the study was the student, schools and classes were also sampled as contextual variables as well as units of analysis in their own right.

Data on the school and class as indicators of the context of learning were collected using questionnaires for School Heads (for the school context), teachers - both local teachers and NETs (for the class context), students and parents at the student level, but parent data were also collected to examine the family context of learning. The items included in these questionnaires were determined in consultation with representatives of the Hong Kong

government, teacher education specialists and content area specialists in attempts to rationalise the policy development as a basis for the contextual items. The items and questionnaires were designed to supply the data for links to curriculum, resources, school policy and leadership and process variables to examine differences between student and school level outcome measures. Questionnaires encompassed:

- a student attitude questionnaire administered in Chinese;
- a parent questionnaire, administered in Chinese, addressing attitudes to and practices in English and to the PNET Scheme as well as other home background factors considered to be influential to the development of English proficiency;
- a NET questionnaire on matters related to experience and training, teaching practices, resources and beliefs about teaching English and attitudes towards the PNET Scheme;
- a local teacher (SET and LET) questionnaire covering aspects of experience and training, teaching practices, resources and beliefs about teaching English and attitudes towards the PNET Scheme; and
- a school principal questionnaire related to school implementation and leadership with regard to language education, professional development and resources, as well as attitudes to the PNET Scheme.

What percentages of students reached the different levels of student achievement in 2006 and how do these compare to student outcomes in 2004 and 2005?

In 2006, 1436 P1 students, 1741 P2 students, 1208 P3 students and 1535 P4 students participated in the evaluation study. Boys and girls were relatively equally represented in the sample and at each year level (51% of sampled students were boys).¹

Most of the students had limited opportunities to practise English outside school, and there had been a shift in 2006 towards higher proportions of students entering P1 from homes in which English was never spoken. The impact of home background characteristics on student proficiency in English is presented in detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

¹ Statistical weighting procedures were used to correct for sampling so that the analyses could be generalised to the target population of students in Hong Kong primary schools where Native English-speaking Teachers (NETs) were currently deployed. This process was described in the technical appendix to the 2005 evaluation report (Griffin et al., 2005). All reported analyses refer to weighted statistics.

Student Achievement in Reading in English

Student proficiency in reading English was assessed against the *Profiles in English as a Second Language* (Griffin et al., 2003). In 2006, the students could be described in terms of seven distinctive levels of proficiency in reading English, as shown in Table 1.1.²

Table 2.1 *Reading Profile Levels*

| Level | Reading Profile Level Description |
|------------------------------|--|
| Literate 5 | Reads independently. Can perform a range of functions using reading skills |
| Literate 4 | Able to interpret different sorts of texts. Makes responses to texts. Can recognize word order in familiar texts |
| Literate 3 | Demonstrates various methods of developing reading skills |
| Literate 2 | Relies heavily on teacher support to establish meaning in a text. Can read a well-known text with support. Knows how to assist own development of literacy in English |
| Preliterate C/ Literate 1 | Has a sign vocabulary in English. Relies on illustrations to gain meaning from a text. Recognizes some words in English. Participates in reading activities. |
| Preliterate B | Can recognise some environmental print. Needs extensive support to understand a very simple text. Can read back own writing. |
| Preliterate A | New to English and new to literacy. Relies heavily on illustrations to support a text. Understands the organisation of print in English. Can recognise and name some letters |

Figure 2.1 presents the distribution of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students across levels on the reading profiles in 2006. An expected developmental trajectory from P1 to P4 is illustrated in the chart, with increasing proportions of students capable of reading independently in English in higher year levels. In P1, almost 30% of students were at the lowest levels on the reading scale – needing extensive support from their teachers to read simple text in English. By P4, only 8% of students were assessed at these lowest levels of reading proficiency, and over 60% of the students were reading in English independently and competently.

² In 2004 and 2005, it had been observed that student performance on *Preliterate Level C* and *Literate Level 1* of the Reading Profiles overlapped, and so these levels were combined to describe the reading proficiency of students. The observed developmental progression on the Reading Profiles was presented in detail in the technical appendix to the 2005 report (Griffin et al., 2005).

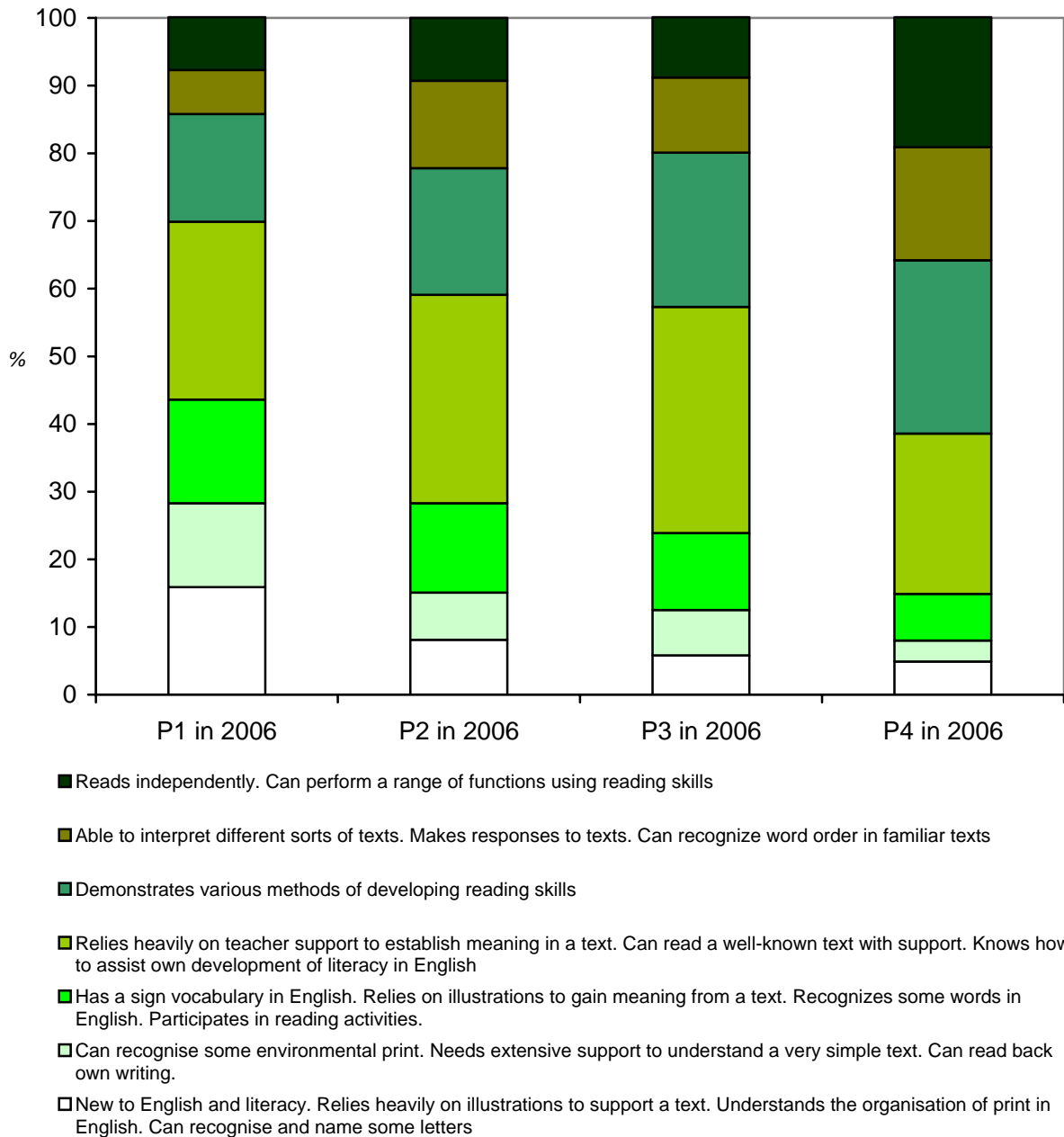


Figure 2.1. Proportion of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students at each level on the Reading Profile scale in 2006.

Growth in Student Proficiency in Reading English from 2004 to 2006

Student proficiency in reading English was tracked longitudinally from 2004 to 2006, as the same students progressed from P1 to P3, or from P2 to P4, across the three years of the evaluation study. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate the strong patterns of improvement in performance for students in both cohorts as they moved to higher year levels.

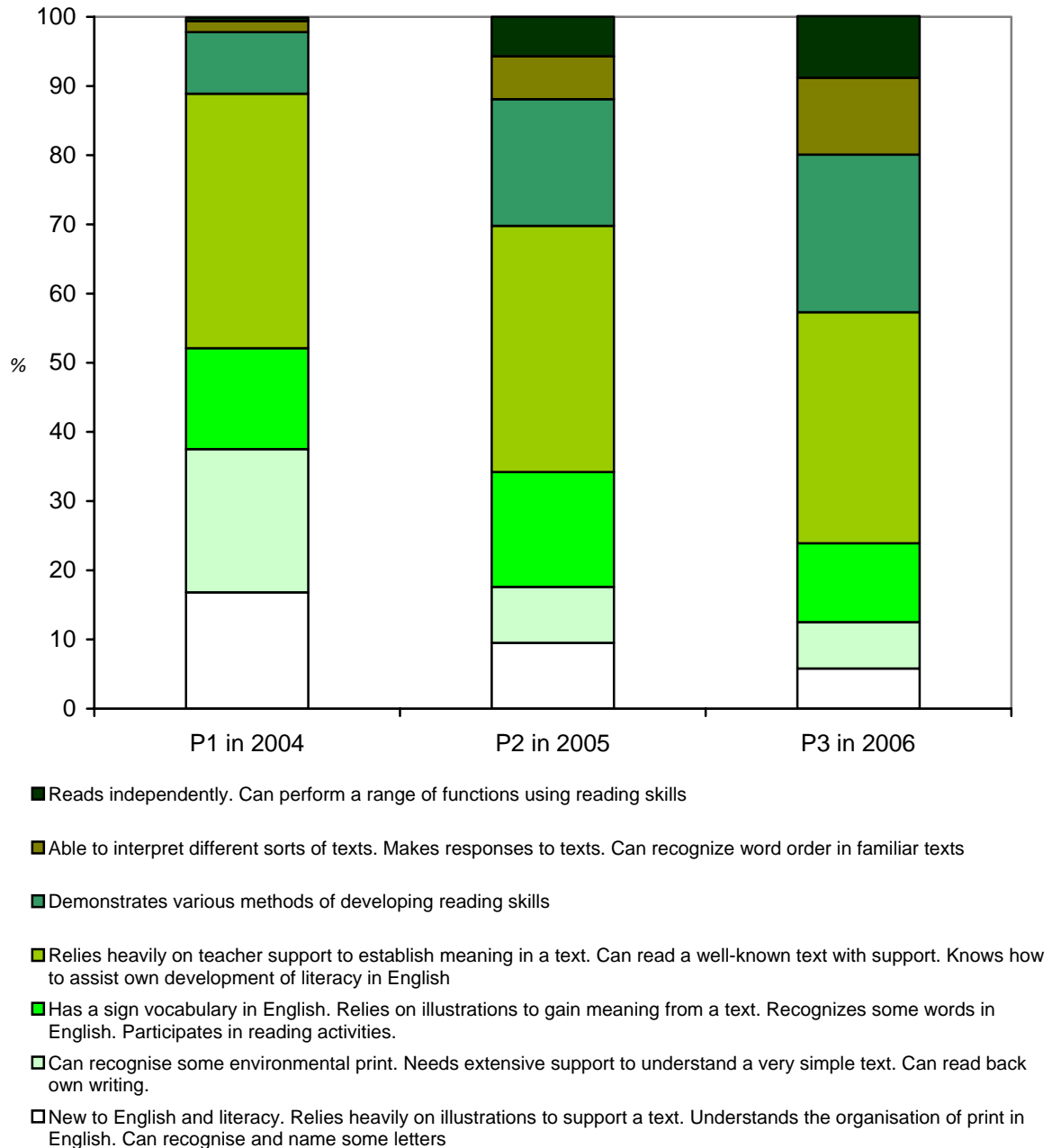


Figure 2.2. Longitudinal change in student achievement outcomes in reading English for students who were in P1 in 2004, P2 in 2005 and P3 in 2006.

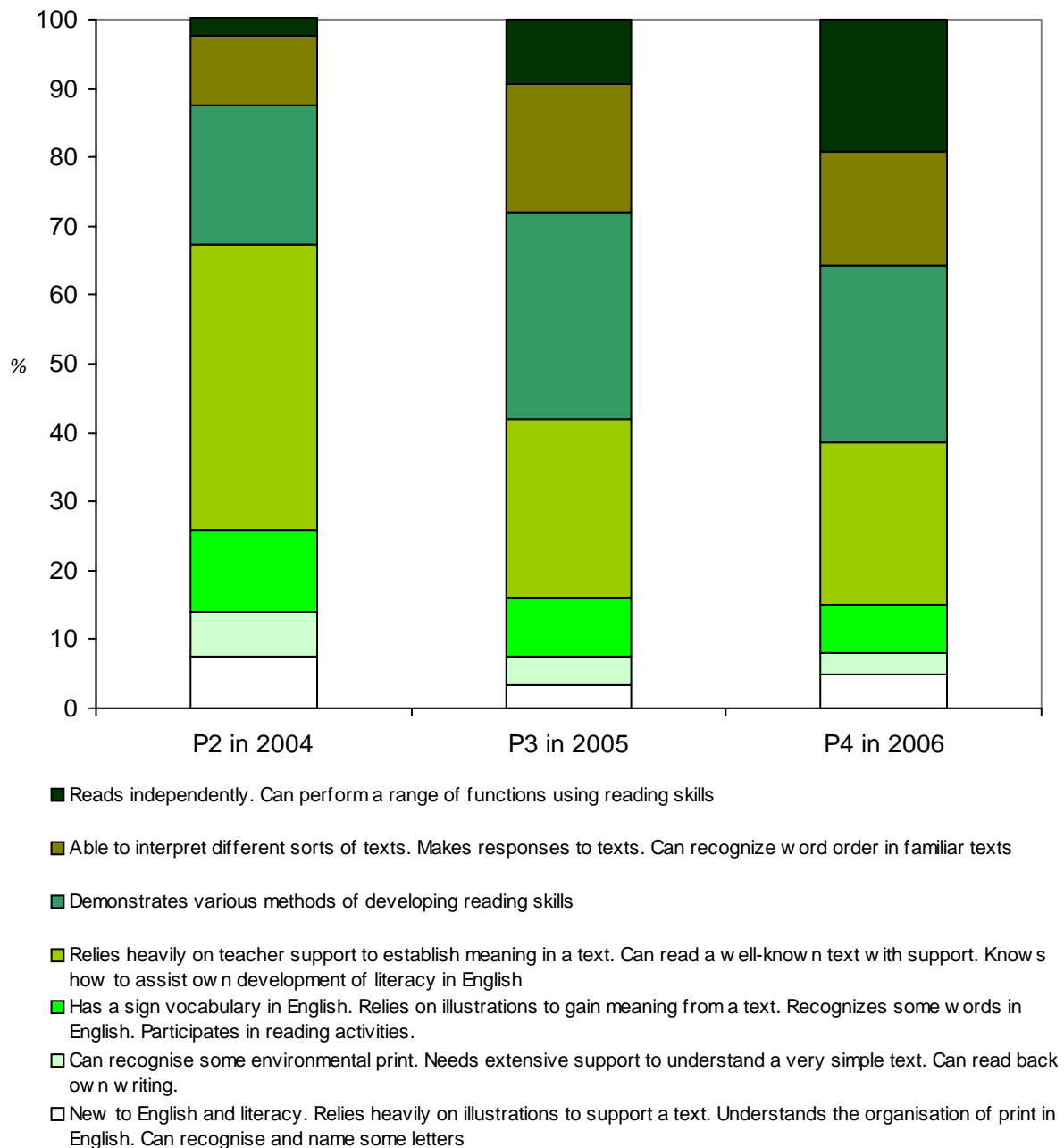


Figure 2.3. Longitudinal change in student achievement outcomes in reading English for students who were in P2 in 2004, P3 in 2005 and P4 in 2006.

Patterns of Change in Student Reading Achievement from 2004 to 2006

A cross-sectional analysis compared outcomes in English reading proficiency for:

- P1 students in 2006 with those of P1 students in 2004 and 2005;
- P2 students in 2006 and P2 students in 2004 and 2005; and
- P3 students in 2006 and P3 students in 2005.

Comparisons of student reading proficiency are illustrated in Figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 respectively for cohorts of students in P1, P2 and P3 across the years of the evaluation.

- In 2006, more P1 and P2 students demonstrated higher levels of reading proficiency in English than in previous years.
- P3 students demonstrated a higher level of reading proficiency in 2005 than 2006.

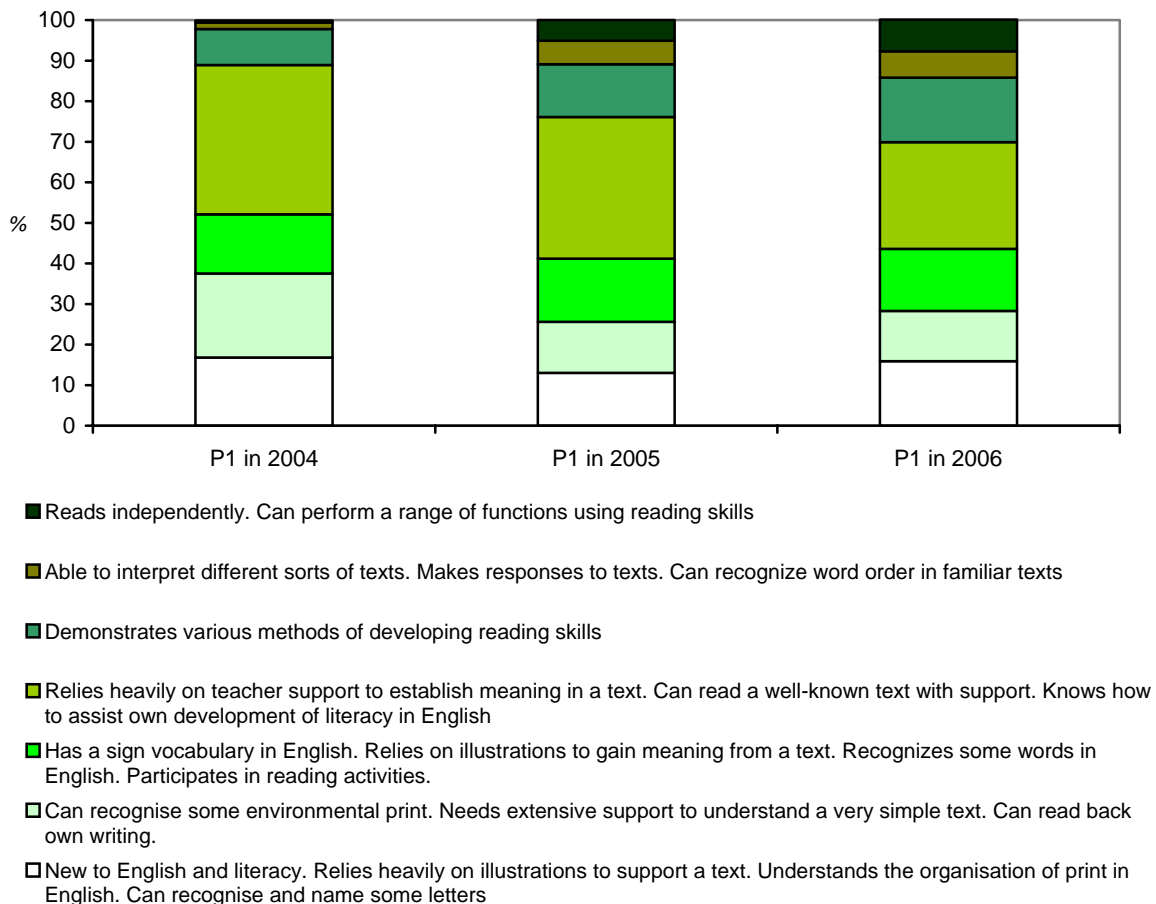


Figure 2.4. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in reading English for P1 students in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

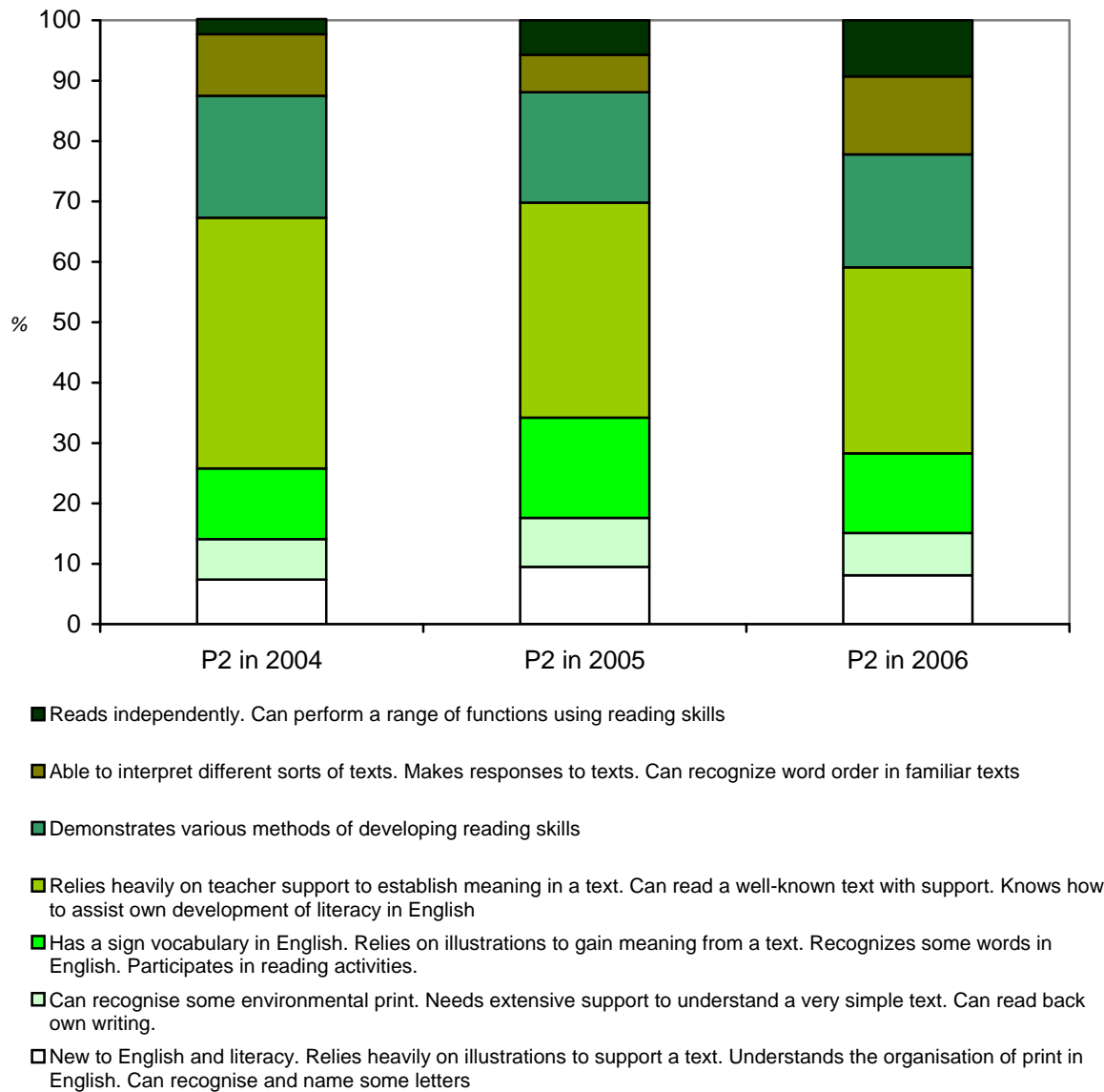


Figure 2.5. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in reading English for P2 students in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

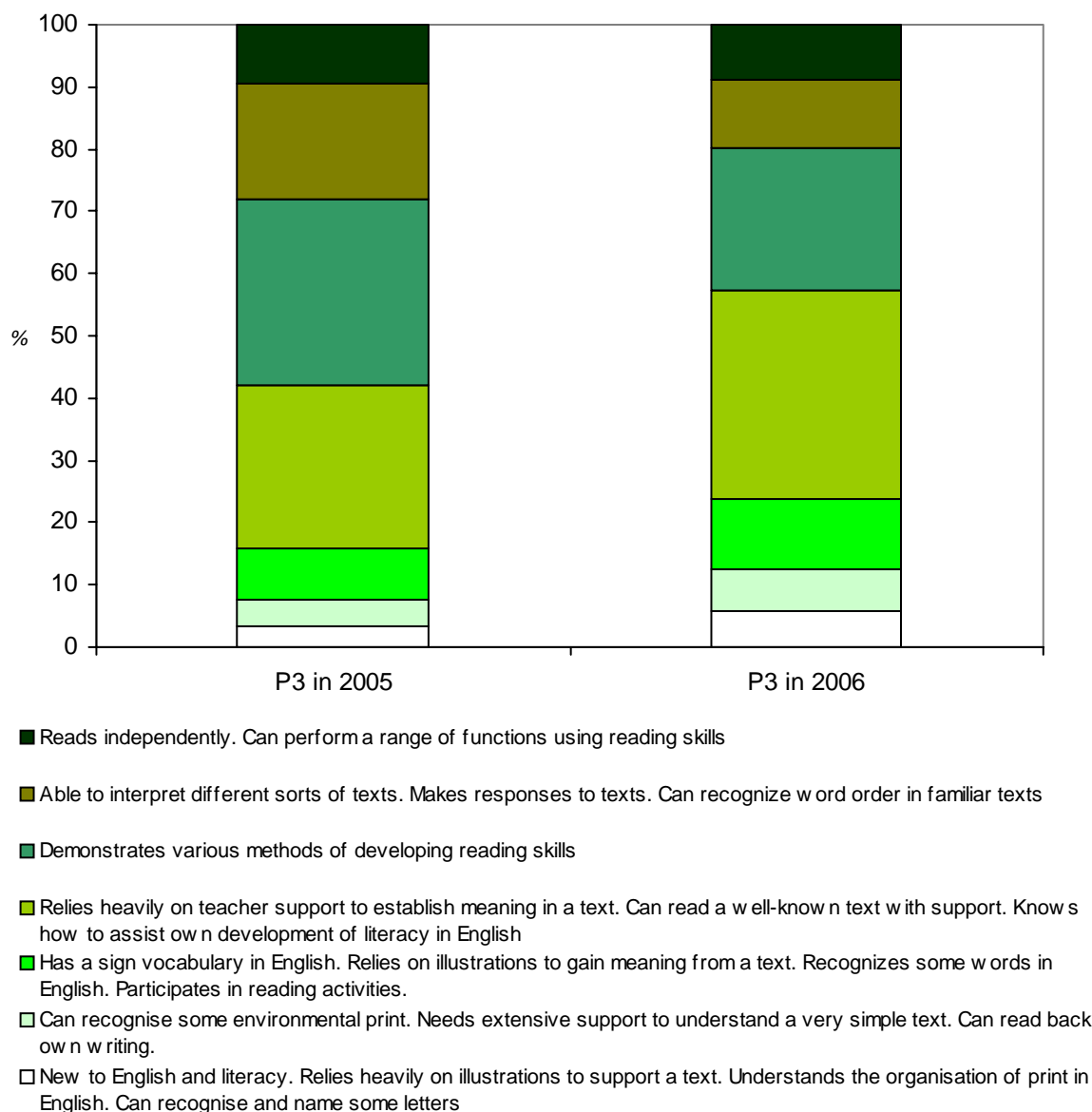


Figure 2.6. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in reading English for P3 students in 2005 and 2006.

Student Achievement in Written English

Students were described in terms of eight levels of student proficiency in written English, as shown in Table 2.2.³

Table 2.2 *Writing Profile Levels*

| Level | Writing Profile Level Description |
|------------------------------|--|
| Level 6 | Writing shows flexibility, adaptability and variety. |
| Level 5 | Writing shows increasing control of structure and genre |
| Literate 4 | Growing proficiency in English means command of a wider vocabulary and more complex structures to use in writing. Expands vocabulary through many different sources |
| Literate 3 | Can write for different purposes. Uses a restricted range of structures and vocabulary |
| Literate 2 | Can write simple sentences. Correlation between written and oral structures and vocabulary. Consciously seeks to increase range of vocabulary and structures for writing |
| Preliterate C/ Literate 1 | Writing shows greater physical control. Grasp of story form. Some attempts at conventional spelling. Supports writing using illustrations. |
| Preliterate B | Recognizes and attempts to reproduce some words, spoken structures reflected in writing. |
| Preliterate A | New to literacy in English. Relies heavily on pictures and illustrations to communicate |

Figure 2.7 presents the distribution of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students across levels of proficiency in written English. A developmental progression in proficiency in written English is illustrated in the chart, with almost 40% of P1 students at the lowest levels on the scale – simply able to recognise and attempt to reproduce some words in English. By P4, less than 8% of students were described at these lowest levels of proficiency in written English.

³ As for the Reading Profiles, it was observed in 2004 and 2005 that *Preliterate Level C* and *Literate Level 1* of the Writing Profiles overlapped, and so these levels were combined to describe the writing proficiency of students. The observed developmental progression on the Writing Profiles was presented in detail in the technical appendix to the 2005 report (Griffin et al., 2005).

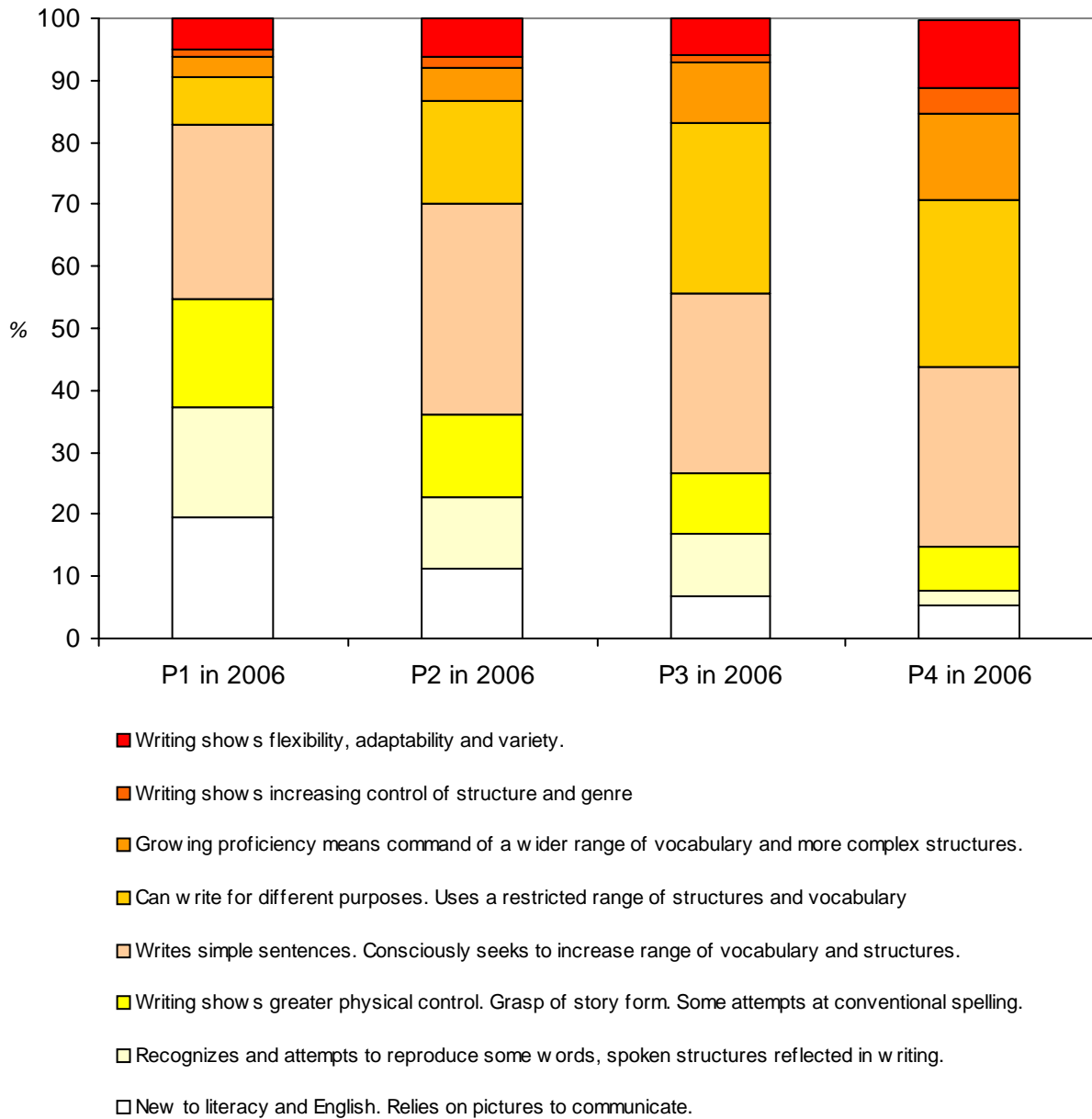


Figure 2.7. Proportion of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students at each level of proficiency in written English in 2006.

Growth in Student Proficiency in Written English from 2004 to 2006

Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show the longitudinal patterns of growth for students progressing from P1 to P3 or from P2 to P4 across the three years of evaluation.

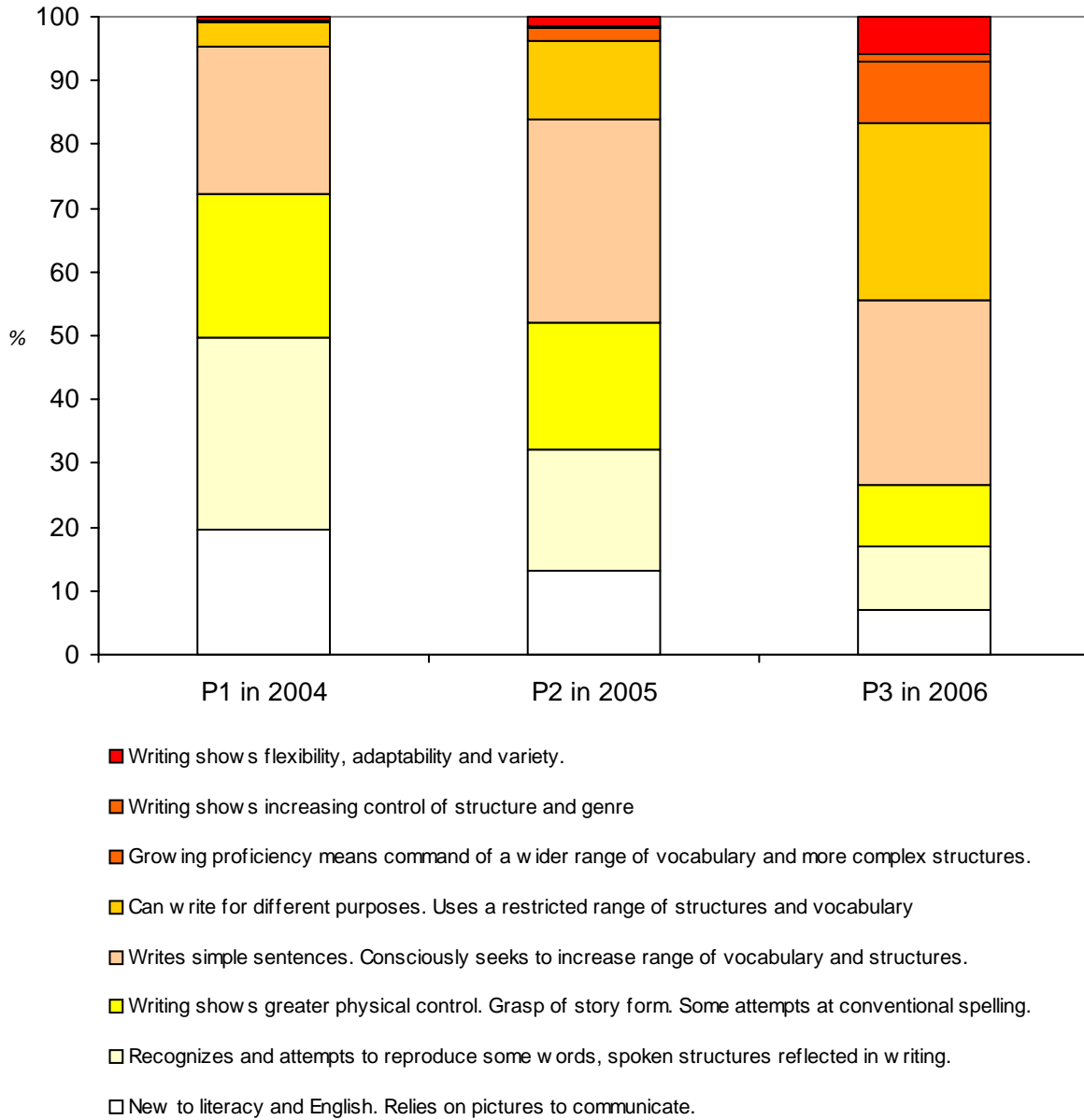


Figure 2.8. Longitudinal change in student achievement outcomes in written English for students in P1 in 2004, P2 in 2005 and P3 in 2006.

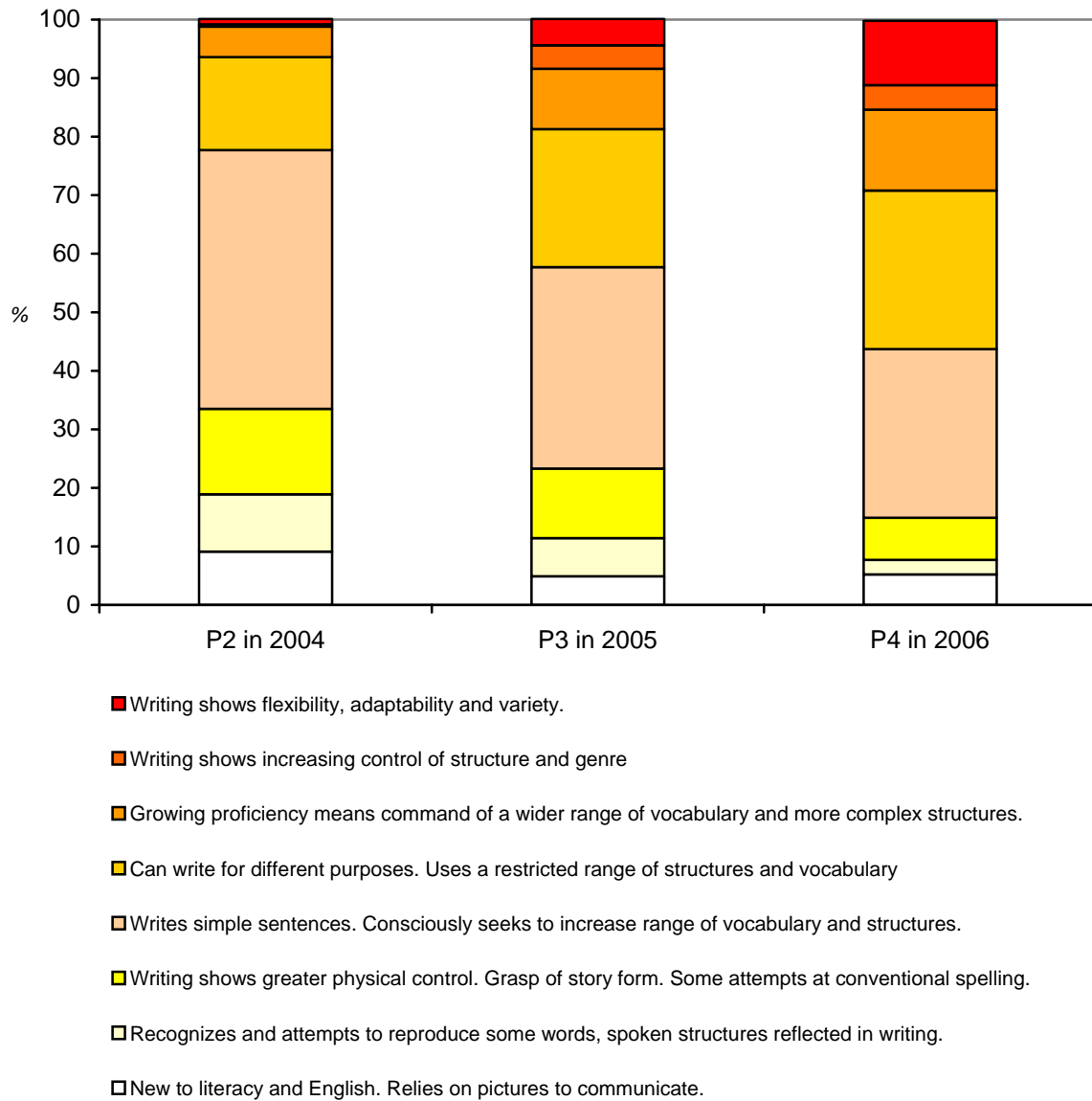


Figure 2.9. Longitudinal change in student achievement outcomes in written English for students in P2 in 2004, P3 in 2005 and P4 in 2006.

Patterns of Change in Student Proficiency in Written English from 2004 to 2006

Patterns of achievement in written English were compared for cohorts of students in P1, P2 and P3 respectively, across the years of the evaluation. These patterns are illustrated in Figures 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12.

- In P1, more students were at higher levels on the scale of written English in 2005 and 2006 than in 2004.
- In P2, more students were at higher levels of proficiency in 2006 than in previous years.
- Proficiency in written English was stable across 2005 and 2006 for P3 students.

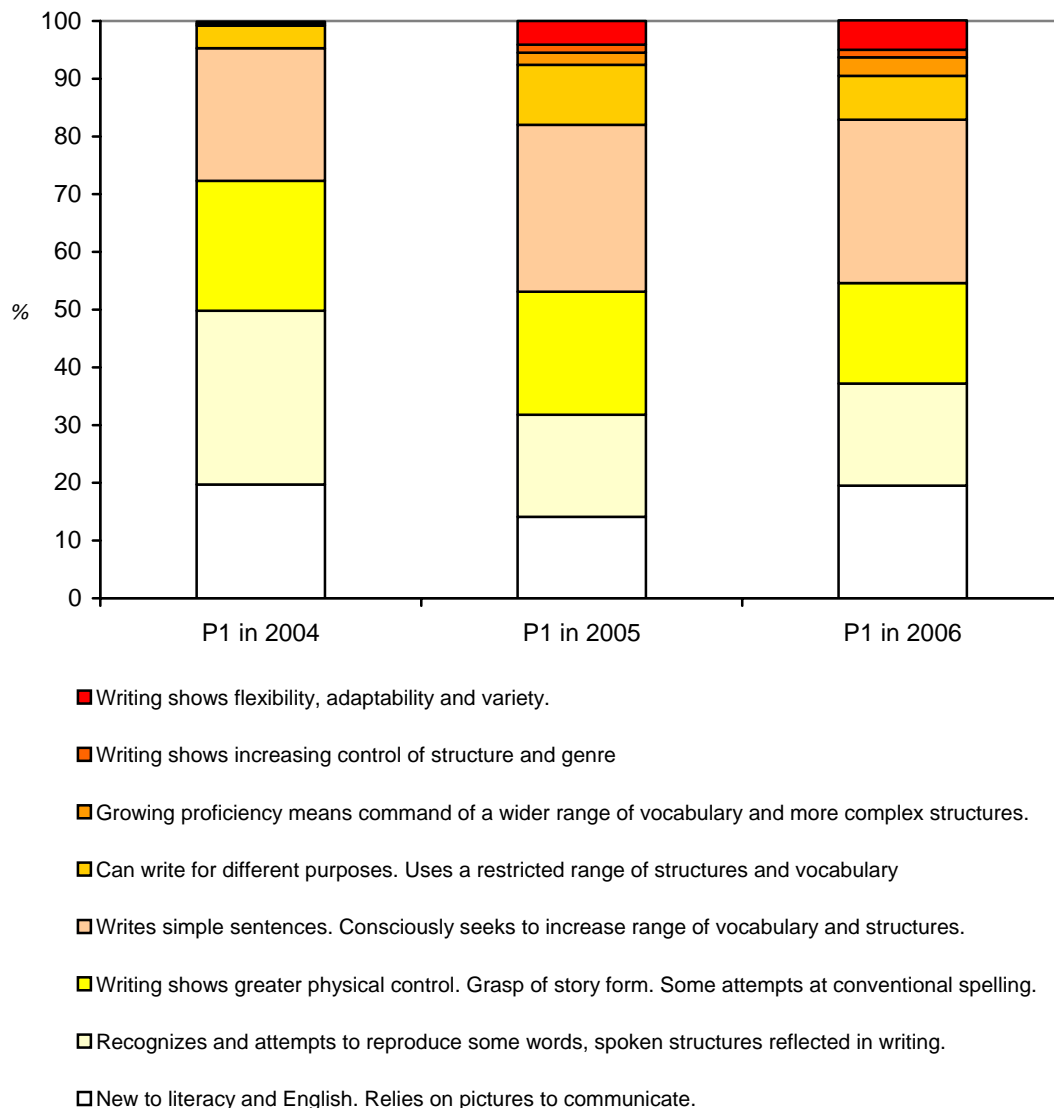


Figure 2.10. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in written English for P1 students in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

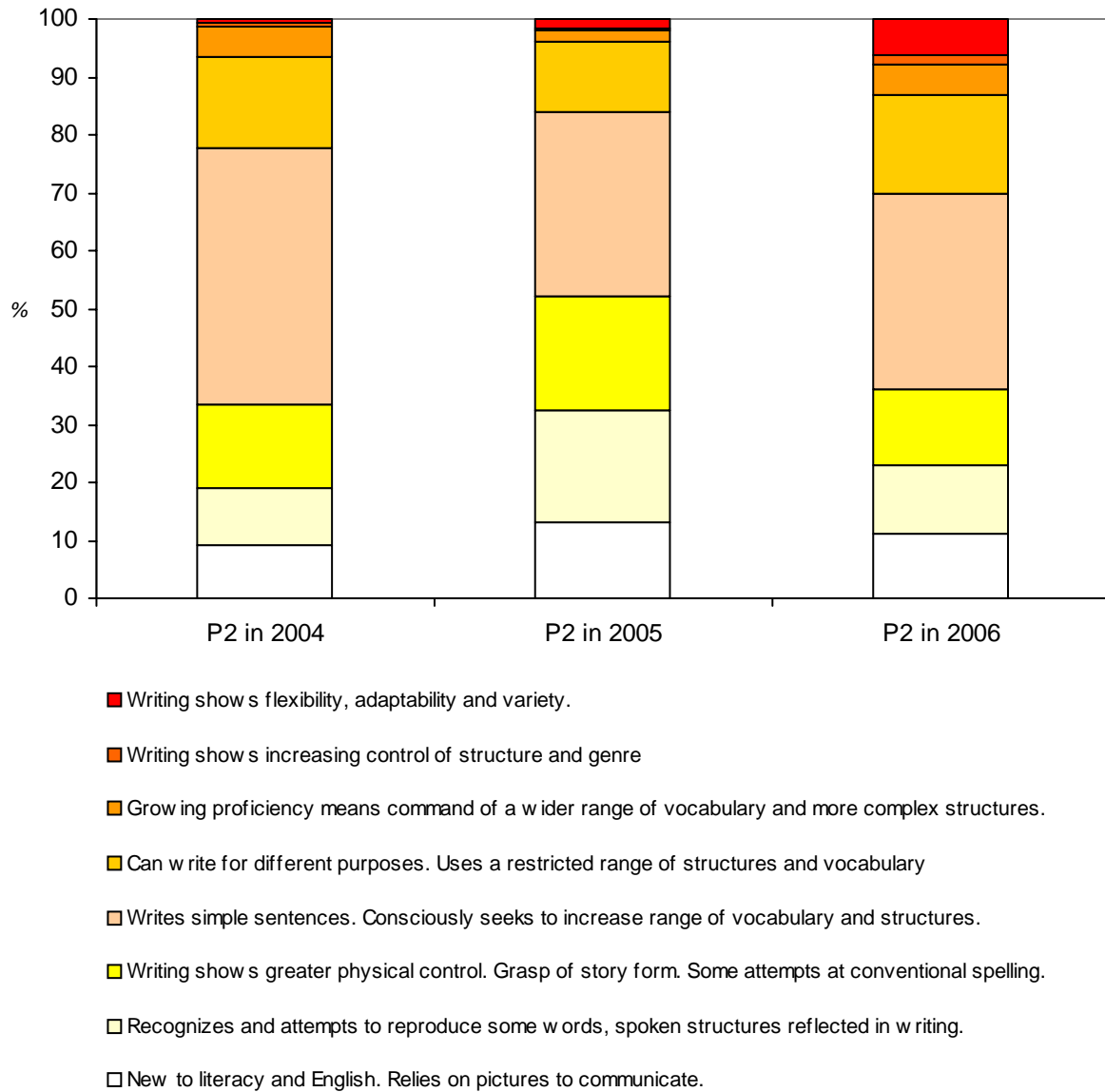


Figure 2.11. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in written English for P2 students in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

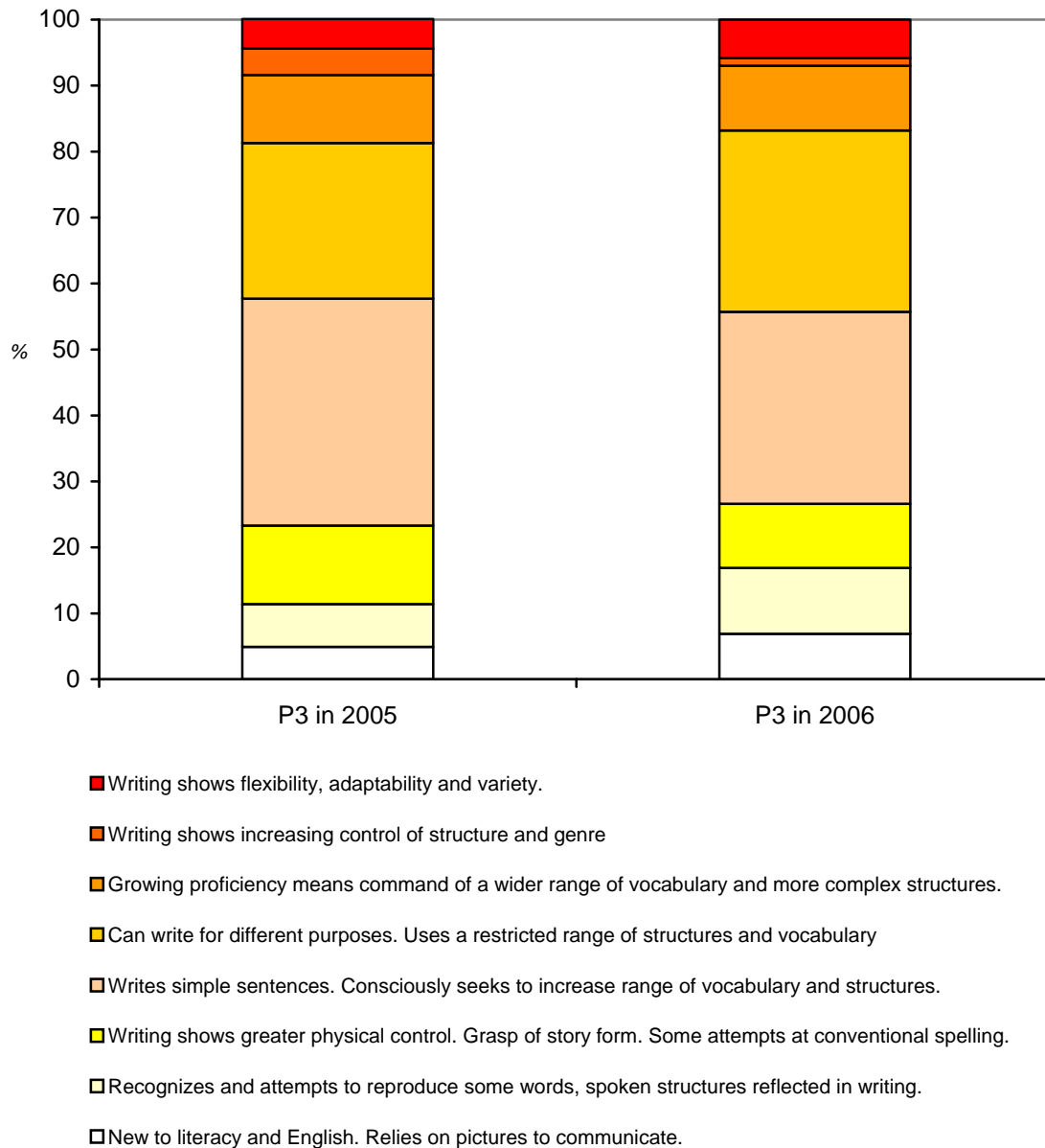


Figure 2.12. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in written English for P3 students in 2005 and 2006.

Student Achievement in Spoken English

Figure 2.13 presents the distribution of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students across the nine levels on the Spoken English Profile scale in 2006. A developmental progression in proficiency in spoken English is illustrated in the chart, with over half of the P1 students described by their teachers as communicating very simply in English. By P4, over half of the students had gained stronger structural control of their English language production, and less than 15% were at the lowest two levels on the scale of proficiency – just settling into English classes or able to communicate very simply using some words, phrases and non-verbal communication.

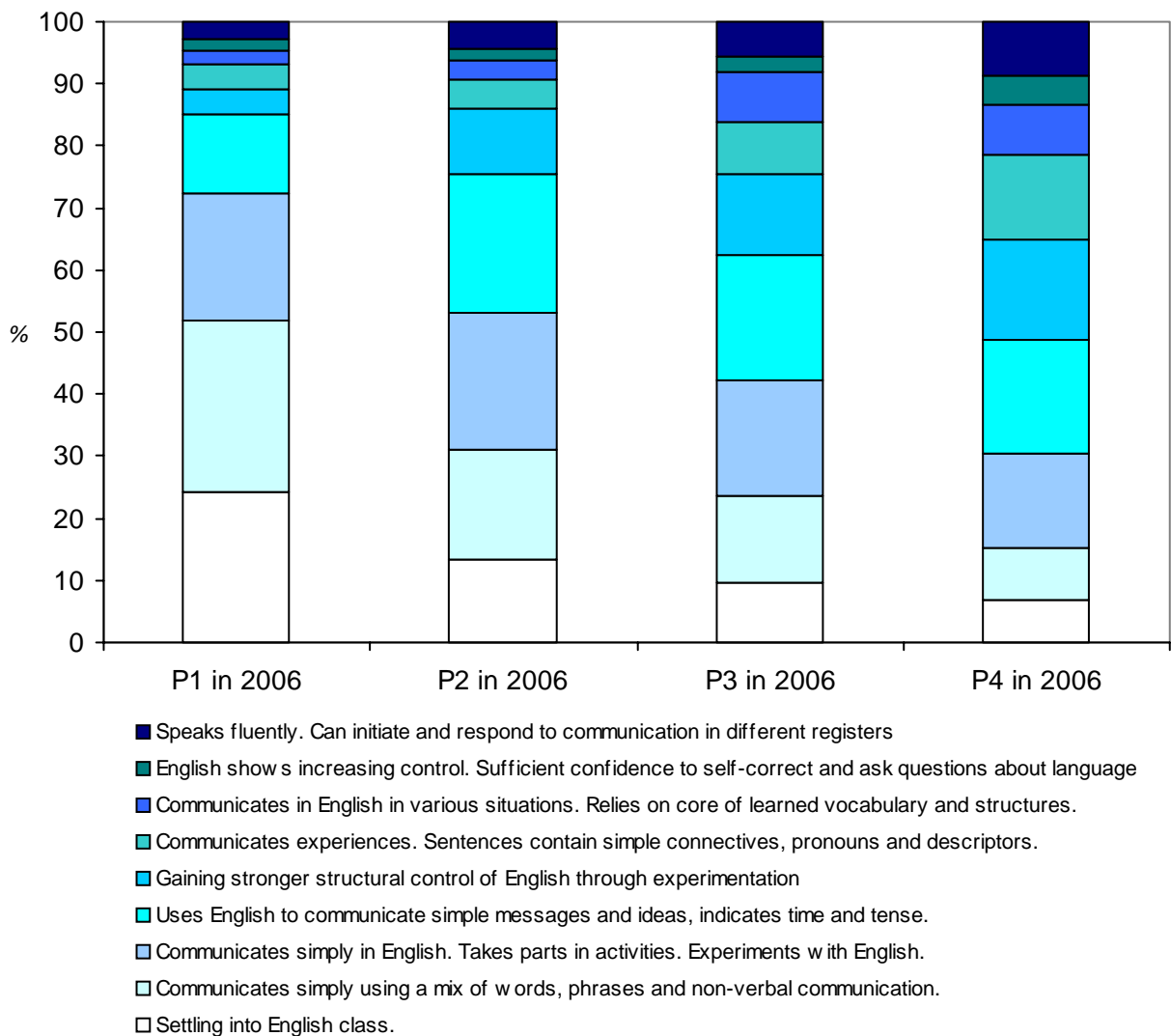


Figure 2.13. Proportion of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students at each level on the spoken English profile scale in 2006.

Growth in Student Proficiency in Spoken English from 2004 to 2005

Changes in student achievement in spoken English were tracked longitudinally over three years, and strong patterns of growth in proficiency are illustrated in Figures 2.14 and 2.15.

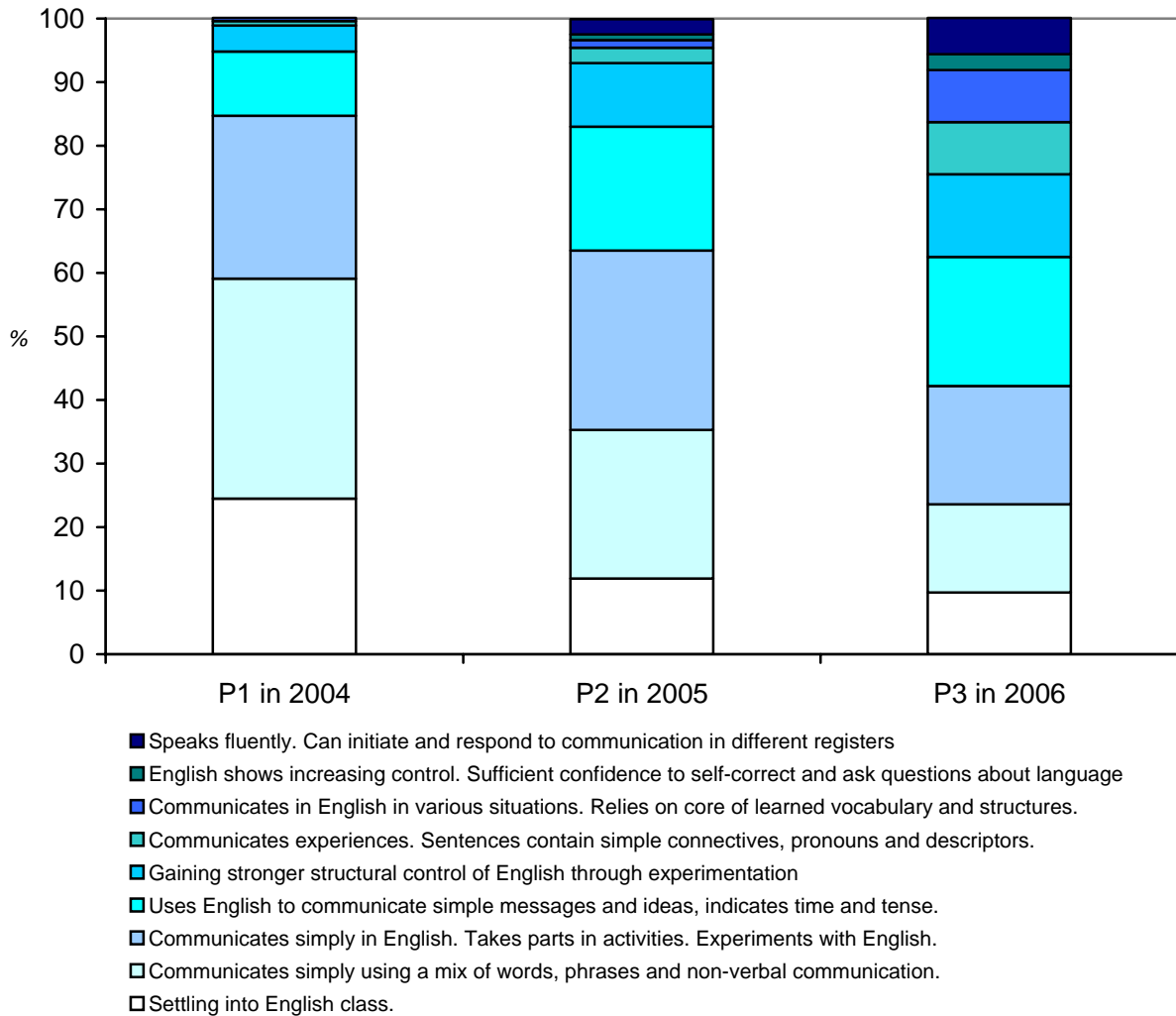


Figure 2.14. Longitudinal change in student achievement outcomes in spoken English for students in P1 in 2004, P2 in 2005 and P3 in 2006.

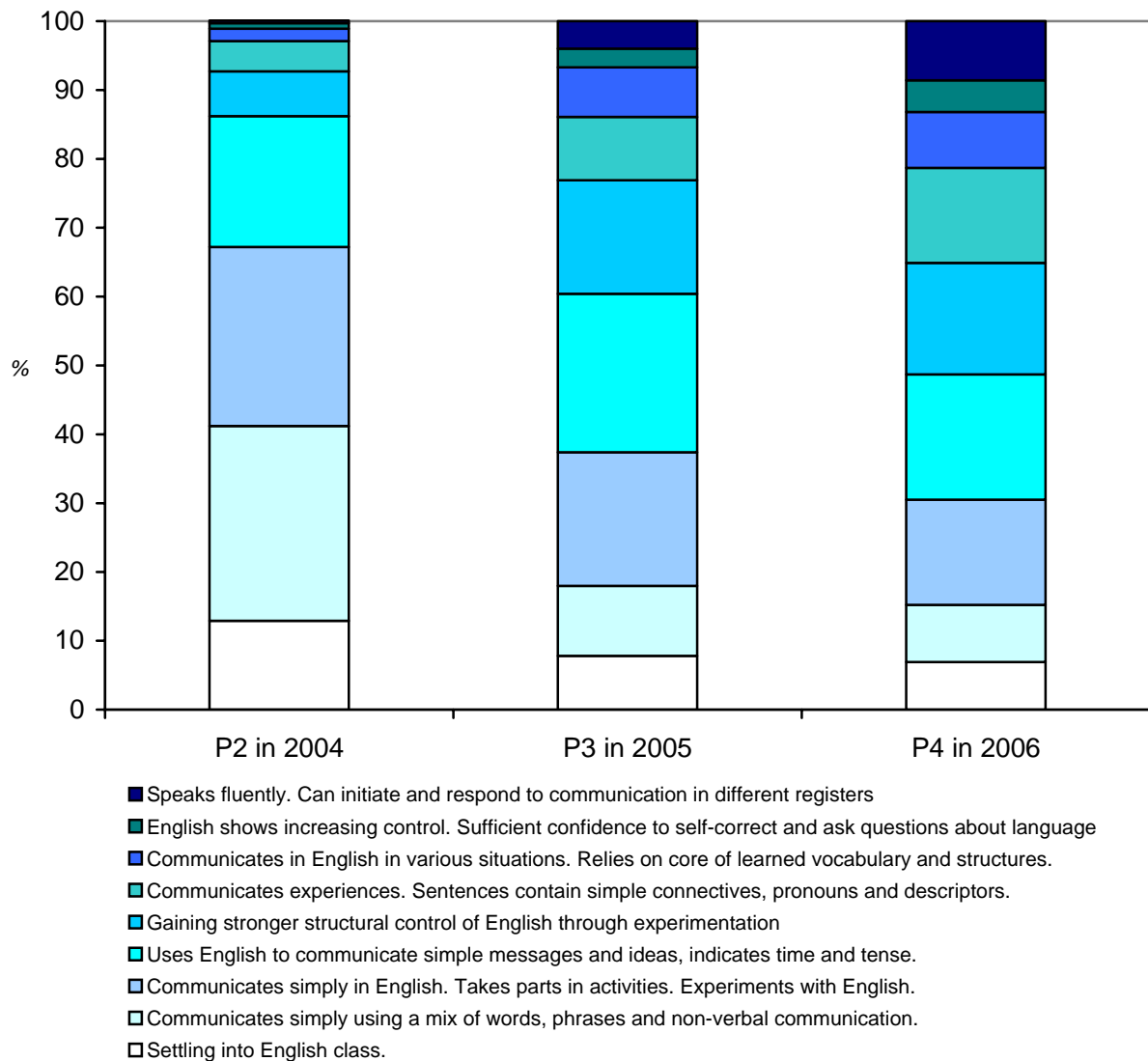


Figure 2.15. Longitudinal change in student achievement outcomes in spoken English for students in P2 in 2004, P3 in 2005 and P4 in 2006.

Change in Patterns of Student Achievement in Spoken English from 2004 to 2006

Patterns of achievement in spoken English for cohorts of students in P1, P2 and P3 were compared across years of the evaluation. These comparisons are illustrated in Figures 2.16, 2.17 and 2.18.

- In P1, more students were at the higher levels of proficiency in spoken English in 2005 and 2006 than in 2004.
- In P2, more students were at higher levels of proficiency in 2006 than in previous years.
- Proficiency in spoken English was stable across 2005 and 2006 for P3 students.
- There was evidence of a shift in proficiency for students in P1 and P2 but not for P3.

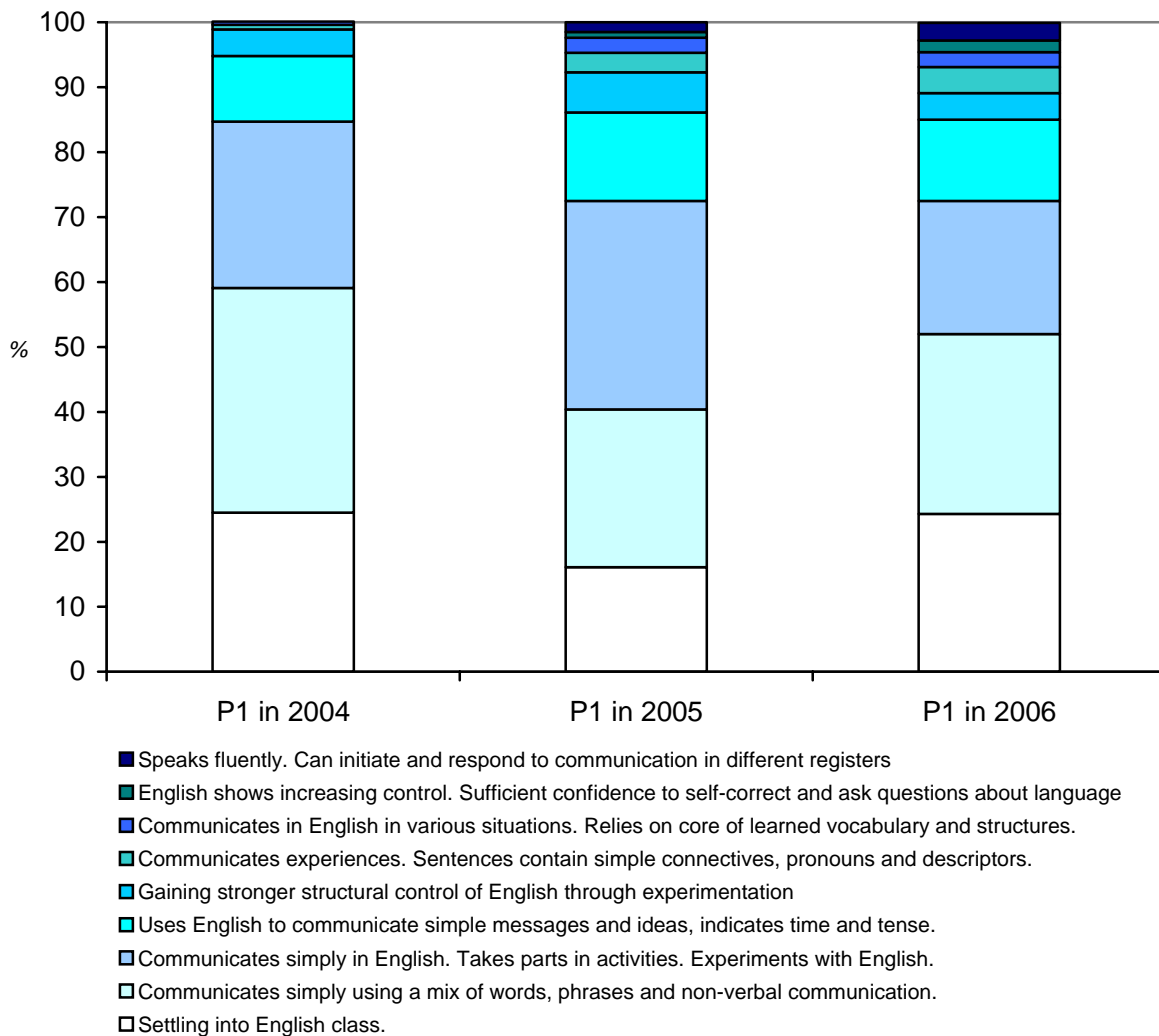


Figure 2.16. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in spoken English for P1 students in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

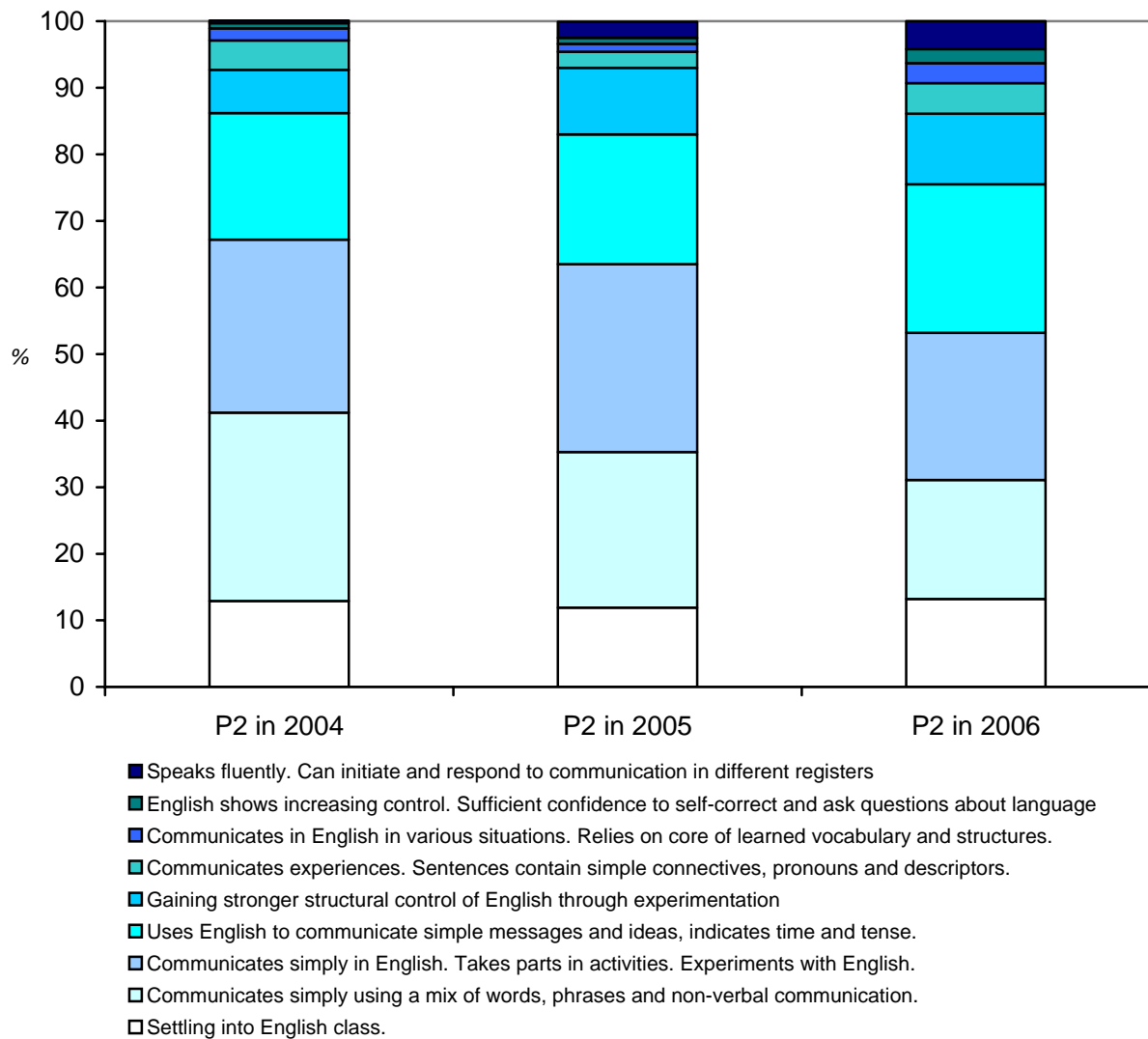


Figure 2.17. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in spoken English for P2 students in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

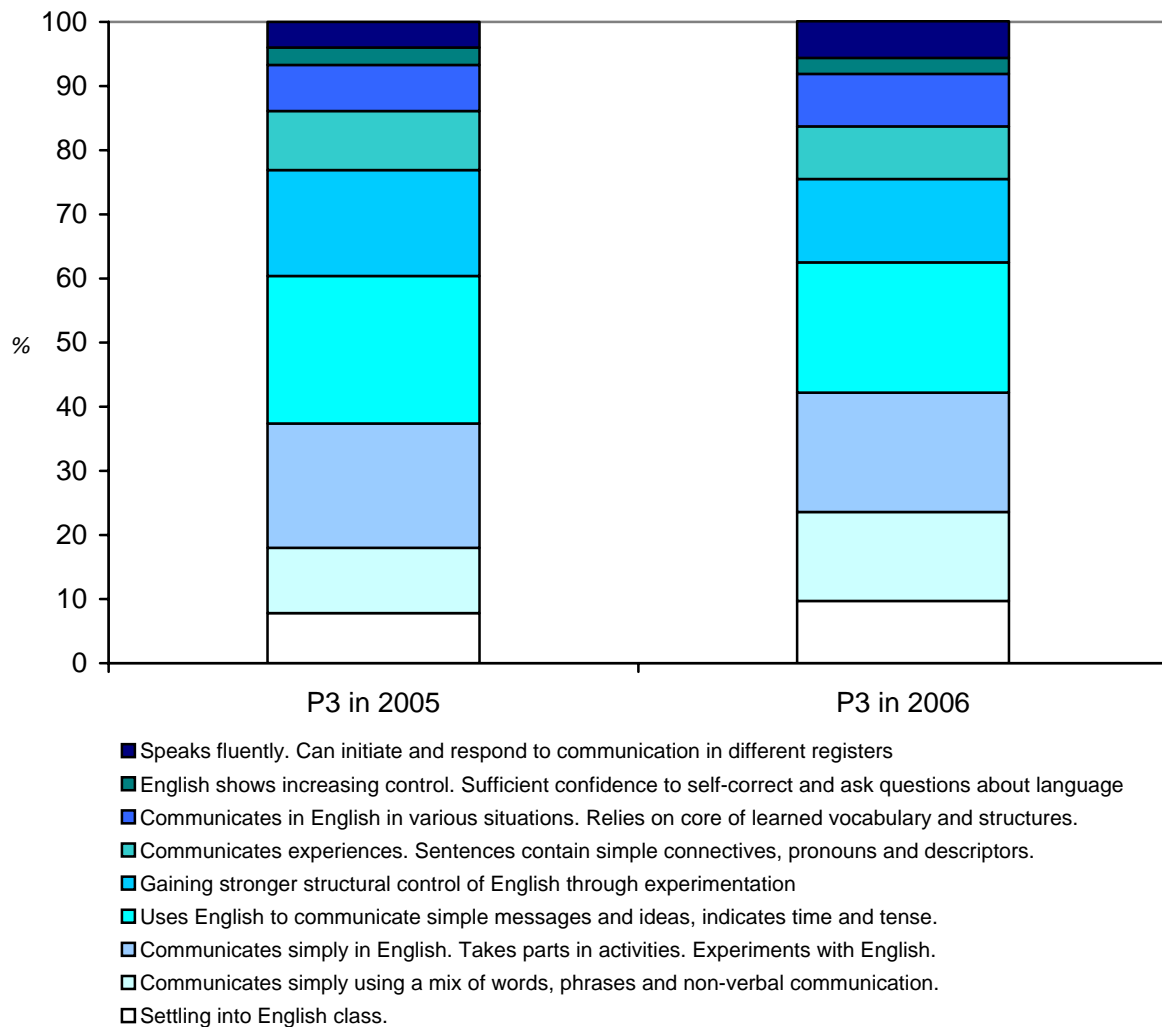


Figure 2.18. Cross-sectional comparison of student achievement outcomes in spoken English for P3 students in 2005 and 2006.

The Interview Test of English Language

In addition to the profile descriptions provided by their teachers, student proficiency in spoken English was assessed by an *Interview Test of English Language (ITEL)*. The interview test was designed to examine student progress in terms of their ability to use progressively more complex structures of oral English.

Figure 2.19 presents the distribution of all 2006 sampled P1, P2, P3 and P4 students across six levels on the interview test. In P1, almost 15% of students were just beginning to be able to use English in the form of answering simple questions about themselves (e.g., “What is your name?” “How old are you?”) and responding to simple greetings. The proportion of students at this basic level of spoken English dropped quickly, so that by P2 approximately 5% of students were described at this beginning level. In contrast, by P4 almost 40% of students were competently and confidently able to use English to discuss everyday activities, make polite requests and invitations, and express notions of past, present and future.

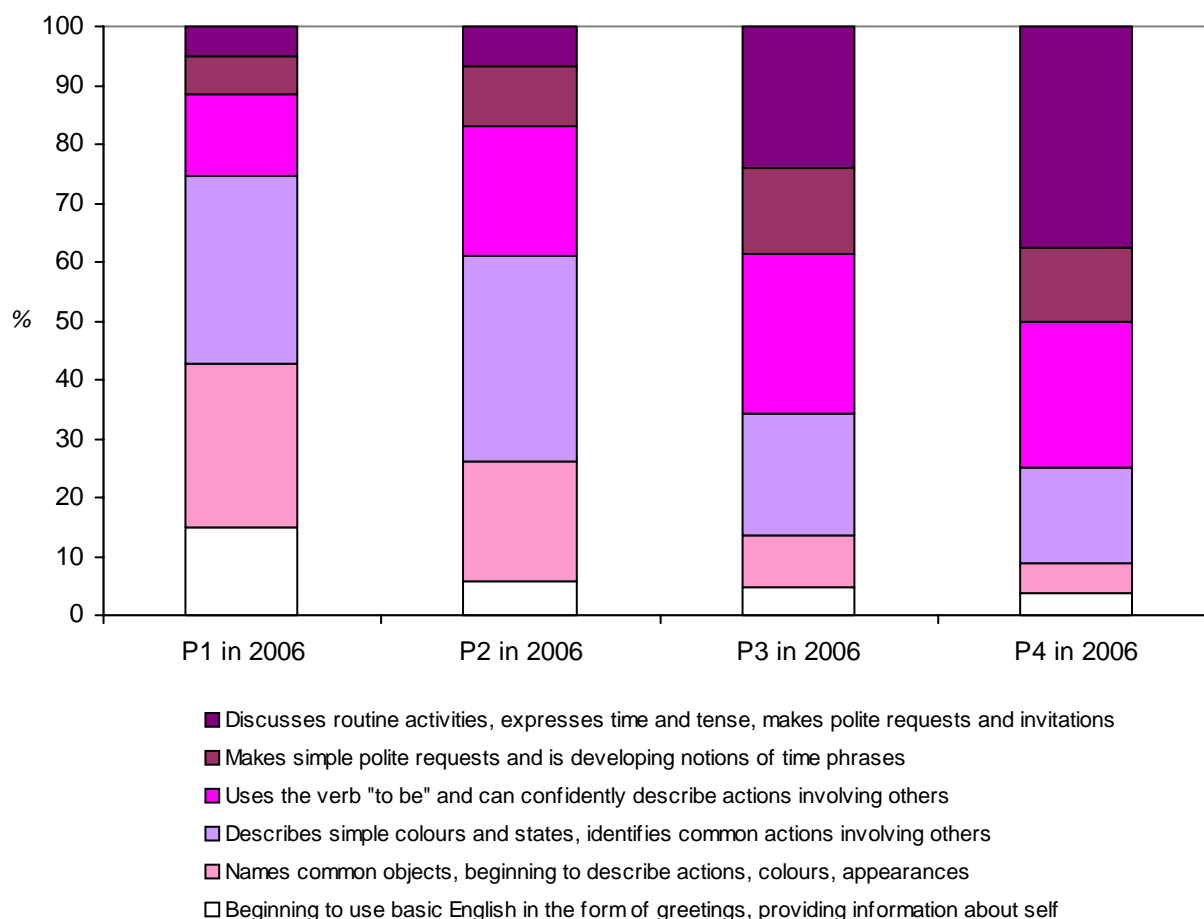


Figure 2.19. Proportion of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students at each level on the interview test of English scale in 2006.

Across grade levels, there was an increase in the proportions of students who were able to participate in discussions concerning time and place and to make routine offers and requests. These skills generalised to a much broader proficiency level and indicated students who were developing fluent command of language. Specific structures were emerging in the language. At this point, a strong base was being established for language development.

Growth in Student Achievement on the Interview Test from 2004 to 2006

Student proficiency in spoken English assessed on the interview test was tracked longitudinally, as students progressed from P1 to P2 to P3, for example, or from P2 to P3 to P4, as shown in Figures 2.20 and 2.21. These graphs illustrate strong patterns of growth in ability to speak in English for the same students across the three years of the evaluation.

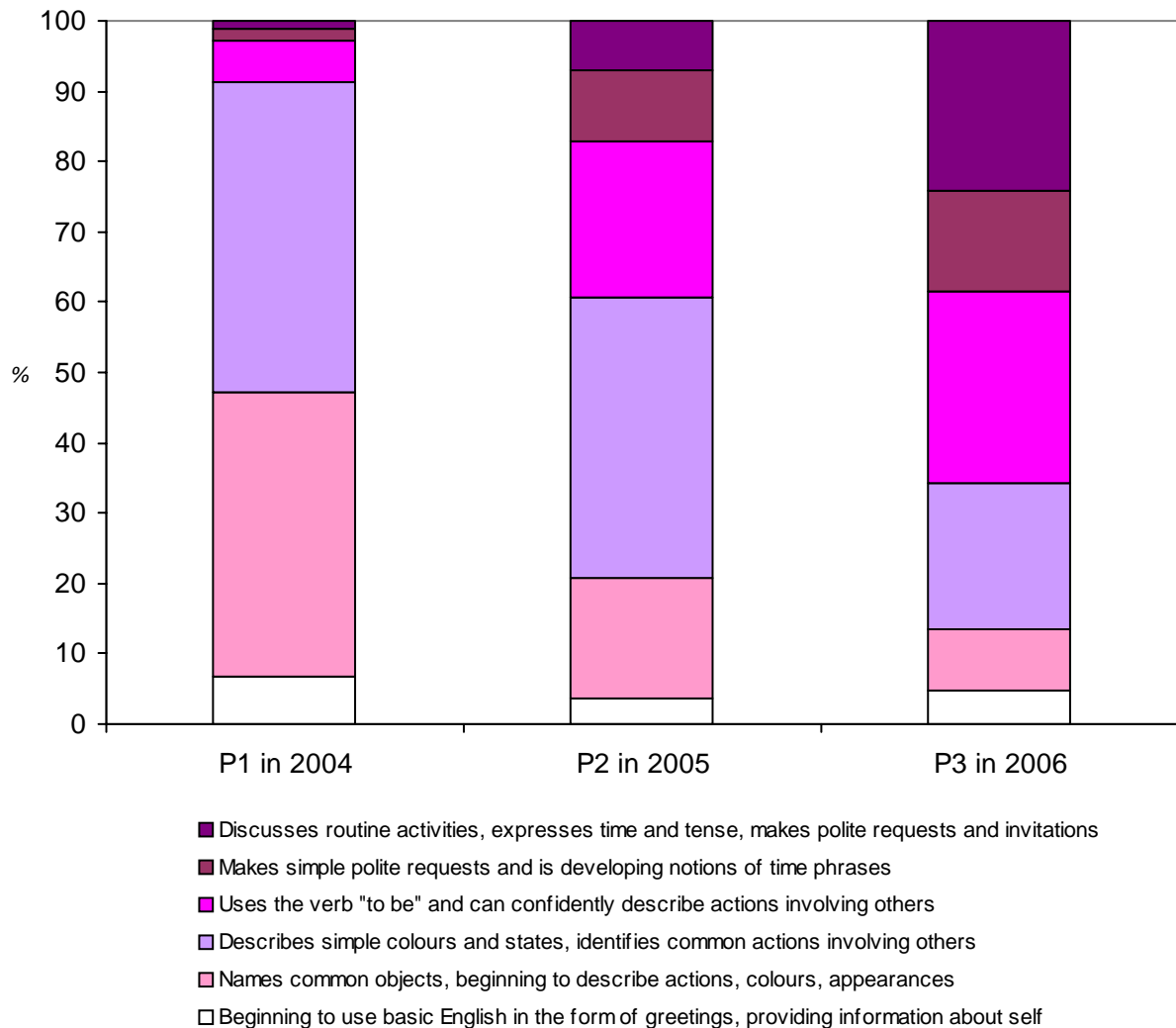


Figure 2.20. Change in achievement on the ITTEL for students in P1 in 2004, P2 in 2005 and P3 in 2006.

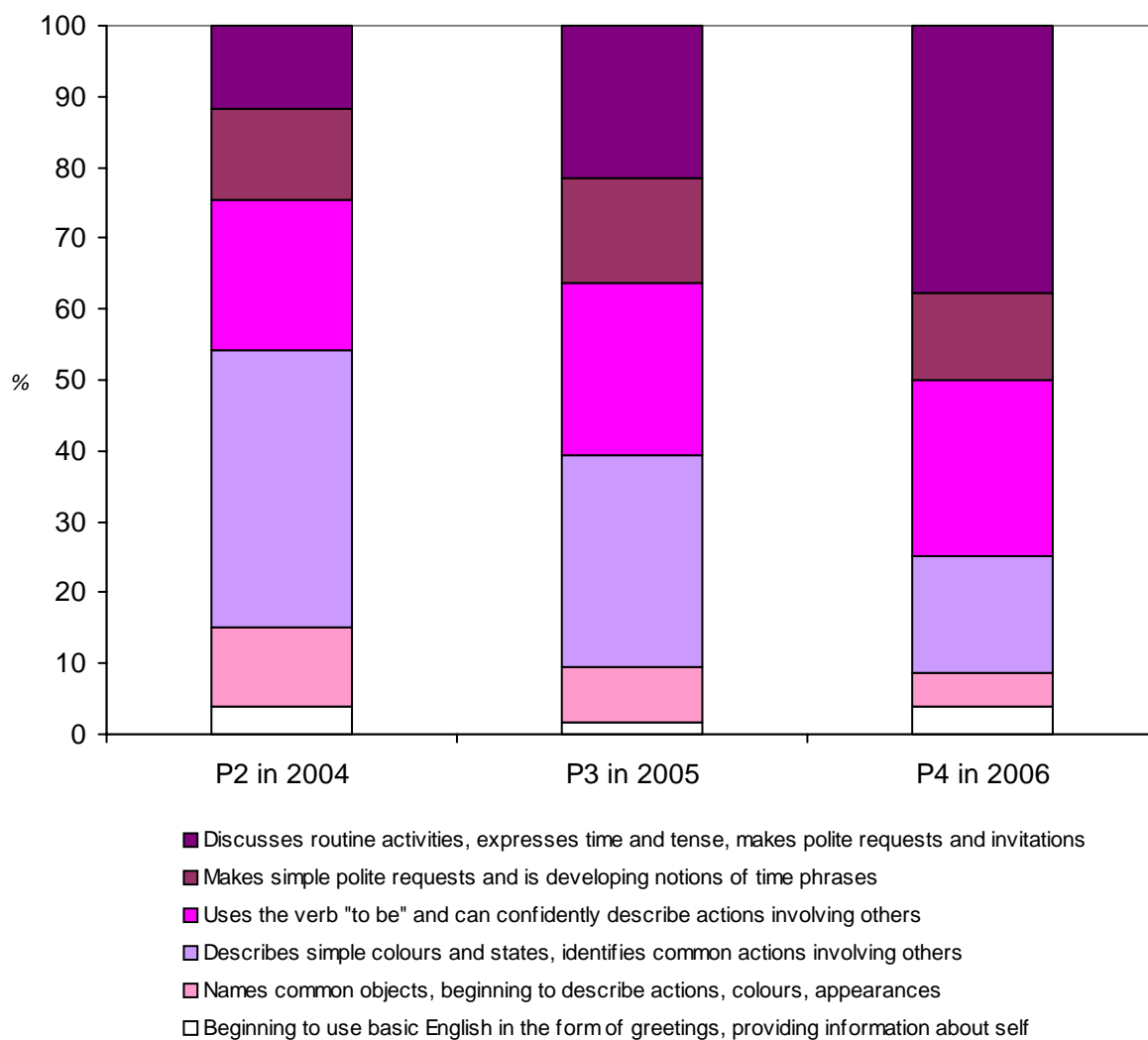


Figure 2.21. Change in achievement on the ITTEL for students in P2 in 2004, P3 in 2005 and P4 in 2006.

The replication of growth patterns across different measures was reassuring. Proficiency in English was developing on average and with grade level. The task then was to link this to the PNET Scheme, and this is discussed in Chapter 7 of this report.

Change in Student Achievement for the 2004, 2005 and 2006 Cohorts

Patterns of achievement in spoken English assessed on the interview test were compared across years of the evaluation for cohorts of students in P1, P2 and P3. These comparisons are illustrated in Figures 2.22, 2.23 and 2.24.

- For the P1 students, there were more students at the extremes of the scale in 2006 than in previous years. More of the 2006 P1 students performed at higher levels of proficiency, and there were also more students at the lowest level of the scale. This may have reflected a higher than average proportion of 2006 P1 students who were observed to live in homes in which English was never spoken. The impact of home background variables on students' proficiency in English is discussed in Chapter 3 of this report.
- For the P2 students, proficiency in spoken English as assessed on the interview test was relatively stable across the three years of the evaluation.
- Performance in spoken English as assessed by interview test was relatively stable across 2005 and 2006 for P3 students.

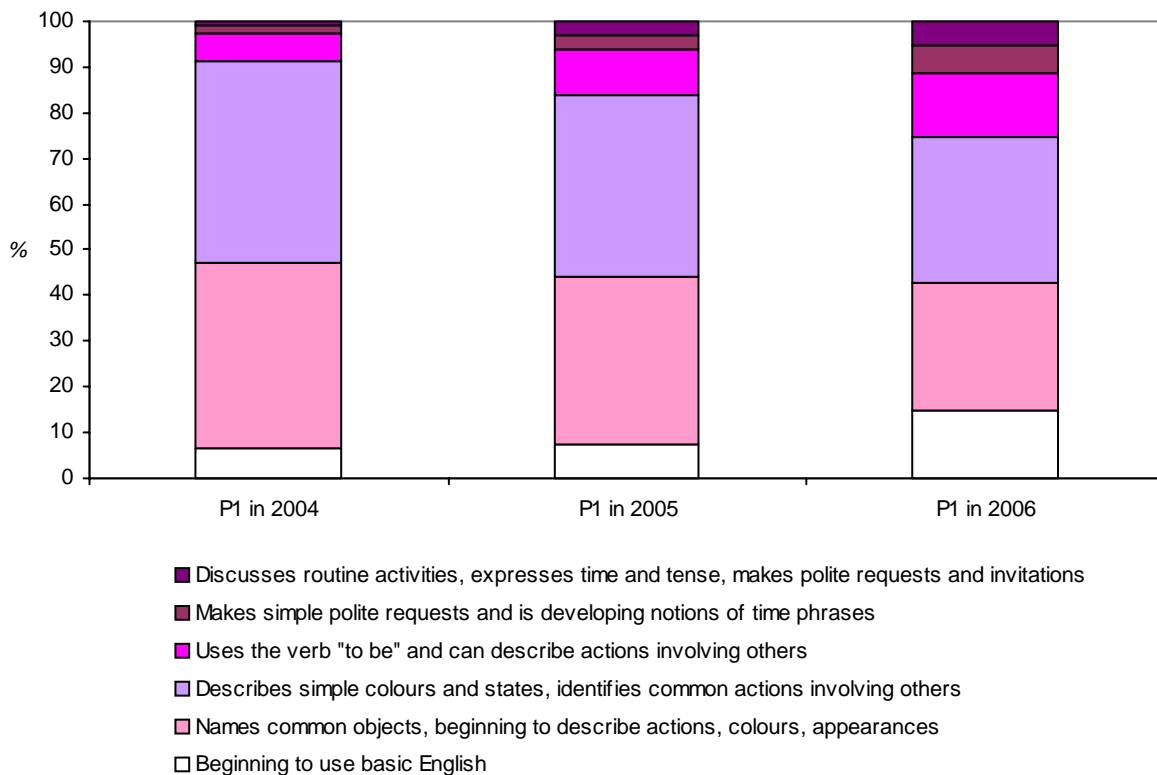


Figure 2.22. Proportion of P1 students at each level on the ITEL scale in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

For P1, this was encouraging. The longer the PNET Scheme had been implemented, the higher the proportion of students who showed gain at P1 level. This was not attributable to maturation.

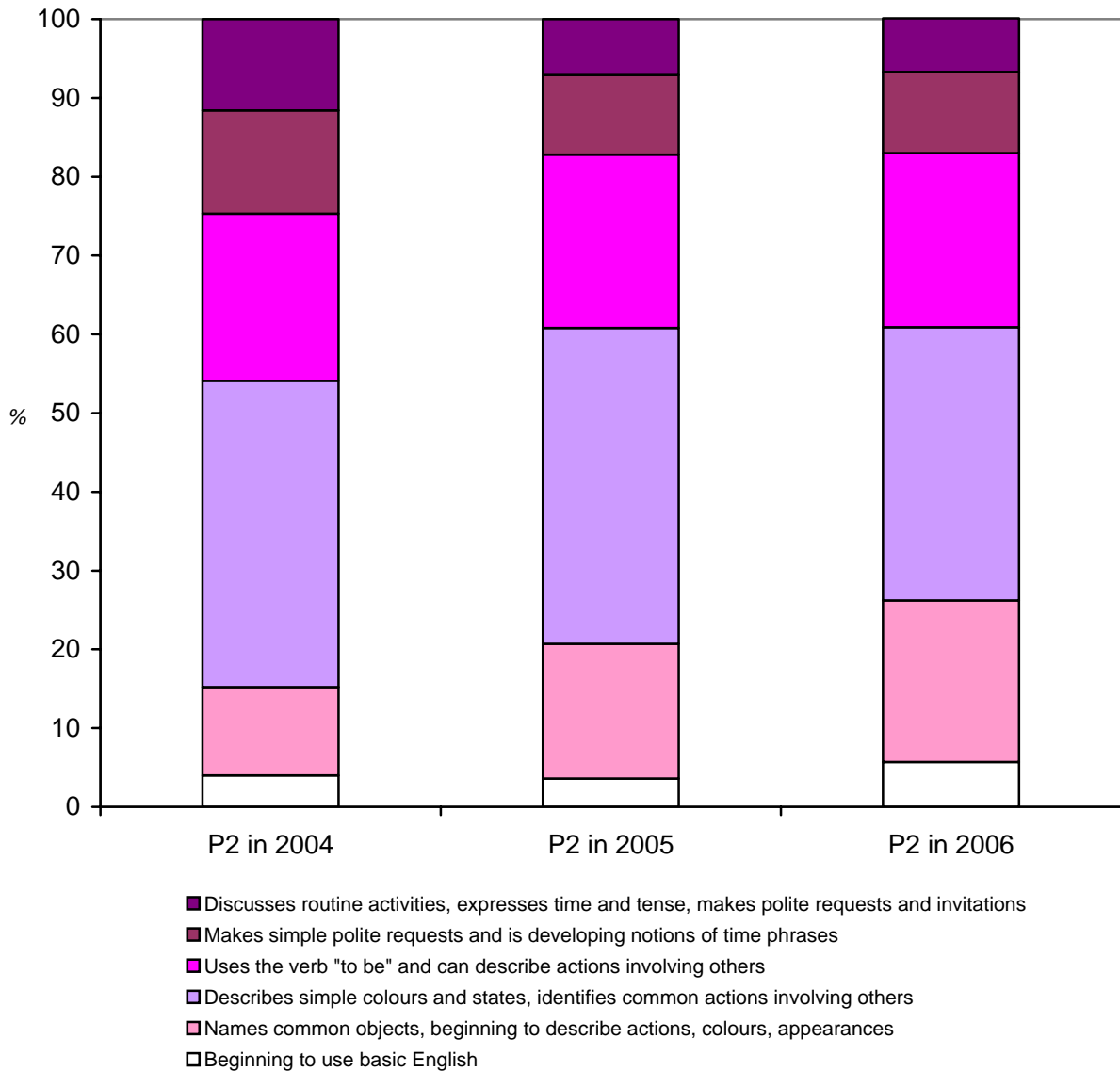


Figure 2.23. Proportion of P2 students at each level on the ITTEL scale in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

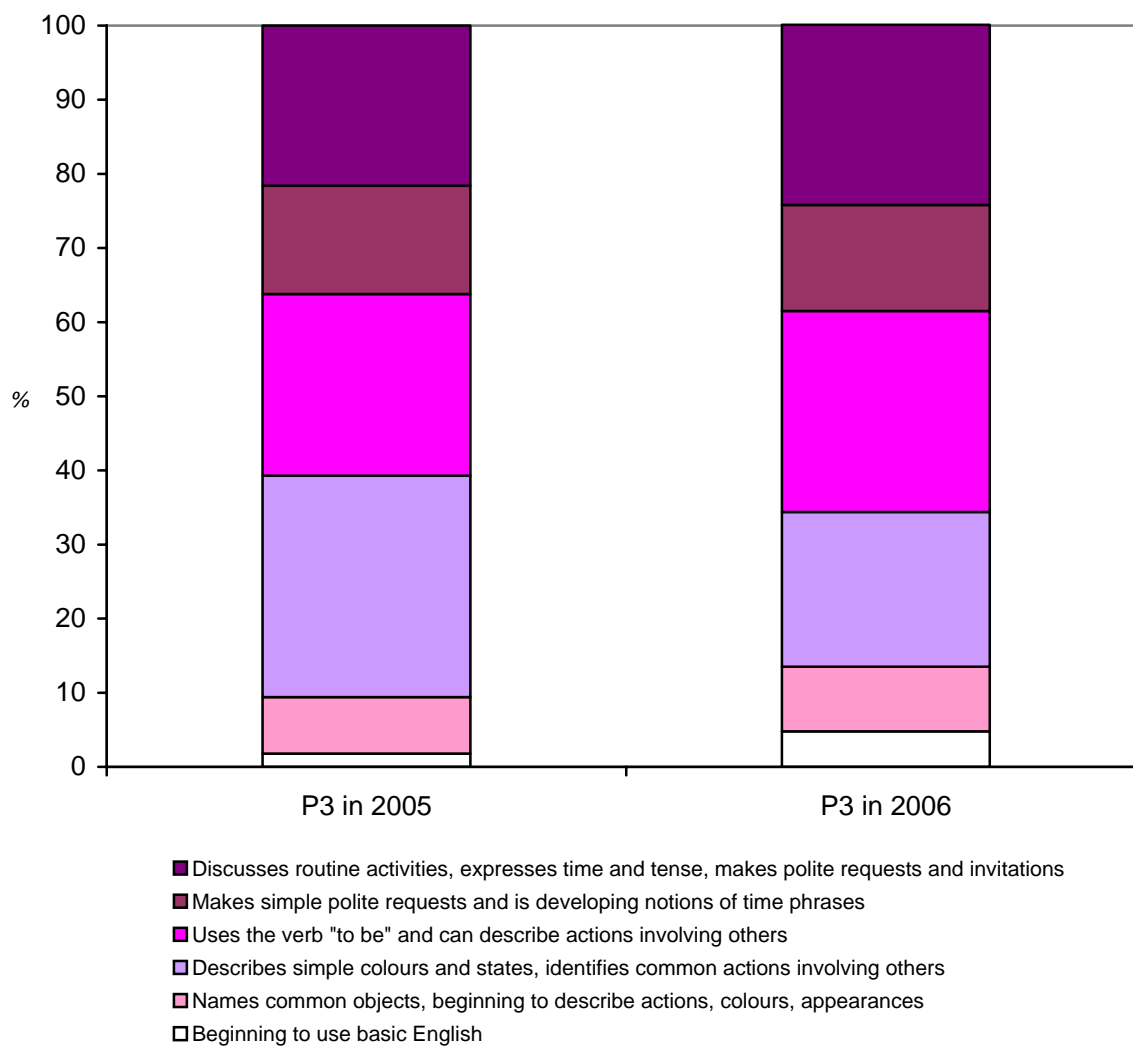


Figure 2.24. Proportion of P3 students at each level on the ITEL scale in 2005 and 2006.

Student Attitudes to English

The attitudes of students to learning and using English have remained very positive across the three years of the evaluation. In 2006, levels of student attitude were described, and the proportion of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students at each of the attitude levels is shown in Figure 2.25.

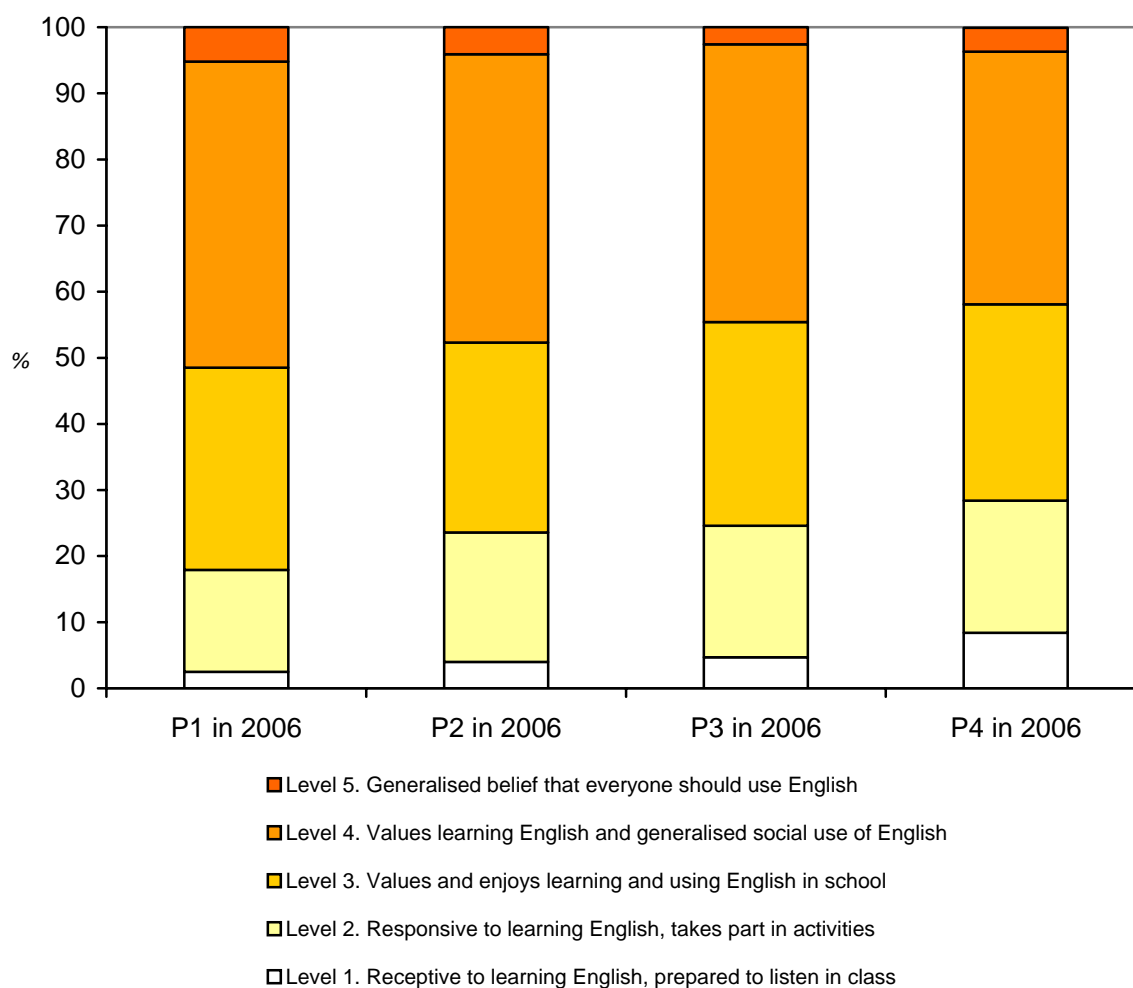


Figure 2.25. Proportion of P1, P2, P3 and P4 students across levels on the attitude scale.

As in 2004 and 2005, the attitudes expressed by most students were warmly positive and remained so as students progressed to higher year levels. Across all year levels, the gender of the student and the parent's indication that the student was or was not likely to speak English at home were strong predictors of attitudes towards learning and using English.

Girls were more likely than boys to express positive attitudes, but both boys and girls tended to say they were happy to learn English and eager to use English at home and school.

For some of the students who indicated that they were happy to participate in English classes and to use English at school, but were not likely to engage others outside the classroom in English conversation (levels 2 and 3), this realistically reflected the opportunities that the children had to extend their use of English to their everyday lives, as confirmed by their parents.

Other possible predictors of student attitudes to English were examined, and found to offer little if any explanatory value. For example, variables related to the socioeconomic status of the student's family did not make a significant contribution to the ability to predict attitudes, nor did parental supervision of homework, the location of the school, the years of teaching experience or qualifications of the NET, nor the years of teaching experience or qualifications of the local teachers of English.

In interviews conducted during school visits, LETs and NETs discussed the effects of student attitudes. LETs recognised the importance of a positive attitude to learning English. They tended to describe this in terms of motivational factors associated with the level of support in the home. The quality of the support the child would be likely to receive was felt to impact on his or her motivation to learn.

LETS

- *The standards of parents vary. Some parents really can't help the homework of their children. Especially for English, many parents said that they don't know it. Sometimes children need to help themselves. However, it is difficult for the child to go back home and study if he is too young. If the child is old enough, his foundation may be better as he has learnt more vocabulary. As a result, the child will find it much easy to do their homework at home.*
- *The students mainly come from families that don't speak English [and] usually they have working parents. So most likely they will be left alone doing their homework. And then their motivation to learn English is really low. Maybe nobody can help them outside class, like when they finish school. So the motivation is really low and then no incentive to do their best in English as well. I think the parents are too busy to take care of, not only English but Chinese, Mathematics, and other subjects as well.*

Many of the children described in this way were recent immigrants, or children who lived across the border and were bussed to northern New Territories schools every morning.

Since NETs in the sample rarely assigned homework, they tended to describe the classroom performance of such children:

- *Some ...there's been recruiting, throughout the past two or three years, from what I understand, in terms of getting students from Shenzhen across the border. Of course to enhance the student population. Comparing these children with local*

children, again, the discipline factor doesn't really figure into it. It would be more...they'd be the type of students, either because they're new to the school or their language isn't up to par in even Cantonese and they would more sit back in the class, so they'd be more the shy ones.

In one school, LETs described a marked demographic change which the quantitative data had highlighted in 2006, and which the local teachers also felt was a strong influence on overall motivation to learn and attitudes to learning:

- *One more reason is that there's an obvious change in their family background as well. Because in the past few years, we have, we had strong parent support. Because they all come from middle class and some parents are professionals. However these few years, we, the students come from, mostly come from the public estate yes. The family back... er support is not so strong. The social status [is lower] It's because of keen competition. Not enough students. Also we cannot interview the students in the first round. A few years ago, we can we have interview with the students and we can choose the students. But now we cannot do that.*

Since teacher expectations are known to impact on student performance, it is worth noting a possible tendency among local teachers more used to dealing with children from more supportive backgrounds, to describe the ability of relatively low achieving children and the progress they were felt likely to make in negative terms:

- *They are quite weak in English. And for their background, I think erm, er, the parents don't know English and they can't help them teaching English. And students are quite lazy here. Come from the nearby estates... From nearby districts. And this is not a very wealthy district, it's a sort of ... mm..... some of the parents they don't have jobs ... Are the parents interested in children learning English - not quite. Just the minority of them. I think the parents er, want them to be good in English. But they cannot help, they can't help, because they don't know English. Most of them are come from China in the recent years so they don't know English.*
- *At least they, at the beginning, they know nothing, well at least at P3, they can speak at least a few sentences and that is an improvement.*

The kind of teacher attitude displayed here was not common in the meetings with LETs. Generally speaking, however, the attitude of LETs to their pupils was markedly different to that of NETs. LETs tended to conform to cultural stereotypes of Chinese schoolteachers in being formal in their dealings with students. NETs tended to be more relaxed and to be more interested in socialising with students. LETs not only acknowledged the difference but recognised the motivational value, and its impact on student attitudes, of the less formal NET approach. Note however, that in the following example illustrating this tendency, the LET was actually contrasting 'non-native NETs' with 'native NETs' and asserting that NETs who are also native speakers of the language

were less formal, whereas NETs who were not (like the one in her school who was racially Chinese), were more like a LET in terms of attitude:

- *I think the native[speakers of English], they are more open in their attitudes. So they are more... warm, so I think to the students, students will feel that natives are easier to approach. And then the native, they are more easy-going and they are willing to play with the students. So they carry a more open attitude. But for the non-native one, I think it is similar to the local teachers in some form or another. Erm... in relation to the attitude to the students. So not as open, you know what I mean, to the students.*

Student Attitudes and Achievement

The link between student attitudes towards learning English and their achievement was clearly evident. More students who enjoyed learning and using English achieved high scores on the interview test and were observed as working at higher levels on the Profiles of reading, written and spoken English when compared with students who expressed less positive attitudes to their English studies. There was also a positive relationship between students' attitudes and their rate of progress in their English language studies. Students with more positive attitudes improved more rapidly in English from 2004 to 2006 than students with less positive attitudes. These relationships are illustrated in Figures 2.26, 2.27, 2.28 and 2.29 for the Profiles (speaking, reading and writing in English) and interview test of English respectively.

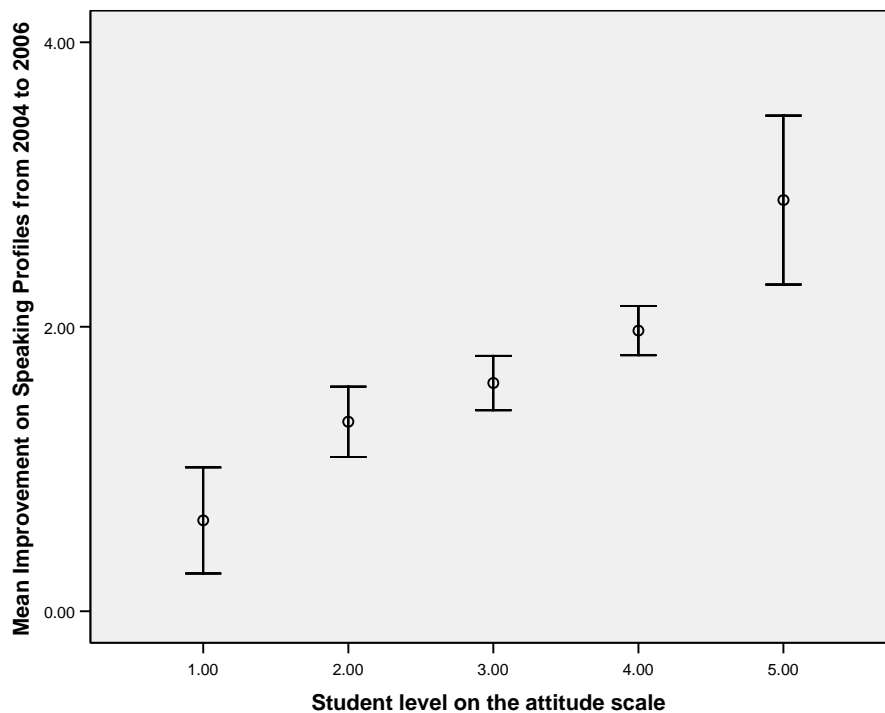


Figure 2.26. Mean improvement on Speaking Profiles from 2004 to 2006 for students at different levels of attitude to English.

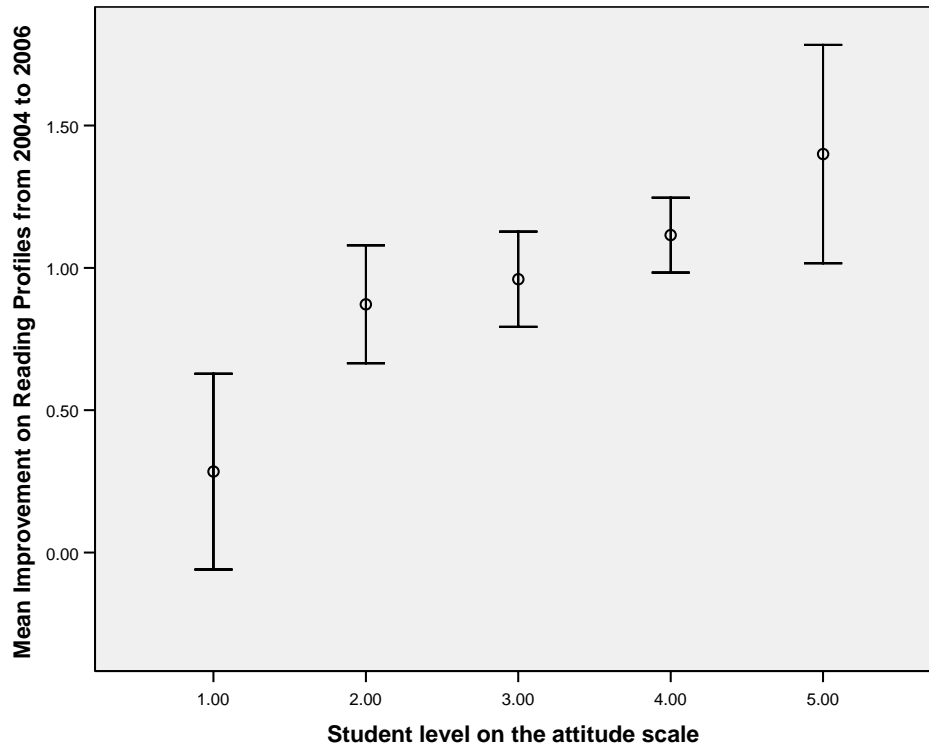


Figure 2.27. Mean improvement on Reading Profiles from 2004 to 2006 for students at different levels of attitude to English.

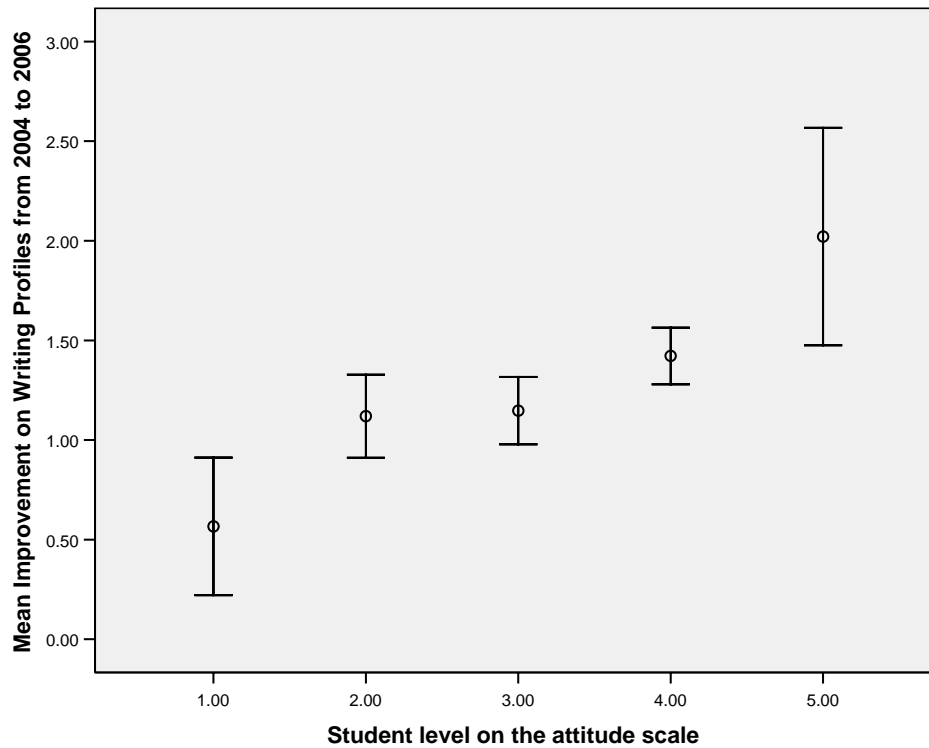


Figure 2.28. Mean improvement on Writing Profiles from 2004 to 2006 for students at different levels of attitude to English.

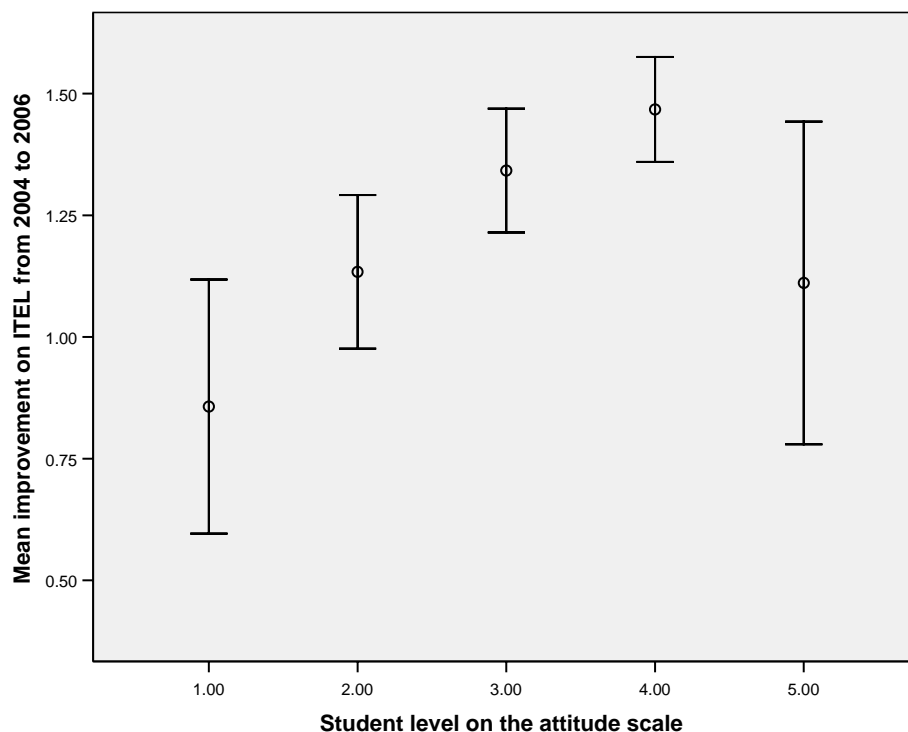


Figure 2.29. Mean improvement on the interview test of English from 2004 to 2006 for students at different levels of attitude to English.

In focus group discussions with LETs, it was common to hear teachers differentiate between children on the basis of ‘willingness’. It was common for LETs to acknowledge an impact of the NET for students who exhibited willingness. It seemed likely that children perceived by LETs to be willing would be children who also displayed positive attitudes to English. For less willing children, the impact of the NET was often perceived to be less noticeable. Some examples illustrating this are provided below:

- *If the students er they accept the existence of the NET in the school, so they are willing to talk to the NET, they are willing to participate in more different kinds of English activities. So most likely their result is like they are willing, they are more willing to learn and speak in English. And then they will get more excited when they have NETs with them. So... but.... I think depends on the type of students. Some of the students they like.... it's like that there is a barrier for them to learn English. So even though the NET is here, so they won't speak to the NET as well. So they won't take any opportunities to extend their learning outside*
- *I think that for those students who can understand the NET or for those who are willing to try, they speak more English. They know the foreigner use[s] English. Students' confidence increased. Also, it is good to students to listen[to] more English and different accent.*

Gender and Proficiency

On average, girls tended to perform better than boys at all year levels and on all measures of English proficiency. These comparisons are presented in Figures 2.30 to 2.33.

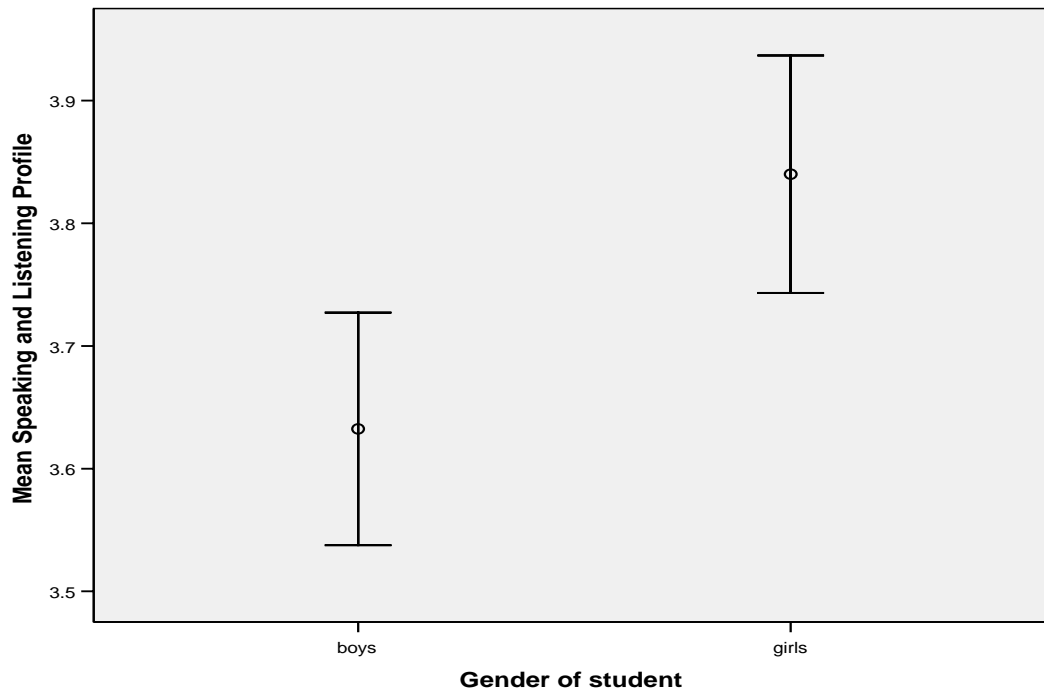


Figure 2.30. Comparison of mean level on Speaking Profiles for boys and girls in 2006.

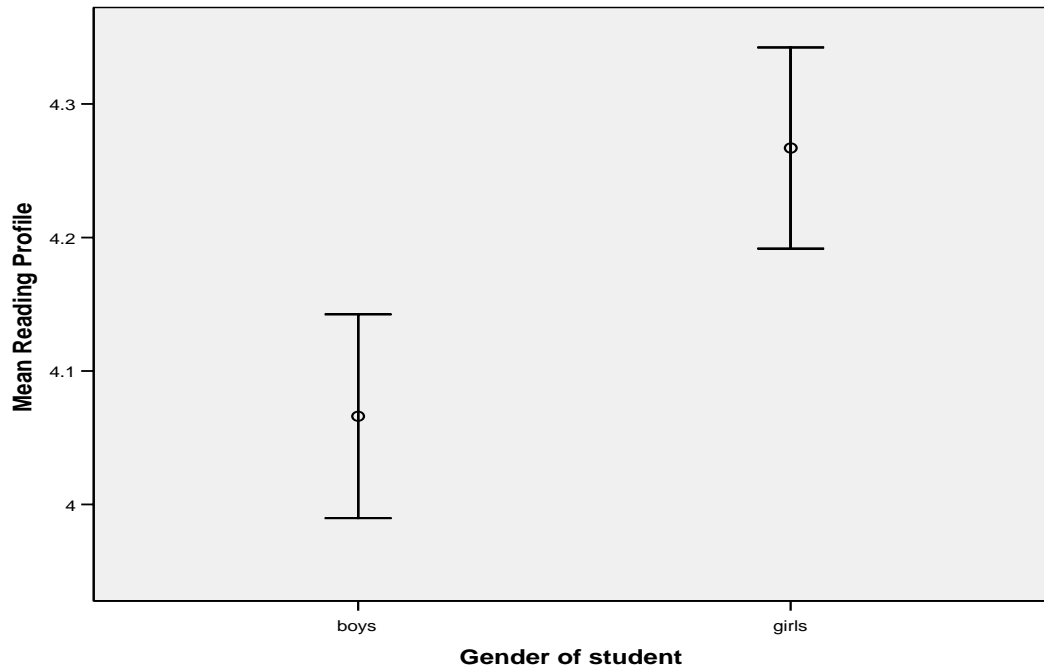


Figure 2.31. Comparison of mean level on Reading Profiles for boys and girls in 2006.

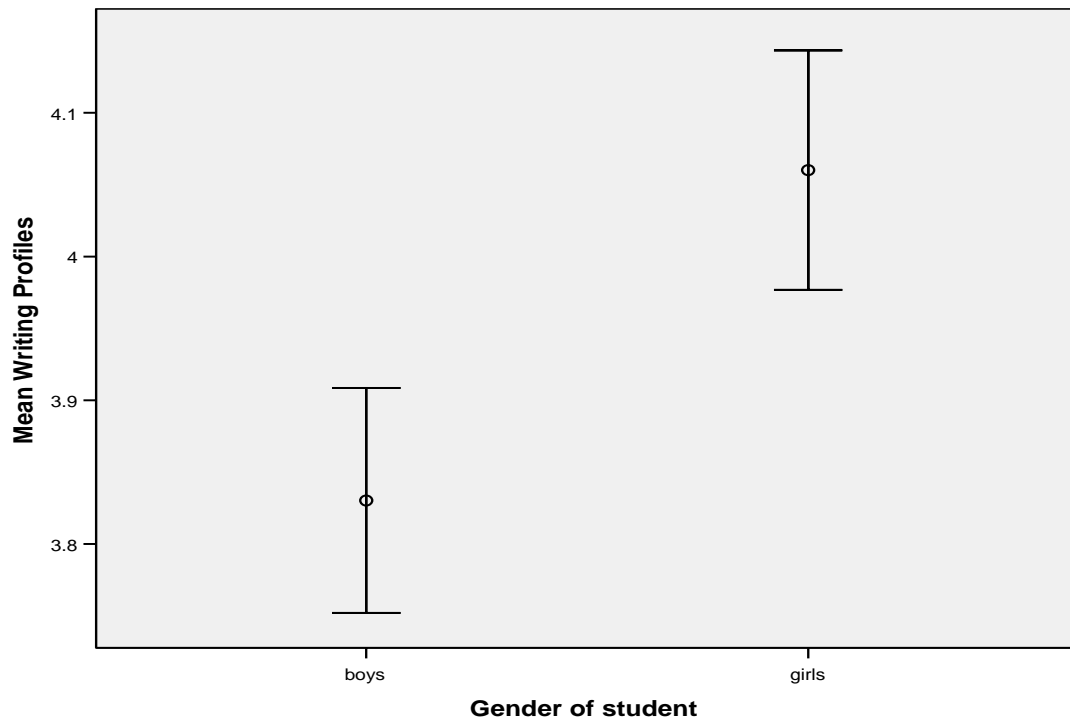


Figure 2.32. Comparison of mean level on Writing Profiles for boys and girls in 2006.

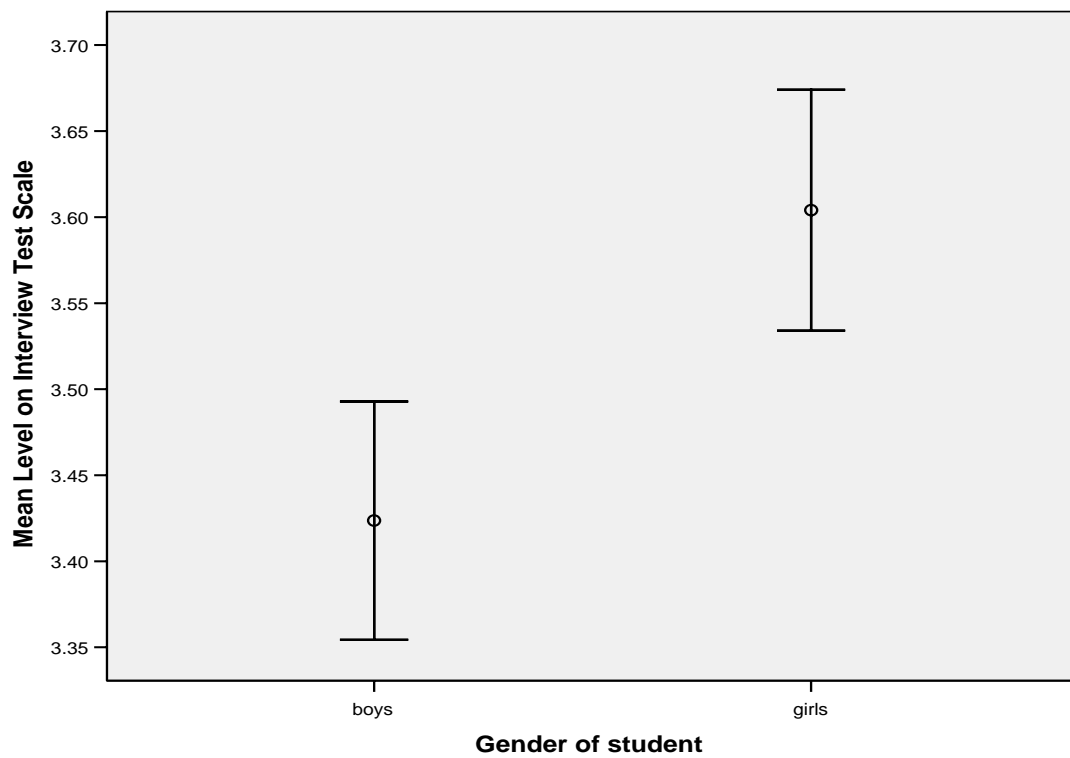


Figure 2.33. Comparison of mean level on Interview Test scale for boys and girls in 2006.

On average, girls tended to develop their proficiency in English language at a faster rate than boys, although this was most noticeable in terms of the Speaking and Writing Profiles, and less so in reading in English and spoken English proficiency as assessed on the Interview Test. These comparisons are illustrated in Figures 2.34 to 2.37.

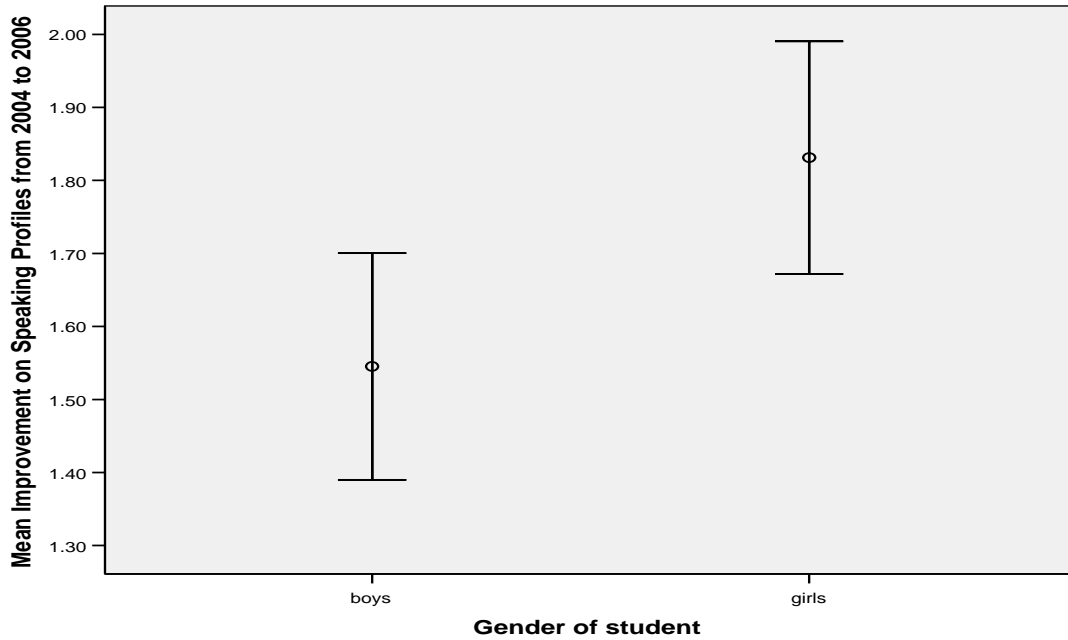


Figure 2.34. Comparison of mean improvement on the Speaking and Listening Profiles for boys and girls tracked from 2004 to 2006.

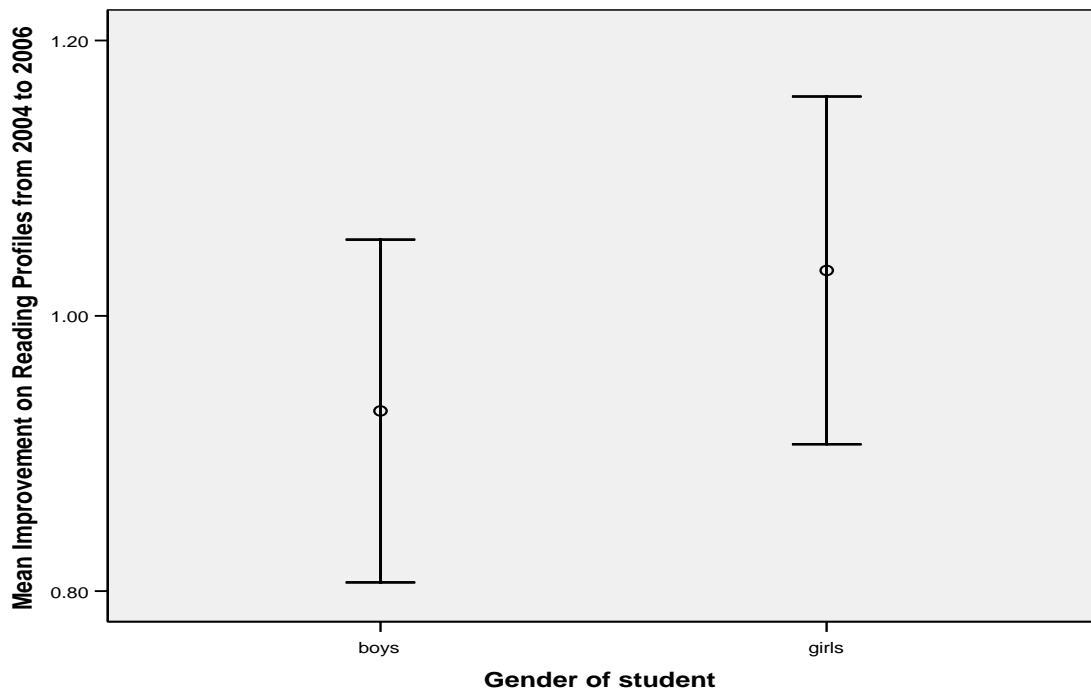


Figure 2.35. Comparison of mean improvement on the Reading Profiles for boys and girls tracked from 2004 to 2006.

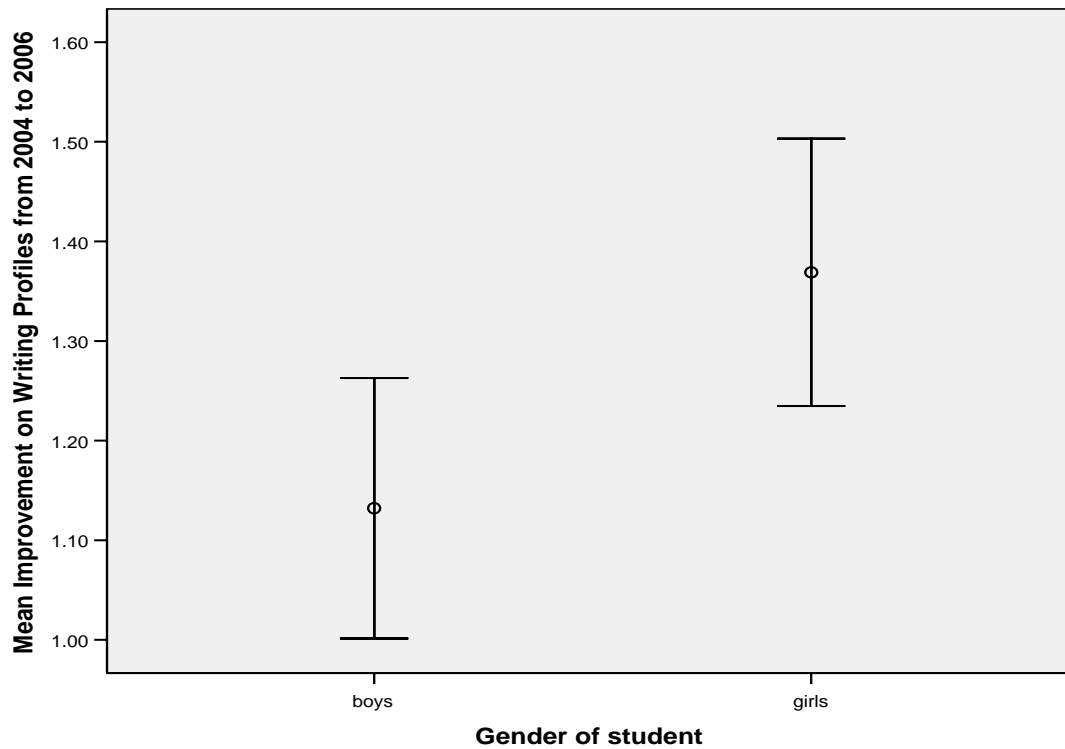


Figure 2.36. Comparison of mean improvement on the Writing Profiles for boys and girls tracked from 2004 to 2006.

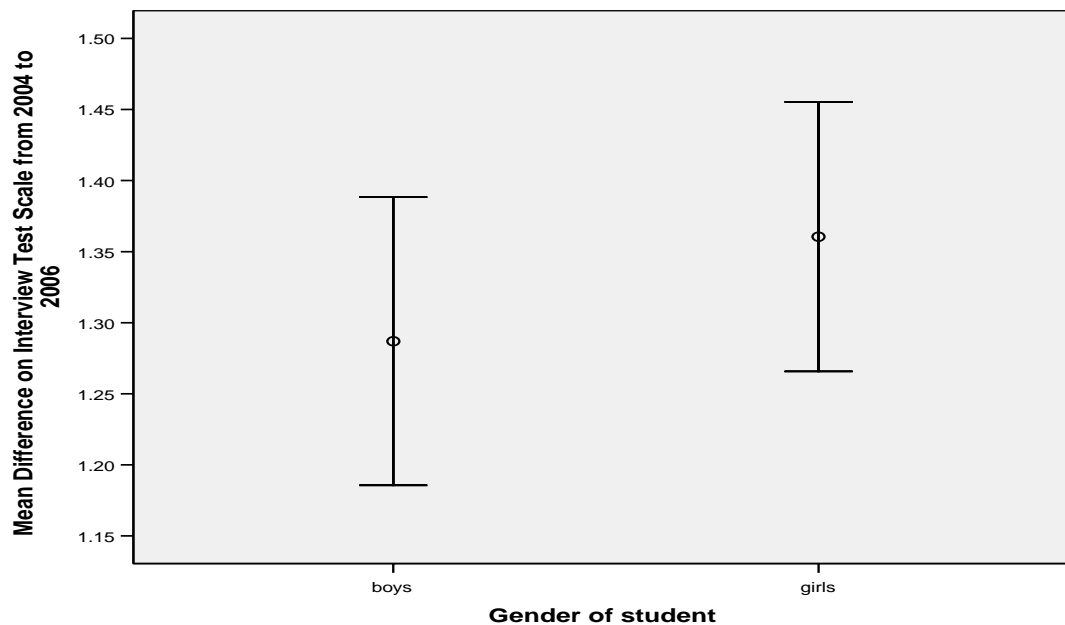


Figure 2.37. Comparison of mean improvement on the Interview Test scale for boys and girls tracked from 2004 to 2006.

On average, more girls than boys expressed positive attitudes towards learning English and, in particular, towards using English in social situations and outside the classroom, as illustrated in Figure 2.38.

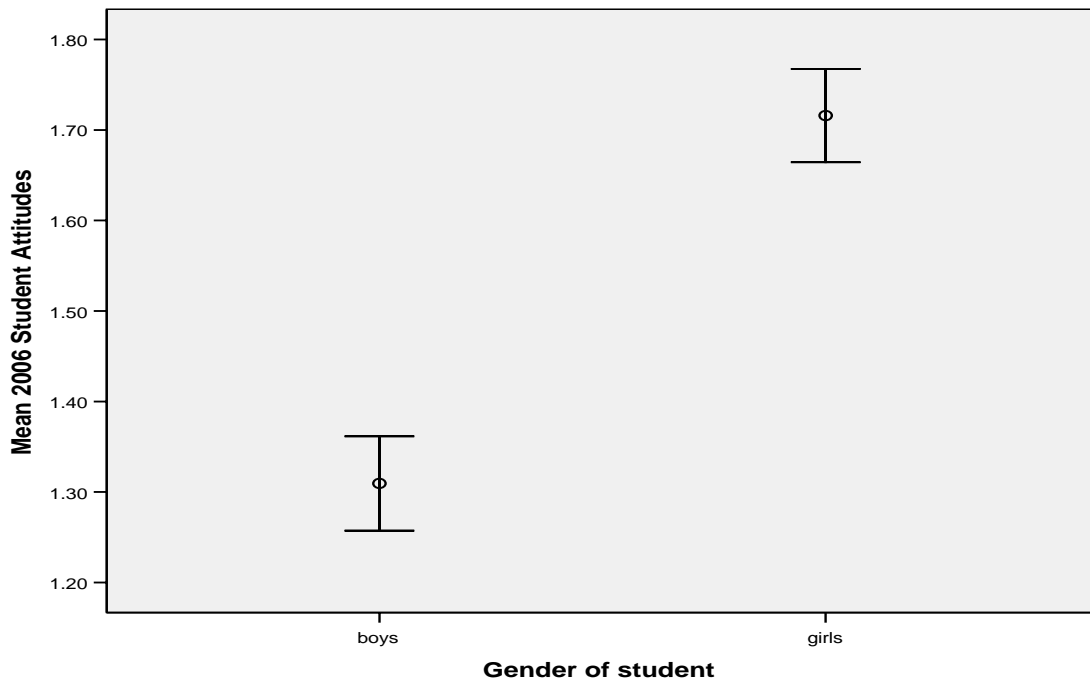


Figure 2.38. Comparison of attitudes towards learning and using English for boys and girls.

The observed differences between boys and girls in their attitudes to learning and using English was consistent across all year levels. In P1, girls expressed more positive attitudes than boys towards their English language studies, and this gender difference continued throughout P2, P3 and P4.

Summary

Longitudinal tracking of student performance in English language studies demonstrated strong developmental patterns of improvement for students as they moved from P1 to P3 or from P2 to P4 over the three years of the evaluation.

Cross-sectional comparisons of student proficiency at a given year level (P1 or P2 from 2004 to 2006, and P3 from 2005 to 2006) indicated that, in 2006, P1 and P2 students demonstrated higher levels of proficiency in English, as assessed by the Profiles of English as a Second Language, than in the previous two years of the evaluation. However, much of the gain in proficiency was observed for students at the higher levels of proficiency. The proportions of students at lower proficiency levels remained stable. This could be interpreted as an indication that the PNET Scheme had been successful at

improving the proficiency of higher achieving students, while having little impact on students at the lower levels of proficiency. It could also reflect a demographic shift as increasing numbers of children from homes in which English was never spoken entered the school system. This could flag an additional challenge for the PNET Scheme in the future.

In discussions with local teachers and NETs in the qualitative investigation, perceptions of student development were elicited. The tendency for children with higher proficiency to respond more positively to the opportunity of interacting with a NET was confirmed in the views of all respondents. It appeared that a threshold needed to be passed before interaction with a NET was possible and productive. In other words, in order to be able to benefit from being taught by a NET, children needed to have acquired a minimum level of proficiency, to have developed the strategic competence to deploy their limited English resources in communication, and have the confidence and motivation to do so.

In schools with high proportions of low ability students, the opportunity to observe the responses of children above and below this hypothetical threshold level was more evident. The NET in a school with relatively high incidence of special needs children remarked:

- *Well, the kids, I think it depends on individual kids. Some kids really they like to learn so it doesn't really matter what you present them with, they'll learn. They want to learn. I think the behavioural ones, if they are interested in that day's topic, they will want to learn it but occasionally, their behavioural issues sometimes get in the way and they just, it doesn't matter how much they are into the lesson, they just, they go off the deep end and they get too excited or something like that. You know, it's difficult.*

A LET in the same school made the same distinction between children above and below a certain threshold, though she described it not in terms of proficiency but of interest. Of interest in her remarks were the strategies employed to bolster flagging motivation:

- *Well, usually ... for those who ... you found that they're interested in learning English, you try to ask them to challenge themselves by erm talking to even local teachers in English or sometimes they can come ... encourage them to come to see er, the NET and talk to him in English. For lower interest, well ... try, try to let them to feel the experience of success. Like in a class, questioning and we'll let them to try to answer the questions more. Or, with some peers, like they can help among the peers, like high achievers can help the low achievers, more group work and pair work. And you know the sitting, how they sit it helps a lot. Like they sit with pairs, higher and lower together. So sometimes for the lower achievers who cannot understand what I say, then higher achievers can sometime translate for these students. So this is a way how I arrange their class.*

It was noteworthy, too, in this school, that even the slowest learners responded well to the NET. LETs perceived this response as setting a good foundation for future development:

- *Since some students in my class are slow learners, and they are, when they see the NET, they will try their best to use all their body language or their limited language to explain his, express his ideas. So I think it is quite... ar.... put a good beginning for them to start using English. Maybe this practice can be started at the low levels since the students are used to that. Maybe when they getting to a higher form, they will try, they will want to try since the NET have some patience even though they... he doesn't get what they want to say, but he will try, he will try to understand what they are talking about.*

In a third school, a clear distinction was made between the students of higher ability who enjoyed, and could benefit from, being taught by a NET and weaker students who could not:

- *I think the NET helps certain students only. Take my class for an example, for those smart students or those whose learning abilities are higher than others, they like to attend NET's lesson. The reason is that they can show off themselves in a way that they can understand what the NET said and they can speak English to the NET. These students pay much attention during the NET's lesson. For those below averaged students, the NET cannot act as a factor of encouragement. Those students even just sit quietly in the NET's lesson and dare not to say anything. Those students become shy and dare not to speak. These students cannot express in Chinese as they are facing a NET. I do not know whether the other classes like this or not. Yet, this is the situation for my class. Smart students are always eager to answer the questions and they want to attend the NET's lesson. If there is no NET's lesson in a week, they will be disappointed very much. For those below averaged students, the NET does not affect them much. These students just sit in the classroom.*

Another possible way of interpreting this phenomenon is in terms of the methodology commonly employed to teach English to absolute beginners. In Hong Kong, teachers at the primary level were trained to deal with students who had already acquired a foundation in basic English. Teachers built upon this foundation using a gradually increasing proportion of English as teaching medium as students progressed through the lower school levels. When faced with children who had not already acquired a basic foundation, however, teachers responded by increasing the proportion of Chinese in their teaching. For students of lower ability and working at pre-foundation levels, this effectively delayed development of an ability to cope with the teaching and learning situation they found in a NET class in which only English was used.

In schools where the student population was more homogenous in their proficiency levels and fewer students were below the hypothetical threshold for interaction with the NET, perceptions of differences between students in their receptiveness to NET impact were uncommon. LETs and NETs generally perceived growth in confidence and ability as a result of exposure to a NET, as the following examples show:

LETs

- *Actually, the children are using more English as I have observed, from the beginning of the NET Scheme. They are not as shy as before. They are brave enough to talk to strangers, native speakers. Quite impressive, actually.*
- *Students' use of English, especially speaking, is improved because when we co-teach inside the classroom, students have to speak in English. As a result, their chance of being exposed to the NET is increased. By doing so, the students are more or less affected. They have more confidence to speak. At least, they are not afraid of it ... The NET also created many opportunities for the students to speak ... For instance, the NET invites the students to speak during lesson ... Also, when the NET is on duty, she will talk to the students. Students are not afraid of the NET and dare to speak to her. The students know that they can have confidence to speak to the NET, even [if] their English [is] incorrect.*

NETs

- *Yes. When I first came, basically they didn't speak. Didn't matter what level they were, they didn't speak. They just had no confidence to do so. Whereas now, the... I mean all of the children are, they are more willing to acknowledge me and, you know, greet me because they are used to having me around. But with the children, the P3, 2 and 1, they are much more able, apart from just willing, to actually initiate a conversation and I mean very different ability levels. But yes they will They trust, they believe in themselves, more, because they've had a lot more practice. What we try to bring into every lesson is whatever the structures are, we'll have a game where, and play in pairs so that, you know, fifty per cent of the time they are talking. And it's putting it into something closer to a real life context rather than just a book. And yes, I think they are, they have more belief in the fact that they can speak English.*
- *Oh, yes definitely especially for the classes that I have taught for two years. In terms of reading, I've seen them develop. You know initially, they have absolutely no idea about sounding out and decoding and using clues from the book to be able to understand what it's all about. I've really seen them developing yes in terms of their reading ability. And speaking too, initially they were a little bit afraid because they are in a warm, safe comfortable environment, relaxed atmosphere, they are not afraid to talk and to ask things.*
- *Yes, absolutely. When I first came to this school, they used to be very afraid of me and never talked to me. But over a period of time now... I used to be always making the first move, I'd go up to the kids and as soon as they saw me they'd run off in all directions and then I used to be asking the questions. And the conversation was very limited "Good morning" "Good morning. How are you?", "I am fine, thank you" and stop. But now, they come to me and they ask me "How are you". That's so good when you hear children...*

More of the 2006 P1 students achieved higher levels on the interview test than in previous years, and there were also more students at the lowest level of the scale in this year. This may have reflected the higher than average proportion of 2006 P1 students from home backgrounds in which English was never spoken.

For the P2 and P3 students, achievement on the interview test was relatively stable across the three years of the evaluation.

On average, girls tended to demonstrate higher levels of proficiency in English than boys, and also to progress more rapidly than boys.

Most students expressed positive attitudes to learning and using English, and these attitudes were related to the gender of students and to their opportunities to use English outside school. Students who were more positive about learning and using English tended to achieve higher levels of proficiency and to progress more rapidly in their English studies than students who were less positive about their English studies.

Conclusions

The patterns and relationships summarized in this chapter suggest that the largest impact of the PNET Scheme was at P1 level. It appeared that there were diminishing returns for the PNET Scheme after P1, although overall growth in language proficiency was increasing.

While student attitudes to learning and using English were extremely stable over the evaluation period, it was clear that they were strongly related to proficiency. The direction of influence was not clear. However, there needs to be a concerted effort to build attitudes towards learning English after P1. The stability in attitudes suggested that:

- Attitudes are formed before students enter school.
- Attitude development in schools is negligible.
- Those with more positive attitudes were more likely to develop their language proficiency.
- Methods of developing more positive attitudes are urgently needed, at least to the level of valuing English language proficiency.
- The link between opportunities to use English outside school and more positive attitudes suggested that students need to be shown the relevance and importance of English to their own lives. For many students, English has remained simply another subject to be learned at school, rather than a useful skill and one with personal relevance.

Chapter Three: Home Support for English Studies

Home Background Characteristics of the Students

Across the three years of the evaluation, the parents of 5498 students answered survey questions¹ about their child's home background, with an emphasis upon the support available for children in the home as they developed their proficiency in English. Parents of 2006 P1 students responded to these surveys as part of the 2006 data collection, parents of P2 students responded in 2005 (when these students were in P1), and parents of P3 and P4 students responded in 2004. The following charts and text summarize survey responses given by parents.

Speaking English at Home

Most children spoke English only occasionally, if at all, outside school, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, and only 10% of all parents indicated that they had an English-speaking domestic helper at home. In 2006, there was a shift towards higher proportions of students coming from home backgrounds in which English was never spoken, and much lower proportions of students coming from home backgrounds where English was often spoken.

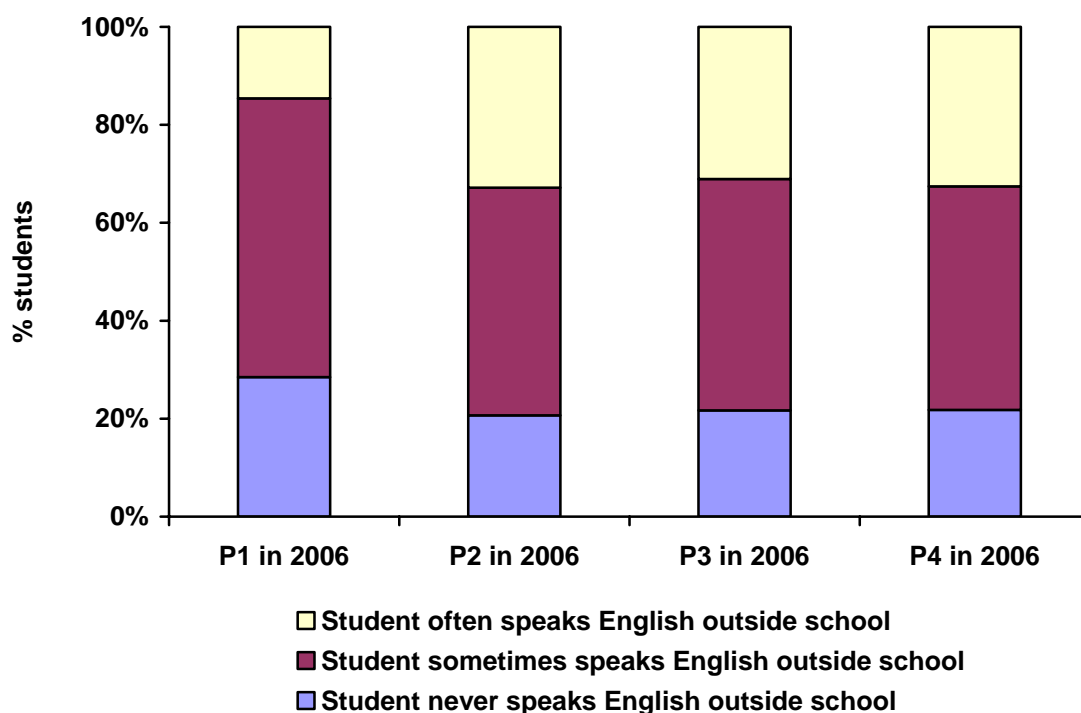


Figure 3.1. Students' opportunities to speak English outside school.

¹ Parents responded to home background surveys that were administered in Chinese.

The majority of parents who responded to the surveys were from a Cantonese-speaking background (77% of mothers and 89% of fathers) with very few native English-speakers among the surveyed parents (less than 1%). There were no students in the sample who had both parents who were native speakers of English.

In 2006, there was an increase in the number of parents from a native Putonghua-speaking background. Thus, approximately 15% of mothers and 5% of fathers surveyed in 2006 came from a native Putonghua-speaking background, in comparison with 9% of mothers and 2% of fathers in previous years of the evaluation. Slightly less than 5% of mothers and 4% of fathers came from other language backgrounds (usually South Asian), and some parents did not specify their language background (2.5% of mothers and 1.5% of fathers).

Parents' Education

Parents were asked to indicate the highest level of academic achievement for their child's mother (or female guardian) and father (or male guardian). As in previous years, approximately 20% of mothers and fathers had achieved primary level education, 30% had lower secondary level education, 37% had upper secondary or vocational education, and 5% of mothers and 9% of fathers had university level qualifications. In 2006, 4% of mothers and 3% of fathers had not attended school, 4% of parents did not respond to the question about mother's highest level of education and 1% did not respond to the question about father's highest level of education.

Attitudes of Parents to English Language Studies

As in 2004 and 2005, the parents who responded in 2006 to questions about their attitudes to their child's English language studies expressed strongly positive views.

Almost all parents responded that they placed importance on their child's English language studies, wanted to know more about their child's English language learning, and actively encouraged their child to learn English.

Most parents (97%) responded that everyone should learn English, and most (98%) said that they encouraged their child to read books in English and (95%) believed that good English language skills would help their child to get a better job.

However, 17% of parents responded that they did not know very much about the English curriculum at their child's school (although they wanted to know more), and 12% did not believe that it was a parent's responsibility to help their child with English studies.

Access to Books and Leisure Activities

A substantial proportion of all parents (31%) indicated that they did not have any English language books in the home, and 14% responded that they did not have books in any language in the home.

Parents indicated that a large proportion of most children's leisure time was spent watching television and videos. More than half of the students watched at least one hour of Chinese medium television per day, making it by far the most popular leisure activity. Sixteen percent of parents responded that their child spent more than one hour each day reading Chinese books, but reading was a more popular activity for most children than playing in a playground, playing computer games, swimming or playing sport. Leisure activities did not vary greatly with grade level, with P1, P2, P3 and P4 students showing very similar preferences and amounts of time spent on each activity.

Homework and Supervision

The majority of parents (70%) responded that their child was given homework in English at least four times per week, and most also responded that someone supervised completion of that homework all or at least some of the time, and that someone helped their child with their homework most of the time. Furthermore, most parents responded that someone at home looked at the English language work that their child had completed at school all (63%) or some (32%) of the time.

While most parents (54%) said that their child did not take extra tuition in English outside normal school hours, 29% of parents responded that their child took one or two hours of extra tuition, 12% took between three and five hours of extra tuition, and 5% of parents said their child took over five hours of extra English tuition each week.

Relationships between Home Background and Students' Achievement in English

A range of personal and home background characteristics was examined for possible relationships with students' proficiency and their rate of English proficiency development.

In 2004 and 2005, it had been observed that students tended to achieve higher outcomes in English when their parents were themselves well-educated (i.e., with more than junior secondary level education), took a keen interest in their child's English studies, supported opportunities for the student to practise English outside school, and where there was good access to books in English and other languages at home and school. The current analyses were designed to address whether there were particular personal or home background factors that were related to both higher average levels of achievement and more rapid improvement in English language studies.

Impact of Opportunities to Use English

Students who had opportunities to speak English outside school with family, friends or English-speaking domestic helpers had higher average levels of achievement across all measures of English language proficiency, compared with students who never or very rarely spoke English outside the school context. These comparisons are illustrated in Figures 3.2 to 3.5.

By P4, the impact of frequency of opportunities to speak English outside school had become closely linked to higher average proficiency in spoken English. Similarly, P4 students who had at least some opportunity to speak English outside school demonstrated higher proficiency in reading and writing in English, when compared with students who did not have opportunities to speak English outside school. These relationships are shown in Figure 3.5.

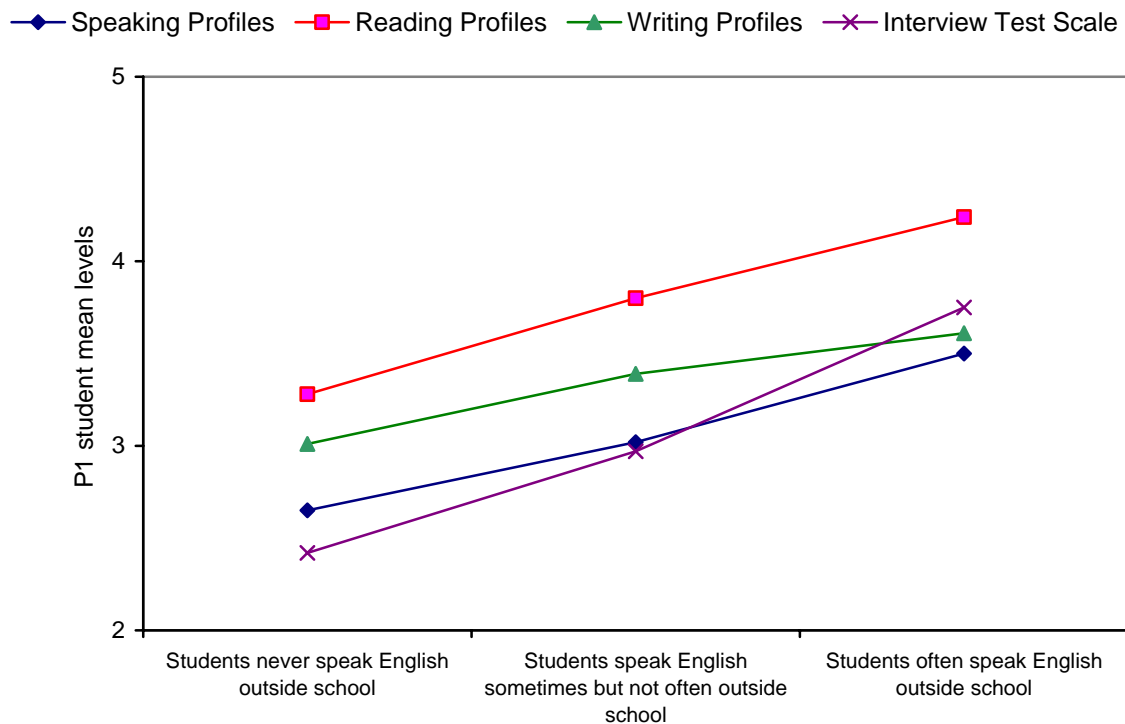


Figure 3.2. Relationship between student proficiency and opportunities to speak English outside school for 2006 P1 students.

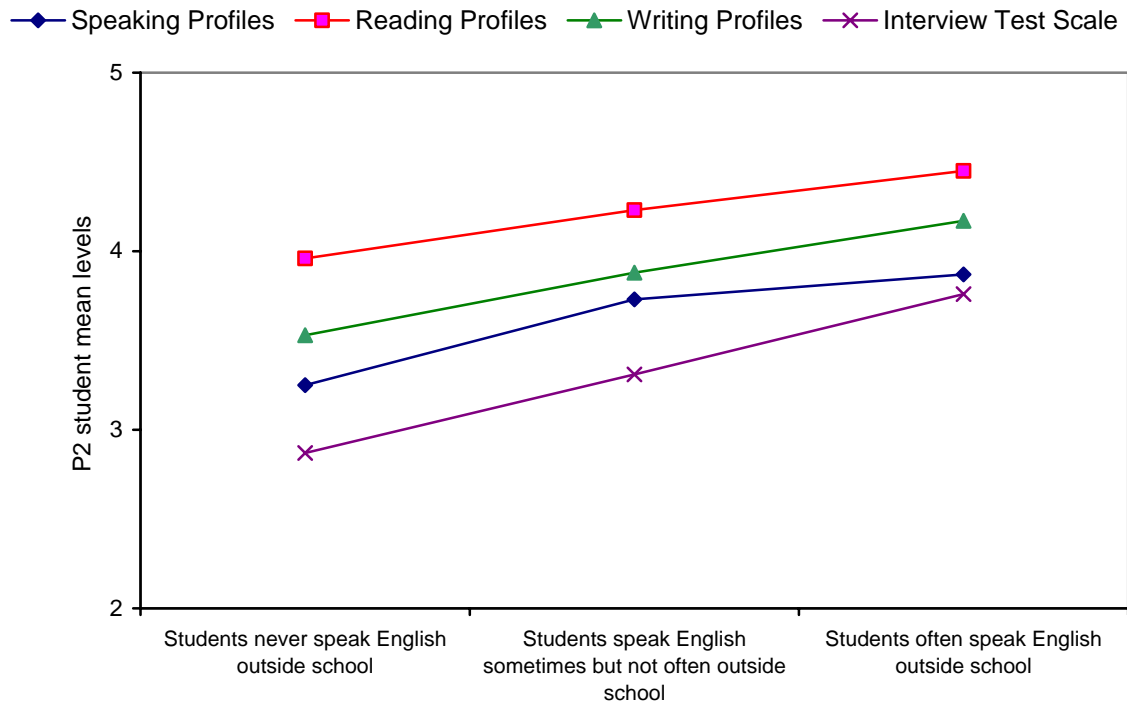


Figure 3.3. Relationship between student proficiency and opportunities to speak English outside school for 2006 P2 students.

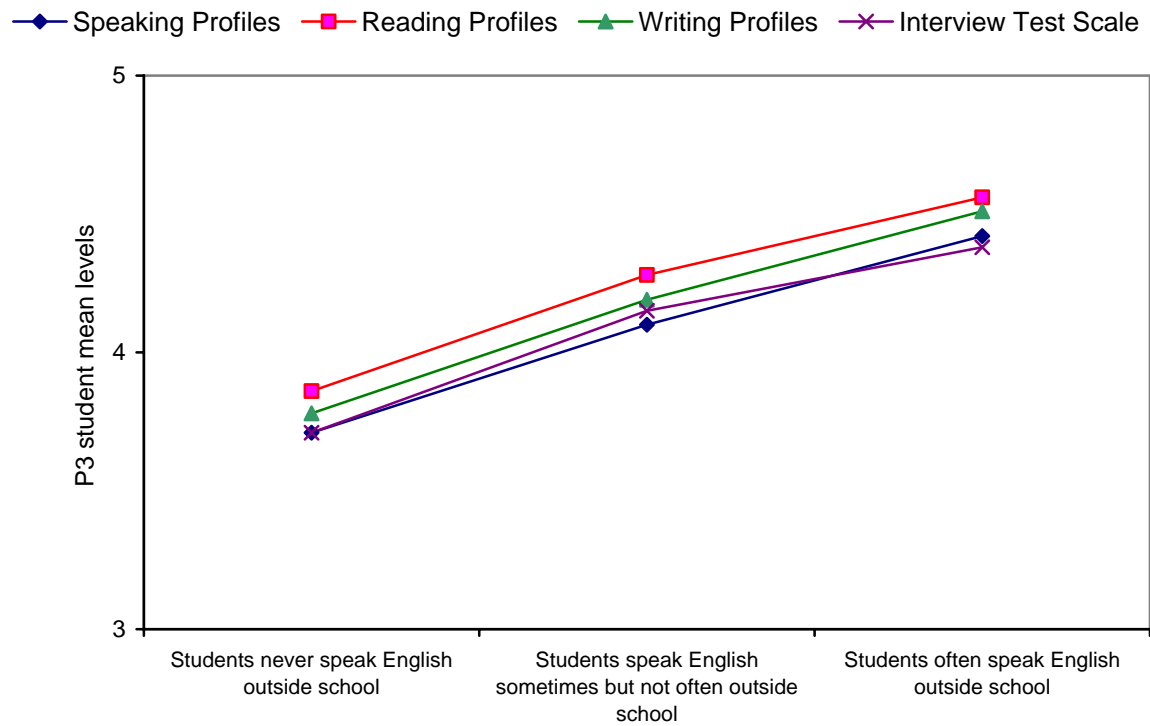


Figure 3.4. Relationship between student proficiency and opportunities to speak English outside school for 2006 P3 students.

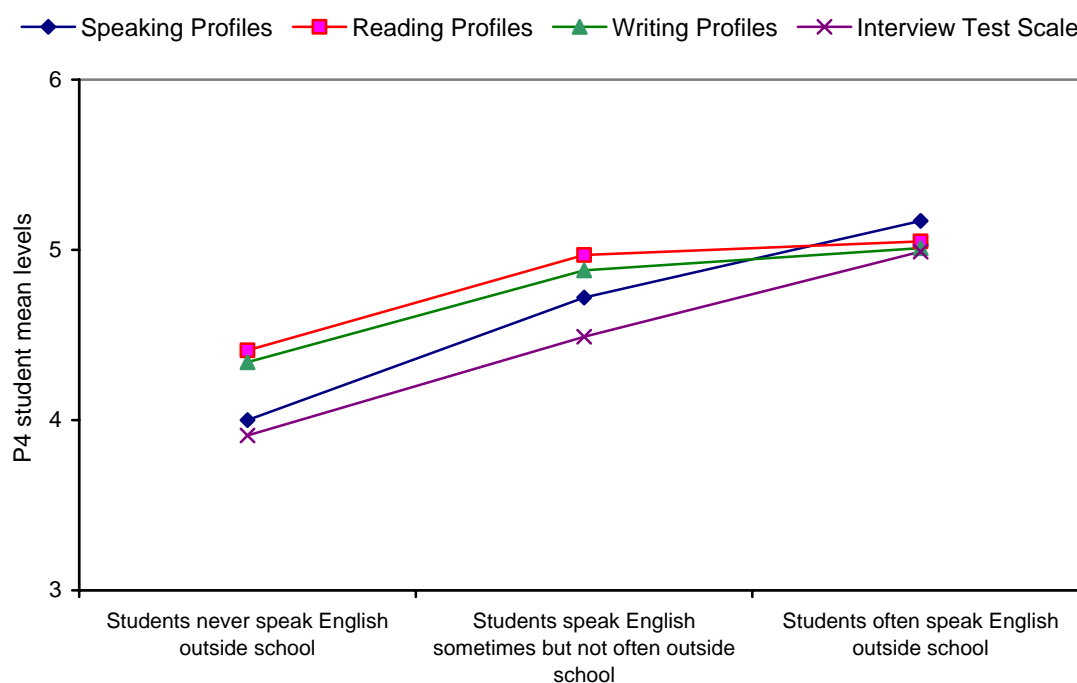


Figure 3.5. Relationship between student proficiency and opportunities to speak English outside school for 2006 P4 students.

There were indications that students with opportunities to speak English outside school not only had higher average levels of proficiency, but also developed their proficiency in spoken English at a faster rate than those who did not have similar opportunities. Differences in the rate of development in English reading or writing ability based on opportunities to *speak* English outside school were much less obvious, possibly because of a more general lack of opportunity for students to read and write in English outside school. This is an aspect that needs to be addressed through the school and the media to stress the importance of home support for English and for opportunities to practise. This also indicated that the English language learning advantage students gained from home backgrounds in which English was spoken remained over time. Students with opportunities to speak in English outside school developed their English reading and writing ability, on average, at the same rate as those who did not have similar opportunities, and thus retained their advantaged position in terms of English proficiency over the first four years of school. These relationships are illustrated in Figures 3.6 and 3.7 for students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 or from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

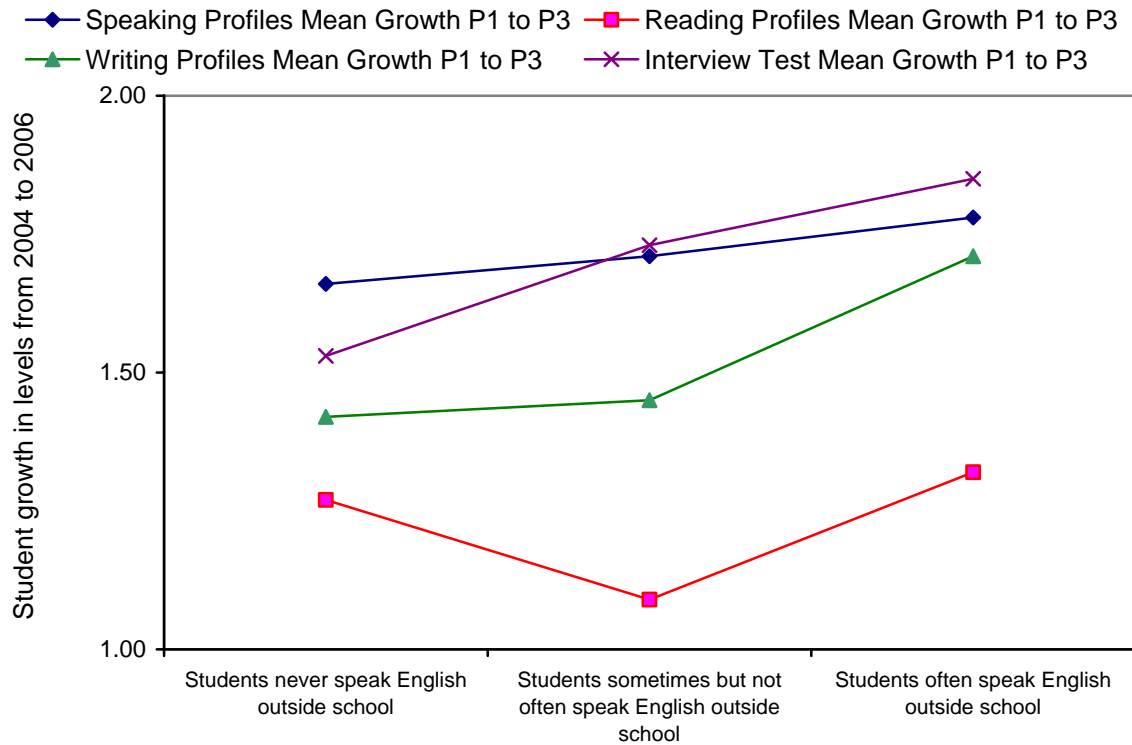


Figure 3.6. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and opportunities to speak English outside school for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

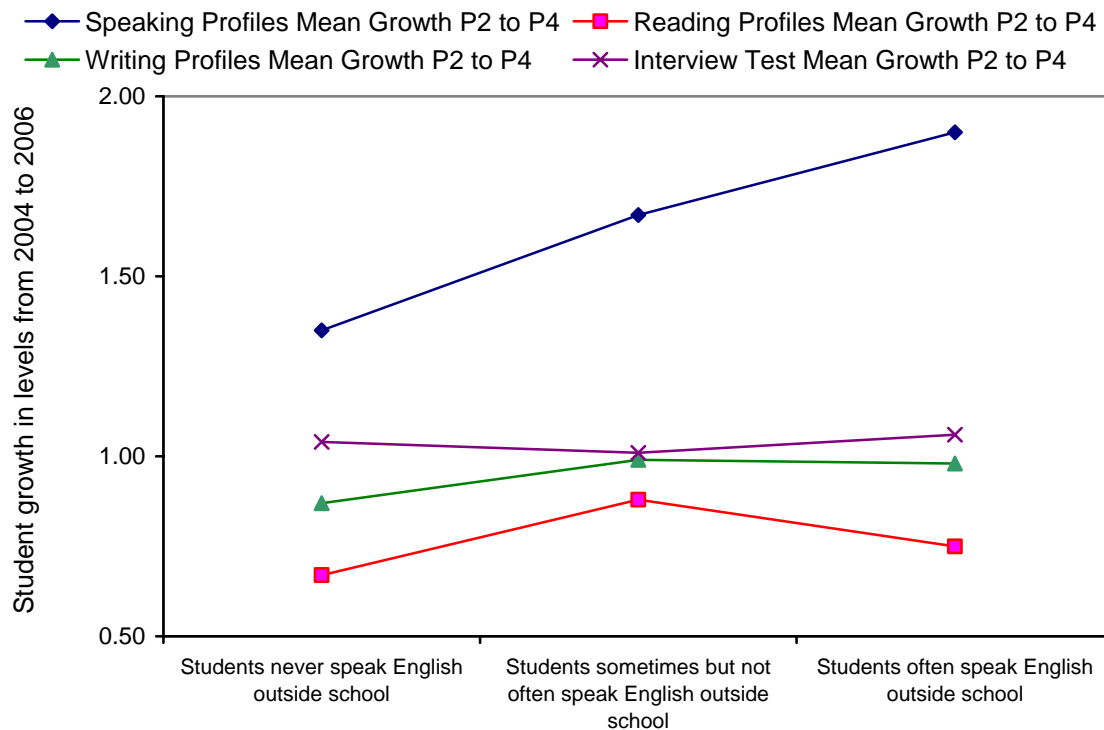


Figure 3.7. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and opportunities to speak English outside school for students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

Impact of Access to Books at Home

Students with access to many books (in any language) in the home tended to achieve higher average levels of proficiency in English than students with restricted access to books. These relationships were constant across age levels and domains of English proficiency, as illustrated in Figures 3.8 to 3.11.

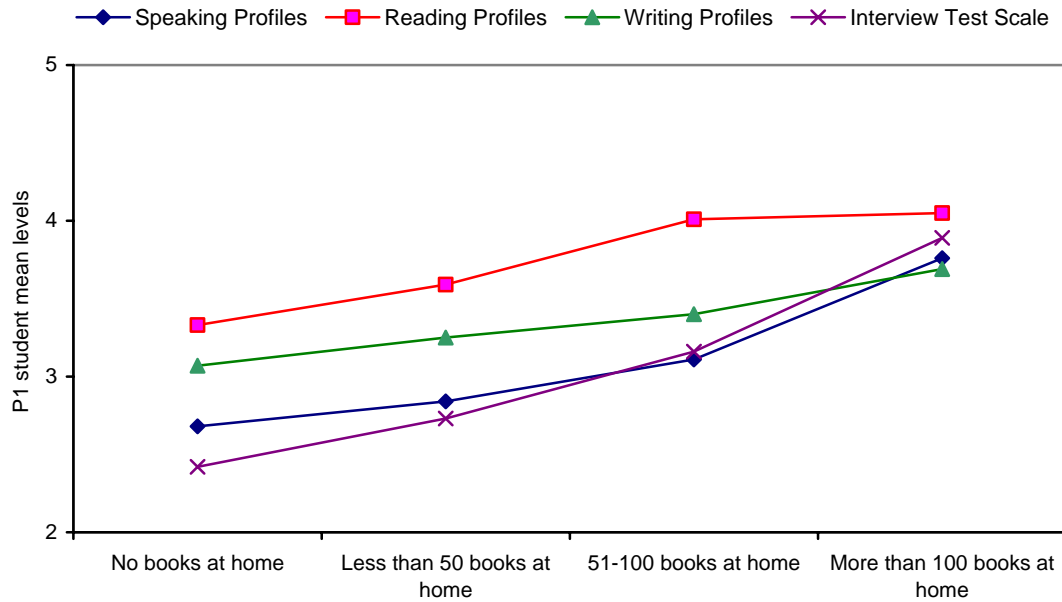


Figure 3.8. Relationships between student proficiency and access to books at home for 2006 P1 students.

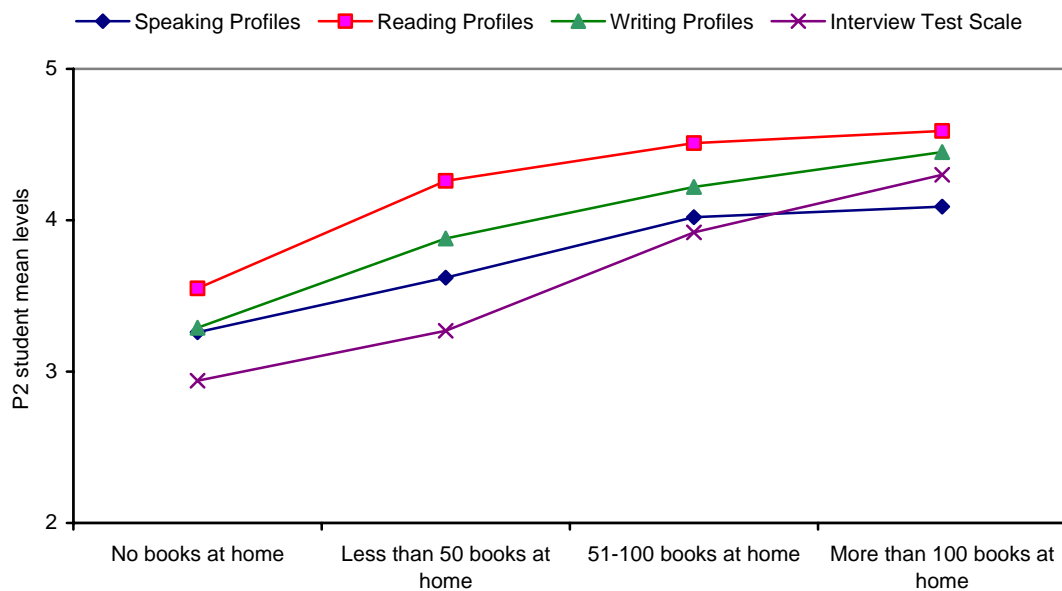


Figure 3.9. Relationships between student proficiency and access to books at home for 2006 P2 students.

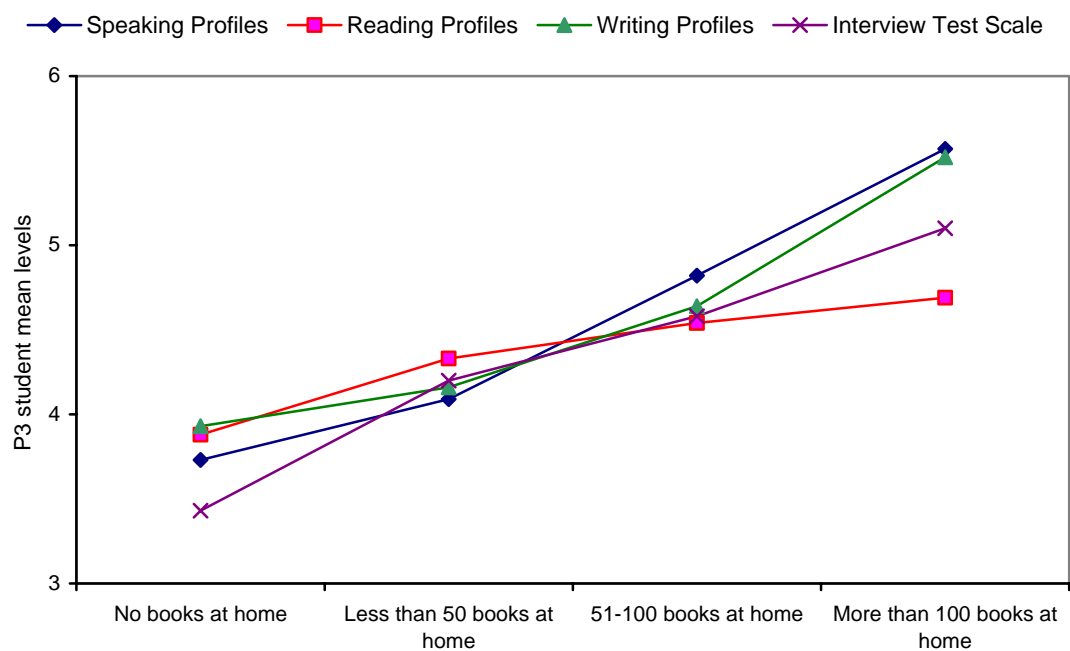


Figure 3.10. Relationships between student proficiency and access to books at home for 2006 P3 students.

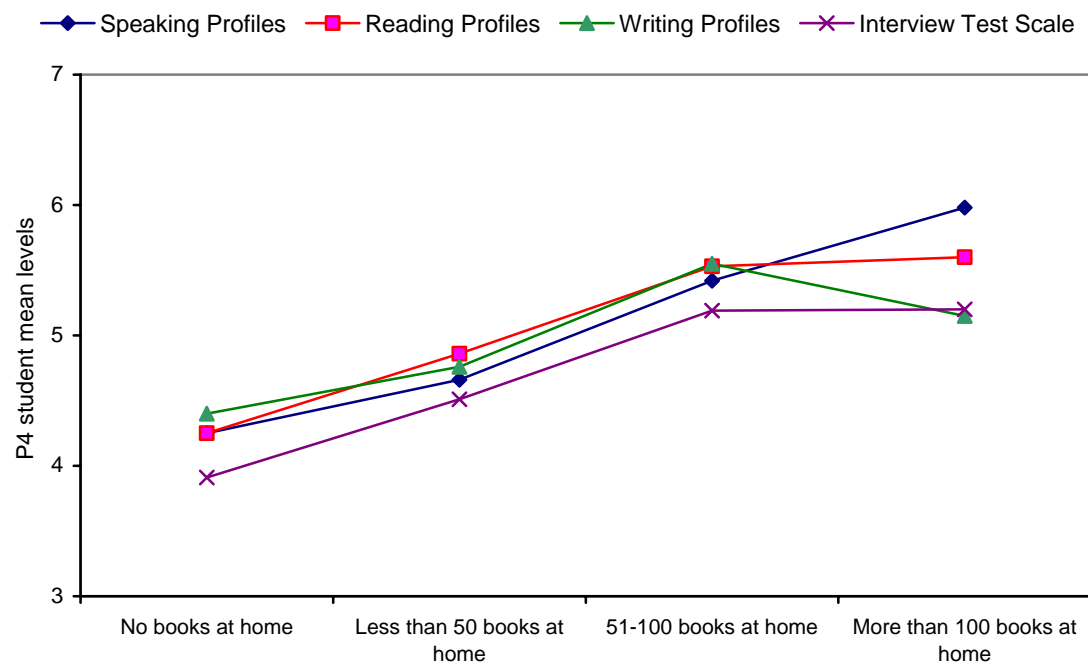


Figure 3.11. Relationships between student proficiency and access to books at home for 2006 P4 students.

Relationships between students' access to books at home and their growth in proficiency in English over the three years of the evaluation differed across age groups and domains of proficiency. These relationships are illustrated in Figures 3.12 and 3.13 for students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 or from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

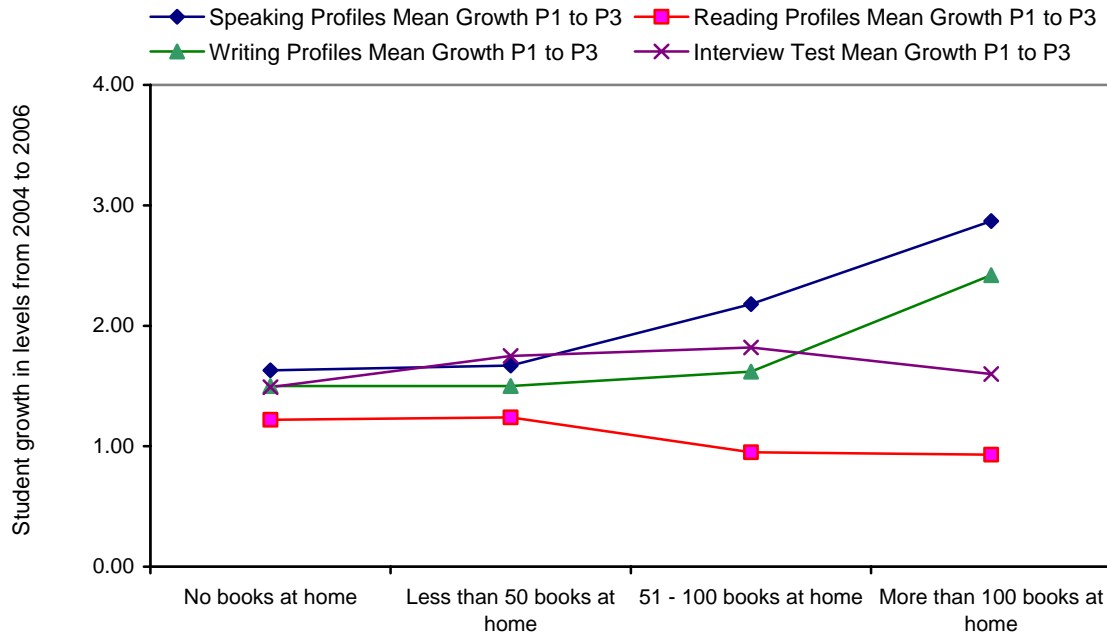


Figure 3.12. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and access to books at home for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

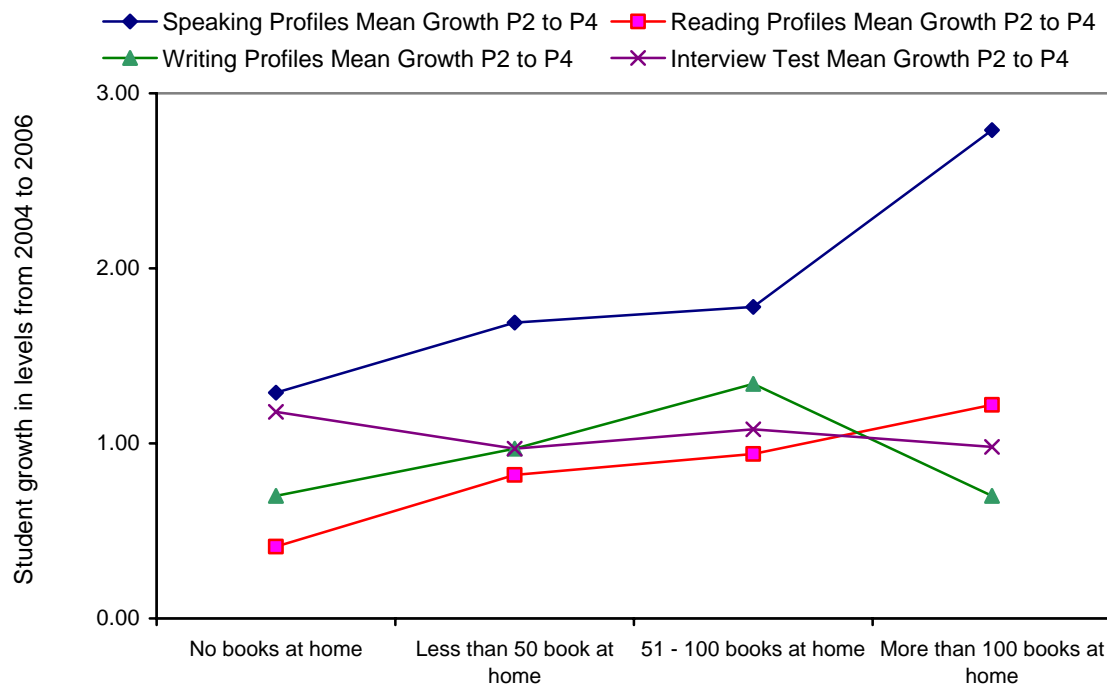


Figure 3.13. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and access to books at home for students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

The observation that student access to relatively *few* books at home was related to higher average rates of growth in reading proficiency for P1 to P3 students (Figure 3.12) seemed counterintuitive.

It was possible that the impact of the PNET Scheme, with its particular emphasis upon reading, could be seen at work here, as students with limited access to books at home were given opportunities to overcome this deficit through access to books at school.

To explore this possibility, average rates of growth in reading proficiency for students from different home backgrounds and tracked from P1 to P3 were compared for students who were or were not currently engaged in the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading (KS1) [PLP-R (KS1)]. This comparison is illustrated in Figure 3.14.

Impact of the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading (Key Stage One) on Development of Reading Proficiency

The PLP-R (KS1) was a programme produced by the ATT, providing direction and guidance for the teaching of literacy with a planned and structured focus on reading and provision of tools for assessment of student needs and targeted intervention for students (NET Section, EMB, 2005).

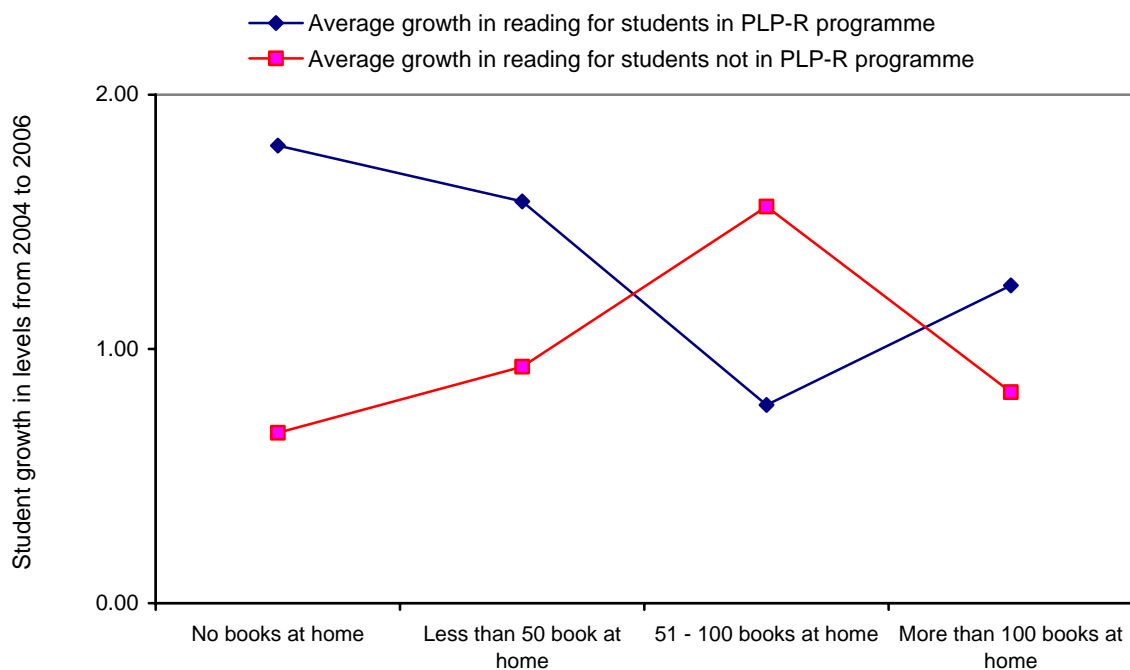


Figure 3.14. Relationship between student growth in reading proficiency, access to books at home, and participation in PLP-R (KS1) for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

The relationships graphed in Figure 3.14 offer support to the argument that a structured and soundly supported reading programme such as the PLP-R(KS1), embedded within the PNET Scheme, can be used to overcome the negative impact of a lack of books at home on students' development of reading proficiency.

Students from less enriched home backgrounds (in terms of access to books) who were also taking part in the PLP-R(KS1) showed a much stronger rate of growth in reading proficiency than their counterparts who were not taking part in the PLP-R(KS1).

The PLP-R(KS1) was linked to most difference for those students who were most in need of support for their reading, and who did not have access to books in any other context than the school and classroom.

One of the PLP-R(KS1) schools visited as part of the qualitative investigation illustrated the dual impact of an experienced native-speaking English teacher and a structured curriculum innovation. The school had been re-housed in a new building located in an area of Kowloon which was undergoing redevelopment. The NET was working on a one-school-one-NET basis. She was an experienced teacher who had worked in the school for two years and brought with her 20 years experience of teaching in other contexts and a Master's degree in TESOL. PLP-R was used at KS1 in the school, together with a textbook.

LETs described their general teaching strategy in terms of policies – environment-rich learning at P1, small class teaching at P2 – and of the electronic resources they used that accompanied the textbook – 'PowerPoint in almost every lesson'. They described an environment-rich policy which had been introduced at P1. This applied to the medium of instruction in the classroom and to an endeavour to use English outside the classroom when meeting students in the corridors and playground: *For P1, from this year, erm, we start environment-rich learning. That means for English teachers we can only use English to talk to the student. Yeah. No, no Chinese at all. For P1, starting from this year ... For P2, although we don't have the environment-rich learning, we have more class teaching. So there are only twenty something students in each class, so we have, we can have a lot of activities, for example, interviewing, and lots of games that can be interactive... For English teachers, we will use English to communicate with students [outside class]. For example, I will say 'Hello, how are you?' and something like that. But at the very beginning, it is very difficult for them to communicate with the teacher because they have less vocab they can use. But, from this semester it's better compared with the last semester ... I think it takes time, it become more efficient to use. But, actually it is useful for students to use their language after the lesson.*

In discussing NET impact, the LETs gave the impression that it was a fortuitous combination of the introduction of PLP-R and the recruitment of a NET with a specialisation in literacy which had energised teachers in the school and impacted on the curriculum and on language development. Although this was a PLP-R school, LETs only

mentioned PLP-R in relation to the NET. This reinforced the impression that PLP-R was the domain of the NET. When the NET was absent, as on the day of the LET interview for example, PLP-R could not be used: *The problem I find is, when the NET is not here, at the day, we can't have PLP-R lesson ... Today she is absent ... Yes, she is sick today ... So she is important.* When asked about their general teaching strategy, the LETs talked about the textbook, which took up seven out of nine lessons per week for KS1 classes, rather than the PLP-R system which took up two lessons per week.

LETs appreciated the NET's guidance and input in general, but specifically in relation to literacy teaching and PLP-R: *... practically, she helps us in PLP-R lessons teaching. And for the other co-planning, she gives us a lot of new ideas and help us to develop a new, a new way to teach ... We have a good relationship, we can say that ... She is involved in P1 to P3 for the PLP-R programme ... And also the programme is from EMB, the primary literacy programme in reading. That's why we are very lucky to have the NET who is the expert in literacy programme in Australia. She helps us a lot in, in teaching students the strategies of reading ... For P1, is it shared reading. She focuses on the shared reading. But for P3, she focuses on the guided reading.*

LETs perceived an impact of the NET on pupil language development in general and related to PLP-R: *I think they are more willing to guess and predict and also try hard to speak in English. That is the impact. And I think pupils like English, especially in reading since we start the PLP-R programme. They read more story books written in English.* LETs also welcomed the general support and advice the NET could bring, as well as the linguistic and cultural enrichment she could engender: *And I think the PNET Scheme is welcomed by the parents in Hong Kong, especially one school one NET or more than one NET ... We are happy to know more innovative teaching method, because the NET can introduce her views to us ... We are happy not only to learn English from the NET teacher but also we learn and experience her culture for example, I always have lunch with her. So when we have lunch we talk much about her country, and our travel. So we exchange much experience.*

LETs acknowledged the value of the NET's teaching approaches in terms of learning to learn, which had also impacted on them in the form of newly learned techniques and approaches in the context of PLP-R: *I think the NET can introduce some very simple but also very useful strategies for students to learn English. For example, she designed that work board. I think it is very efficient and very interesting for students because they can have different work to do. And she introduced some very well organized way for us to teach English. Maybe you can see the activities, for example, reading around. That means they can use that magic stick and students can walk around and just point to the word they know and then read. That is very simple but for them that is very interesting and to encourage them to read out the words. Yeah. But for the local teachers, we may not think of this simple but interesting activity for them. Yeah. She introduced some good methods to us ... for example, in the past err, when student answered wrongly, I just gave them the correct answer. But now, for this year, for the PLP-R programme, I find that I can ask other students to help the less able students to learn so that the others can have more interaction. And for the less able student, they can also gain from this kind of*

learning activities. And I think this can also help them to improve their confidence, gain more confidence ... I think she can, the NET can share our workload. And I think it is much better to have her help because we are not work alone. She can help us because she is the expert, I think ... Maybe she played a supportive role in our school.

LETs cited several examples of techniques and approaches they had acquired from working with the NET. These included general methodology as well as ideas specifically related to reading which would apply in the PLP-R lessons: *I think, if the NET was not there okay, we won't have much changes in teaching of English. Because we have a textbook, usually we focus on the textbook, a textbook-based teaching. And with the help of the NET, we adapt the textbook, get some ideas and think of other activities to help students to learn English ... I think she can enrich the use of the reading strategies, right? Because she conduct the reading workshop for us. So I think our professionalism in the reading strategies will be improved. Will be enhanced ... Also in the teaching strategies, she give us a lot of ideas. So, at least to me, I would think, to the student, I need to speak as much English as I can. Try not to translate in Cantonese. And for the students, when they don't know how to ask in English, when they just say aloud in Cantonese, I also try to teach them to speak in English. Try to read a few sentence and ask them to read after me ... I think she can help me to help more the weak students. She always encourages me to reflect on the lesson. And because she can find out the difficulty of some weak students, she just follow up, follow up activity for them and I can try my best to help her to do it ... I think she also broaden our view, our view because erm, in the past, we always focus on textbook, but now, she brings some ideas maybe from Australia, or from other countries and she has more materials from other, other... resources.*

Impact of Parents' Education

Students with parents who were more highly educated tended to achieve higher average levels of proficiency in English than students with parents who had completed no more than lower secondary level education.

The strong relationship between parental level of education and student proficiency in English had been noted in 2004 and 2005. These relationships, which continued in 2006, are illustrated in Figures 3.15 to 3.22.

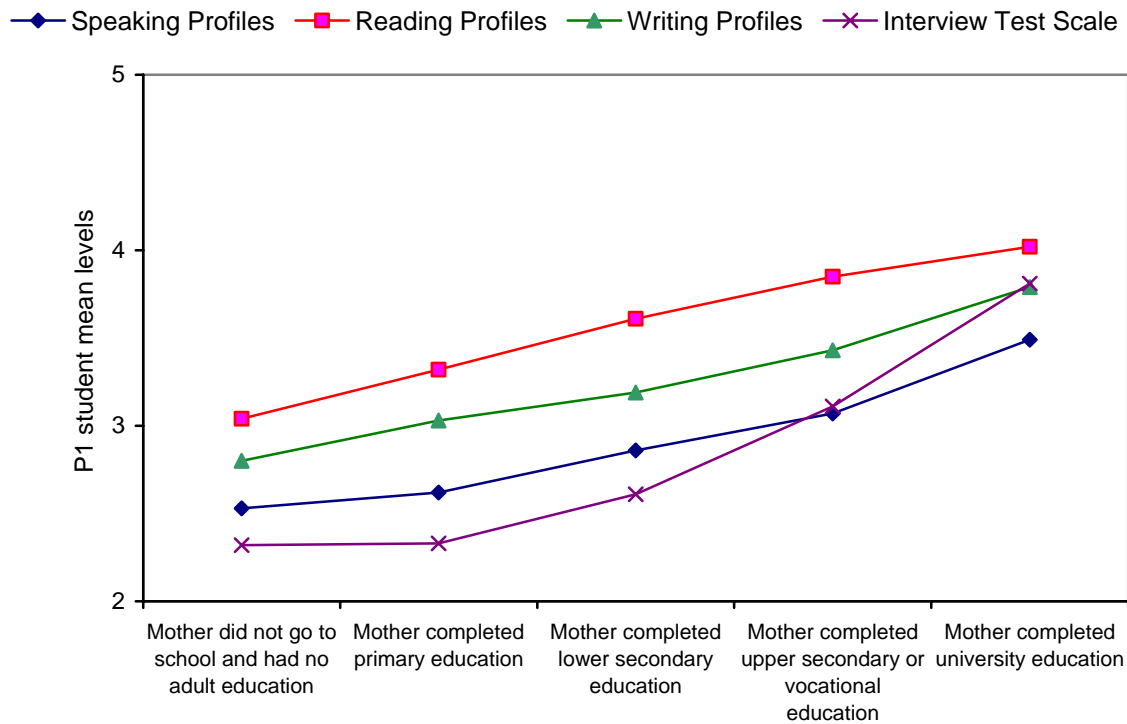


Figure 3.15. Relationships between student proficiency and maternal (or female guardian's) level of education for 2006 P1 students.

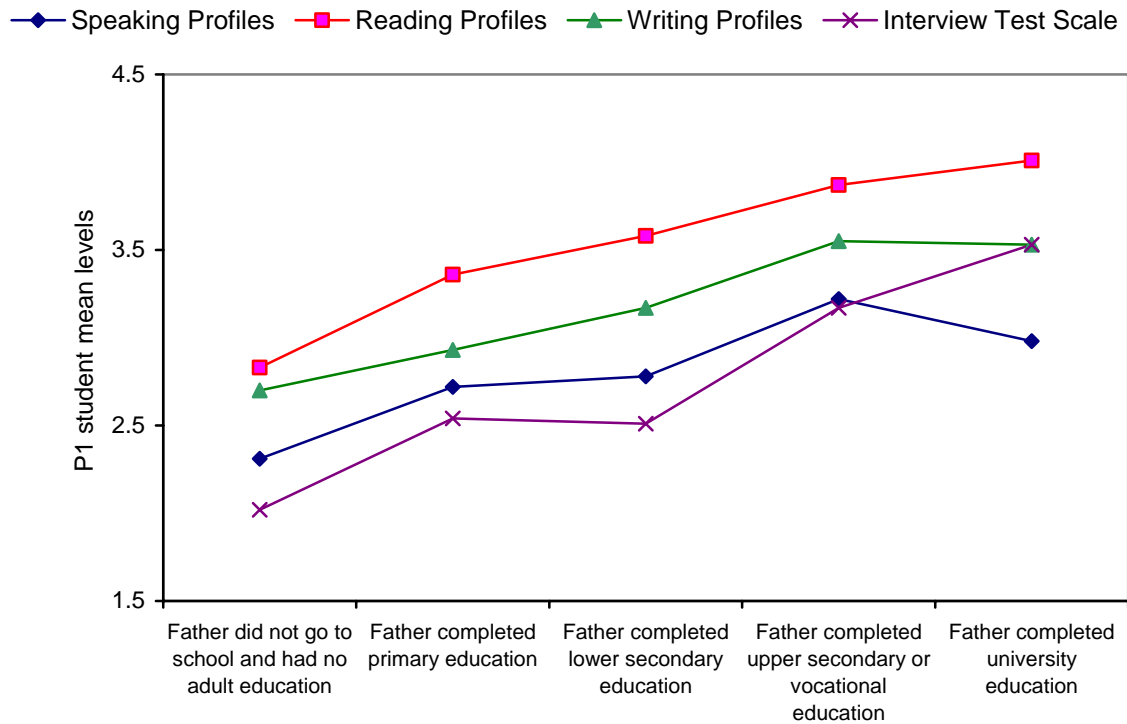


Figure 3.16. Relationships between student proficiency and paternal (or male guardian's) level of education for 2006 P1 students.

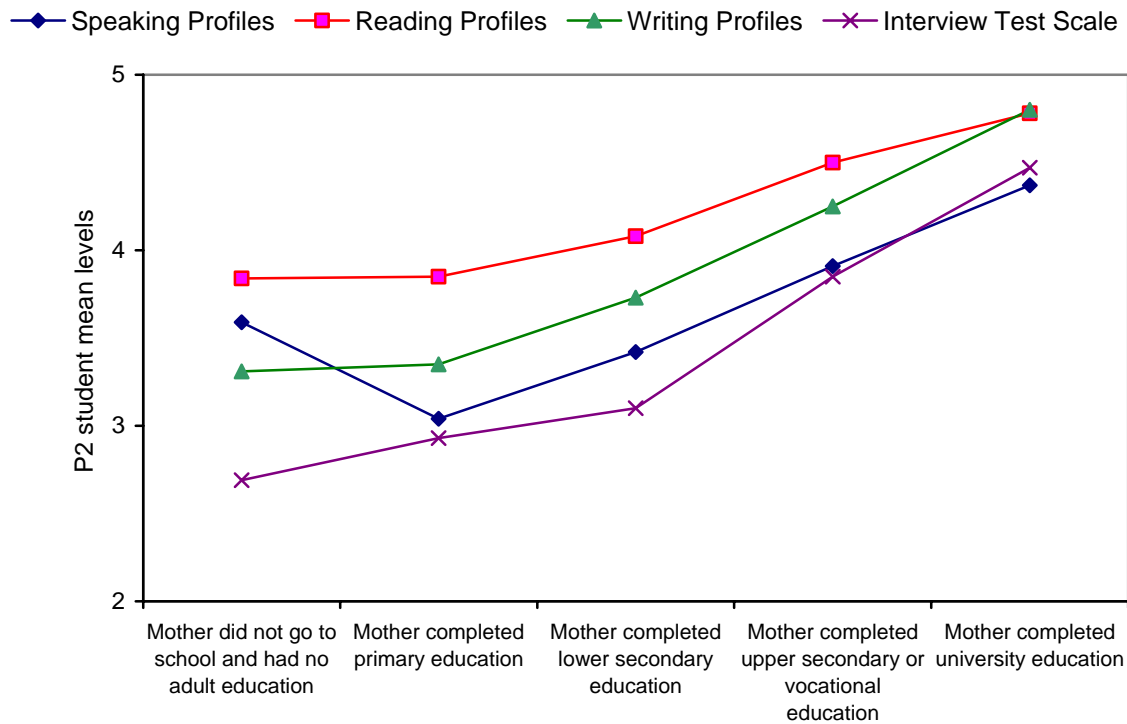


Figure 3.17. Relationships between student proficiency and maternal (or female guardian's) level of education for 2006 P2 students.

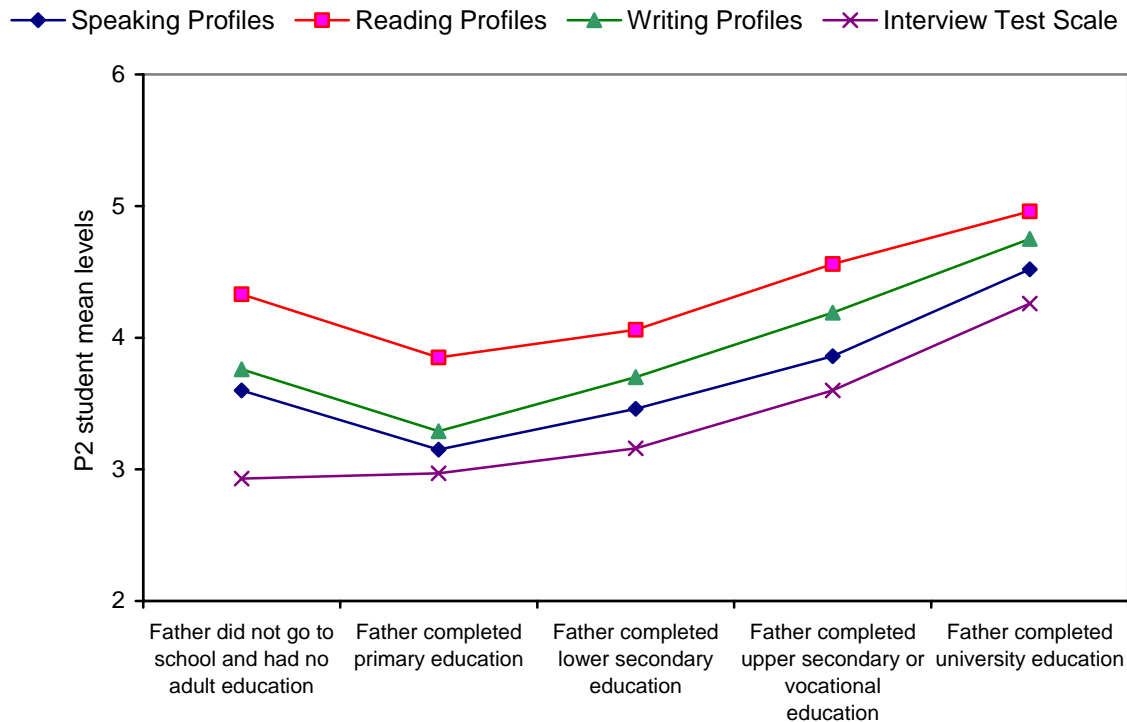


Figure 3.18. Relationships between student proficiency and paternal (or male guardian's) level of education for 2006 P2 students.

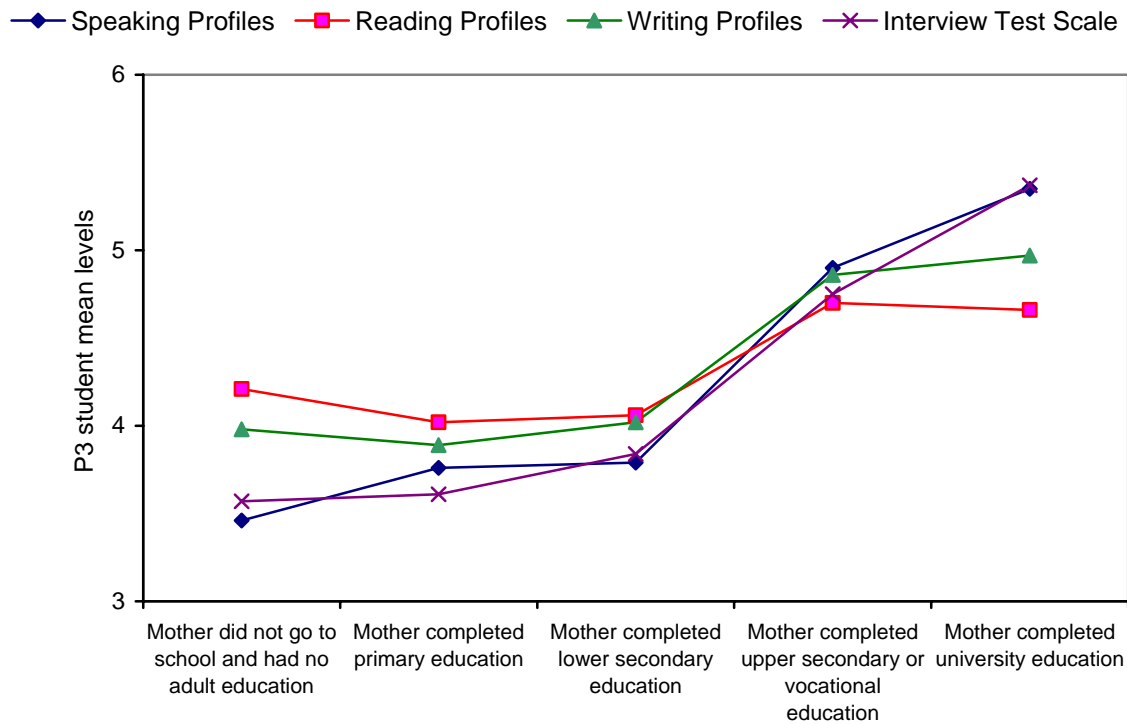


Figure 3.19. Relationships between student proficiency and maternal (or female guardian's) level of education for 2006 P3 students.

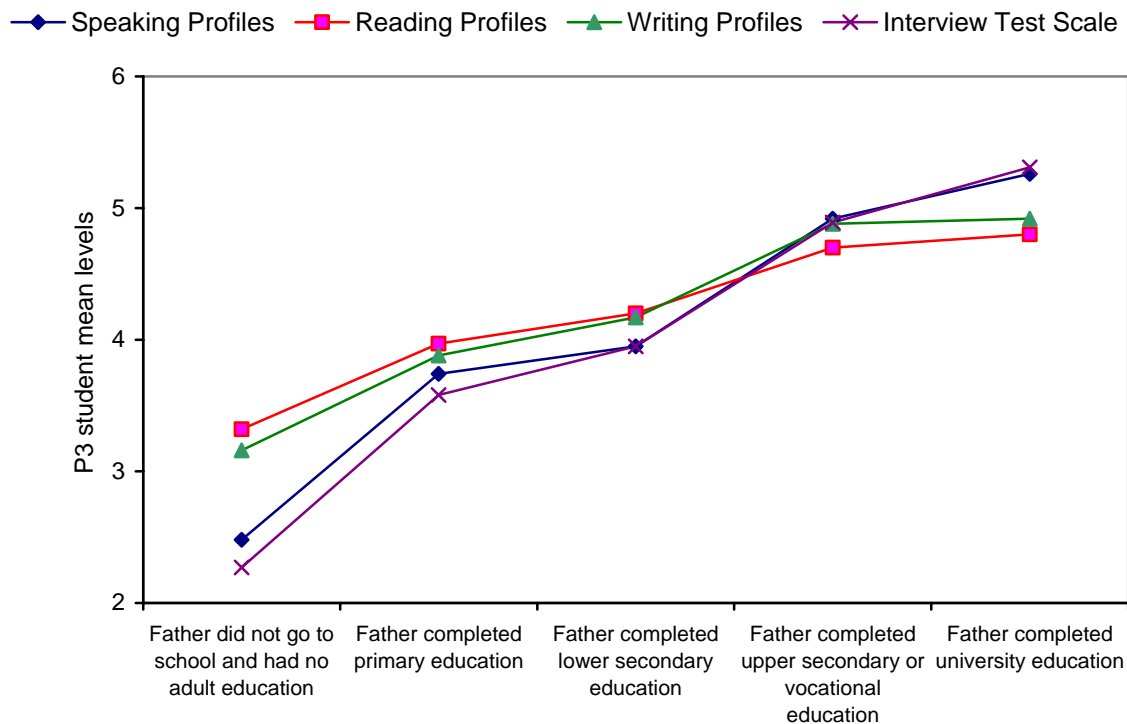


Figure 3.20. Relationships between student proficiency and paternal (or male guardian's) level of education for 2006 P3 students.

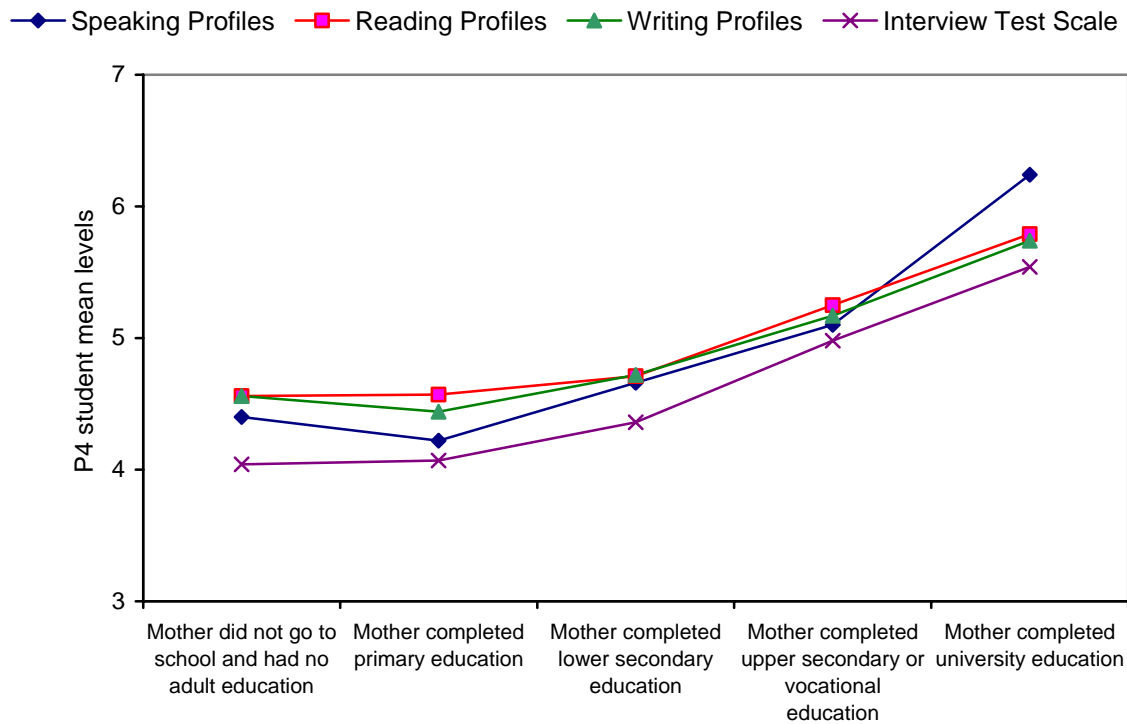


Figure 3.21. Relationships between student proficiency and maternal (or female guardian's) level of education for 2006 P4 students.

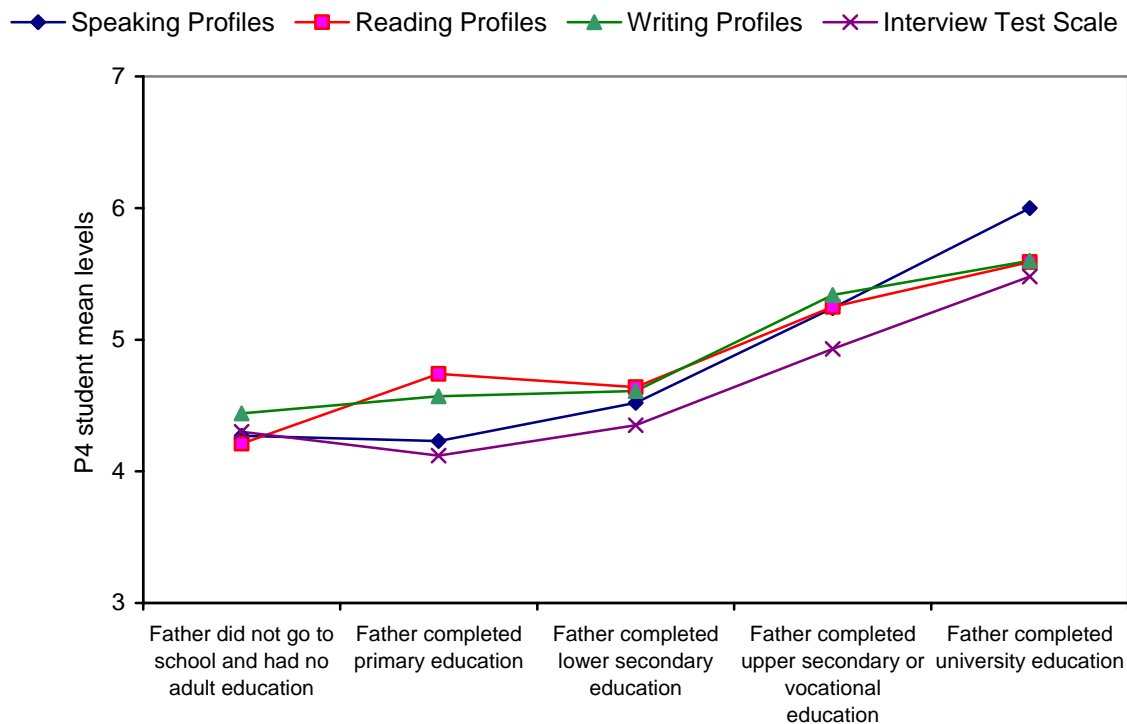


Figure 3.22. Relationships between student proficiency and paternal (or male guardian's) level of education for 2006 P4 students.

Figures 3.23 to 3.26 illustrate relationships between parents' education and student progress in English proficiency. The findings suggest that younger students (tracked from P1 to P3 over the evaluation period) made more progress in *spoken* English proficiency if they had more highly educated parents. However, the rate of student progress in *literacy skills* in English, and particularly in reading, seemed to be constant regardless of parental education. Students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 seemed to make more progress in terms of the Profiles of spoken English if they had more highly educated parents, but rates of progress in the other domains were similar for students regardless of parental education. When combined with the patterns illustrated in the previous figures, Figures 3.23 to 3.26 show that students with well educated parents maintained or increased their advantage over other students in terms of English proficiency over the three years of the study.

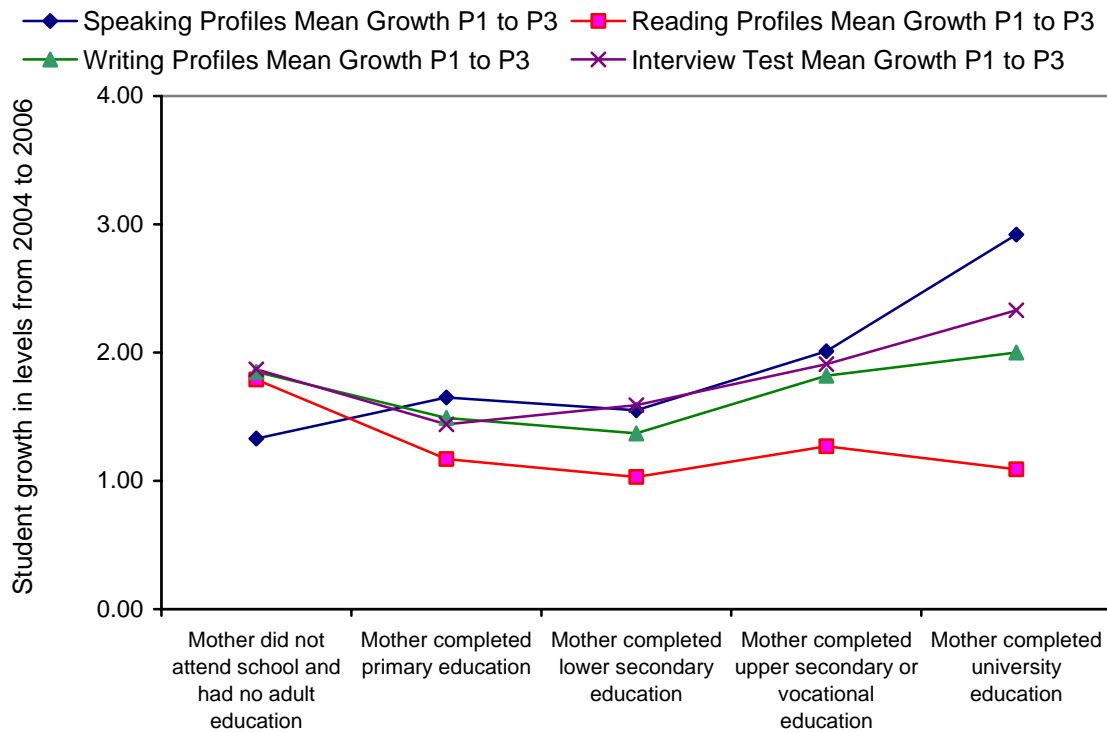


Figure 3.23. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and maternal (or female guardian's) level of education for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

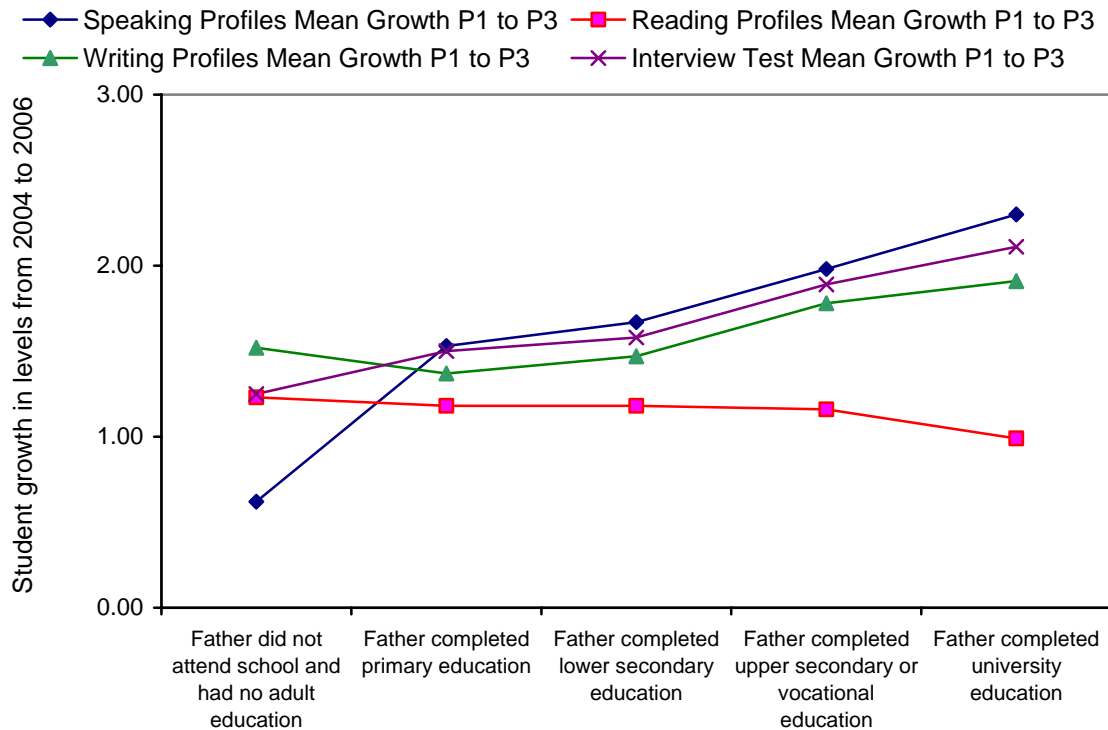


Figure 3.24. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and paternal (or male guardian's) level of education for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

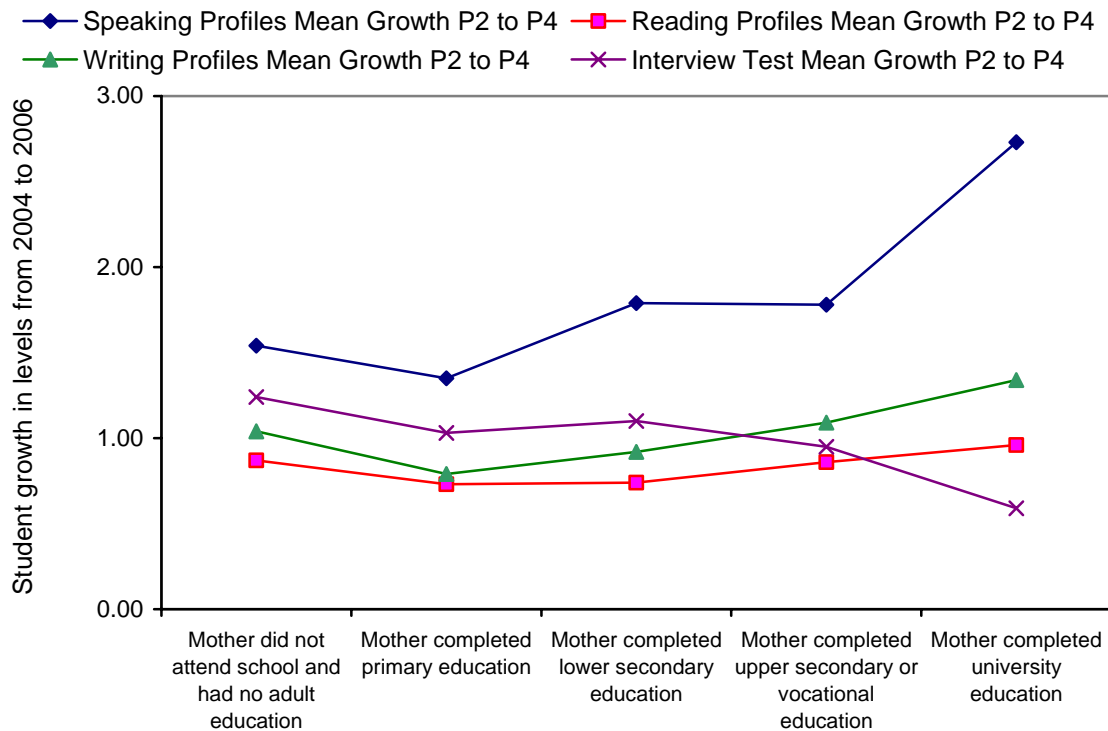


Figure 3.25. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and maternal (or female guardian's) level of education for students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

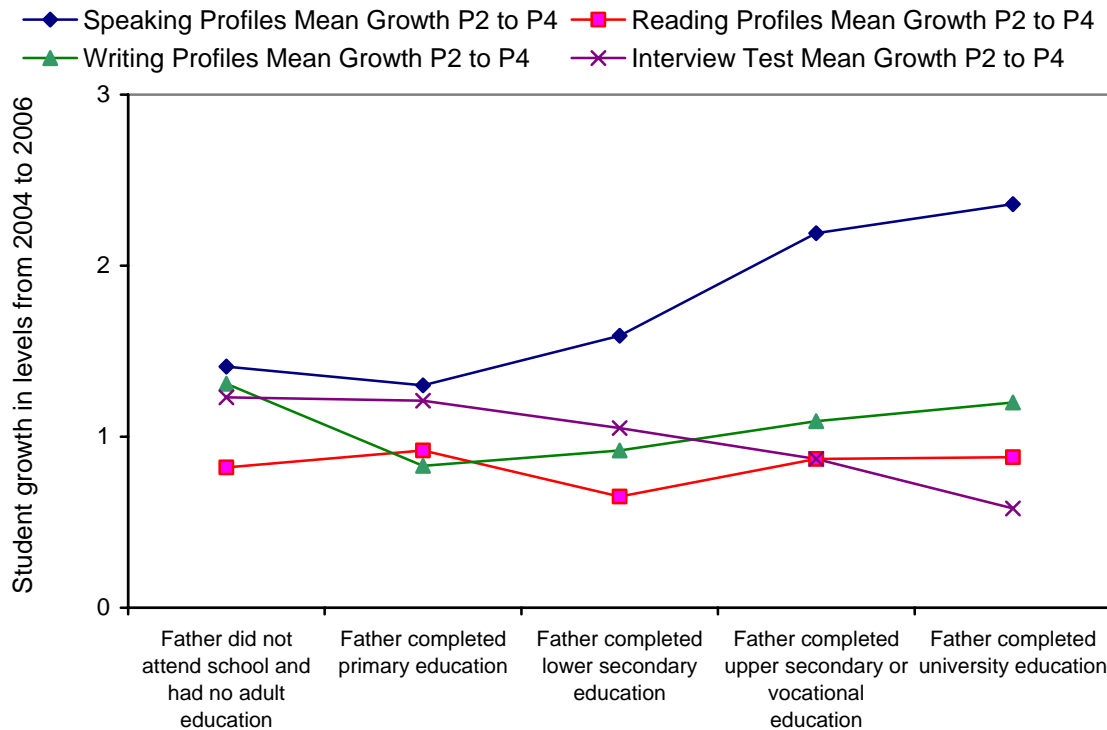


Figure 3.26. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and paternal (or male guardian's) level of education for students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

Impact of continuity of teaching by a NET on relationships between student development of proficiency and parental education

The deployment of NETs in schools, and the impact of continuity of teaching by a NET on relationships between home background and development of student proficiency was of particular interest in this evaluation. For example, was the NET more active and influential in schools where the parents were more supportive? Was the negative impact on English proficiency of home backgrounds that offered no opportunities to use English overcome, at least in part, by the students' access to a NET at school?

All students in the 2004 sample (who were in P1 or P2 at the time of first data collection) had been working with a NET at the start of the evaluation study. However, schools made their own decisions about how best to deploy the NET and so not all of the students in the sample had ongoing contact with a NET for the teaching of English over the duration of the evaluation.

Figure 3.27 illustrates the difference in average growth (described in levels on the Profiles and Interview Test of English Language) for students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006, and draws comparisons between students who did or did not have continuity of teaching by a NET into P3 in 2006. All students had at least one, and most had two, years of contact with a NET at their school (during P1 and P2) and this graph shows the impact on student proficiency of maintaining that contact with a NET into P3.

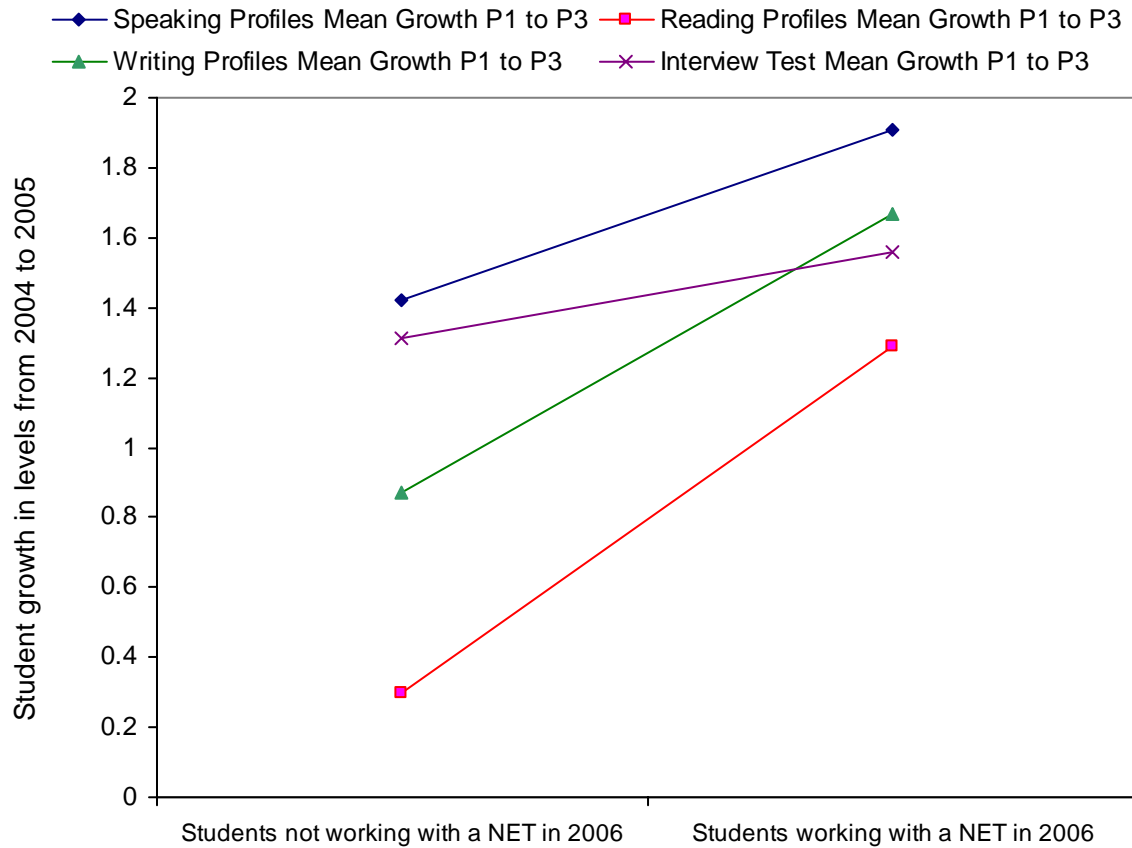


Figure 3.27. Relationships between student growth in proficiency and continuity of access to NET for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

The impact of continuity of access to a NET was less pronounced for students who were tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006. All these students had at least one, and many had two, years of contact with a NET at their school (during P2 and P3) and Figure 3.28 shows the impact on student proficiency of maintaining that contact with a NET into P4.

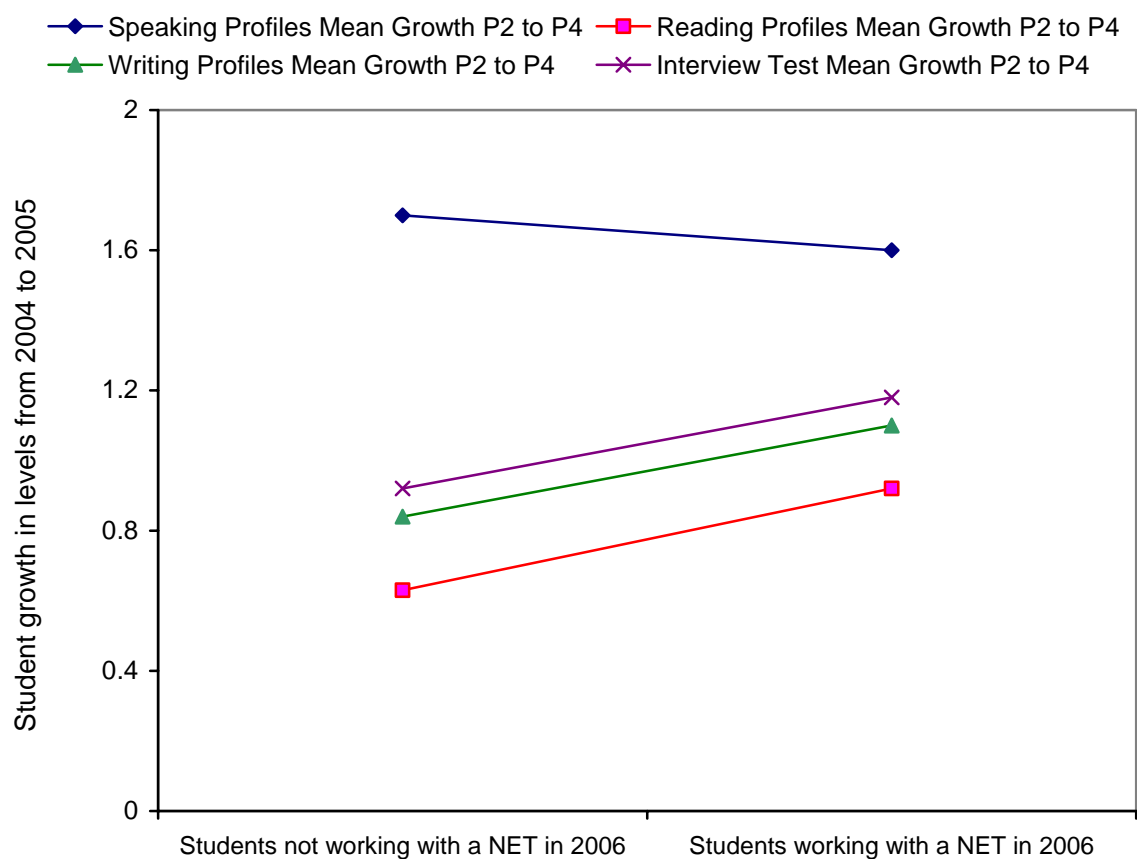


Figure 3.28. Relationships between student growth in proficiency and continuity of access to NET for students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006.

Figures 3.29 and 3.30 show the impact of teaching by the NET for students whose parents were less well educated than average. The proficiency levels for students who had parents with lower levels of education (i.e., lower secondary level or below) and who did or did not have continuity of teaching by a NET over three years can also be examined. Groups were combined in these analyses, to redress imbalances in group sizes and permit more meaningful comparisons. Relationships shown in these graphs suggest that continuity of teaching by a NET was strongly linked to higher average levels of improvement in English proficiency for these students.

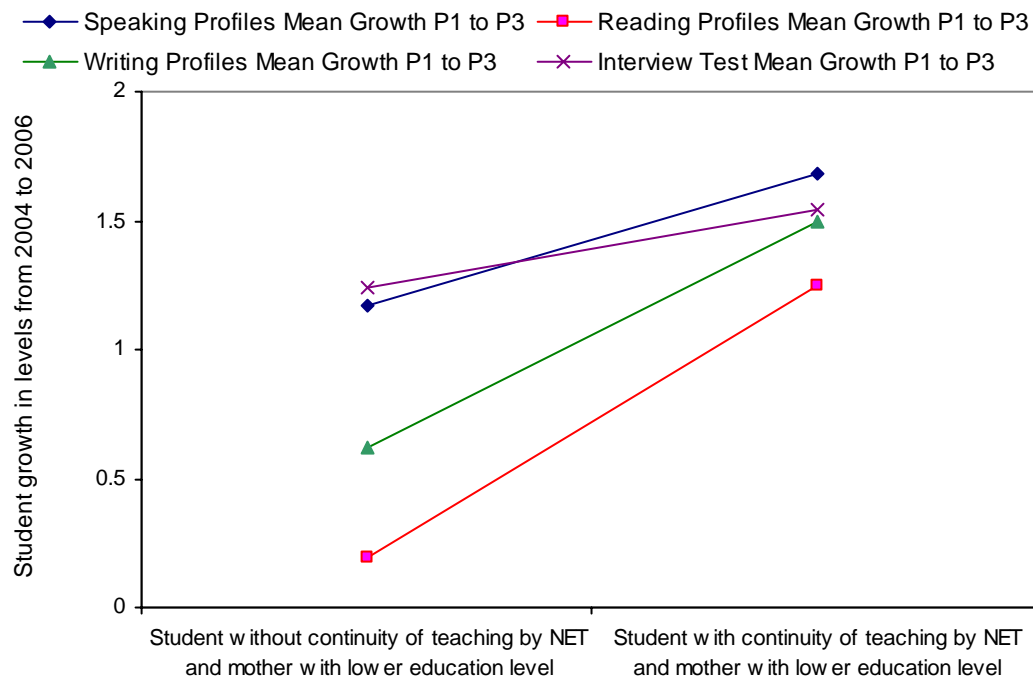


Figure 3.29. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and continuity of teaching by NET for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 whose mothers had lower levels of education.

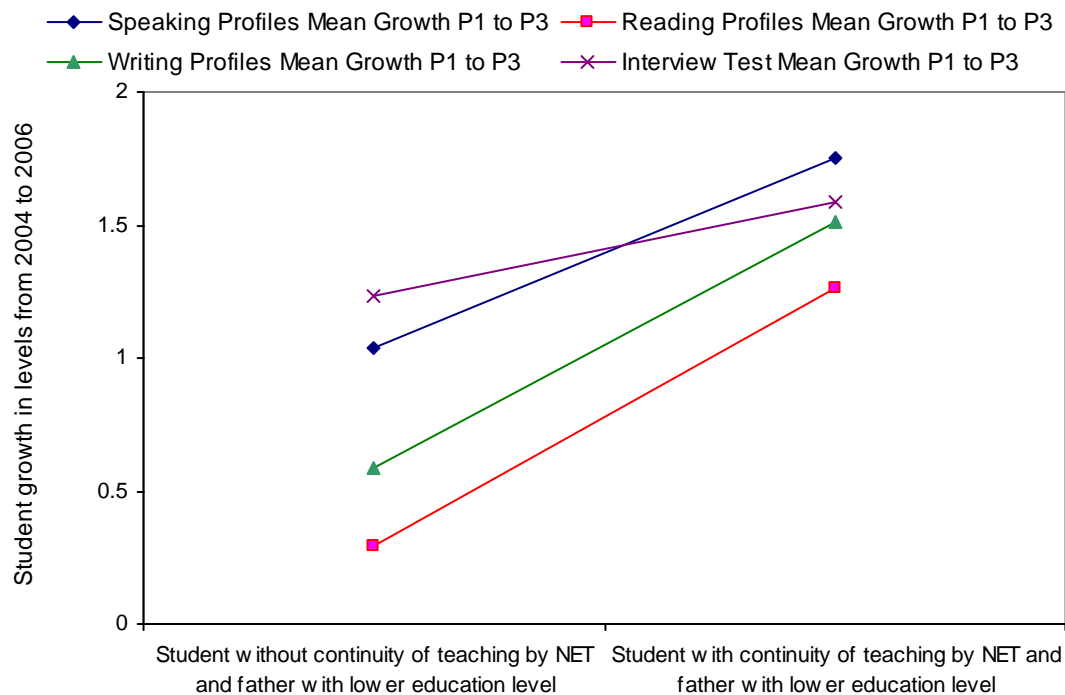


Figure 3.30. Relationship between student growth in proficiency and continuity of teaching by NET for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 whose fathers had lower levels of education.

Students tracked from P1 to P3 whose parents had higher levels of education (i.e., upper secondary or tertiary level) also benefited from continuity of teaching by a NET, but the differences were not as extreme as those observed for students from less-advantaged home backgrounds.

Similarly, students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 showed stronger rates of growth in reading and writing in English if they had continuity of teaching by a NET over the evaluation period. It was clear that continuity of the NET involvement in teaching was important for all students, and of particular benefit for students from less advantaged home backgrounds.

One of the schools visited during the qualitative investigation was situated within a public rental housing estate in a densely populated working class district of Kowloon. Children came from less advantaged homes in which either both parents were working and the child was cared for by a grandparent during the day, or in which the main breadwinner was unemployed, or the family was a single parent unit.

In this school the energy and enthusiasm of the NET for the welfare of the children enabled a set of unique English experiences to be created for the children concerned. He had taken a leading role in engineering an approach to English which was well suited to helping less advantaged children develop. This included elegantly simple activities which nevertheless made a significant impact in the lives of the children. For example: an excursion to a local branch of a fast food chain where the NET had arranged in advance with the manager that staff would use only English; a slide show in which he shared his experiences of taking a helicopter trip across Hong Kong; a lesson in which children brought in their favourite toys to 'show and tell' about to the class. The following extracts from a report on the toys lesson gives a flavour of the approach:

The opening of the lesson is characterised by lively interaction, maximum involvement and instant feedback. Pupils' first names are used. The NET is lively and uses gestures, and facial expression to good effect.

The NET uses a tactile approach. He does not hesitate to hold the hands of students, hug them. He uses the mike only to enable the class to hear the more reticent and softly spoken students....Volunteers are brought out to show and tell their favourite toys encouraged by the NET. [He enfolds] the child in his arms using the microphone to amplify their contributions to the lesson.

Once children were asked specifically, their toys began to emerge with enthusiasm. ... Great joy was exhibited by some pupils in showing and telling about their toys. Winnie, for example, had such a broad smile when she introduced her drumming doll. For others, there was some embarrassment. John, for example, had to drag himself to the front to show his Lego robot and was hard pressed to say anything about it, despite the fact that it was very intricate and complex in design.

This is a joyful lesson with such big smiles as children show their toys and have their photographs taken at the end. One child puts her Hippo doll on her head like a hat for the final picture.

LETs appreciated the approach of the NET and recognised his impact with invariably positive comments:

- *The excursions, I think, help students to learn in a real situation. Because otherwise, if they are learning at school, they can't use their language. Because we, we, we ... how to say it? Not force, not force them, but we encourage, encourage them to use their language after they learn from school.*
- *The students like to talk to [the NET] and he is very friendly. He always chats with the students no matter whether they are right or wrong. Just they talk, they point to the tree, flowers, and interested in speaking English. ... He's friendly. ... So this would also enhance their interest in learning English, right? They have more willing ... More confident.*
- *I think it may be contribute to the fact that before the NET Scheme our children [did not] have ...opportunities to interact with native speakers. Because our school is situated in estate, public estate regions, so I think among, among the daily experience, they don't have a chance to interact with the native speakers. But after NET teachers come to our school, I think the students they build, build up their confidence to speak to native speakers as well as some strangers. ... I think that is a very good or very strong enforcement for them to learn English.*

The NET himself felt that interest in learning English had been greatly enhanced by the Scheme. He cited as an example the fact that children cheered when he entered a classroom. Also, enhanced confidence was evident in the children in using English.

The students said they liked English lessons because they found English lessons interesting and fun, especially the English stories told by the NET. They thought they had learnt a lot in English lessons and they could use English to communicate with foreigners. It was good to learn something in a joyful and interesting way.

Impact of Parents' Support for English Studies

Indicators of parental support for English language studies were linked to the frequency with which English was spoken at home and the parental level of education. Thus, parental support was related to the ability that parents had to use English themselves, and to assist their child with their English language studies. Parental support was also related to student proficiency in English.. Thus, students with parents who regularly looked at the school work their child had completed in English language studies had higher average levels of achievement than students whose parents never or only occasionally looked at their English school work.

However, parental support for English language studies was not systematically linked to the rate of student development of proficiency so that students tended to develop their proficiency in English at similar rates regardless of the level of parental support and interest. Students from more supportive home backgrounds maintained their relative advantage across the three years of the evaluation. Relationships between parental interest and support and student proficiency in English are illustrated in Figures 3.31 to 3.34.

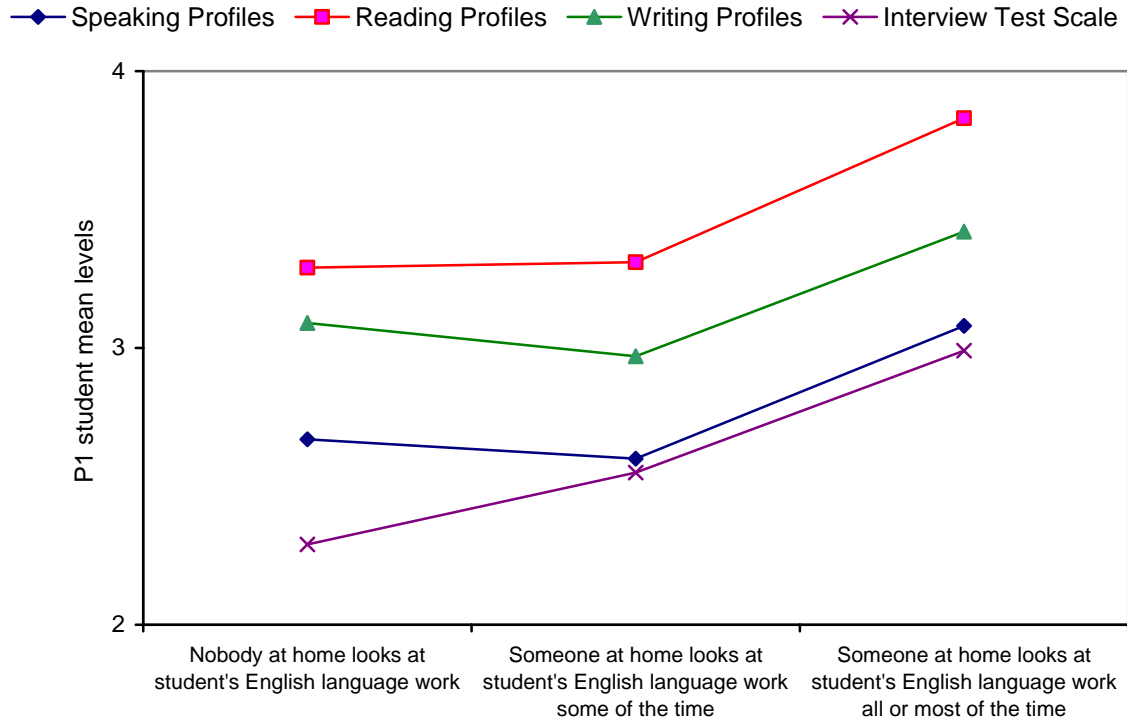


Figure 3.31. Relationships between student proficiency for 2006 P1 students and frequency with which someone at home looks at student work in English.



Figure 3.32. Relationships between student proficiency for 2006 P2 students and frequency with which someone at home looks at student work in English

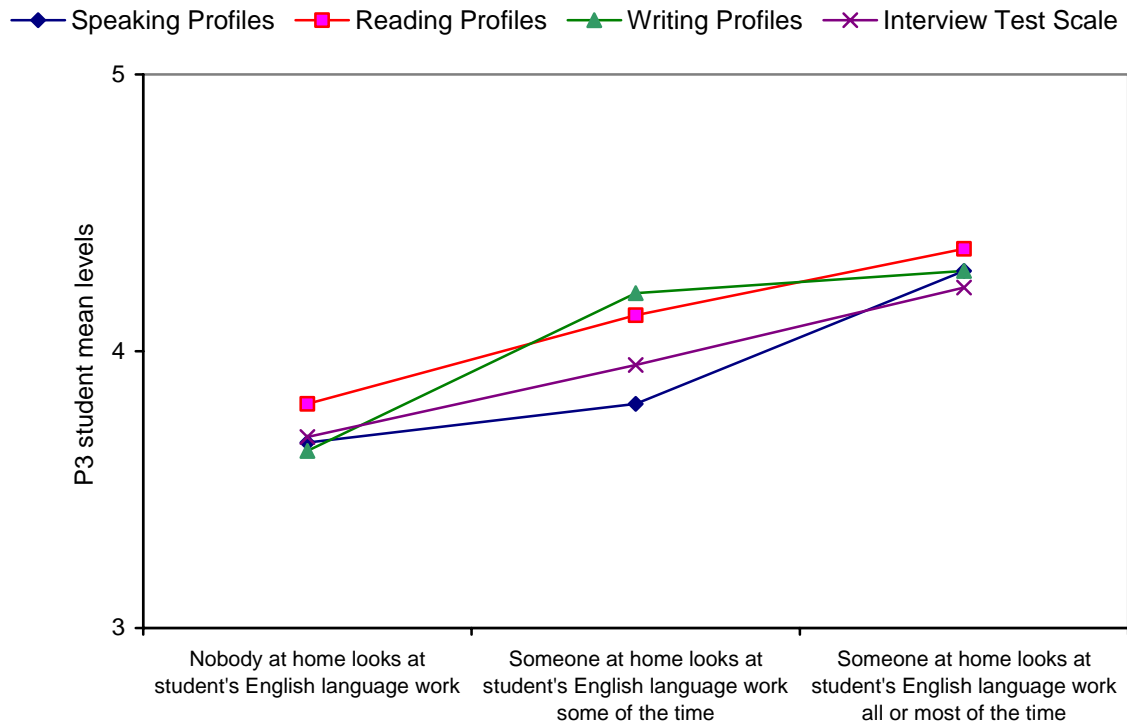


Figure 3.33. Relationships between student proficiency for 2006 P3 students and frequency with which someone at home looks at student work in English.

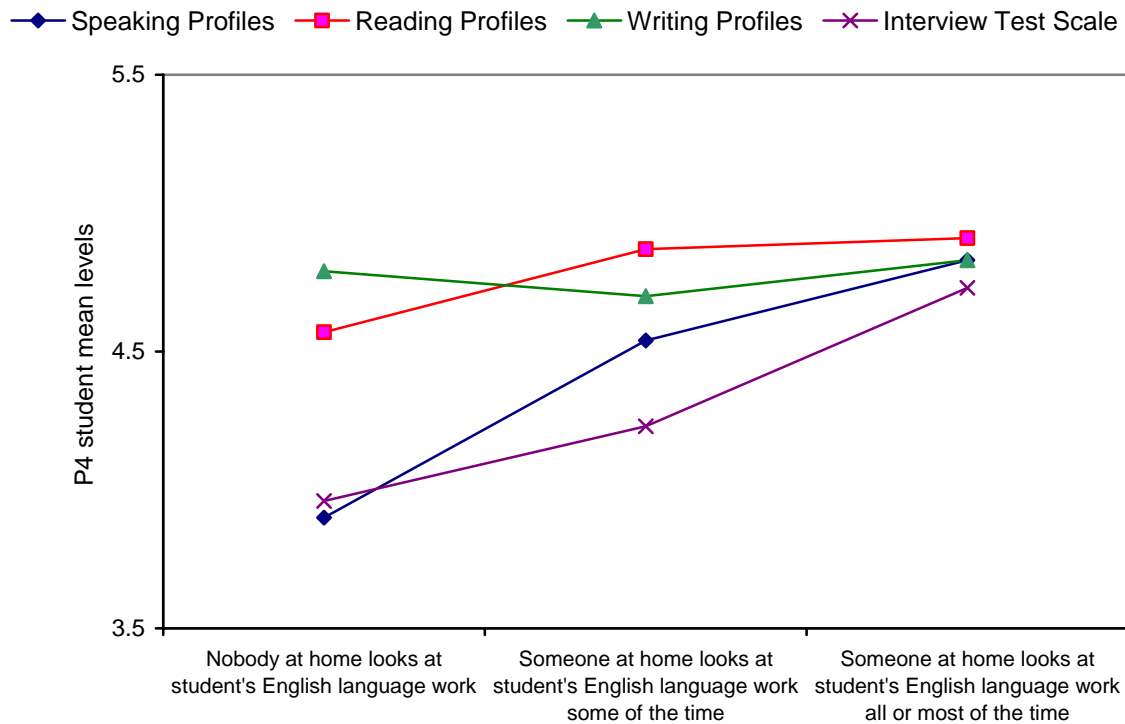


Figure 3.34. Relationships between student proficiency for 2006 P4 students and frequency with which someone at home looks at student work in English.

Visits to schools in the qualitative investigation revealed several patterns of parental support and involvement in the schools. Some successful schools had established systems to facilitate home-school cooperation including the direct involvement of parents in school activities such as the preparation of teaching resources, story telling and special activity days.

In focus group discussions, LETs often made mention of parental concerns regarding the English curriculum. BCA and the NET Scheme had added to the areas of normal parental interest – whether homework was being marked properly, whether the textbook they had paid for was being fully exploited – by including anxiety over exam results and a concern that their child have an equitable chance to be exposed to the benefit of NET teaching. In some cases the latter concern led schools to deploy NETs in a way which, while catering to parental wishes, did not result in an arrangement which NETs or LETs considered satisfactory. One such arrangement was described by a group of LETs below:

- For week one, he has to go to P1, P3 and P6. For week two, he has to go to P2, P4 and P5. So he goes to all the classes. Actually he can use the same materials for same activities for the other levels. But then still a workload to him. Because he always works alone, and therefore he doesn't get to know the pupils. It is because the parents request to be fair for all the students. If you only let the NET*

to go into one class, then the parents complain. Why you choose that class? Not my class? I don't agree with the parents, actually. But in reality, we have to listen to their request, otherwise they will change to other schools. They are the boss. They have many choices outside. We think the NET can do better if he just focuses on a few classes. But the reality is not. I feel sorry for him.

A NET in another school employing a similar deployment strategy pointed out the obvious – that spreading the NET so thinly was not a productive use of resources:

- *I felt that some of the things I was doing weren't really productive. One of the things I do there is, I take P3 groups for oral languages for twenty minutes. But I only see the same group twice in a year. And I see each group once a semester which to me is ... that's forty minutes a year. Which is virtually ... so those sorts of things I see as problems with the whole NET Scheme.*

Summary

On average, students achieved higher levels of English proficiency if they had opportunities to practise their English outside school, access to many books in the home, and parents with higher than average levels of education who expressed interest in their child's English language studies, supervised their English language homework and took time to look at the child's English school work.

Continuity of teaching by a NET over three years of primary education was related to improved outcomes for students from home backgrounds that were less enriched in terms of support for English language studies. In particular, involvement with the PLP-R (KS1) seemed to help overcome the negative impact on students' progress in reading associated with homes in which there were few or no books.

Chapter Four: Teachers, the Classroom Environment and Student Achievement

This chapter presents the understanding of the PNET Scheme and attitudes to teaching English reported by LETs and NETs, with emphasis placed upon the use of teaching resources and strategies in classrooms, teaching and learning activities for English, and ideas about the optimal deployment of the NET. These factors were related to achievement and change in achievement for students.

Characteristics of Teachers

In 2006, demographic background and attitude questionnaires were completed by 665 LETs and SETs from 111 Hong Kong primary schools. The demographic characteristics of the local teachers, in terms of age, gender, teaching experience, workload and incidence of speaking English outside the school environment, had remained stable over the three years of the evaluation.

Gender and Age

Ninety percent of the LETs in 2006 were women. Higher proportions of students at P4 level were being taught by a male teacher, in comparison to students at P1, P2 or P3 level. The gender of teachers was not directly related to student proficiency or growth in proficiency in English.

In 2006, 61% of students were being taught by a female LET and female NET paired together, 4% by a male LET and male NET, and 35% by a combination of either female LET with male NET or, less commonly, a male LET with a female NET. The combination of a male LET and male NET, while unusual, occurred most frequently for teachers working with P4 students, but there were no other systematic relationships between year level of students and gender pairing of LETs and NETs.

Pairing of NETs and LETs who were of the same or different genders was not linked to either student proficiency in English, or to growth in student proficiency. There was no relationship between the frequency of collaboration between NET and LETs and gender matching of teachers, nor between gender matching of teachers and positive attitudes of teachers to collaboration. In general, pairings of opposite gender teachers reported similar levels of collaboration and attitude to collaboration as pairings of same gender teachers.

Teachers ranged in age from 24 to over 60 years, with an average age of 36.3 years ($SD = 8.7$ years). The age of LETs was not directly related to achievement outcomes of students, and a small link between age of NET and student achievement was mediated by student background variables. However, in previous years of the evaluation it was reported that teacher age was related to frequency of positive collaboration between NETs and LETs (Griffin et al., 2005). The matching of a younger NET and younger LETs resulted in more frequent interaction between teachers, and more positive attitudes towards working together (Griffin et al.). In 2006, comparisons were made based not on the age of teachers, but rather on their relative years of experience as teachers of English.

Pairing more and less experienced LETs and NETs.

The sample of teachers in 2006 included LETs and NETs with a very broad range of teaching experience, from those in their first year of teaching English, to those with more than 35 years of experience. The LETs and NETs each had, on average, 12 years of English teaching experience, and the LETs had spent an average of nine years teaching at their current school. There were no direct relationships between teachers' years of experience and proficiency of students at any year level, although there were relationships between pairing of teachers and their perceptions of collaboration for the teaching of English.

The distribution of years of teaching experience for the 2006 NETs is shown in Figure 4.1. The median years of English teaching experience for the NETs was seven years, with an average of 12 years and a broad spread of teaching experience.

NETs could be divided into two broad groups: one group was younger (with an average age of 36 years) and had been teaching for seven years or less, while the second group had been teaching for more than eight years and had an average age of 50 years. There were no differences between NETs who were more or less experienced teachers of English in terms of the years they had been deployed in their current school.

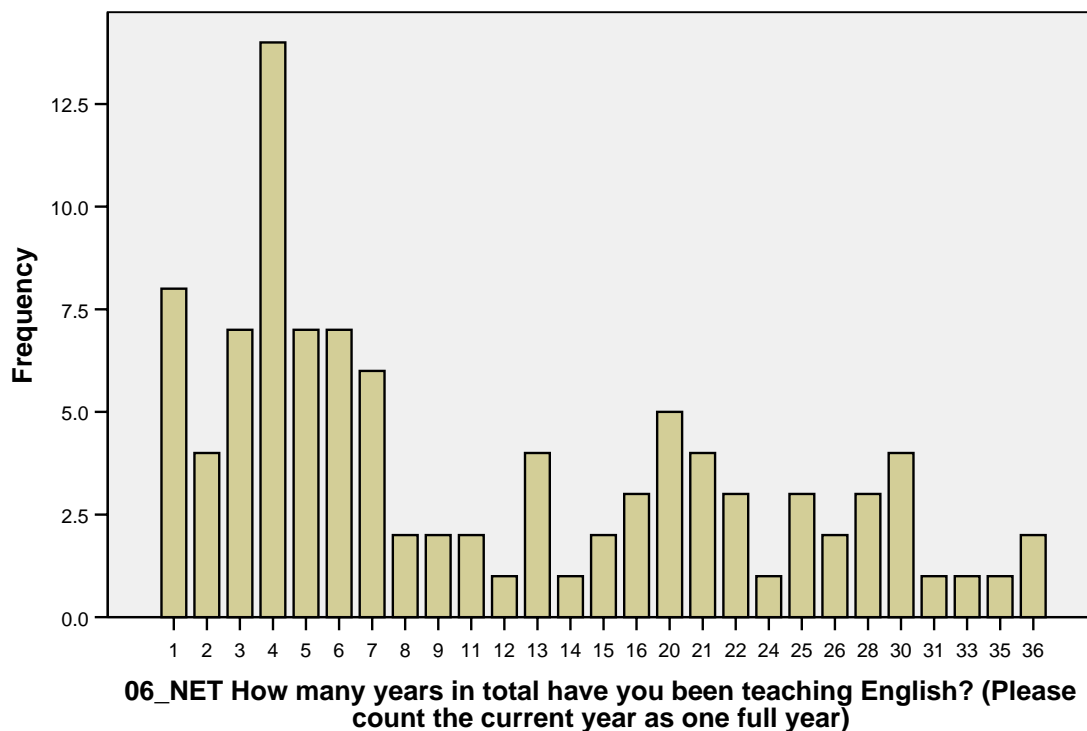


Figure 4.1. Years of experience teaching English for the 2006 NETs.

The distribution of LETs' years of experience teaching English is shown in Figure 4.2. The median years of English teaching experience for the 2006 LETs was 10 years, with an average of 12 years and a considerable spread of teaching experience.

The LETs could be divided into two broad groups in terms of their experience as teachers of English, and other relevant demographic factors. One group was younger (with an average age of 31 years) and with ten years or less experience in teaching English. The other group was a little older (with an average age of 44 years), and more than ten years of teaching experience.

The younger, less experienced LETs had higher level, formal qualifications in teaching than their older, more experienced counterparts. Over 30% of the younger, less experienced LETs had postgraduate teaching qualifications, compared with 15% of the older, more experienced LETs. Almost half of the older, more experienced LETs had Certificate level qualifications, compared with 30% of the younger, less experienced LETs.

Older, more experienced LETs had been teaching for an average of 13 years at their current school, compared with an average of six years for the younger, less experienced LETs. There was no difference between the two groups of LETs in terms of gender (90% were women in both groups), or in the proportion who were currently working as SETs in their schools.

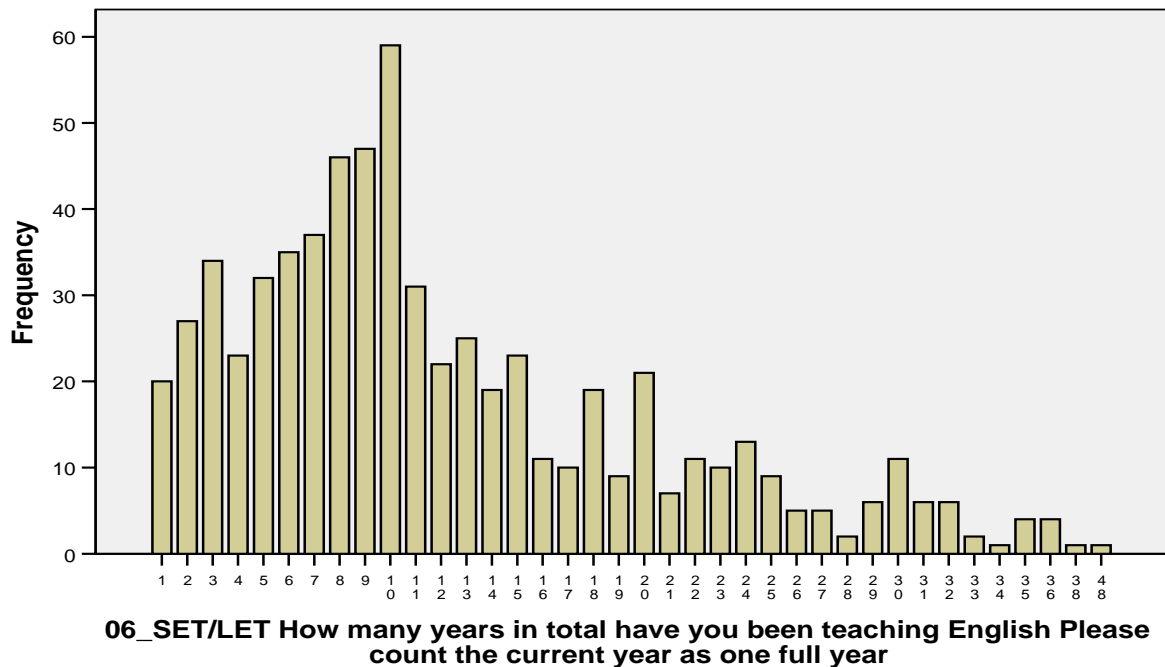


Figure 4.2. Years of experience teaching English for the 2006 LETs.

The following patterns of relationship between pairings of teachers with more and less than the median years of teaching experience, and their collaboration, in terms of frequency of co-teaching and meeting to co-plan lessons, were observed:

- Younger and less experienced LETs working with younger, less experienced NETs were more likely than other pairings of teachers to rate their meetings as effective or very effective in terms of improving English teaching at the school, as shown in Figure 4.3.
- Pairings of younger and less experienced LETs and NETs tended to meet more frequently to co-plan and also to co-teach with each other more frequently than other pairings of teachers, as illustrated in Figures 4.4 and 4.5.

- When an older and more experienced NET was paired with younger, less experienced LETs, the teachers met less frequently for co-planning meetings and collaborated in the classroom for co-teaching English on a comparatively regular basis, as illustrated in Figures 4.4 and 4.5.
- When older and more experienced LETs were paired with a less experienced NET, the teachers met frequently to co-plan, but tended to spend fewer lessons per week co-teaching than pairings of teachers that included less experienced LETs.
- When a more experienced NET was paired with more experienced LETs, they met less frequently for co-planning than other teachers and co-taught fewer lessons per week than other teachers.
- These relationships between attitudes and frequency of cooperation by teachers, and pairings of more or less experienced teachers, were similar in schools regardless of whether they shared a NET with another school.

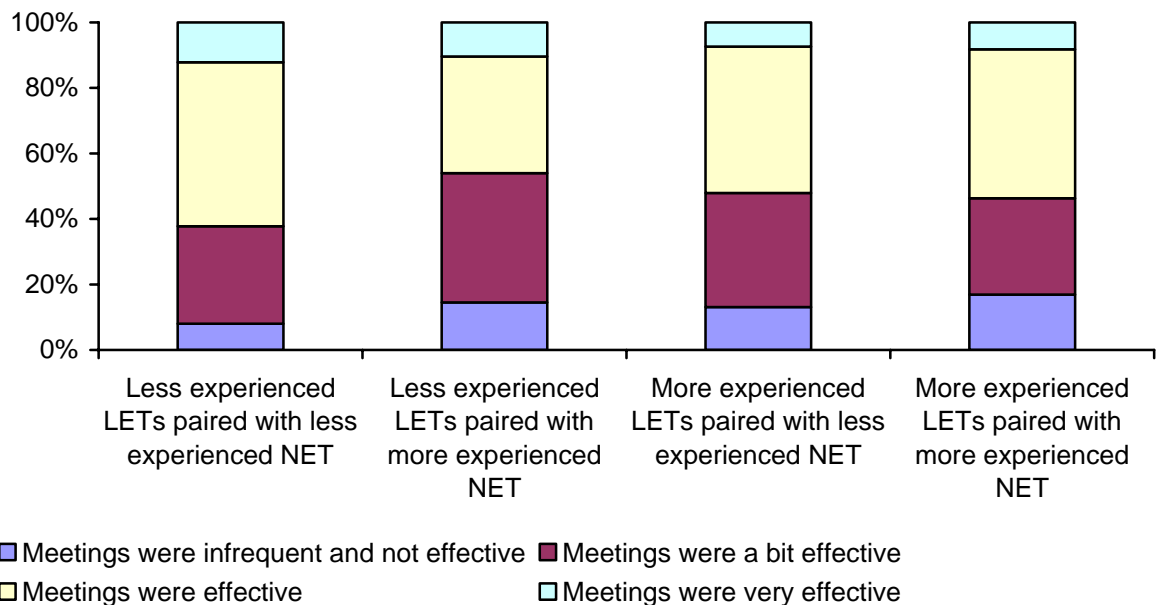


Figure 4.3. Relationships between teacher experience and value placed by LETs upon collaboration with the NET at their school.

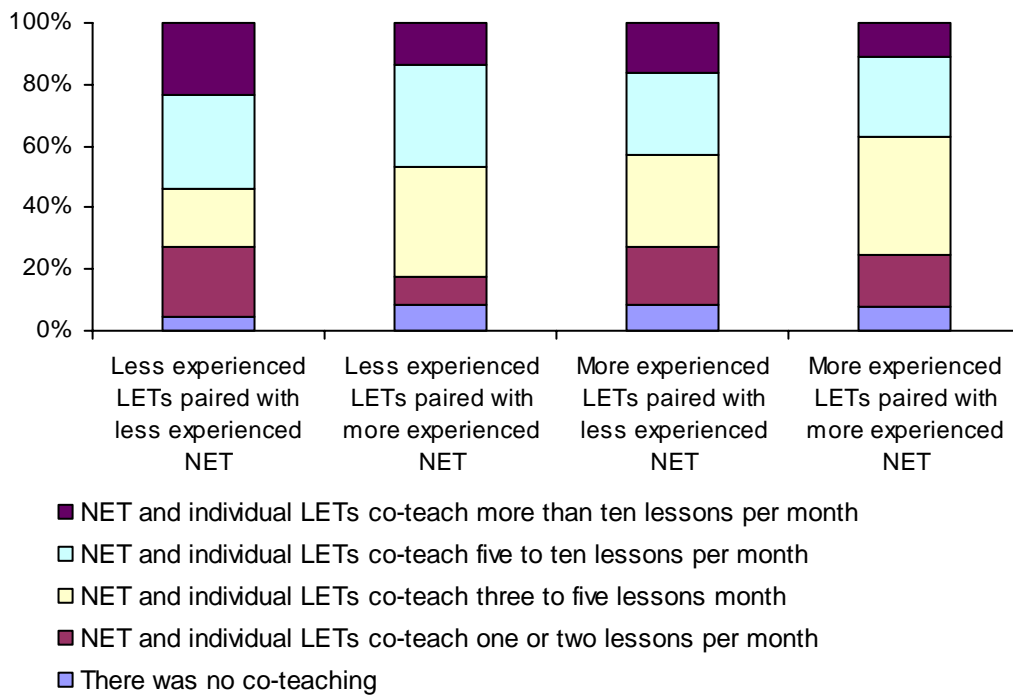


Figure 4.4. Frequency of co-teaching between pairs of more or less experienced NETs and LETs.

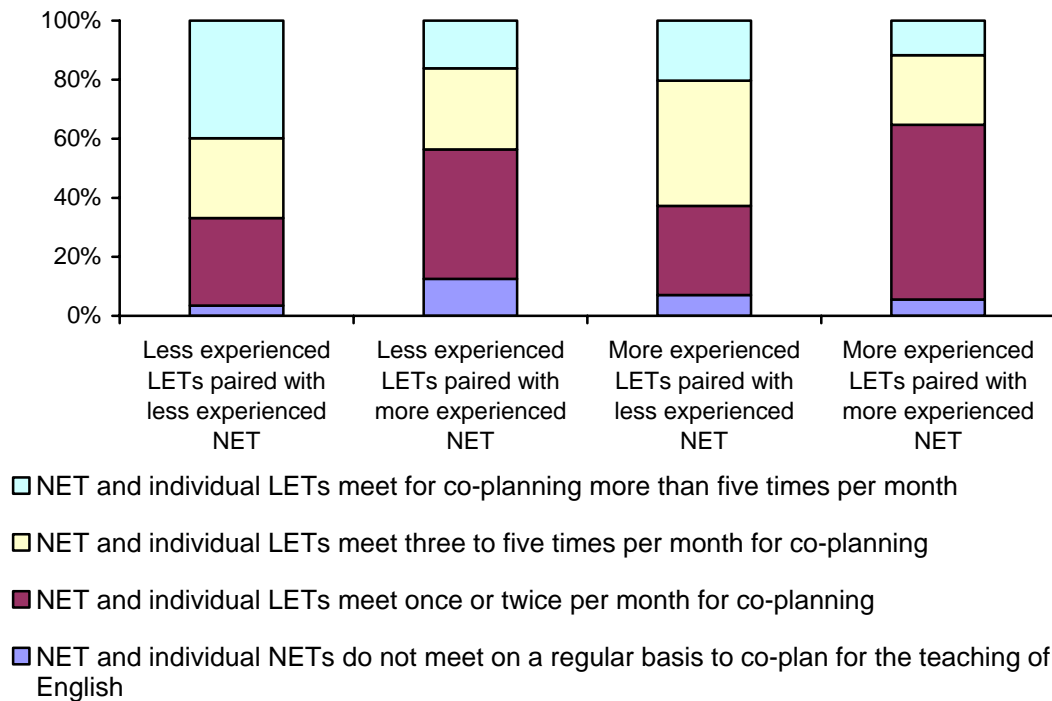


Figure 4.5. Frequency of co-planning between pairs of more or less experienced NETs and LETs.

Thirty two percent of the 2006 students were being taught by a LET and NET, both of whom had less than the median years of experience in teaching English, 26% of students were being taught by more experienced LETs working with a less experienced NET, 25% of students were being taught by less experienced LETs in combination with a more experienced NET, and 17% of students were being taught by more experienced LETs and NET working together.

There were no direct relationships between the teaching experience of LETs and NETs, and the way that they were paired, and the proficiency or development of proficiency in English for students at any year level. However, there was a relationship between students' development of proficiency in English and their teachers' perceptions of their schools' support for collaboration between the NET and LETs. These relationships are explored in the next section.

Impact of Collaboration between LETs and NETs

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 summarise relationships between student development of English proficiency and their teachers' perceptions of school support for co-planning between NET and LETs, for students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 and from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 respectively.

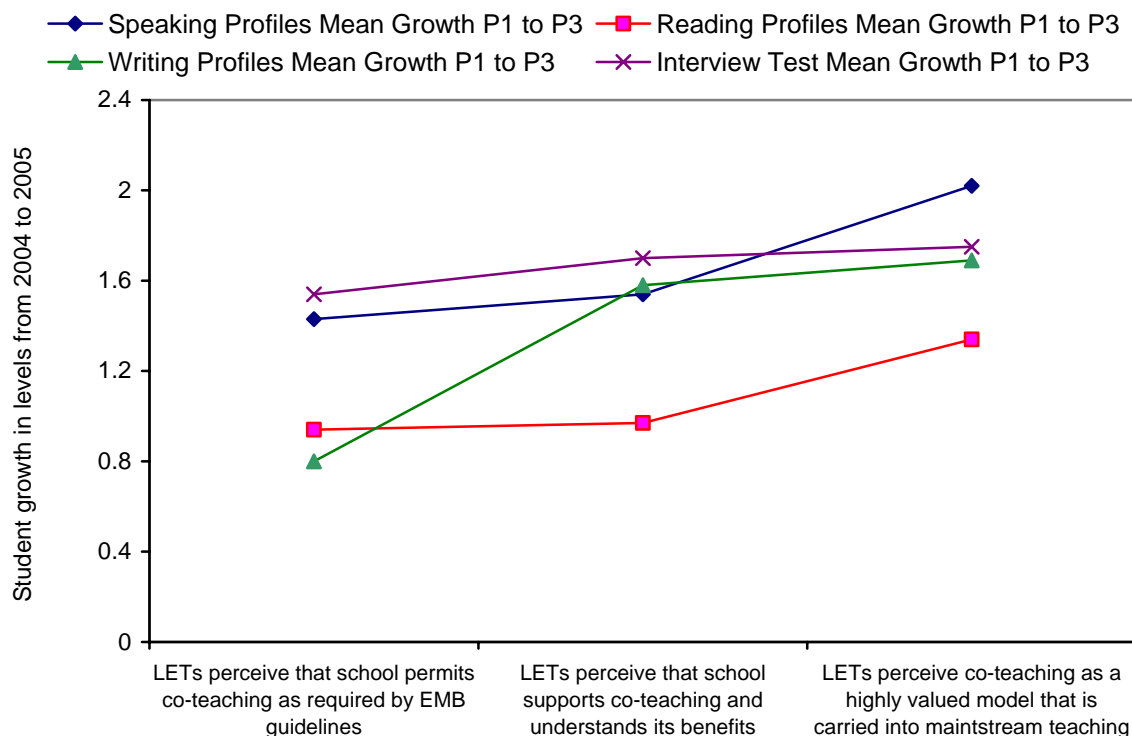


Figure 4.6. Relationship between development of English proficiency from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 and LETs' perception of school support for co-teaching.

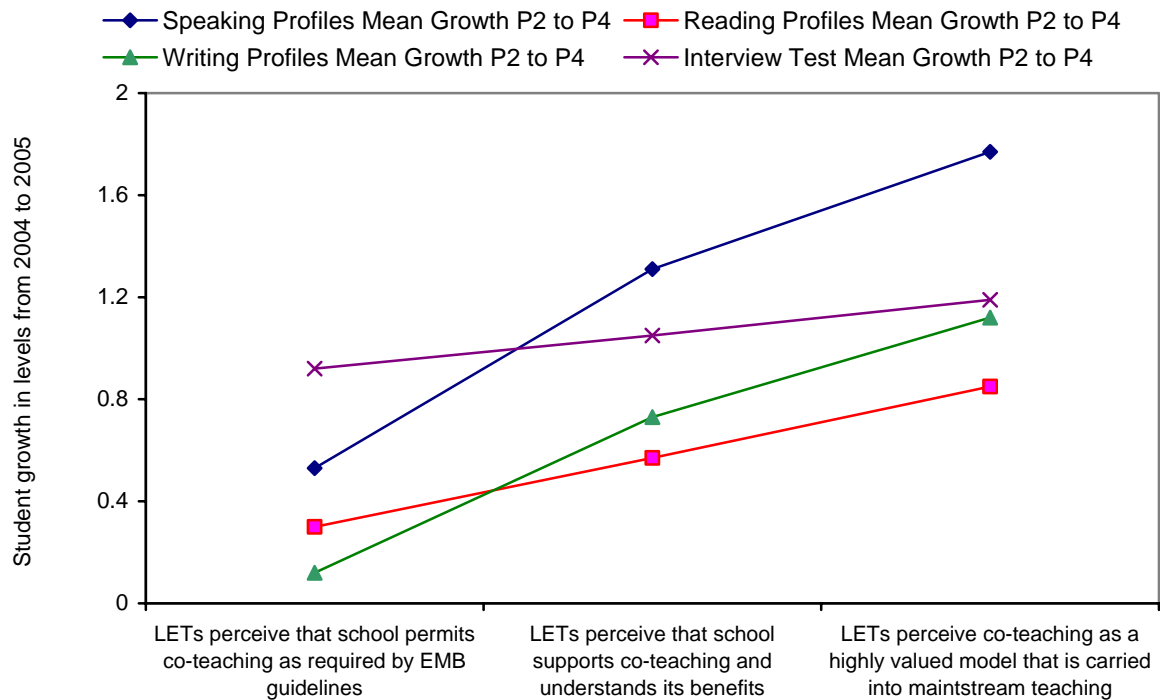


Figure 4.7. Relationship between development in English proficiency from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 and LETs' perception of school support for co-teaching.

Similarly, a relationship could be observed between teachers' perceptions of the format of co-planning meetings at their schools and outcomes for students, but the very small numbers of teachers who had negative perceptions meant that categories needed to be combined for comparison.

Figures 4.8 and 4.9 summarise relationships between teachers' perceptions of co-planning meetings and average additional gains in proficiency for students whose teachers held positive views.

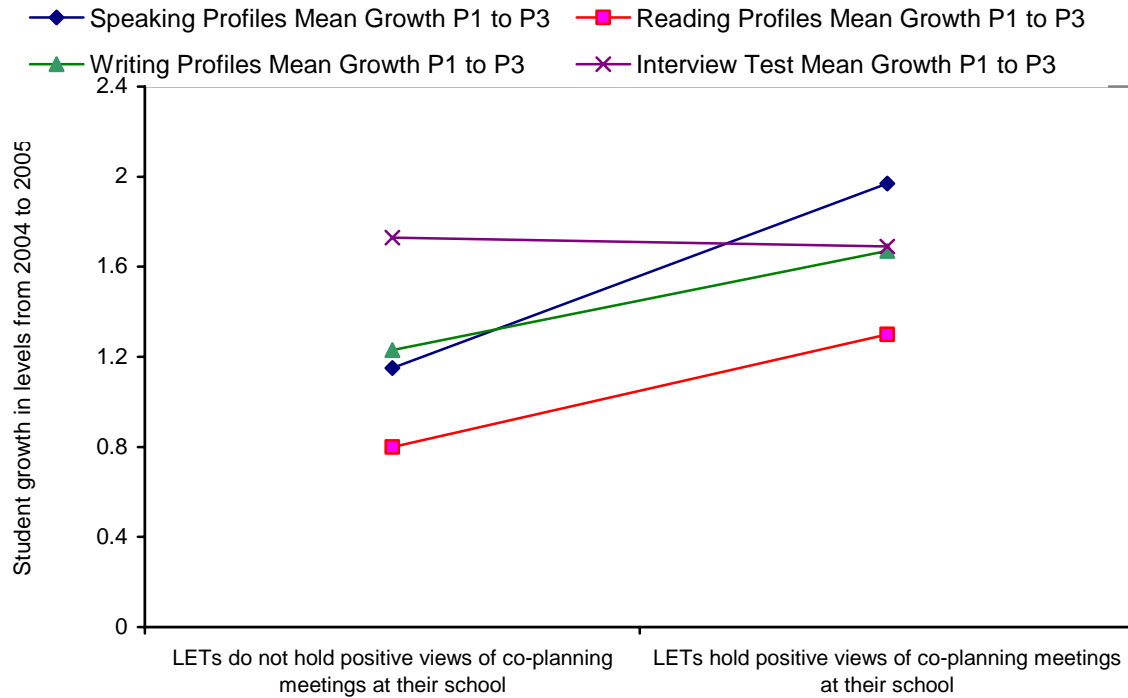


Figure 4.8. Relationships between students' development in English proficiency from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 and LETs' perception of format of co-planning meetings.

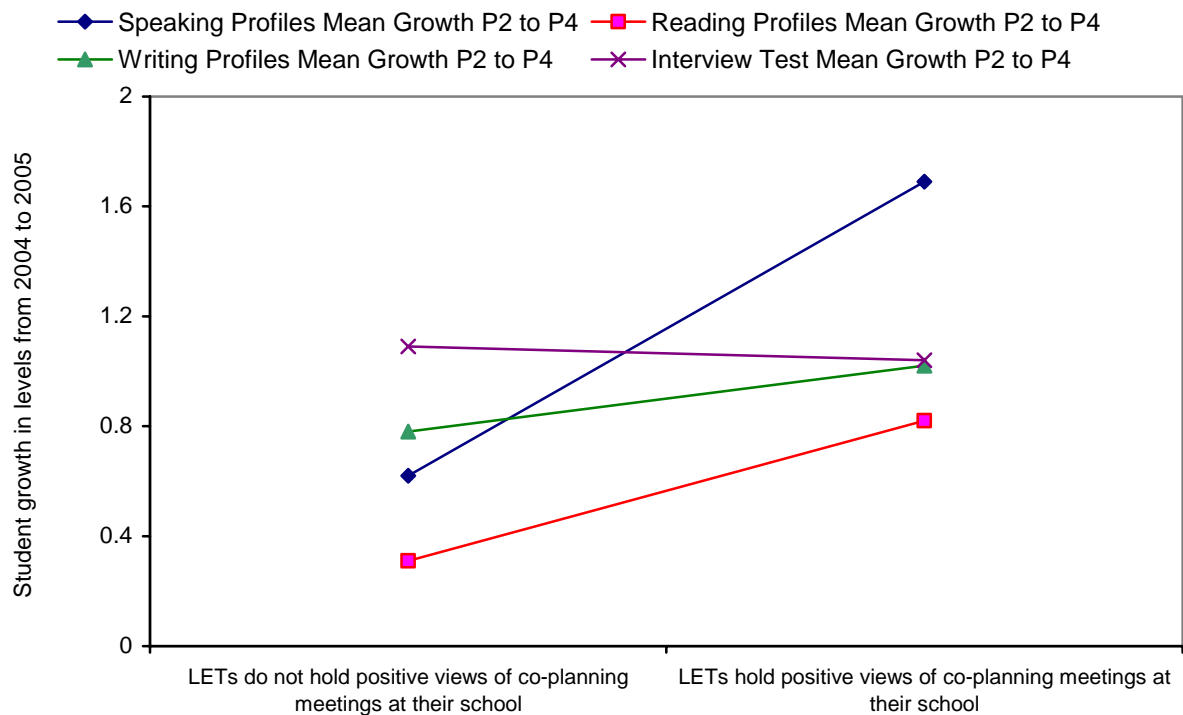


Figure 4.9. Relationships between students' development in English proficiency from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 and LETs' perception of format of co-planning meetings.

The operation of co-planning and co-teaching activities was a key focus of the qualitative investigation. In visits to 21 schools, a range of patterns of collaboration was identified. The number of years of relevant teaching experience of NET and LETs was a factor in determining the different patterns, and this seemed to affect the level of partnership in the collaboration. Generally a less experienced NET would be a junior partner in the collaboration and he or she would be directed by LETs as to what to do in the co-taught lessons. More experienced NETs tended to have a more equal partner role, while NETs with highly relevant experience, for example in teaching literacy to young learners, often took on a leading role in the partnership. Some examples of statements from NETs and LETs in the following illustrate these patterns.

When the NET was the junior partner:

LETs

- *The current NET does not have much experience. In the co-planning, we say how to teach. Sometimes the NET gives a bit suggestion. But, after all, the NET does not have teaching experience. Thus, the NET follows our suggestion and teaches accordingly. The NET learns from us.*
- *Sometime for my class, sometimes. For example, when we need some consolidation, we ask him to adapt the materials and he can make up some worksheet yes ... we have co-planning meetings regularly ... we discuss the lesson before he goes into the classroom. And the NET will prepare some teaching materials and a lesson plan and we will teach together.*

NETs

- *I find that the local teachers know what they are talking about, they've got sensible ideas. They are very, I can say honestly, the school here is...the achievement standard is very high. Way beyond mine as a teacher, so I am trying to actually keep up. Because also they're very much in tune, most of the teachers here are, as you know the hours they work...it's quite, it's quite heavy. Because of that they are really in tune with the needs of the Hong Kong students.*
- *Usually we have or we try to have all the teachers present. And we talk about what we are going to do in next week. So usually, what I try to do is stay in step behind the teachers and the textbook. So they do the initial vocabulary and grammar teaching. And then I'll speak to them in the co-planning and find out where the students need extra work. And we design some sort of intervention for that grade level, for that lesson.*

When the NET was an equal partner:

NET

- *We plan. During our planning meetings, we decide who is doing what. But we don't really assign you will do that and you will do this. We don't really assign specific roles we just complement kind of each other in the classroom now I use my strengths and we get the strengths of the co-teacher. Sometime she is good at drawing and she'd illustrate something on the board and I am doing the reading. So you don't really say you would be in charge of something. We just complement each other when the need arises ... we share the responsibilities ... we plan together, we share our thoughts, we share ideas, we reflect, we talk about what went well, what didn't go well or how we can change so that we can improve for the next time, and then we share responsibility for lessons that don't go too well.*

When the NET was the senior partner:

NET

- *Yes, we do it two weeks in advance and I got them to agree, and they're very good at it, that they actually brainstorm the unit themselves, not together at all, but individually before they come to the meeting. So we get everybody's ideas. And they come with those brainstorm sheets, and I do mine and we look at all the different things that can be done with that book which is going to be done the following fortnight ... I felt that my role is to show them what else they can do.*

In these cases, the relative experience of the two parties to collaboration was matched in an appropriate model of partnership in which all felt general satisfaction. In the qualitative investigation there were situations observed where experience in the NET was not acknowledged or appropriately exploited and NETs, as a result, expressed feelings of frustration:

- *I have specific things to do, and I am asked to do them. I'm not given a lot of scope to do other things which is a big difference between this and my role in the other school. I find it a somewhat limiting use of my experience. My timetable and responsibilities here are very structured with very little opportunity to take the initiative or be involved in any projects. While the English teachers are cooperative and pleasant, they seem to have very low expectation of my contribution.*
- *I would like to be involved in the reading programme. I think that the way that it is structured at the moment, I visit every classroom, so I am spread across the school. I think that's more to keep parents happy so that I do see every student at some stage ...but yes to be involved in the reading programme would be good.*

In the three partnership models illustrated above, collaboration was effective as a means of creating structured opportunities for professional sharing among teachers. The qualitative investigation revealed other examples of collaboration which were perceived to be successful, but which were less structured than the recommended mode of operation. In these cases, teachers often appeared to favour the less structured approach over the formal meeting. The key appeared to be the existence of a harmonious relationship between NET and LETs and opportunities for interaction created by the physical location of the NET. By contrast, cases where the NET located himself or herself in the English Room and used that room for preparation activities seemed to deprive the English staff as a whole of opportunities to use the language as well as making everyday communication with the NET difficult. Some comments by LETs and NETs illustrating both harmonious and less harmonious relationships are provided below:

LETs

- *We share ideas which come from both the NET and the local teachers ... Sometimes during lunch time when we are eating next to the NET teacher, ideas come up, we talk.*

NETs

- *The teachers here seem to be very busy with paper work and so often I'm the only one who's actually prepared anything [for the co-planning meeting]. So I think we get a lot more, I tend to get a lot more out of informal planning than the actual formal co-planning. Just by going to speak to the teachers beforehand to find out what should I do in your class and what would you like me to do. But I think one of the problems that the old NET identified was the co-planning so I've been trying to make it work. And I don't know whether I've succeeded or not, but I think the informal things have altered that.*
- *Because of the way we sit in the staff room, and there are no barriers. Just sitting and talking we talk about what's happening. The English teachers sit together. So it's very easy to talk to them about ... anything that comes up. I mean it happens every day. Just sort of talking about different ideas. Most of the changes that have been suggested have come from just sitting at the desks and just talking about how something went. They're very good at this school at reviewing what's happened in classes which has been great because some of the teachers, not all of the teachers, when you say how do you think that went, or do you think that went well or something, "Of course". And I think, mmm oh, really. And I say, you know, when I did such and such I thought that next time I should do that differently because I didn't like what happened, or it didn't work like I thought it would, but here they are very open about discussing change.*

Both NETs and LETs identified problems with co-planning. The NET in one of the less successful schools visited in the qualitative investigation expressed frustration about both co-planning and co-teaching. For some co-taught lessons, there was no formal co-planning meeting and local teachers would take the opportunity to do their marking in the co-taught lessons.

- *It depends on the level. Some levels are very good for co-teaching and co-planning. Some of the other levels aren't. For some reasons, the teachers prefer not to, or they don't have time or you know, I've had the full range you know, from total cooperation to "Just do something interesting" ... the ones who you know appreciate having a NET as more than just having a person to take the class over while they mark or do other duties, you know they are a joy to work with, you know they are open they want new ideas, they are interested in some of the ideas that I have from back home. The ones who, you know you can lead a horse to water, but what can you do?*

Logistical problems with co-planning were also found during the qualitative investigation. The NET in one of the more successful schools admitted that co-planning was not a strong point:

- *Co-planning phase hasn't been a great strength this year, we want to work on that for next year. The reason is that there are nineteen teachers and running three levels we've tended, I've tended to do most of the planning and then I've showed the others teachers and said what do you think? But I'd like it to be more the teachers who make a greater input. We've just decided that there's too many teachers involved, so next year we're thinking of having fewer teachers but doing more PLP-R. Yes. And also I think there'll be a lot more collaboration. Because it is difficult to get nineteen people all working together. Just time wise, it doesn't work, whereas if we had a group of about three teachers at each level, we'll come down here and co-plan together.*

Teacher Workload

There were no systematic relationships between student year level and the amount of time that teachers reported spending on classroom teaching and lesson preparation, nor between student proficiency and the amount of time that teachers reported spending in the classroom or preparing lessons for the teaching of English. This was not surprising, as LETs were quite similar in terms of their reported workload. Most LETs reported that they spent between seven and fifteen hours per week in the classroom teaching English, and between five and ten hours per week preparing lessons for their English teaching.

In a small number of schools visited during the qualitative investigations, LETs expressed frustration about the additional burden which the NET Scheme placed on them. They were sometimes less than enthusiastic about co-planning, largely, it seemed, because of the additional burden it imposed on their already heavy workload. As well as the need for training in co-planning and co-teaching identified in the third example below, there was a clear need for strong support from the school for the timetabling arrangements that were needed to facilitate co-planning:

- *One thing about administrative arrangement. Cooperation with the NET takes us a lot of time. We need to co-plan and co-teach with the NET. I suggest that the number of lesson that we, the LETs that cooperate with the NET, are responsible can be reduced. If the school has a good administrative arrangement, then it will be good. Sometime I heard other school teachers saying that cooperation with the NET waste a lot of time. I think that can be solved. That is, for those teachers that co-plan and co-teach with the NET, just reduce the number of lesson that they need to be responsible for. The school can make this kind of arrangement. By doing so, teachers will not have so much negative feeling and will be more positive. Originally, I am very positive. But you know, too much workloads and you will become negative and that is natural. I think similar situation happens in every school. If school can make administrative arrangement, it can help to reduce the anger of teachers. I think this is very important.*
- *It takes more time to prepare for the cooperation with the NET because we have time tabled the co-planning. Every week we have one to two lessons for co-planning and those who cooperate with the NET will have a meeting with the NET and discuss the arrangement for the coming lesson, like the distribution of work and how to co-operate each other. Thus, this is also a kind of work arrangement. If the teachers have a lot of other workload, then the teachers will have more burden. Thus, if administrative arrangement can be made, that will be much better. That situation happens in other schools. Every time when I meet English teachers from other schools, they are not happy. That's true.*
- *Cooperating with the NET is also collaboration. In certain lessons, co-teaching is needed. It seems that no course or training is provided for teachers and the NET to teach them how to co-teach and how to share the roles. Because if we teach some special educated need students, training on how to co-teach and how to share the roles is available. But for the case of working with the NET, it seems that nothing is provided in this regard. Actually, learning collaboration is needed.*

Since the commencement of the PNET Scheme, workshops on co-teaching and co-planning have been conducted in September and February each year to cater for the newly arriving cohorts of NETs, and these workshops were also available to LETs. However, there was a theme in LETs' responses that showed high value being placed on centralized workshops and professional development experiences, but that individual LETs felt they had had limited opportunities to attend these workshops. LETs consistently expressed interest in learning more about co-planning and co-teaching, but also expressed some frustration that their workload prevented them from taking advantage of professional development.

Teacher Qualifications

LETs in 2006 varied in their general academic education and teaching qualifications in English. More specifically, 37% of the LETs had Certificate level qualifications, 36% held a Bachelor's degree, and 23% had postgraduate qualifications in teaching English. Only 3% of teachers responded that they had received no training specific to the teaching

of English, and four teachers did not answer the question.

There had been a shift in terms of teacher qualification over the evaluation period. In 2006, a higher proportion of the LETs reported that they had postgraduate qualifications related to the teaching of English than had been recorded in previous years of the study. This may have been because teachers with postgraduate qualifications in teaching English were most likely to be teaching the P4 students, and teachers with Certificate level or no specific qualifications in English were most likely to be teaching students at P1 level.

After the year level of the students had been taken into account, there were no direct relationships between the teachers' qualifications in teaching English and student proficiency in English.

Teachers' Use of English

Very few (2%) of the LETs indicated that they regularly spoke English at home or outside their work environment. Indeed, almost 44% responded that they never or rarely ever spoke English at home, and 54% said that they did so some of the time. This reflected the language environment in which teachers were operating and the relatively sparse opportunities available, even for teachers specialising in English and committed to teaching the language, to engage in meaningful use of the language outside the workplace. This suggested that the imperative to use English within the workplace and create an English speaking environment around the English Panel was all the more important.

In the qualitative investigation, an incidental social benefit of the NET Scheme became clear in a large number of the schools. This was the additional opportunity LETs gained to use English in the workplace, not only for professional but for social purposes. Given the sparse opportunities LETs have to use English outside the workplace, this may represent a significant means for local teachers to gain exposure to English which would help them maintain and develop proficiency.

Some comments from NETs and LETs illustrated these incidental benefits:

NETs

- *I think it's been great. I mean that's my opinion. But they go out of their way to support me and make sure I'm involved in anything that's going on and they speak to me in English as much as they can and the curriculum coordinator, the other day, she said to me, your impact on the speaking of English, you have had a great impact on the school. And I said what, and she said you go and talk to the teachers in English and they have to speak back to you. She said some NETs are very quiet but you just talk. And no one has ever said, you know moved away or tried to avoid me...*
- *I take many opportunities through out the week to have informal chats with my teaching partners about lesson plans and teaching roles. This has helped with the collaboration improvements in about 80% of my classes.*

LETs

- *At first, we just speak English inside the classroom. But now we need to talk to the NET in English. We find that our English is improved ... Yes, but because of the NET, we speak more English.*
- *She sits next to me so I talk with her a lot ... She has a quite good relationship with us. She is quite friendly. So we are not afraid of talking to her ... I think so. I think the relationship is quite good. And sometime if I don't know how to express some meaning in English, then I will ask her. Or if there are some words that I am not sure the pronunciation, then I will ask her ... She is ... She always ... give us help if we ask her about something we are not very clear about that, and then she is quite willing to teach us or say about that chance.*
- *I think my colleagues speak more English as we need to communicate with the NET. In the past, when the NET was not here, we communicate in Chinese. Now, we are more willing and active to use English for communication.*

The benefits that were evident in terms of LET language use and language development because of the presence in the school of a non-Chinese-speaking member of the English teaching team, were dependent, in the view of the LETs and to a certain extent, on the NET having an outgoing and approachable personality.

Perhaps even more crucial was the location of the NET in the staffroom and in close proximity to other teachers of English in the school. In one school, a NET described by his local colleagues as 'shy and secluded', became less accessible to the LETs as he was located in the English room. This effectively removed him from the rest of the English Panel and from opportunities to engage with them both in professional discourse and in less formal interactions:

- *The current NET always works in the English Room. Our Staff Room is on the third floor while the English room is on the first floor. Sometimes we want to discuss something with the NET. However, we may not have adequate time to find him. Even if we go to look for him, it may happen that he has just gone somewhere. This is a problem. The current NET is different from the previous two NETs. They worked on the third floor. The first NET sat next to me. So when he had a free lesson, I was able to speak to him. We could exchange ideas. The second NET sat behind me For the current NET, I never see him when I am in my office. The NET may be in a lesson or he may be doing some preparation on the first floor. The NET normally will not sit on the third floor. When he comes to school, he puts down his belongings and then does his job and I may even have no idea when he leaves.*

Language proficiency needs to be constantly refreshed in order to be maintained. While the opportunity provided by the presence of the NET in the school, and preferably in the staffroom, needs to be fully exploited, teachers of English should also be seeking ways to

expose themselves to English outside the school in order to maintain and extend their proficiency. This would include exposure to English in its spoken and written forms including its literature. Provision of greater opportunities for teachers to engage with the language would extend their linguistic competence and is an issue which needs to be addressed at a system and school level. Teachers need to be encouraged, supported and rewarded for taking opportunities for seeking and making use of such opportunities. This might be achieved through cultural and professional activities, overseas and local immersion programmes, and rewards for teachers who undertake enrichment programmes in language and literature. The system expects parents to be supportive of their child's English language studies, the NETs to collaborate with local teachers, and the students to develop lifelong positive attitudes towards learning English, and teachers must also take responsibility for maintaining and developing their productive competence in English, and extending their relevant cultural awareness and linguistic knowledge. Of all the issues to address, this may be among the more serious requiring system intervention.

At each year level, there was a small relationship between student proficiency in English, and particularly in spoken English, and the frequency with which teachers spoke English outside school. This relationship did not extend to student growth of proficiency in English. Thus, it appeared that students whose teachers used English more frequently in their everyday life achieved higher average scores in English proficiency than their age level peers, but did not necessarily improve more rapidly in English than their peers.

The frequency with which LETs used English outside school was not related to their reported level of collaboration with the NET, nor was it linked to LETs' reported attitudes towards collaborating with the NET at their school.

LETs' Attitudes to English and Teaching English

Most of the LETs expressed strongly positive attitudes towards teaching English and most indicated a willingness to improve their own English language skills. Thus, it must be assumed that most of the LETs would welcome additional opportunities to practise their English language skills outside the classroom. Twenty-eight percent of LETs responded that they found it difficult to teach English, and 25% reported that it was hard for them to learn things in English. Thus, a sizeable proportion of the LETs had expressed concern over their own levels of proficiency, both as teachers and users of English. Most of these teachers also reported that they wanted to improve their English language skills. Only 6% of the LETs responded that they were not interested in developing their English language proficiency.

It was also a matter of concern that 10% of the LETs responded that they did not want to teach English and felt a personal antipathy towards English. These strongly negative attitudes were not systematically related to student proficiency in English, or to the frequency of interaction with the NET at the school. Nonetheless, they were indicative of very low morale among a worryingly large proportion of LETs. Teachers' confidence in their ability to teach English could be related to student proficiency, as shown in Figures 4.10 to 4.13. Similar patterns of relationship were observed between teachers' confidence

in their own English proficiency and student outcomes.

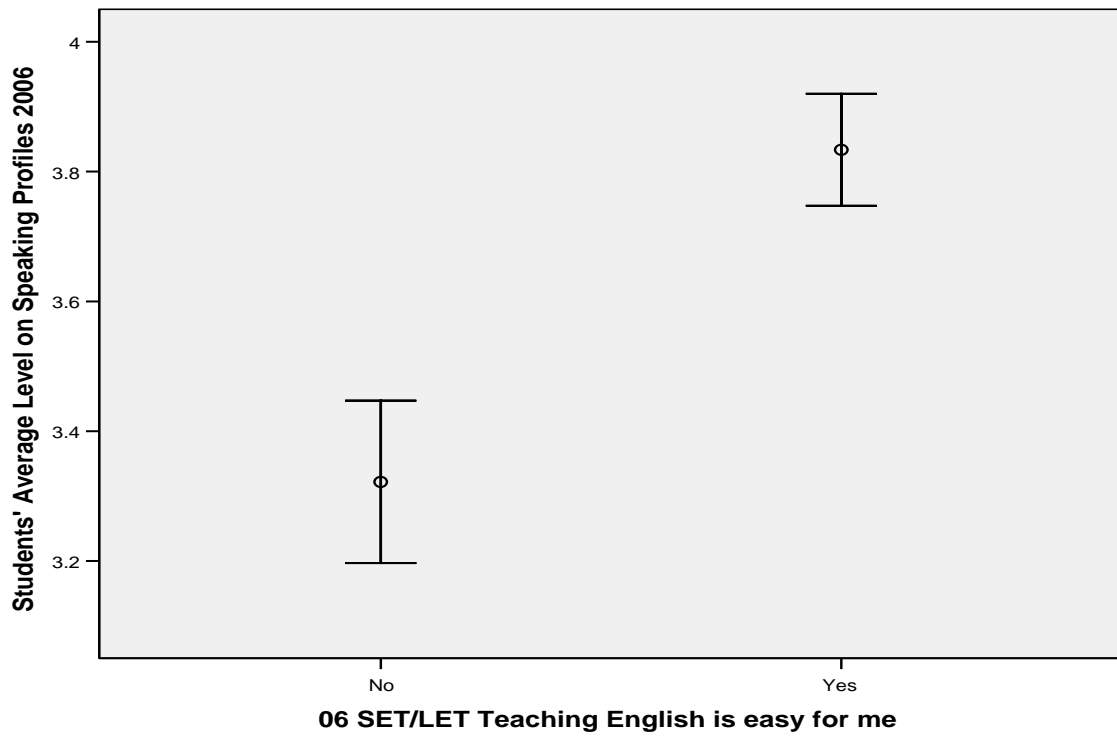


Figure 4.10. Relationships between LETs' confidence in ability to teach English and student achievement on the Profiles of Speaking and Listening in English.

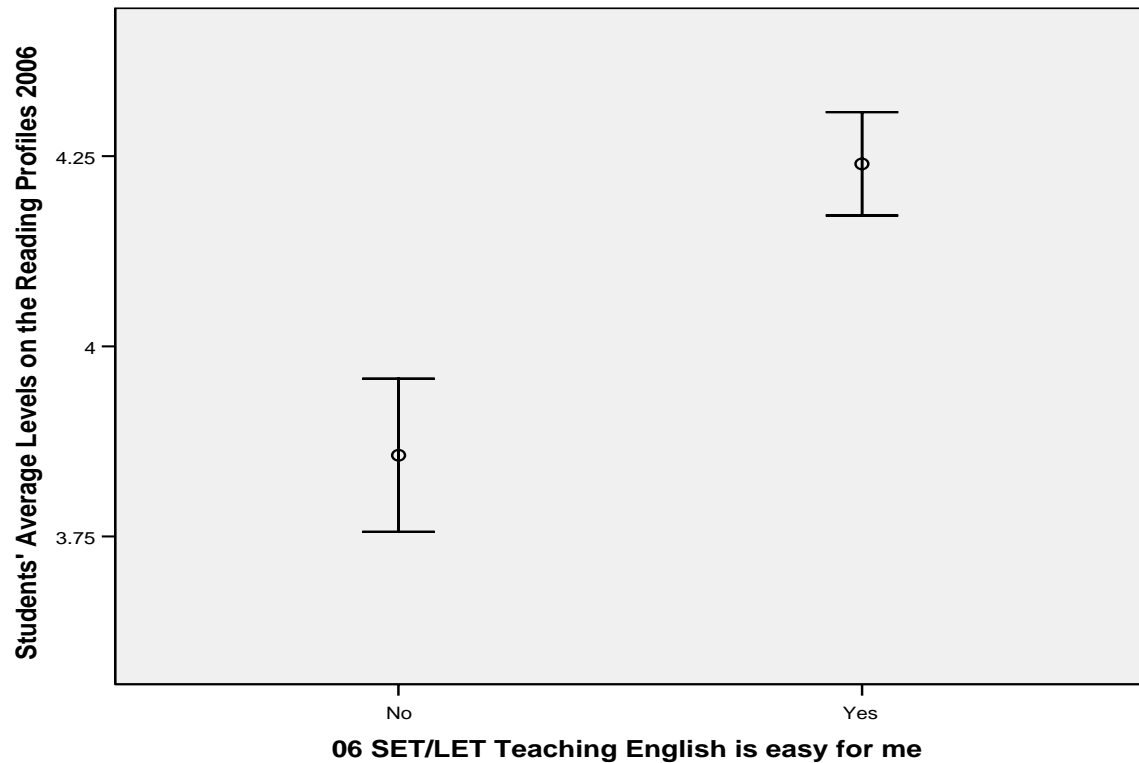


Figure 4.11. Relationships between LETs' confidence in ability to teach English and

student achievement on the Profiles of Reading in English.

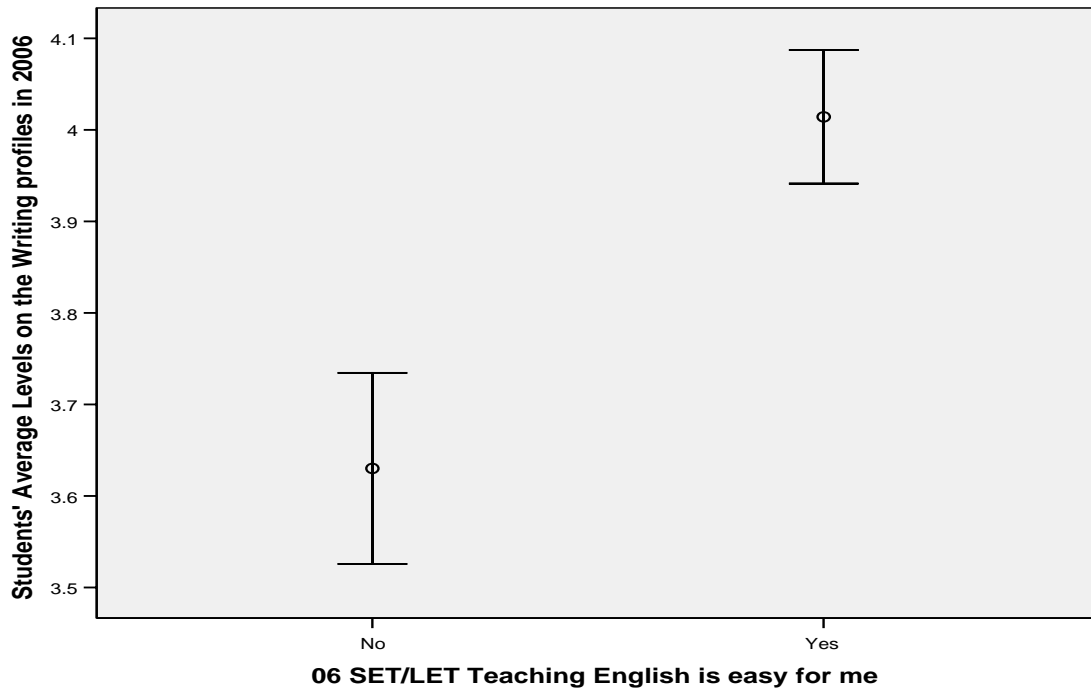


Figure 4.12. Relationships between LETs' confidence in ability to teach English and student achievement on the Profiles of Written English.

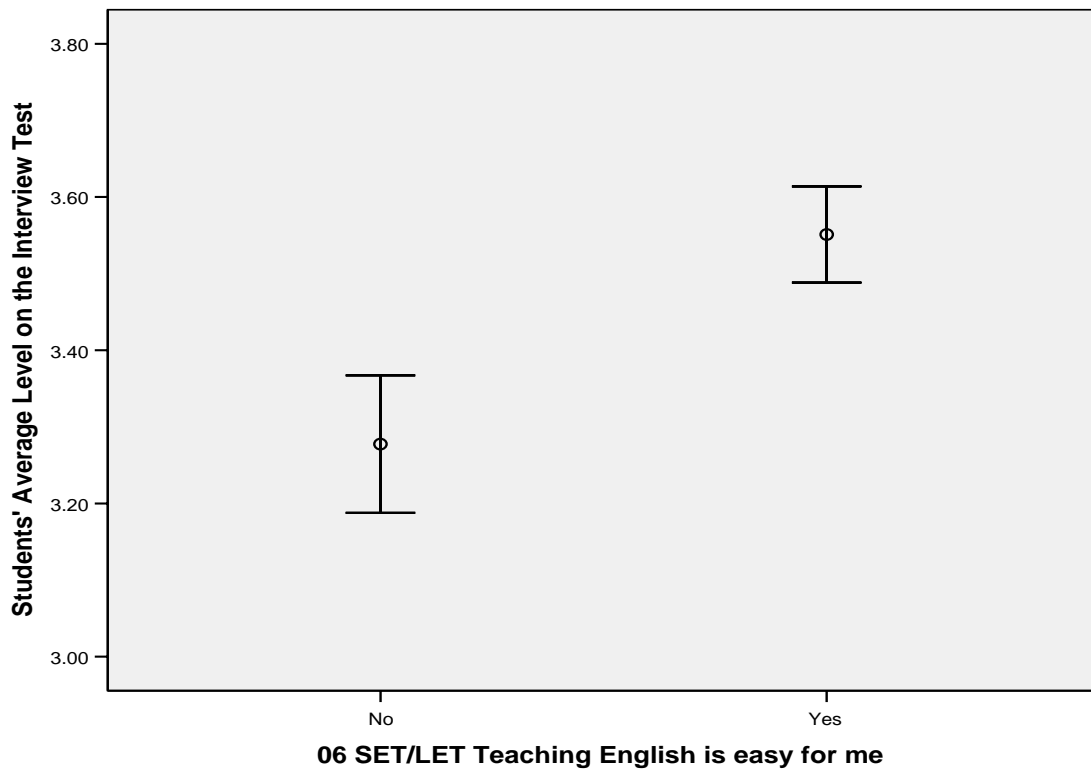


Figure 4.13. Relationships between LETs' confidence in ability to teach English and student achievement on the Interview Test.

The importance of the LETs and their attitudes to both teaching and using English cannot be over-stated. Teacher morale, interest, commitment and confidence are of primary importance for the development of student proficiency in English and positive attitudes to the lifelong study of English. Teachers and parents are the role models for the students, and both need to demonstrate commitment and enjoyment of the English language. Without such a commitment from the teachers to their own use of English, many of the innovations and programmes of the PNET Scheme may fail to reach their potential.

The Classroom Environment

The LETs and the classroom environment in which students encountered their everyday English experiences clearly provided important influences upon student development of proficiency in English. In most schools the LETs spent considerably more time than NETs teaching and interacting with individual students, so their influence upon student proficiency and development of proficiency was only to be expected. However, when this level of contact and influence was coupled with LETs who did not have the opportunity to use English outside the workplace and lacked confidence in their ability to teach English, it boded badly for the teaching of English in Hong Kong and placed a greater priority on the success of the PNET Scheme.

Across all years of the evaluation, the impact of the NET, the AT, the school community and the PNET Scheme were channelled and mediated via the responses that the LETs had to their influence and the ways that the LETs drew upon different types of support, materials and advice to inform their classroom practice. Therefore, this section presents data on LETs' practices and use of teaching resources in the classroom, their access to resources, patterns of stability and change in teachers' use of resources from 2004 to 2006 and between NETs and local teachers, and the relationships between teachers' classroom practice and student achievement and change in achievement.

Teachers' Access to Teaching Resources

The availability of a range of teaching materials and resources was examined for both LETs and NETs, and summarised in Table 4.2. This table lists teaching resources in order of the frequency of their availability as reported by LETs, and described in terms of the proportion of students whose LET or NET responded that they had regular, occasional or no access to the resource or materials.

Most schools and classrooms were well equipped and teachers could draw upon a wide range of resources to support their teaching of English. Almost all LETs had frequent access to textbooks, pictures, computers and the internet, audiovisual equipment, teaching kits, display boards, games and songs, printing facilities and materials for making their

own teaching resources, a Chinese English dictionary, reference materials, video equipment and multimedia materials. All or almost all NETs also had at least some access to these resources. However, NETs were much more likely than LETs to have at least some access to materials and resource packages recommended by the ATT.

From this it can be concluded that the system was providing the resource support that was needed, and that every teacher had sufficient materials and support from the system, but that local teachers were constrained in their ability to fully exploit available resources.

Teachers' Use of Resources and Practices

LETs and NETs were asked about their use of a range of teaching resources and practices, and their responses are summarised in Table 4.3.

Almost all LETs responded that they relied primarily upon textbooks, homework in English and drills. Most LETs were also making frequent use of the same text for every student in reading lessons, self-produced teaching materials, formal assessment of students' production of English, co-planning with the NET, and opportunities for students to practise conversation in English. By contrast, most of the NETs responded that they made most frequent use of self-produced teaching materials, shared reading of English texts, co-planning and team teaching with the LETs, games and songs in English, opportunities for students to practise English conversation, and shared teaching of reading lessons with the LETs.

Table 4.2. *Frequency of Access to Teaching Resources and Materials for LETs and NETs*

| English Teaching Resource | LETs' Frequency of Access (% students) | | | NETs' Frequency of Access (% students) | | |
|--|--|------------------|-----------------|--|------------------|-----------------|
| | Not at all | Some of the time | All of the time | Not at all | Some of the time | All of the time |
| English textbooks | 1.9 | 19.7 | 78.4 | 5.5 | 16.1 | 78.4 |
| Pictures as teaching illustrations | 0.9 | 34.6 | 64.5 | 6.2 | 19.9 | 73.9 |
| Computers, internet for own use | 1.8 | 36.8 | 61.4 | 3.2 | 10.4 | 86.4 |
| Audiovisual equipment | 0.8 | 39.9 | 59.3 | 1.0 | 14.5 | 84.5 |
| Teaching kits | 3.9 | 43.7 | 52.4 | 9.3 | 31.3 | 59.4 |
| Display boards to show student work | 2.5 | 45.9 | 51.6 | 7.5 | 21.1 | 71.5 |
| Materials for making teaching aids | 4.0 | 47.0 | 49.0 | 1.3 | 15.9 | 82.8 |
| Games and songs | 2.4 | 49.2 | 48.5 | 2.3 | 21.9 | 75.8 |
| Printing facilities | 2.4 | 52.7 | 44.9 | 2.9 | 4.2 | 92.8 |
| Chinese English dictionary | 2.7 | 55.2 | 42.1 | 10.3 | 13.6 | 76.1 |
| Reference materials | 3.2 | 55.9 | 40.9 | 1.3 | 21.6 | 77.1 |
| Video equipment | 6.4 | 57.5 | 36.1 | 6.8 | 23.8 | 69.4 |
| Multimedia materials | 7.0 | 57.2 | 35.8 | 14.0 | 36.3 | 49.8 |
| Computers, internet for student use | 8.9 | 57.9 | 33.2 | 21.6 | 37.7 | 40.7 |
| Stories related to students' lives | 7.4 | 60.5 | 32.1 | 13.0 | 32.1 | 54.9 |
| Reading kits | 8.1 | 64.0 | 27.9 | 11.7 | 28.3 | 60.0 |
| Curriculum guide to English | 14.0 | 60.0 | 26.0 | 0.0 | 14.8 | 85.2 |
| An English area to work with students | 21.5 | 53.2 | 25.3 | 19.3 | 12.6 | 68.1 |
| Phonics packages | 11.9 | 64.0 | 24.1 | 11.0 | 23.2 | 65.8 |
| Teaching materials for the PLP-R | 37.2 | 38.9 | 24.0 | 36.6 | 22.9 | 40.5 |
| Apparatus for laminating teaching aids | 22.2 | 54.0 | 23.8 | 7.4 | 14.0 | 78.6 |
| Interactive multimedia materials | 15.5 | 60.9 | 23.6 | 14.1 | 45.9 | 40.1 |
| Materials recommended by NET | 19.0 | 59.8 | 21.3 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Materials recommended by the LETs | N/A | N/A | N/A | 5.5 | 46.1 | 48.3 |
| Excursions, extracurricular activities | 18.4 | 61.2 | 20.4 | 15.2 | 53.5 | 31.3 |
| English materials from media | 21.6 | 63.5 | 14.9 | 24.2 | 36 | 39.8 |
| Plays and drama activities | 16.1 | 69.1 | 14.9 | 10.1 | 43.6 | 46.3 |
| Materials recommended by AT | 34.1 | 55.0 | 10.9 | 9.3 | 43.6 | 46.3 |
| Resource packages recommended by AT | 51.1 | 40.7 | 8.2 | 16.4 | 31.3 | 52.3 |

These patterns of use of resources and materials by LETs and NETs were consistent with observations in 2004 and 2005. LETs continued to make most frequent use of textbooks, drills and homework. Although recent textbooks incorporate up-to-date approaches to the teaching of English including task-based learning, project learning and pair and small group work, over reliance on textbooks carries certain implications, suggesting a teacher-centred approach, focused on whole class instruction. The efforts of the ATs, professional development and training, and the ideas and support of the NETs, have not so far shifted the majority of LETs away from reliance on textbooks and drills, although the system and schools were clearly providing adequate access to resources. Table 4.3 suggests an apparent failure to communicate about changes to teaching practices in order to improve language proficiency. This, coupled with the low levels of confidence of some of the local English teachers and the lack of commitment of a minority, is a cause for concern. In the qualitative investigation, three patterns were observed in the way lessons co-taught with the NET articulated with the mainstream curriculum. One of these patterns, relatively common in non-PLP-R schools, seemed likely to exacerbate textbook dependency. The three patterns were:

(i) PLP-R

Schools employing PLP-R generally integrated the lessons co-taught with the NET into the mainstream, although in one school the co-taught lessons extended only to PLP-R classes and LETs used the textbook in other classes. In another school, a whole language, literacy-based curriculum had replaced textbooks at P1 and P2 and the co-taught NET lessons were fully integrated with lessons taught by LETs alone.

(ii) NET integration with textbook curriculum

In a small number of schools, the NET assisted local teachers in delivering what was essentially a textbook curriculum by developing activities and resources to complement the textbook.

(iii) NET segregation from the textbook curriculum

The most negative pattern of deployment, which was relatively common consisted of the NET co-teaching Phonics and shared reading lessons at KS1 while LETs compressed the remainder of the textbook curriculum into a smaller number of lessons.

In schools exhibiting the third pattern, it was common to hear LETs complain that they had insufficient time to incorporate ‘activities’ into lessons, because they had to complete the textbook units. There was often a clear distinction between (co-taught) NET lessons – which were activity-based lessons operated at a relaxed pace with an emphasis on enjoyment and with no homework as follow up – and LET lessons where textbook activities were raced through superficially with no time for activities or enjoyment and with the added burden of homework to follow. The view of a LET from a pattern (iii) school was representative of several of the schools visited. While enjoyment of NET lessons was acknowledged, LETs explained this partly by the reduced homework expectations and lack of individual work in NET lessons. While LETs acknowledged the benefits of a more relaxed approach (and pointed out that enjoyment was not restricted to

NET lessons) they also emphasised the need for homework (a preoccupation characteristic particularly of bi-sessional schools) and the pressurised curriculum emphases which were a consequence of the arrangement of lessons in their schools:

- *[Pupils] find it interesting, not only to attend the NET's lessons but also our lessons, because we try to use more activities so that lessons become more active ... But [NETs are] unlike us ... we need to handle BCA, textbooks, examination, tests, so pupils have a lot of homework ... pupils must have some homework to do. But for NET lessons, only one worksheet [will be given] and that is about drawing, or writing some words and the like. In addition, for NET lessons, most of the time pupils are divided into groups. Pair or group work is the majority. Little individual work is found. Pupils think that their burden is not so heavy ... I cooperated with the NET in a way that three lessons for alternative week. To complete my own teaching is already very tight. If I really learn something from the NET, I don't think I can apply it in the lesson. After all, we need to rush for the curriculum, to do the worksheet. I think NET's worksheet and group work is good. However, every time, it spends a lot of time ... Even the NET is here, it is impossible for me to totally rely on him. I cannot, say, because the NET teaches certain part of the topic, I need not to teach that part. No, I can't do it. After all, NET focuses mainly on reading. Even though the NET taught something on grammar, it was kind of reinforcement only. Our teaching is the basic and what NET taught was based on ours and was a kind of revision to the students. So other than the three lessons taught by the NET, all of my lessons were very tight and I have to rush in order to complete the topics that I need to cover. Thus, even the NET is here, the curriculum does not change.*

This perception that a negative impact of the NET was to take lessons away from the total number allocated to English was reflected in the views of a LET from another of the schools visited. She expressed the idea that LETs did not have time to employ activities in the same ways as NETs did, because LETs had to complete the textbook syllabus:

- *As mentioned, we also have activities. However, the things that the NET needs to teach is not much and she has so much time to teach, so she can achieve a task by using two to three activities. But for us, we need to teach so many things and thus we may have only one to two activities. So we can't have so many activities like the NET. The NET needs to teach not so many things. For instance, if the NET teaches sentence structure, he may have a story telling first and then play a matching game with the students. But we can't do it. The NET's homework is done during the lesson. But for us, students need to bring homework back to home. The NET stresses that homework is done during the lesson and then check the answer with the students.*

Table 4.3. *Frequency of Use of Teaching Resources and Materials by LETs and NETs*

| English Teaching Resource or Strategy | LETs' Frequency of Use (% students) | | | NETs' Frequency of Use (% students) | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Not at all | In some classes | In most classes | Not at all | In some classes | In most classes |
| Textbooks | 4.1 | 20.4 | 75.5 | 27.4 | 44.8 | 27.8 |
| Homework | 2.0 | 27.6 | 70.4 | 7.0 | 43.2 | 49.8 |
| Drills in English | 0.9 | 40.0 | 59.1 | 20.8 | 48.6 | 30.6 |
| The same text for every student in reading lessons | 5.4 | 46.3 | 48.3 | 9.2 | 35.7 | 55.2 |
| English teaching materials produced by LET | 1.5 | 55.9 | 42.7 | 8.5 | 61.4 | 30.1 |
| Formal assessment | 5.3 | 51.9 | 42.7 | 27.7 | 58.0 | 14.4 |
| Co-planning by NET and LETs | 11.5 | 46.7 | 41.8 | 4.6 | 21.7 | 73.7 |
| Conversation practice | 1.8 | 57.9 | 40.2 | 0 | 39.6 | 60.4 |
| Games and songs in English | 1.9 | 59.2 | 38.9 | 0 | 28.0 | 72.0 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 4.2 | 57.2 | 38.6 | 2.3 | 15.4 | 82.3 |
| Multimedia materials (e.g., powerpoint presentations) | 5.5 | 56.2 | 38.3 | 15.6 | 47.8 | 36.6 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 3.7 | 61.5 | 34.8 | 13.9 | 38.3 | 47.7 |
| Team teaching between NET and LETs | 14.9 | 51.1 | 34.0 | 5.2 | 15.7 | 79.1 |
| Talks, presentations in English | 9.4 | 59.0 | 31.7 | 6.8 | 54.6 | 38.6 |
| Shared teaching of reading lessons by NET and LETs | 14.5 | 55.7 | 29.8 | 1.0 | 32.4 | 66.6 |
| Continuous improvement strategies | 4.7 | 65.5 | 29.7 | 3.9 | 41.5 | 54.6 |
| Stories related to students' everyday lives | 5.7 | 65.6 | 28.7 | 5.5 | 59.6 | 34.9 |
| Supported reading of English materials | 7.6 | 65.0 | 27.4 | 1.0 | 37.3 | 61.7 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 6.3 | 66.8 | 26.9 | 2.0 | 55.1 | 43.0 |
| Grouping based on student ability | 16.6 | 57.3 | 26.1 | 32.6 | 40.9 | 26.4 |
| Teaching materials developed by the NET | 17.6 | 57.1 | 25.4 | 1.0 | 12.5 | 86.6 |
| Teaching strategies learned from courses, training | 3.6 | 71.2 | 25.2 | 3.2 | 64.0 | 32.8 |
| Advice or support from the NET | 16.2 | 60.4 | 23.4 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Advice or support from the SET/LETs | N/A | N/A | N/A | 4.2 | 41.3 | 54.5 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 12.1 | 65.3 | 22.6 | 5.5 | 51.3 | 43.1 |
| Ideas from lessons co-taught by NET and LETs | 17.6 | 59.7 | 22.6 | 9.7 | 54.1 | 36.2 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with NET | 24.7 | 53.2 | 22.1 | 9.1 | 34.3 | 56.7 |
| Curriculum guide to teaching English | 20.0 | 58.6 | 21.4 | 7.6 | 39.5 | 52.9 |
| Interactive multimedia materials | 14.7 | 64.3 | 21.0 | 29.4 | 49.9 | 20.7 |

| English Teaching Resource or Strategy | LETs' Frequency of Use (% students) | | | NETs' Frequency of Use (% students) | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Not at all | In some classes | In most classes | Not at all | In some classes | In most classes |
| Group work on writing stories in English | 17.8 | 62.8 | 19.3 | 21.9 | 58.9 | 19.2 |
| Shared teaching of writing lessons with NET | 27.7 | 55.0 | 17.3 | 18.3 | 48.3 | 33.4 |
| Plays and drama activities | 17.9 | 65.0 | 17.1 | 12.0 | 66.4 | 21.7 |
| Excursions or extracurricular activities | 20.2 | 62.8 | 17.1 | 22.8 | 64.9 | 12.3 |
| Teaching materials from the PLP-R | 42.7 | 40.4 | 16.8 | 51.3 | 27.5 | 21.2 |
| Split class teaching | 46.2 | 39.7 | 14.1 | 35.5 | 42.6 | 21.9 |
| English materials from the media | 24.4 | 63.7 | 11.9 | 34.7 | 47.5 | 17.8 |
| Materials recommended by the AT | 37.1 | 51.3 | 11.7 | 9.4 | 67.7 | 23.0 |
| Strategies suggested by AT | 35.4 | 53.1 | 11.5 | 13.2 | 58.9 | 27.9 |

Thus, in the three years of this study, there had been little change in patterns of teaching and of resource use reported by teachers. This was disappointing, given the amount of resources poured into the Scheme. Clearly there was an effect of the presence of the NET in schools, and of the ATT efforts, but there were influences at school and classroom level that mitigated against change.

Local Teachers' Use of Teaching Resources and Student Achievement

As in previous years, associations between LETs' use of resources and strategies and student achievement were explored and those resource/strategies linked to higher or lower achievement at each of the four levels (P1, P2, P3 and P4) are reported in Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 respectively. In each case, teaching resources are listed from those that were used by most LETs to those that were used by the smallest proportion of LETs in the sample. Strategies that were most strongly associated with differences in achievement are highlighted in the tables.

These data allow the reader to summarise links between higher or lower levels of student proficiency in English and use by LETs of particular teaching resources at different age levels. It is possible that teachers of more capable students were able to incorporate a wider range of materials and activities into their English teaching, or that teachers of less capable students were not able to extend their teaching to include these resources.

In many cases, it was not possible to compare student performance on the basis of teachers' use of textbooks, homework, drills in English, and games and songs, because all or almost all teachers at a year level reported using these practices. For example, almost 99% of students at P1, P2 and P3 had teachers who reported incorporating games and songs into their teaching of English at least some of the time. Only at P4 level was there sufficient variation in the use of this teaching practice to permit meaningful comparisons to be drawn.

At P1 level, more teachers reported use of self produced materials and these were linked to higher student proficiency, as was the practice of matching resources to student achievement. LETs' use of self-produced teaching materials was linked to their confidence in their ability to teach and use English. Teachers who were more confident were more likely to make and use their own materials for teaching English to P1 students. At P2, P3 and P4 levels, the relationships with LETs' use of resources was not as great as for P1 students, and the nature of the strategies and resources linked to higher achievement also changed. At P2 level, formal assessment and advice and support from the NET were linked to higher achievement levels. For P2 and P3 students, it was also evident that spoken language activities in class were effective strategies, with plays and drama being the most common activity linked to greater difference in achievement when they were used. Matching reading materials to student ability was a useful strategy in terms of higher level outcomes in reading for P3 students. A further shift was evident at P4 level. The importance of oral work was enhanced and the emergence of formal assessment and group work suggested that the teaching strategies were shifting more towards the social and interactive use of language.

Table 4.4. 2006 P1 Students' Mean Levels of Achievement and LETs' Use of Resources

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|---|----------|------|----------------------------|
| <i>2006 P1 Students' Mean Level on ITEL</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | 1.84 | 2.83 | 0.99 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 2.14 | 2.84 | 0.70 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 2.39 | 2.89 | 0.50 |
| Strategies learned from courses and training | 2.35 | 2.82 | 0.47 |
| Advice and support from NET | 2.33 | 2.80 | 0.47 |
| Ideas/methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 2.38 | 2.82 | 0.44 |
| Excursions, extracurricular activities | 2.46 | 2.90 | 0.44 |
| <i>2006 P1 Students' Mean Level on Speaking Profiles</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | 1.93 | 2.91 | 0.98 |
| Formal assessment of students' English | 1.82 | 3.00 | 1.18 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 2.07 | 2.92 | 0.85 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 2.10 | 2.99 | 0.89 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 1.65 | 2.91 | 1.26 |
| Strategies learned from courses and training | 1.61 | 2.91 | 1.30 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 2.23 | 3.00 | 0.77 |
| Interactive multimedia materials in English | 2.48 | 2.96 | 0.48 |
| Plays and drama activities | 2.34 | 3.04 | 0.70 |
| English language materials from the media | 2.28 | 3.18 | 0.90 |
| Strategies suggested by AT | 2.53 | 3.10 | 0.57 |
| <i>2006 P1 Students' Mean Level on Reading Profiles</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | 2.10 | 3.68 | 1.58 |
| Formal assessment of students' English | 2.91 | 3.72 | 0.81 |
| Multimedia materials | 2.76 | 3.70 | 0.94 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 3.29 | 3.64 | 0.35 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 3.10 | 3.75 | 0.65 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 2.71 | 3.69 | 0.98 |
| Teaching materials supplied by NET | 3.35 | 3.72 | 0.37 |
| Strategies learned from courses and training | 2.70 | 3.69 | 0.99 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 2.90 | 3.77 | 0.87 |
| Teaching materials from PLP-R | 3.37 | 3.81 | 0.44 |
| English materials from the media | 3.27 | 3.83 | 0.56 |
| Strategies suggested by AT | 3.20 | 3.90 | 0.70 |
| <i>2006 P1 Students' Mean Level on Writing Profiles</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | 2.08 | 3.28 | 1.20 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 2.35 | 3.30 | 0.95 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 2.70 | 3.34 | 0.64 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 1.57 | 3.34 | 1.77 |
| Strategies learned from courses and training | 2.64 | 3.31 | 0.67 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 2.81 | 3.33 | 0.52 |
| Interactive multimedia materials in English | 2.80 | 3.32 | 0.52 |
| English materials from the media | 2.80 | 3.47 | 0.67 |

Note: Mean weighted achievement level for P1 students on the ITEL was 2.80 ($SE = 0.04$), on the Profiles of spoken English 2.91 ($SE = 0.06$), of reading English 3.64 ($SE = 0.05$), and of writing English 3.27 ($SE = 0.05$).

Table 4.5. *Relationships between 2006 P2 Students' Mean Levels of Achievement and LETs' Use of Teaching Resources*

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|---|----------|------|----------------------------|
| <i>2006 P2 Students' Mean Level on ITEL</i> | | | |
| Opportunities for students to practise conversation | 3.04 | 3.36 | 0.32 |
| Teaching materials supplied by NET | 3.13 | 3.38 | 0.25 |
| Interactive multimedia materials in English | 3.19 | 3.37 | 0.18 |
| Group work on writing stories | 3.20 | 3.38 | 0.18 |
| Plays and drama activities | 2.90 | 3.43 | 0.53 |
| <i>2006 P2 Students' Mean Level on Speaking Profiles</i> | | | |
| Formal assessment of students' English production | 3.13 | 3.61 | 0.48 |
| Co-planning with the NET | 3.21 | 3.61 | 0.40 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 2.96 | 3.61 | 0.65 |
| Team teaching with the NET | 3.39 | 3.65 | 0.26 |
| Shared teaching of reading lessons with the NET | 3.21 | 3.62 | 0.41 |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | 2.63 | 3.64 | 1.01 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 3.27 | 3.62 | 0.35 |
| Teaching materials supplied by NET | 3.24 | 3.63 | 0.39 |
| Advice and support from NET | 3.11 | 3.64 | 0.53 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 3.17 | 3.64 | 0.47 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 2.81 | 3.68 | 0.87 |
| Shared oral lessons with the NET | 3.29 | 3.73 | 0.44 |
| Plays and drama activities | 2.84 | 3.71 | 0.87 |
| English language materials from the media | 3.34 | 3.67 | 0.33 |
| <i>2006 P2 Students' Mean Level on Reading Profiles</i> | | | |
| Co-planning with the NET | 3.78 | 4.21 | 0.43 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 3.48 | 4.23 | 0.75 |
| Team teaching with the NET | 3.88 | 4.24 | 0.36 |
| Grouping based on student ability | 3.88 | 4.27 | 0.39 |
| Advice and support from NET | 3.74 | 4.23 | 0.49 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 3.55 | 4.28 | 0.73 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 3.79 | 4.23 | 0.44 |
| Plays and drama activities | 3.43 | 4.33 | 0.90 |
| <i>2006 P2 Students' Mean Level on Writing Profiles</i> | | | |
| Continuous improvement strategies in teaching | 3.53 | 3.86 | 0.33 |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | 3.50 | 3.86 | 0.36 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 3.60 | 3.87 | 0.27 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 3.48 | 3.89 | 0.41 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | 3.44 | 3.99 | 0.55 |
| Curriculum guide to teaching English | 3.64 | 3.89 | 0.25 |
| Shared writing lessons with the NET | 3.63 | 3.90 | 0.27 |
| Plays and drama activities | 3.30 | 3.93 | 0.63 |
| English materials from the media | 3.49 | 3.94 | 0.45 |

Note: The mean weighted achievement level for 2006 P2 students on the ITEL was 3.31 ($SE = 0.03$), on the Profiles of spoken English 3.61 ($SE = 0.06$), on the Profiles of reading English 4.21 ($SE = 0.08$), and on the Profiles of writing English 3.87 ($SE = 0.05$).

Table 4.6. *Relationships between 2006 P3 Students' Mean Levels of Achievement and LETs' Use of Teaching Resources*

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used - Not used) |
|---|----------|------|------------------------------|
| 2006 P3 Students' Mean Level on <i>ITEL</i> | | | |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 3.73 | 4.15 | 0.42 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | 3.93 | 4.17 | 0.24 |
| Plays and drama activities | 3.5 | 4.18 | 0.68 |
| Excursions, extracurricular activities | 3.87 | 4.18 | 0.31 |
| 2006 P3 Students' Mean Level on <i>Speaking Profiles</i> | | | |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | 3.89 | 4.29 | 0.40 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 3.73 | 4.31 | 0.58 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 4.00 | 4.34 | 0.34 |
| Teaching materials supplied by NET | 4.01 | 4.29 | 0.28 |
| Strategies learned from courses and training | 3.84 | 4.29 | 0.45 |
| Advice and support from NET | 3.58 | 4.37 | 0.79 |
| Posters and artwork related to teaching English | 3.76 | 4.30 | 0.54 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 3.86 | 4.27 | 0.41 |
| Interactive multimedia materials in English | 3.74 | 4.35 | 0.61 |
| Excursions, extracurricular activities | 3.92 | 4.28 | 0.36 |
| Teaching materials from PLP-R | 3.88 | 4.5 | 0.62 |
| Materials recommended by AT | 3.86 | 4.51 | 0.65 |
| Strategies suggested by AT | 3.85 | 4.52 | 0.67 |
| 2006 P3 Students' Mean Level on <i>Reading Profiles</i> | | | |
| Shared reading of English materials | 4.1 | 4.31 | 0.21 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 3.31 | 4.36 | 1.05 |
| Plays and drama activities | 3.73 | 4.37 | 0.64 |
| Materials recommended by AT | 4.11 | 4.43 | 0.32 |
| Strategies suggested by AT | 4.1 | 4.44 | 0.34 |
| 2006 P3 Students' Mean Level on <i>Writing Profiles</i> | | | |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 3.84 | 4.26 | 0.42 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 3.86 | 4.23 | 0.37 |
| Plays and drama activities | 3.91 | 4.25 | 0.34 |

Note: The mean weighted achievement level for 2006 P3 students on the ITEL was 4.10 ($SE = 0.06$), on the Profiles of spoken English 4.17 ($SE = 0.10$), on the Profiles of reading English 4.30 ($SE = 0.07$), and on the Profiles of writing English 4.24 ($SE = 0.08$).

Table 4.7. *Relationships between 2006 P4 Students' Mean Levels of Achievement and LETs' Use of Teaching Resources*

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|---|----------|------|----------------------------|
| <i>2006 P4 Students' Mean Level on ITEL</i> | | | |
| Homework specifically related to English | 3.78 | 4.46 | 0.68 |
| Games and songs in English | 4.05 | 4.47 | 0.42 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 3.84 | 4.49 | 0.65 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 3.91 | 4.47 | 0.56 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 3.86 | 4.49 | 0.63 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 4.14 | 4.49 | 0.35 |
| <i>2006 P4 Students' Mean Level on Speaking Profiles</i> | | | |
| Drills in English | 4.42 | 4.77 | 0.35 |
| Games and songs in English | 4.49 | 4.78 | 0.29 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 3.94 | 4.84 | 0.90 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 4.05 | 4.83 | 0.78 |
| Grouping based on student ability | 4.43 | 4.88 | 0.45 |
| Posters or artwork related to English | 4.40 | 4.82 | 0.42 |
| Group work on writing stories | 4.34 | 4.87 | 0.53 |
| <i>2006 P4 Students' Mean Level on Reading Profiles</i> | | | |
| Formal assessment of students' English | 4.34 | 4.89 | 0.55 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 4.65 | 4.88 | 0.23 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 4.44 | 4.90 | 0.46 |
| <i>2006 P4 Students' Mean Level on Writing Profiles</i> | | | |
| Formal assessment of students' English | 4.28 | 4.85 | 0.57 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 4.50 | 4.85 | 0.35 |
| Group work on writing stories | 4.65 | 4.87 | 0.22 |

Note: The mean weighted achievement level for 2006 P4 students on the ITEL was 4.39 ($SE = 0.05$), on the Profiles of spoken English 4.77 ($SE = 0.08$), on the Profiles of reading English 4.87 ($SE = 0.06$), and on the Profiles of writing English 4.83 ($SE = 0.06$).

Several points can be made from the information displayed in Tables 4.4 to 4.7:

- Different teaching resources were associated with higher student proficiency levels in different domains of English and different year levels. The teaching resources and practices associated with teaching students at higher levels of proficiency to read in English were not necessarily the same as the resources and practices associated with teaching students verbal skills in English.
- Strategies associated with the NET and the PNET Scheme were linked to higher mean achievement for students in P1, P2 and P3, but less so for P4 students.

It is also evident from these data where the professional development and encouragement of teachers might focus. From interactive art and media at P1 level, to the group and socially interactive use of language of teachers in P4, there was a discernable shift in teaching strategies associated with higher levels of student language proficiency.

Growth in Student Proficiency and LETs' Use of Resources and Practices in the Classroom

Relationships between student *growth* in proficiency in English and LETs' use of resources were examined by comparing average change in levels of achievement for P2 students (tracked from P1 in 2005 to P2 in 2006), P3 students (tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006) and P4 students (tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006). Results of these comparisons are shown in Tables 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 respectively, with strategies most strongly associated with higher levels of growth highlighted in the tables.

As with overall achievement levels, *growth* in language proficiency was associated with different teaching strategies across student year levels. The importance of incorporating advice from the ATs and of the NET into classroom teaching emerged. It was also evident that shared reading and the use of multi media materials led to greater growth over the three years. It was encouraging from the point of view of the PNET Scheme that strategies associated with the NET and AT were among the more effective practices in promoting growth in proficiency over the three year period.

Thus, student development of language proficiency was associated with a wide range of teaching practices and resources, some of which were related to the influence of the NET in the schools and the PNET Scheme, and some of which were more general teaching strategies. As P4 students became part of the study sample, the strategies associated with development of language proficiency changed towards more social interactive use of language, group work, homework and formal assessment. In addition, the importance of shared reading and strategies learned from the NET, AT and other sources of professional development became increasingly important.

These observations have important implications for the professional development of LETs such that the ATs and NETs need to orient training to increasingly involve more socially interactive activities with increasing year levels, in association with more formal assessment strategies. The extent to which the latter was an artefact of the basic competency assessment regime was unknown, but what was clear was that formal monitoring through homework and formal assessment was associated with greater growth in proficiency. Strategies for interpreting and using this assessment and formal and informal monitoring information should be emphasised in the professional development of teachers.

Professional development and upgrading incentives should also seek to develop the confidence of local teachers as full professionals. Over reliance on textbooks may result from lack of confidence to prepare school-based resources. It may also be a question of succumbing to parental pressure. The ability to direct parents' understanding of curriculum issues, rather than succumb to under-informed parental views of what should be done, is also something that comes with greater confidence, commitment to and interest in the teaching of English and the enhanced professionalism that can come from upgrading and development.

Table 4.8. *Relationships between LETs' Use of Teaching Resources and **Growth** in Proficiency for Students Tracked from P1 in 2005 to P2 in 2006*

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|--|----------|------|----------------------------|
| <i>Average Growth on ITEL for 2005 P1 - 2006 P2 Students</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | 0.41 | 0.68 | 0.27 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Spoken English for 2005 P1 - 2006 P2 Students</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | -0.36 | 0.88 | 1.24 |
| Formal assessment of students' English | -0.32 | 0.87 | 1.19 |
| Games and songs in English | 0.30 | 0.86 | 0.56 |
| Shared reading of English materials | -0.06 | 0.86 | 0.92 |
| Multimedia materials in English (Powerpoint presentations) | 0.45 | 0.87 | 0.42 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 0.11 | 0.89 | 0.78 |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | -0.29 | 0.89 | 1.18 |
| Supported reading of English materials | 0.59 | 0.86 | 0.27 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 0.44 | 0.93 | 0.49 |
| Teaching materials supplied by the NET | 0.43 | 0.89 | 0.46 |
| Advice and support from NET | 0.56 | 0.88 | 0.32 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 0.16 | 0.93 | 0.77 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | 0.44 | 1.03 | 0.59 |
| Curriculum guide to teaching English | 0.61 | 0.90 | 0.29 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.39 | 0.96 | 0.57 |
| Shared teaching of writing lessons with the NET | 0.51 | 0.93 | 0.42 |
| Plays and drama activities | 0.46 | 0.90 | 0.44 |
| Excursions and extracurricular activities | 0.55 | 0.89 | 0.34 |
| English materials from the media | 0.44 | 0.96 | 0.52 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Reading English for 2005 P1 - 2006 P2 Students</i> | | | |
| Self-produced teaching materials | 0.34 | 0.68 | 0.34 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 0.06 | 0.68 | 0.62 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 0.32 | 0.69 | 0.37 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 0.19 | 0.76 | 0.57 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 0.44 | 0.71 | 0.27 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | 0.32 | 0.85 | 0.53 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.21 | 0.78 | 0.57 |
| Shared teaching of writing lessons with the NET | 0.38 | 0.77 | 0.39 |
| Plays and drama activities | -0.20 | 0.79 | 0.99 |
| English materials from the media | 0.41 | 0.75 | 0.34 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Written English for 2005 P1 - 2006 P2 Students</i> | | | |
| Drills in English | -0.49 | 0.66 | 1.15 |
| Self-produced teaching materials | -0.88 | 0.67 | 1.55 |
| Formal assessment of students' English | 0.09 | 0.65 | 0.56 |
| Co-planning with the NET | 0.26 | 0.68 | 0.42 |
| Games and songs in English | -1.40 | 0.67 | 2.07 |
| Multimedia materials in English (Powerpoint presentations) | -0.44 | 0.71 | 1.15 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | -0.65 | 0.71 | 1.36 |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | -0.22 | 0.68 | 0.90 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 0.03 | 0.75 | 0.72 |
| Teaching materials supplied by NET | 0.43 | 0.68 | 0.25 |
| Advice and support from NET | 0.46 | 0.68 | 0.22 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 0.09 | 0.72 | 0.63 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | -0.03 | 0.94 | 0.97 |

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|---|----------|------|----------------------------|
| Curriculum guide to teaching English | 0.22 | 0.73 | 0.51 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.14 | 0.75 | 0.61 |
| Shared teaching of writing lessons with the NET | 0.02 | 0.83 | 0.81 |
| Plays and drama activities | -0.25 | 0.77 | 1.02 |
| English materials from the media | 0.24 | 0.75 | 0.51 |

Note: The mean weighted growth in proficiency level for students tracked from P1 in 2005 to P2 in 2006 on the ITEL was 0.67 ($SE = 0.03$), on the Profiles of spoken English 0.84 ($SE = 0.05$), on the Profiles of reading English 0.67 ($SE = 0.06$), and on the Profiles of writing English 0.63 ($SE = 0.06$).

Table 4.9. *Relationships between LETs' Use of Teaching Resources and **Growth** in Proficiency for Students Tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006*

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|---|----------|------|----------------------------|
| <i>Average Growth on ITEL for 2004 P1 - 2006 P3 Students</i> | | | |
| Opportunities for students to practise conversation | 1.33 | 1.67 | 0.34 |
| Spoken English activities such as talks, presentations | 1.31 | 1.68 | 0.37 |
| Shared teaching of reading lessons with the NET | 1.39 | 1.69 | 0.30 |
| Group work on writing stories | 1.37 | 1.73 | 0.36 |
| Plays and drama activities | 1.27 | 1.70 | 0.43 |
| Excursions and extracurricular activities | 1.26 | 1.74 | 0.48 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Spoken English for 2004 P1 - 2006 P3 Students</i> | | | |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 1.58 | 1.93 | 0.35 |
| Teaching materials supplied by the NET | 1.43 | 1.92 | 0.49 |
| Teaching strategies learned from courses and training | 1.11 | 1.90 | 0.79 |
| Advice and support from NET | 1.02 | 2.01 | 0.99 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 1.40 | 1.86 | 0.46 |
| Interactive multimedia materials in English | 1.63 | 1.90 | 0.27 |
| Excursions and extracurricular activities | 1.52 | 1.88 | 0.36 |
| Teaching materials from the PLP-R | 1.61 | 2.02 | 0.41 |
| Materials supplied by the AT | 1.51 | 2.10 | 0.59 |
| Strategies recommended by the AT | 1.47 | 2.14 | 0.67 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Reading English for 2004 P1 - 2006 P3 Students</i> | | | |
| Co-planning with the NET | 0.53 | 1.21 | 0.68 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 0.33 | 1.21 | 0.88 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 0.31 | 1.23 | 0.92 |
| Team teaching with the NET | 0.84 | 1.20 | 0.36 |
| Shared teaching of reading lessons with the NET | 0.78 | 1.20 | 0.42 |
| Teaching strategies learned from courses and training | 0.77 | 1.20 | 0.43 |
| Advice and support from NET | 0.79 | 1.26 | 0.47 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 0.65 | 1.21 | 0.56 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Written English for 2004 P1 - 2006 P3 Students</i> | | | |
| Co-planning with the NET | 1.29 | 1.57 | 0.28 |
| Reading materials matched to student ability | 0.72 | 1.61 | 0.89 |
| Teaching strategies learned from courses and training | 1.33 | 1.58 | 0.25 |
| Advice and support from NET | 1.11 | 1.63 | 0.52 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 1.29 | 1.56 | 0.27 |

Note: The mean weighted growth in proficiency level for students tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 on the ITEL was 1.60 ($SE = 0.05$), on the Profiles of spoken English 1.77 ($SE = 0.09$), on the Profiles of reading English 1.17 ($SE = 0.08$), and on the Profiles of writing English 1.54 ($SE = 0.08$).

Table 4.10. *Relationships between LETs' Use of Teaching Resources and **Growth** in Proficiency for Students Tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006*

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|--|----------|------|----------------------------|
| <i>Average Growth on ITEL for 2004 P2 - 2006 P4 Students</i> | | | |
| Homework specifically related to English | -0.15 | 1.08 | 1.23 |
| Games and songs in English | 0.75 | 1.07 | 0.32 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 0.22 | 1.08 | 0.86 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 0.85 | 1.11 | 0.26 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.77 | 1.12 | 0.35 |
| Plays and drama activities | 0.63 | 1.15 | 0.52 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Spoken English for 2004 P2 - 2006 P4 Students</i> | | | |
| Shared reading of English materials | 1.40 | 1.69 | 0.29 |
| Spoken English activities, talks, presentations | 1.27 | 1.70 | 0.43 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 1.45 | 1.68 | 0.23 |
| Supported reading of English materials | 1.44 | 1.68 | 0.24 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 0.63 | 1.76 | 1.13 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 1.04 | 1.86 | 0.82 |
| Teaching materials supplied by the NET | 1.32 | 1.73 | 0.41 |
| Teaching strategies learned from courses, training | 1.27 | 1.69 | 0.42 |
| Advice and support from the NET | 1.50 | 1.72 | 0.22 |
| Posters, artwork related to teaching English | 0.90 | 1.79 | 0.89 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.96 | 1.83 | 0.87 |
| Plays and drama activities | 1.34 | 1.72 | 0.38 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Reading English for 2004 P2 - 2006 P4 Students</i> | | | |
| Homework specifically related to English | -0.16 | 0.80 | 0.96 |
| Formal assessment of students' production of English | -0.05 | 0.80 | 0.85 |
| Co-planning with the NET | 0.37 | 0.92 | 0.55 |
| Games and songs in English | -0.13 | 0.84 | 0.97 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 0.56 | 0.79 | 0.23 |
| Team teaching with the NET | 0.53 | 0.87 | 0.34 |
| Shared teaching of reading lessons with the NET | 0.35 | 0.97 | 0.62 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 0.33 | 0.78 | 0.45 |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | 0.56 | 0.79 | 0.23 |
| Group work on oral interaction | 0.11 | 0.82 | 0.71 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 0.59 | 0.83 | 0.24 |
| Teaching materials supplied by the NET | 0.42 | 0.93 | 0.51 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 0.47 | 0.90 | 0.43 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | 0.49 | 0.93 | 0.44 |
| Interactive multimedia materials in English | 0.49 | 0.84 | 0.35 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.35 | 0.87 | 0.52 |
| Shared teaching of writing lessons with the NET | 0.43 | 1.00 | 0.57 |
| Plays and drama activities | 0.42 | 0.85 | 0.43 |
| <i>Average Growth on Profiles of Written English for 2004 P2 - 2006 P4 Students</i> | | | |
| Homework specifically related to English | -0.24 | 0.99 | 1.23 |
| Formal assessment of students' production of English | 0.25 | 0.98 | 0.73 |
| Co-planning with the NET | 0.66 | 1.12 | 0.46 |
| Games and songs in English | 0.50 | 0.99 | 0.49 |
| Shared reading of English materials | 0.52 | 0.99 | 0.47 |
| Team teaching with the NET | 0.64 | 1.14 | 0.50 |

| LETs' Teaching Practice/Resource | Not used | Used | Difference (Used-Not used) |
|--|----------|------|----------------------------|
| Shared teaching of reading lessons with the NET | 0.60 | 1.18 | 0.58 |
| Continuous improvement teaching strategies | 0.44 | 0.98 | 0.54 |
| Stories in English related to students' everyday lives | 0.75 | 0.98 | 0.23 |
| Supported reading of English materials | 0.68 | 0.97 | 0.29 |
| Grouping based on students' abilities | 0.68 | 1.04 | 0.36 |
| Teaching materials supplied by the NET | 0.65 | 1.16 | 0.51 |
| Teaching strategies learned from courses, training | 0.37 | 0.99 | 0.62 |
| Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET | 0.69 | 1.13 | 0.44 |
| Shared teaching of oral lessons with the NET | 0.70 | 1.16 | 0.46 |
| Group work on writing stories | 0.45 | 1.07 | 0.62 |
| Shared teaching of writing lessons with the NET | 0.75 | 1.17 | 0.42 |

Note: The mean weighted growth in proficiency level for students tracked from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 on the ITEL was 0.98 ($SE = 0.05$), on the Profiles of spoken English 1.68 ($SE = 0.08$), on the Profiles of reading English 0.80 ($SE = 0.06$), and on the Profiles of writing English 0.98 ($SE = 0.06$).

The impact of NETs on LETs' attitudes and teaching practices was an aspect explored in the qualitative investigation. In the 21 schools visited, there was a minority of LETs who felt they had not learned a great deal from working with the NET, but the majority of LETs were appreciative of the opportunity to be exposed to a different style of teaching which co-teaching provided. The examples below of practices which LETs had acquired from NETs give an indication of the kinds of positive impact exposure to a NET has for LETs in Hong Kong.

- *A big difference. We belong to a group of people that is very traditional, the pattern of class lecture. The teaching method of the NET is comparatively active and effective. I think I should use more activities, computer, PowerPoint and the students will find it different.*
- *I also find that my teaching method is quite similar with that of the NET. My training in the university is similar. However, in the past, I didn't have much confidence in teaching English. After cooperate with the NET, I find that I have more confidence in teaching English ... because, at first when I cooperate with the NET, I was very afraid that I could not understand what the NET said, could not follow what the NET said as he was speaking too fast. In the first year that I cooperate with the NET, I felt nervous and worried. But after a few years, I find that I have more confidence in teaching. I teach similar things and I also lead similar activities. However, my confidence in teaching is increased. Also in speaking and listening. Maybe I seldom use English to communicate with foreigner and I don't have much chance to train my English. Thus, I can improve myself.*
- *For P1, the change that I have noticed after working with the NET is that I find that students will find more fun if I use more activities in teaching. Students will not think they are attending a lesson. During the lesson, the students think that they are playing. Even so, they can learn. I think this kind of teaching method is suitable for our students. Thus, I try my best to use this kind of teaching method to teach students.*

- *For example, in the past, when students answered wrongly, I just gave them the correct answer. But now, for this year, for the PLP-R programme, I find that I can ask other students to help the less able students to learn so that the others can have more interaction. And for the less able students, they can also gain from this kind of learning activities. And I think this can also help them to improve their confidence, gain more confidence.*
- *I think it is the insistence to speak English during the lesson. Yes, this is really affected by the NET. Also, in the past when I taught upper forms students, I usually wrote, spoke and then translated into Cantonese to explain to the students. But now when I teach the upper forms students, I will try to use different English to explain if the students do not understand what I have taught. If the students don't understand some terms, then I will use Chinese to explain.*
- *I think visual aspect is very important. In the past, I didn't stress on the teaching resources. Pictures and word cards were not that important. However, from lower forms to upper forms, students find these important. It is important to give students chance to listen, to speak and to see.*
- *I think there's influence because er, you know, the NET teachers they have a lots of body language. As a Chinese, we always shy to do that. But nowadays, after working with her for two years, there are some more facial expression, body language. Yes.*
- *I think students are much more happy when they attend the NET's lesson than attend ours, because students have more chance to play in the NET's lesson. We are worry so much on the progress and we need to complete the teaching quickly. To the students, they feel less pressure from the NET. However, we will pose a great pressure to the students. We always demand an improvement on their academic result and other things. Yet, to the students, the teaching of NET is having no pressure. They can learn without pressure.*
- *Praise students more, even the students are wrong. Something like "good", "good try". For me, when students were not good, I deducted one mark from the group. The NET thought that I should not penalize students in this way. I should add mark to the good students but should not deduct mark for bad students. Should be positive method. So, the NET emphasizes reward. At first, I thought that it is hard to add mark to each team. But the NET kept on doing add mark to the students. Then, I thought that I can learn constantly rewards. The NET did it every lesson.*
- *As I mentioned, quite stimulating, I mean. Add.... add more energy to us. I feel more exciting about teaching English with the NET. Yes ... because er... he or she may give me more ideas which we try to introduce in the classroom so that I can try it for myself... Refreshment.*

- *You see this is some cultural differences. For local teachers, they may be quite serious. For NET teacher, they take things easy. Not that.... I mean... er.... a positive attitude. Not that stressful. We really focus on the behaviour, always quiet in the classroom. But for the NET, maybe he'll let them to scream, shout the answer. But for us, maybe we don't like it. But, yeah, he tries it and the environment is quite good because it is still English. My role is to make them calm. And his role is to make them excited.*

Summary

This chapter presented relationships between student achievement and development and the attitudes of teachers, and resources and strategies used in the classrooms for the teaching of English.

Of central importance for the success of the PNET Scheme and positive outcomes for the students were the attitudes and proficiency in English of the LETs, both as teachers and users of the language. Limited opportunities available within the broader social environment to engage in meaningful use of English, even for teachers specialising in English, suggested that the imperative to use English within the workplace and create an English speaking environment around the English Panel was all the more important. There is an opportunity here to effect an improvement in the PNET Scheme. LETs need to be encouraged, supported and rewarded for taking opportunities to develop their proficiency through cultural and professional activities, overseas and local immersion programmes, and enrichment programmes in language and literature.

As in previous years of the evaluation, positive collaboration between LETs and the NET was an important factor in terms of student proficiency and development. Matching LETs and NETs in terms of age and years of experience as English teachers held implications for the frequency of co-teaching and co-planning, and the attitudes that LETs expressed towards the usefulness of their collaboration with the NET. Different patterns of collaboration were explored, and their potential impact on the morale of teachers and outcomes for students was discussed.

Most LETs and NETs had good access to resources, although there were differences between LETs and NETs in terms of the use they made of those resources. Also, different teaching resources were associated with higher student proficiency levels in different domains of English and different year levels. Teaching resources and practices associated with teaching students at higher levels of proficiency to read in English were not necessarily the same as strategies associated with teaching students verbal skills.

Strategies associated with the NET and the PNET Scheme were linked to higher mean achievement for students in P1, P2 and P3, but less so for P4 students. Observations of successful use of teaching resources and practices could be used to target the professional development and encouragement of teachers. From interactive art and media at P1 level, to group work and socially interactive use of language of teachers in P4, there was a discernable shift in teaching strategies associated with higher levels of student language proficiency.

Chapter Five: Implementation of the PNET Scheme in Schools

Characteristics of School Heads

In 2006, students from 117 schools participated in the evaluation study, and school surveys were completed by 105 School Heads.¹ By comparison, School Heads from 136 schools provided information in 2005, and 133 School Heads contributed to the evaluation study in 2004.

Most of the School Heads who responded in 2006 were men (57%). They were aged between 35 and 60 years, with an average age of 51 years ($SD = 5.72$), and had been heading their current school on average for eight years ($SD = 6.31$) with a range of one to 31 years. The School Heads averaged 29 years of teaching experience, with a range of 13 to 40 years.

The School Heads generally held a Bachelors Degree in Education (44%), or postgraduate qualifications (35% with a Masters, 6% with a Doctorate in Education) while 15% were qualified at the level of postgraduate diploma or teacher's certificate. Similarly, 86% of the School Heads reported that they had received specialised training in school management

Characteristics of Schools

Almost all of the schools (over 95%) were subsidised, coeducational, primary only schools. In 2006, the majority (74%) of schools were whole day session schools, while 10% were AM session, 12% were PM session, and 4% were both. There were no systematic relationships between school type, and proficiency or development of proficiency in English for students.

More than half (55%) of the schools were located in the New Territories, while 28% were located in Kowloon, 14% on Hong Kong Island and 3% on the Outlying Islands.

All schools used Cantonese as their principal teaching language, except for one school on an Outlying Islands where the School Head responded that the school taught primarily in Putonghua.

¹ Reasons for non-participation of schools in the 2006 data collection included closure or merging of some schools, while some schools elected not to continue in the study without providing specific reasons to the evaluation team. There were no differences between schools that contributed data in 2006 and those that did not in terms of student achievement in 2004 and 2005. Thus, schools that participated in the evaluation for three years were not more likely to have higher achieving students than schools that did not continue participation. There were also no differences between continuing and non-continuing schools in terms of attitudes to the PNET Scheme expressed by School Heads or teachers in 2004 and 2005.

More than 90% of teachers and 88% of students were native Cantonese-speakers in all but one of the schools. In this school, a high proportion of teachers were native speakers of Putonghua. Only five schools indicated that more than 5% of teachers were native English-speakers and only one school had more than 5% native English-speakers among its student population. This school, where 31% of students were native English-speakers, was the school that conducted its teaching predominantly in Putonghua. Eight schools reported that more than 10% of their students were native Putonghua-speakers. Two schools reported that 30% of students were from a native Putonghua-speaking background, and one school had over 50% of students from this language background.

Schools participating in the 2006 evaluation could be divided between a large group (53%) where less than 5% of the student population were newly arrived in Hong Kong, and a smaller but still sizable group (24%) of schools with more than 15% of students who were new to Hong Kong. The remaining schools indicated that between 5% and 15% of students were newly arrived in Hong Kong.

The impact on the general teaching of English in the schools with high proportions of Putonghua-speaking children was largely related not to their first language, but to their prior educational background. Children who had not attended pre-school, or who had attended a pre-school with a wholly Chinese curriculum, provided a challenge to local teachers in Hong Kong accustomed to building on the foundation laid by the Hong Kong pre-school curriculum which included foundations in English. Another aspect, felt by a school in the northern New Territories, was that the parents of children from across the border were not able to provide the expected support to their children in completing their English homework. Local teachers commented on this:

- *About 20% of our students come from Shenzhen. As a result, the standards of parents vary. Some parents really can't help the homework of their children. Especially for English, many parents said that they don't know it. Sometimes children need to help themselves. However, it is difficult for the child to go back home and study if he is too young. If the child is old enough, his foundation may be better as he has learnt more vocabulary. As a result, the child will find it much easy to do their homework at home.*
- *The family background may be complicated. As there are not so many people to look after the children, almost no one teaches them English at home. Worst still, some parents do not understand English. I think they did attend kindergarten. However, there are two types of kindergarten, Mainland style and Hong Kong style. For the Mainland style kindergarten, English training is very limited. Maybe they just learn simple things like from A to Z. For the Hong Kong style kindergarten, students learn a lot of English. Since the English standard of the mother is not high, if the child learnt some English vocabularies, her mother already feel that her child is very good. However, after we admitted the children into P1, we found out that some of them even don't know A to Z. They are okay with some simple vocabularies. However, their pronunciation has got some problems.*

Impact of Size of School

Schools varied considerably in terms of the number of students enrolled, from very small schools with an enrolment of only 79 students to very large schools with an enrolment of almost 1200 students. The average total enrolment of the schools was 594 students.

The average ratio of NETs to classes of P1 – P4 students was one NET to slightly more than 12 classes, although in some very small schools the ratio was one NET to two or three classes of students, and in some large schools the ratio was one NET to 25 classes of students from P1 to P4. This situation was exacerbated in schools that were sharing a NET with another school. Indeed, in 2006 60% of the students were in schools with more than 10 classes of P1 – P4 students and sharing a NET, and almost 10% of students were in schools that had 20 or more classes of P1 – P4 students and sharing a NET with another school. Some students did not have a NET deployed in their school at all in 2006.

There was a positive correlation between size of school (measured in total enrolments) and student proficiency in English, but no relationship between size of school and student growth in proficiency in English. Students at larger schools tended to demonstrate slightly higher levels of proficiency in English than students in smaller schools, but they did not improve to a greater extent in proficiency in reading, writing or speaking in English over the evaluation period when compared with their peers in smaller schools.

LETs who were working in schools with larger enrolments of students reported a lower frequency of co-teaching and co-planning with the NET at their school, particularly if the school was sharing its NET with another school.

Similarly, NETs who were working in larger schools reported that they spent more of their time working in the classrooms, but considerably less time spent teaching any particular group of students. This was especially the case if the NET was working in two schools.

Deployment of NETs in Schools

In total, 92.5% of students in the 2006 sample were in schools in which a NET was currently deployed, and 81% of students were currently being taught by a NET. By comparison, in 2004 all participating schools were deploying a NET, all participating students were being taught by the NET, and all schools were sharing that NET with another school. In 2005, 80% of the participating students were being taught by a NET and almost all schools shared their NET with another school although this was not reported on in the 2005 survey.

Students in P2 and P3 in 2006 were most likely to be taught by a NET (90% and 88% of students respectively). By comparison, 82% of the P1 students were being taught by a NET, and 64% of the P4 students were being taught by a NET in 2006.

Schools varied in terms of the duration of deployment of a NET, from schools that had employed a NET for only one year to schools where a NET had been working for ten years. The average deployment of a NET in the participating schools was 3.5 years. This was consistent with previous years of the evaluation. In 2004, the School Heads reported an average of just less than two years of NET deployment, and in 2005 they reported an average NET deployment of almost three years. In both years, a small number of schools reported they had not yet had a NET deployed for a full school year.

All students in the 2004 sample (P1 and P2 at the time of first data collection) had been working with a NET at the start of the evaluation study. However, continuity of opportunity to work with a NET varied for the students who were tracked from P1 to P3 and from P2 to P4, as shown in Figure 5.1.

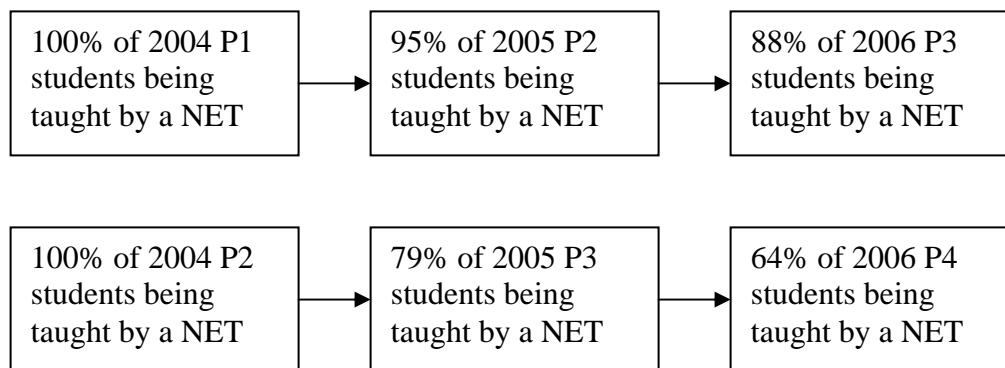


Figure 5.1. Proportions of students tracked from P1 to P3, or from P2 to P4, who were being taught by a NET in each year of the evaluation.

School Support for Collaboration by NET and LETs

Co-teaching

Co-teaching between NETs and LETs had become a highly regarded and well-established practice in many of the primary schools participating in the PNET Scheme. Most of the NETs were regularly spending time in classrooms, and sharing teaching with the local teachers of English. The NETs spent an average of 14 hours per week co-teaching English in classrooms with the LETs, but this could range from one to 30 hours for individual NETs depending on the size of the school and whether the NET was deployed across one or two schools.

School Heads, LETs and NETs were asked about their interpretation of co-teaching and perceptions of the support for co-teaching at their school. Comparisons of their responses are presented in Figures 5.2 and 5.3.

It was clear that, in a majority of the schools, co-teaching was viewed as a strongly collaborative and mutually supportive teaching relationship between the LET and NET.

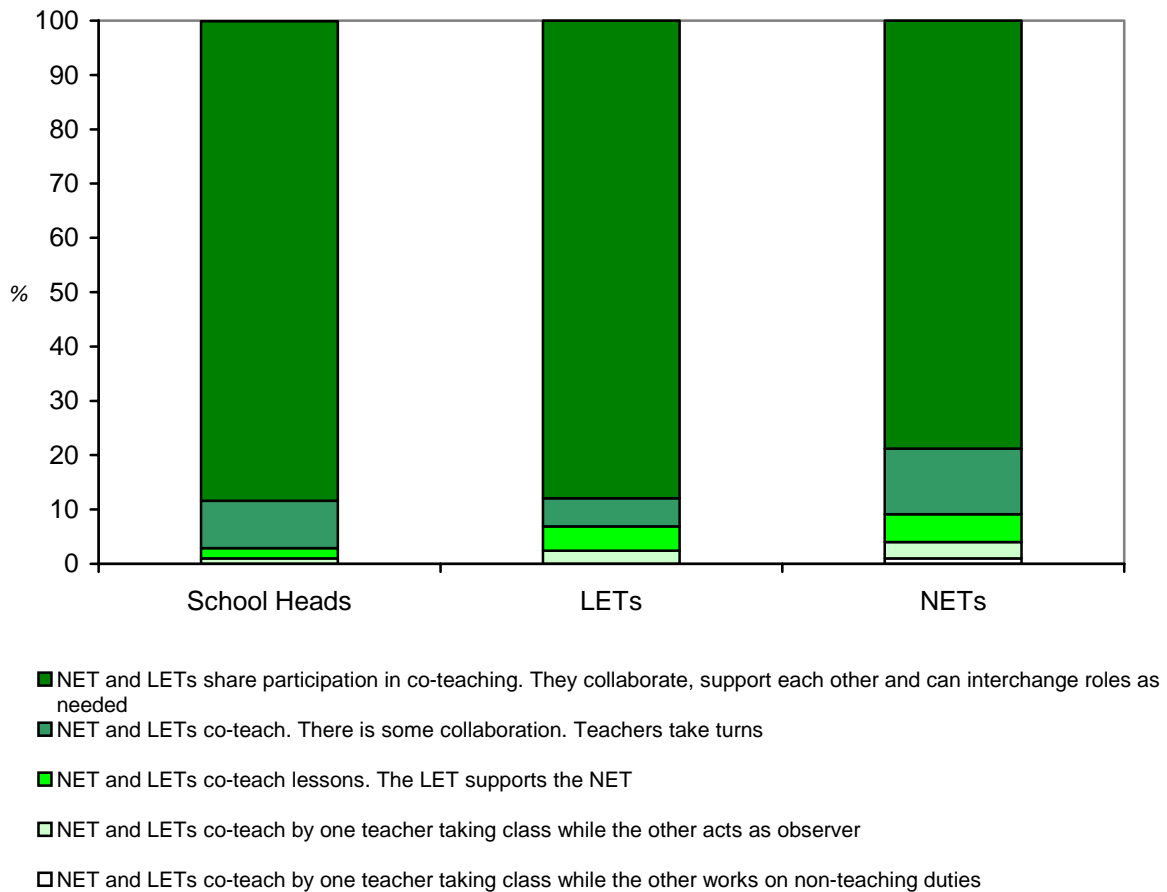


Figure 5.2. Style of co-teaching at the school as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

In most schools, NETs and LETs perceived that their co-teaching was firmly supported by the school, and in over half of the schools co-teaching had become a highly valued teaching model that was extended beyond English lessons into the teaching of other subjects. These patterns are illustrated in Figure 5.3.

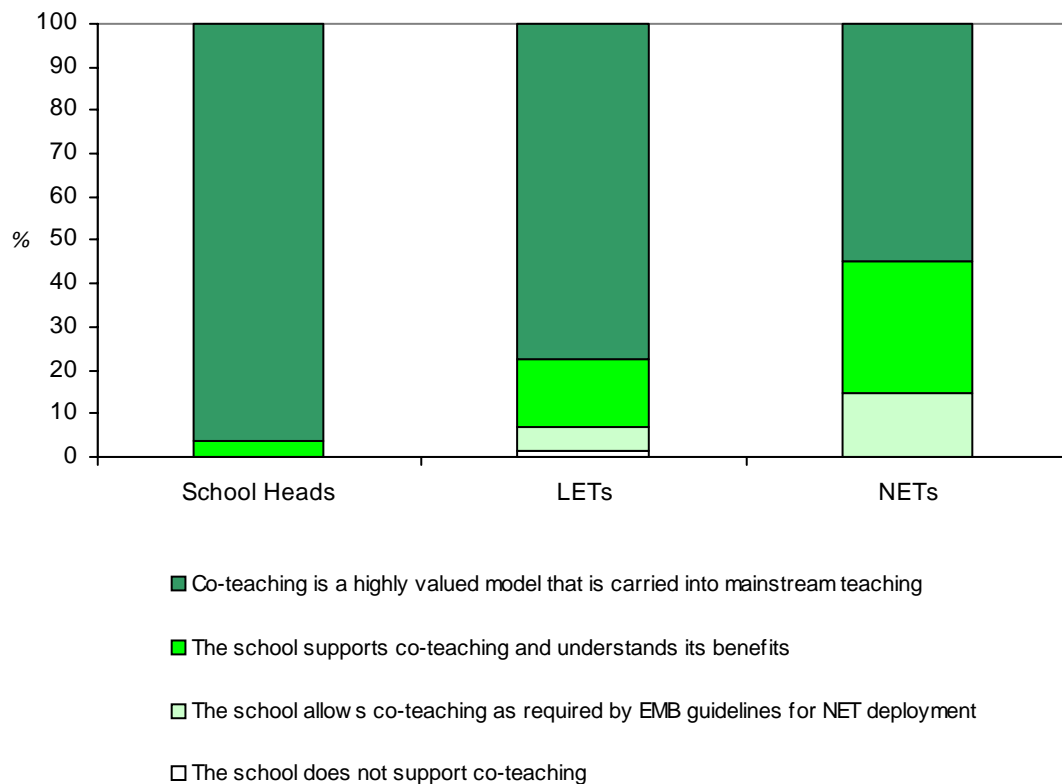


Figure 5.3. Support for co-teaching at the school as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

While there were differences in perceptions of School Heads and teachers, the overall impression was positive. Nevertheless, there was a discrepancy in perceptions of support for co-teaching, and some School Heads did not appear to be aware of the deployment of the NET in their schools. It would be to the advantage of the PNET Scheme if regular monitoring were introduced at school level for reporting the deployment of the NET. If such regular reports were the responsibility of the NET, with the Panel Chair required to sign off, and reports to the NET Section, EMB, sent via the School Head, all would be aware of the actual deployment situation and able to take appropriate action when use of the NET was not in accord with school policy and expectations.

Different styles of co-teaching were observed during visits to the schools in the qualitative investigation. These ranged from a pre-planned turn-taking approach in which the dominant role passed from one teacher to another according to a planned sequence, to a more flexible joint approach in which one or other teacher would intercede when he or she felt that a contribution could be made. The pre-planned turn-taking approach gave structure to the lesson which better ensured focus on and attainment of objectives, even though spontaneity may have been sacrificed. LETs and NETs described a range of experiences of co-planning in the following extracts from the interview transcripts.

First, a structured approach was described by a NET who had taken a leadership role in literacy teaching in her school. She used the plural personal pronoun throughout indicating a partnership approach:

- *Basically, we share the beginning section – the local teacher takes a guided reading group and I take the other guided reading group. That’s the lesson. Music’s not my great forte so I get them doing that. I tended to read the book myself this year, but we are going to change that next year. We start off... the children come in. They get their name tags. And then they start with a song. Then we do some poetry. We have a shared book which we read and work on different aspects of the book – punctuation, the words, or how to read it or ... we try to make the books fun if we can and we try to make it fairly snappy. Then the children divide. On the wall you can see, there is a work board up there. And they are social groupings which go by colour groups. The children’s names aren’t there. What they do is follow the scheme of work. Like there’ll be a writing activity, then a card game, word game. They might do independent reading and half of the class will be involved in that. And we have the teaching assistant in the back of the room. And she organises the children doing these activities so when we finish one activity, they move on to the next. They may not cover all the activities every week, but we keep rotating so eventually, they have a go at everything. The idea is that there’s something that’s of educational value to literacy going on. So it’s not just drawing a picture, they might draw a picture and then they have to write about it. Or it might be something to do with the big book that we’ve shared. It might be a high frequency word activity. The idea is it must have some educational value to them. And while one half of the class is involved in that, the other half of the class splits into two ability groups for guided reading and the local teacher takes one group and I take the other. We’ve got all our books done... they’re all done on reading recovery levels and we move our way through. Basically, what we do is we plot the levels each week, so we write the titles down and we plot the levels as we go.*

A more flexible approach was described by a NET from another school:

- *We have distinct responsibilities from the planning meeting, but then as we are doing it, if something comes up in an aspect of it, that I’m not teaching, or that I’m teaching, they are very comfortable stepping in and saying, oh what about or... I mean I suppose none of us takes over the other person’s responsibilities, but we can have an interaction there.*

In some cases, co-teaching enabled local teachers to make NET input more understandable. There were more and less desirable versions of this approach. In the worst case scenario, witnessed in a lesson observation, the LET translated directly something the NET had said which she felt students had not understood. In the visits to schools, examples were found of successful NETs who had relatively little direct experience of ESL teaching. This meant that they were still learning how to moderate

their language to a level which KS1 students could understand. In helping children understand input from this lively and enthusiastic NET, LETs would ‘interpret’ her words in simpler English. A LET described this approach in terms of facilitating classroom management:

- *But I think that it is difficult for the NET to manage the classroom if just she alone in the classroom. The reason is that, on one hand, the NET does not familiar with the students. On the other hand, the NET speaks quite fast but she does not aware of it. The students can't really understand it. But if the local teacher is also in the classroom, we can help the NET if we see that the students don't understand what the NET said. Maybe the NET can speak slowly or use the word that we always use. Maybe due to the cultural different, some of the words that she uses are difficult to our students. Students don't know the words. Most of the time after the NET saying, I need to explain again before the students can understand what the NET said. We've told the NET about this but the NET forgets. I did talk to the NET that students can't understand some of the words. However, sometimes it becomes the habit of the NET and it is difficult for the NET to filter the words before she use it.*

Another NET, this time with more ESL experience and training, appreciated classroom management as a skill the local teachers contributed to the co-teaching collaboration:

- *They've got very good classroom organisation, classroom management. They've got good ideas. I find that when you are a native English speaker, you are not aware of quite a few things that go on within a class. And quite often they'll pick up if the students aren't understanding. And, they'll either come in with their erm ideas on what we can do. Or else they'll say look can we do this another way? Because, it's quite, I mean. It's a bit like that cartoon where they're taking the dog out for a walk, and he just hears key words and I'm sure that's what happens here a lot of the time. It's yap yap yap and the kids pick up the occasional key word which quite often we can be at completely different purposes and so the local teachers are wonderful for that. And they're not afraid to say "Hey, the kids aren't getting that," which is good.*

English Panel Meetings

In both 2004 and 2005, differences were noted between the participation of the NETs and LETs in relevant school meetings such as the meetings of the English Panel. While most of the LETs were attending meetings of the English Panel at least once per month, many of the NETs seemed to be unaware that these meetings were taking place and most attended only once or twice per year.

This pattern persisted in 2006, with only 25% of NETs routinely attending meetings of the English Panel. By contrast, 65% of the LETs responded that they attended meetings of the English Panel on a regular basis (at least once per month). Nineteen percent of the NETs said that there were no English Panel meetings at their school, while only 1% of LETs made this claim. However, 98% of the School Heads reported that they expected the NET to make an active contribution to English Panel meetings. This suggests a discrepancy between School Heads' expectations and the practice in many schools.

In 2006, only 33% of LETs reported that the English Panel meetings at their schools were usually conducted in English. This had remained constant over the three years of the evaluation. Similarly, in 2006 only 41% of LETs rated the English Panel meetings at their school as effective or very effective in terms of improving their English teaching. Almost half of the 2006 LETs responded that the English Panel meetings were a little bit effective, and 12% responded that they did not attend meetings or the meetings were not effective. There had been a slight improvement in LETs' views of the usefulness of English Panel meetings over the three years of the evaluation. In 2004, only 30% of LETs had reported that they found the English Panel meetings effective or very effective for improving their English teaching. Assuming that at least part of the function of an English Panel meeting is to discuss possible improvements in the teaching of English, low participation rates of NETs in the meetings, low ratings of effectiveness of the meetings by the LETs, and discrepancies between these observations and School Heads' expectations appear to provide a challenge that will need to be addressed by schools.

In an earlier report of the evaluation study (Griffin et al., 2005), it was speculated that attending the regular English Panel meetings might not be regarded by schools as the best way for the NET to provide support and advice to the teachers and the English Panel, especially if the Panel meetings were usually conducted in Cantonese. Obviously the NET would not be able to participate in procedural discussions or in other matters unrelated to the NET's role in the school. In view of the irony that English Panel meetings were not routinely conducted in English while a NET was allocated to the school, and the fact that many LETs did not have opportunities to practise their English outside school, perhaps the NET should be invited to attend Panel meetings in more schools.

Involvement in English Panel meetings offers more than just an opportunity for the NET to be included in the life of the school. Rather, the involvement of the NET in meetings should be seen as a valuable opportunity for LETs to practise English, and to discuss plans, strategies and professional development opportunities. The Panel meetings might be used as a review session for the impact of the PNET Scheme, with standing agenda items designed to formalise plans and provide regular reports for School Heads. There are several potential benefits to be gained:

- LETs would have opportunities to practice their English skills.
- NETs would have opportunities to establish strong working relationships with all LETs at the school.
- LETs' perceptions of the value of English Panel meetings could be improved.
- School Heads would be better informed of all aspects of NET deployment and English teaching at the school.

This recommendation is especially important as increasing numbers of NETs are deployed to work in a single primary school. In these one-school-one-NET situations, the School Head and the English Panel Chair would be expected to be concerned that the NET be treated as a full member of staff. In arrangements where the NET is shared between two schools, an expectation that the NET attend all English Panel meetings in both schools could be seen as unrealistic. However, even when the NETS are shared across schools the importance of the NET in terms of whole of school influence and leadership demands that the NET be a participant in the Panel meetings and that a standing item on the agenda be devoted to the features of the NET Scheme. These include professional development, co-teaching, new materials and strategies, co-planning, and in each case there needs to be a minute of the discussion that can be provided to the School Head and to the EMB via the regular school self-evaluations of the NET Scheme. Relationships between better outcomes for students and inclusion of the NET in English Panel meetings are discussed in Chapter 7 of this report.

School Support for Inclusion of the NET

In most schools, participants reported that the NET was encouraged to participate in and contribute to relevant school events. In a small minority of schools, the LETs and NET agreed that the NET had become marginalised and excluded from the life of the school, but this was an unusual situation.

These responses from School Heads, LETs and NETs seemed to be at variance with the indications of low involvement of NETs in English Panel meetings. An explanation may be that, in many schools, the meetings of the English Panel were not even viewed as relevant to the work of the NET.

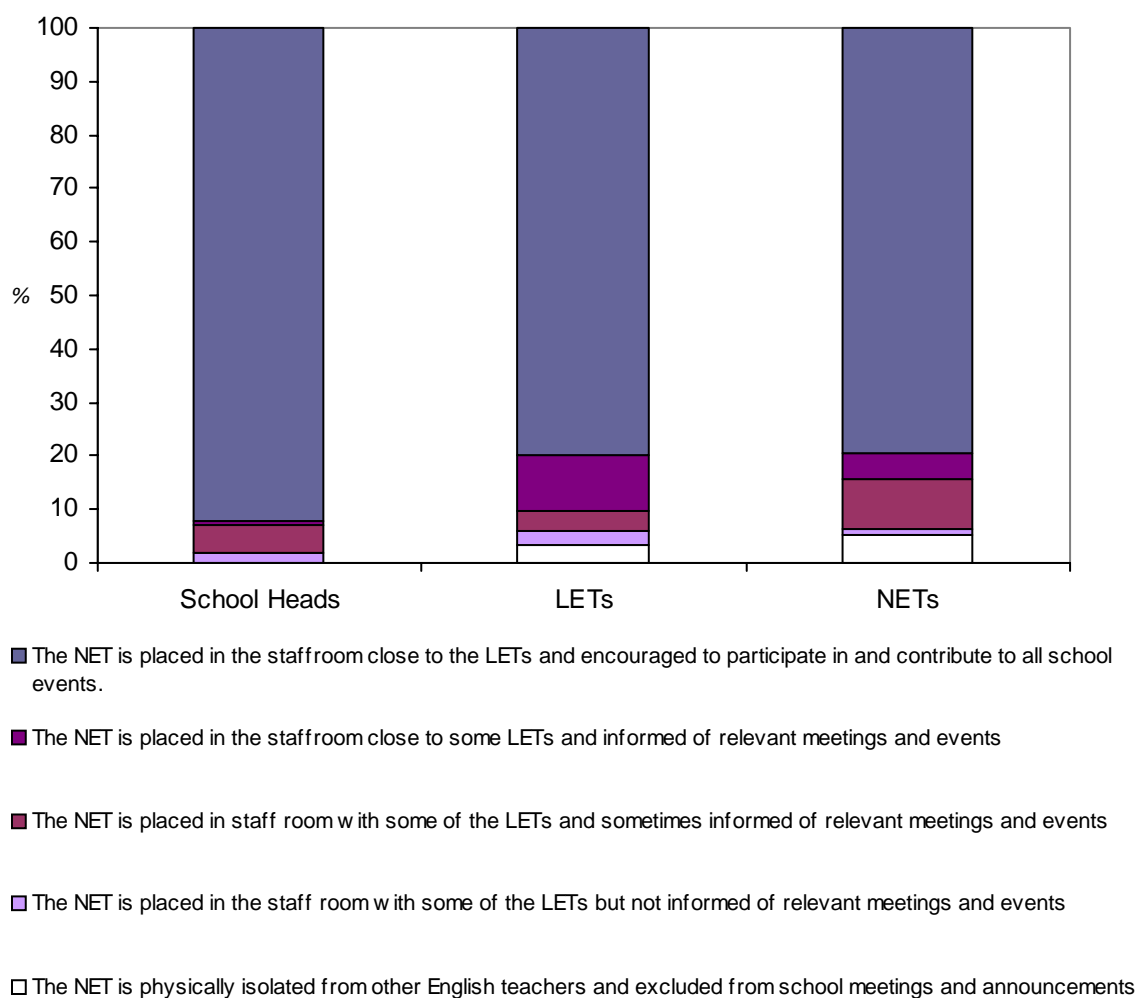


Figure 5.4. Inclusion of the NET in the school as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

The persistence of the discrepancy between School Heads and teachers in terms of perceptions of the role and impact of the NET deserves closer scrutiny. There is a potential role for the NET in the school to document participation and involvement in school meetings and events, and to report to the central project office via the English Panel meetings with a sign off by the School Head. Under these circumstances, all teachers and school leadership would share understanding of the role and functions of the NET, and English Panel meetings would take on a formal monitoring role with an agenda standing item.

The level of inclusion of the NET in their school was not fully understood by some School Heads. The effect of this on LET activities and opportunities, and perhaps even more on the morale of the NET, was uncertain. However, there were obviously some schools where the NET felt excluded and the LETs shared this view, and this was not evident to the School Head.

The exclusion of the NET from general English Panel meetings was not raised as an issue in discussions with NETs during the school visits of the qualitative investigation. However, when prompted NETs did express the view that they would like to be more involved. In some cases NETs made comparisons between partner schools, where they were not expected to attend general meetings, and base schools where they were. However, the effectiveness of NET participation was clearly shown in the data (as discussed in Chapter 7 of this report). In extreme cases, it could be regarded as negligent if the NET does not attend as many meetings relevant to the teaching of English as possible, given deployment constraints such as working across two schools. There is clearly an opportunity for improvement here. It seems strange that the NETs in some schools do not attend meetings, and that they express relief that they are not required by the school to do so. This is an attitude that should be actively discouraged. Further, attendance at meetings to enable the NET to be informed is not enough to effect positive change in schools and bring about gains in language proficiency for students. The contributions of the NET to relevant meetings in order to take a leadership role in English language teaching and learning should ideally be considered mandatory and a key performance indicator in the performance appraisal of both the NET and the Panel Chair. The greater feeling of involvement which resulted when NETs did attend meetings also underlines the opportunities for improvement that are related to this issue, as suggested in the following quotes from NETs:

- *Fortunately, I don't have to attend the staff meeting because the staff meetings are in Cantonese. In this school the English Panel meetings are in Cantonese, so I don't need to attend them, no, not at this school. I do feel left out in terms of being [aware of] what's happening in the area of English. But in the other school I attend all the English meetings and it's very nice to know what is happening.*
- *I haven't been to any English meetings here. They've occurred when I've been at the other school.*
- *I am not involved in general English meetings in this school. In the other school I am, but in this school I, unless it is something specific which we are called together to discuss, or unless it is a PD workshop that I am giving, I don't attend the Panel meetings, they're in Cantonese and there has been no move to alter those. It's not really a problem for me. Not really, because the communication is very open. And because I only teach P1 and P2, there's a huge amount of it that is irrelevant to me, largely irrelevant to me anyway, unless they want my advice on something. You see this is not my employing school, this is my partner school and so they just haven't asked me or required me to be involved in those things. I am more so in the other school.*

It was apparent in some schools that the NET was considered more like an itinerant specialist teacher than a full member of the staff. This role would certainly need to change in the context of a single school NET, but in some cases the transition to one-school-one NET had not made a difference.

One unfortunate case of exclusion was experienced in the first year of a four year period of service by a NET who had become, by the time of the interview, very comfortably an included member of the school:

- *If you want to do the best for your school, communication is so important particularly working in two schools – you can miss out on the simplest things. The first time they had exams in this school, nobody told me that they finished at half day and I was sitting in the staff room at two o'clock in the afternoon, nobody was there and somebody walked in and I said "where is everyone?" "Oh they've all gone home," those things.... And you think I could have gone home at 11:30 too. You know those are the sort of things that don't help relationships too well.*

The image of a specialist itinerant teacher role of the NET needs to be strongly attacked. NETs must be leading contributors to the innovative development of English language teaching in their schools. While there were no clearly interpretable relationships between the teachers' views of the inclusion of the NET in the school and outcomes for students, there was a link between the value placed by the School Head upon the inclusion of the NET and development of proficiency for students. These relationships are illustrated in Figures 5.5 and 5.6.

The impact of the support of the School Head for the inclusion and integration of the NET was strongly related to the development of student proficiency in English, and in particular in the skill areas of reading and writing. In schools where the School Heads did not ensure that the NET was included in all school activities related to the teaching of English, there was a link to negative or less than average rates of improvement for students.

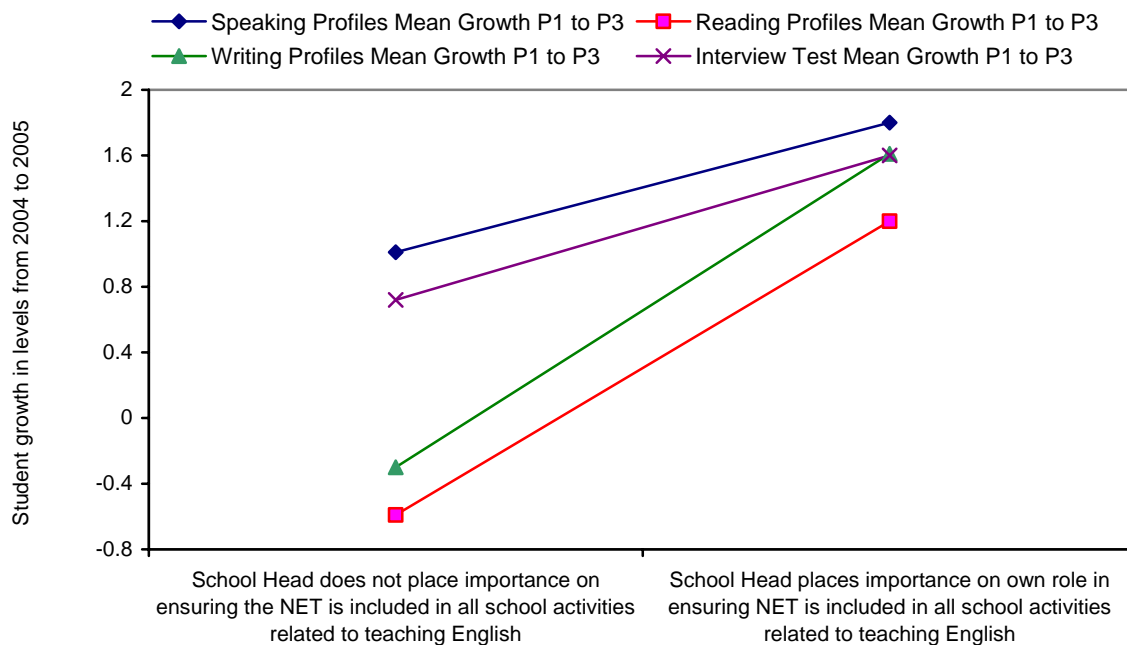


Figure 5.5. Relationships between students' development in English proficiency from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 and value placed by School Heads on ensuring NET is included in all school activities related to teaching English.

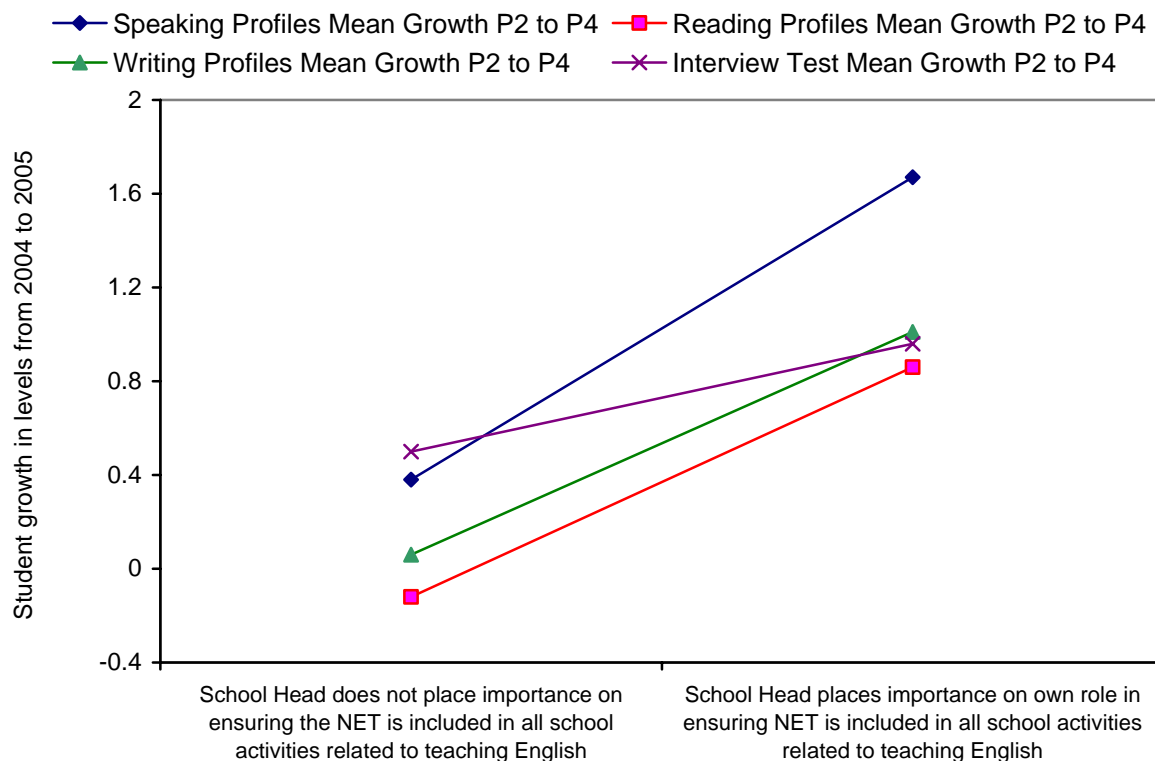


Figure 5.6. Relationships between students' development in English proficiency from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 and value placed by School Heads on ensuring NET is included in all school activities related to teaching English.

The importance of the School Heads and their involvement, knowledge, understanding and support for the PNET Scheme was indisputable.

There was a clear relationship between outcomes for students and the School Heads' support of the NETs' inclusion in all school activities related to teaching English. Whether this was a causal relationship and what the direction of causality might be were not examined. The strength of the relationship, however, underpins its importance. Hence, the significance of ensuring that the School Head be fully informed of all aspects of NET deployment at the school was clear, and reinforced recommendations for establishment of an internal reporting process between the NET, the English Panel and the School Head.

School Support for Co-planning by NET and LETs

Over the three years of the evaluation, it seemed that co-planning between NET and LETs had become a firmly embedded practice in schools in which a NET was deployed. Over 90% of the NETs were regularly meeting each of the LETs at their school to talk about lesson planning and student achievement, and most (80%) also responded that they believed co-planning meetings were effective in terms of improving the teaching and learning of English at the school.

The frequency with which NETs were able to meet individual LETs for co-planning was subject to the size of the school (and therefore the number of LETs) and whether the NET was deployed in one or two schools.

Most of the School Heads and LETs indicated that co-planning meetings between the NET and LETs at their school were regularly timetabled within the school day, valued highly by the teachers, and well-structured, with roles shared and rotated between the NET and LETs.

The NETs largely agreed with this assessment, although more NETs than LETs viewed the co-planning meetings as unstructured in format. These patterns are illustrated in Figure 5.7.

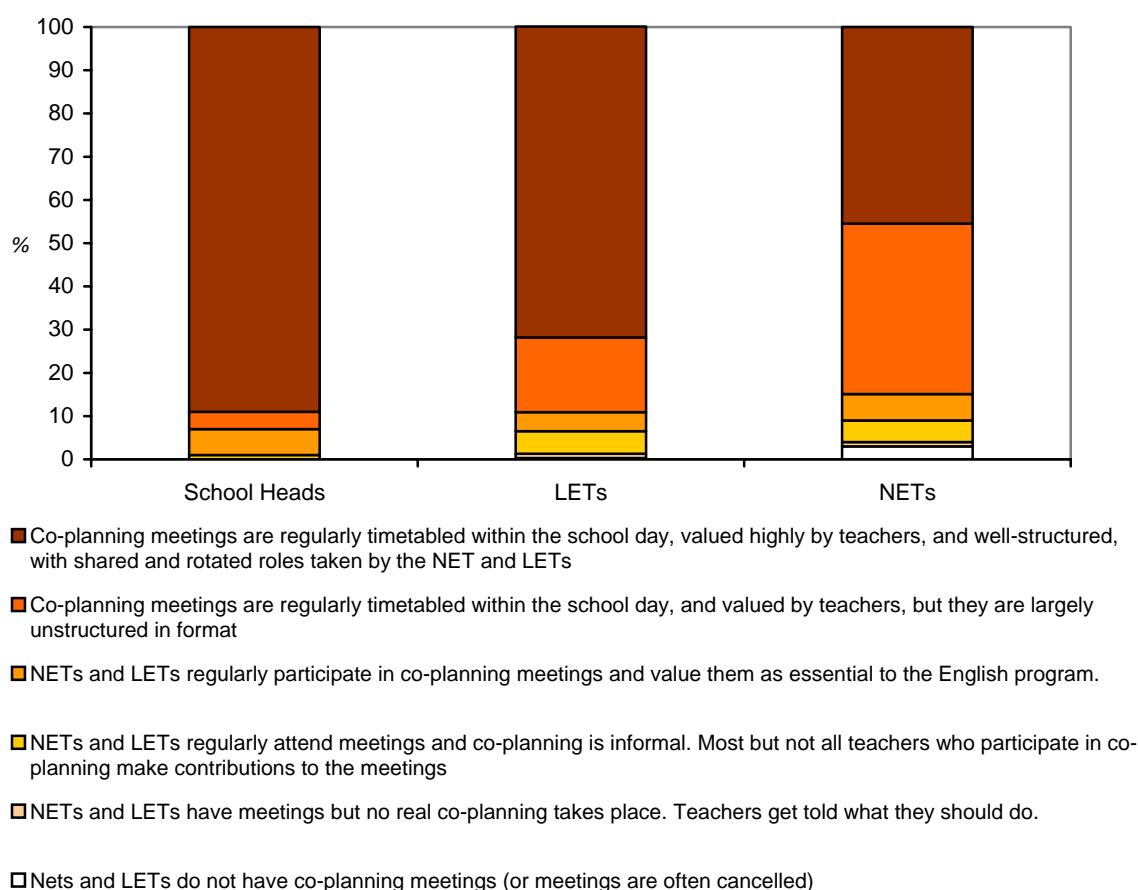


Figure 5.7. Format of co-planning meetings at the school as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

While there was an overall positive image of the format of co-planning meetings, the discrepancy between the perceptions of School Heads and teachers underlines the lack of information being reported to some School Heads. There was an opportunity here for the NET to document the activities in co-planning meetings, and to report to the central project office via the English Panel meetings with a sign off by the School Head. Under these circumstances, all participants would understand the role and functions of the NET and the Panel meetings would take on a formal monitoring role of the organisation and conduct of co-planning through a standing item on the agenda.

In one of the schools visited during the qualitative investigation, the School Head had the habit of dropping in on co-planning meetings. If he did not drop in, he would ask the Panel Chair for a report of the meeting. This was clearly done in a collegial, rather than inspectorial, manner and as a result was perceived by staff in very positive terms. Clearly in a school where this was the practice, the gap in perceptions between Head, NET and LET would diminish. The School Head described his rationale for the visits as follows:

- *To give them a favourable working environment. Give them some encouragement. Mostly, I want to give them administrative support, for example manpower and financial planning. This role is very important. I want to let them know I support this Scheme and I want to do it better. So sometimes, when they want me to have some involvement, for example some meetings, some encouragement for the English teachers, most probably I will appear. Sometimes the work may be a bit heavier. I will try whether I can make some arrangement for them. For example the lesson, the period of the lesson, the meeting, so whether I can favour them to held the meeting, to start the activities or something like that. I rarely sit in the planning meetings for P1 to P3. But after the planning meetings, sometimes I will ask our Panel teachers also the PSMCD how the things are going on. And also sometimes I will ask the teachers themselves, not just the EPC or the AEPC. And also, the class observation - sometimes I stand outside the classroom and watch them for a few minutes. We also have a formal record of classroom observation. But basically, when I walk through the corridor or stand outside the classroom, I will not write anything. We have some classroom observation conducted formally when I will sit inside the classroom and watch them half an hour or a double period. In this case I will write down comments using the classroom observation form and discuss with the teachers. I don't do a formal evaluation of the NETs, only through talking with her, discussing the activities, or discussing the English Department's affairs. But I don't write a formal report on this. That is the EPC's responsibility and she will talk with me about it.*

It was unusual for NETs, LETs or School Heads to respond that the NET was deployed in a manner that was not consistent with EMB guidelines.

Most NETs and LETs and all School Heads reported that the deployment of the NET in the school took EMB guidelines into account in terms of classroom teaching, and provision of time for curriculum planning and professional development. Indeed, a majority of School Heads, LETs and NETs agreed that the school not only acknowledged EMB guidelines for deployment of the NET, but adapted the guidelines to school goals to provide most benefit to teachers and students.

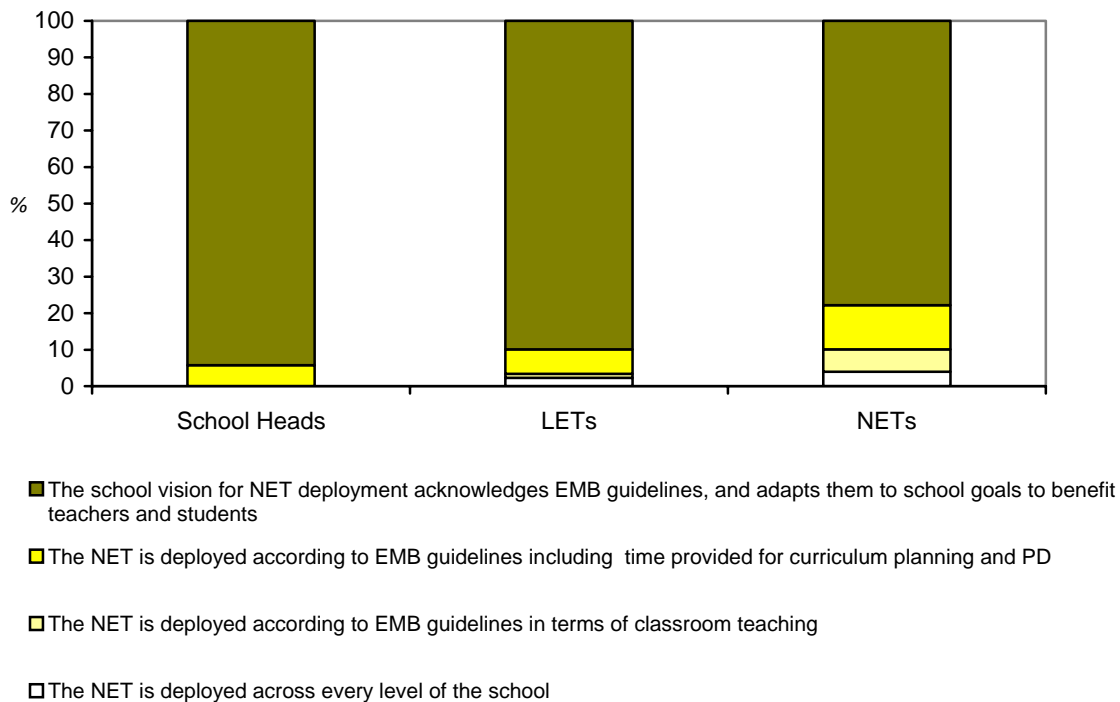


Figure 5.8. Deployment of the NET in the school as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

Some views of NETs and LETs on deployment patterns have been presented in Chapter Four illustrating the need to balance the desire for equitable exposure to the NET with educationally more effective deployment strategies. There were indications, in a number of the schools visited, of a lack of understanding of the NET deployment policy, or of disagreement with the policy, which might justify further explanation at the school level.

In one case, the interviews with local teachers drew their attention to the fact that the NET was spread rather thinly across the school. After the interview they consulted the guidelines and realised that they were not following them correctly. In the meantime, the NET had been deployed across all grade levels for at least one semester:

- I don't think people here knew what the deployment guidelines were. This spread across the grade levels was a way of deploying me on a one school one NET basis and yes, I think was a bit of confusion there. I did try initially to focus on three or four grade levels, but my Panel said that I should go for all six and when I asked my AT about it, I didn't get a lot of help and in the end I gave up and said ok, I'll do what the school wants in the interests of harmony in the workplace and I think it may be market driven again – so that the school can say that every child is taught by a native speaker...but I think this is going to change in the next semester. I know my AT has spoken to my Panel Chair about and so far it looks like I'm going to three plus extra curricular.*

One of the less successful schools had campaigned for a change in the NET deployment guidelines in order to allow them to deploy the NET more widely. The School Head described his feelings and the actions he took to change the KS1 policy:

- *Even the number of classroom lesson that the NET can teach is restricted. Whether it is 12 or 18, there is a regulation. So there is a conflict. The NET Section, two to three years ago gave the instruction that the NET should focus on P1 and P2 ... For P4, P5 and P6, the NET could not enter the classroom. This was a way to concentrate and reduce the stress of the NET. But we only have six classes in our school. And if we concentrate the NET on P1 and P2, the parents will ask, why does your NET just teach P1 and P2 and doesn't teach P3 to P6? We went to Causeway Bay to complain and the EMB still not yet made concession. We already expressed our anger but the EMB still not made concession. They didn't allow our NET to teach P4 to P6 as it was against the regulation. We told the EMB that we would not require the NET to teach the formal sessions. But we require the NET to teach our students after school as a kind of activities. That affects a lot on the role that he plays ... There is a restriction. The NET Section carried out the study. We have met so many obstacles in arranging the NET to teach P4 to P6. It is also related to the attitude of the NET. They may think that even the NET Section does not require them to teach, so it is ridiculous for the school to ask them to teach.*

In cases such as this, it seemed the parties concerned at the school level had not understood the rationale for the policy of deploying NETs at KS1. This further supports the idea that the role of the NET should not be that of a visiting specialist teacher available to take classes. The contribution of the NET to planning and development of the English programme needs to be reinforced in many schools. The importance, in terms of student outcomes, of School Heads taking a positive stance and providing support to the NET as leaders in the English programme are discussed in the next section.

School Head Support for a Leadership Role of the NET

School Heads were asked about the value they placed upon various aspects of their role in the promotion of English at their school and provision of support for the PNET Scheme.

Most School Heads responded that all aspects of their role were important. However, students at schools where the School Head placed particular importance upon supporting the leadership role of the NET in the school English programme tended, on average, to demonstrate more growth in English proficiency than students in schools where this was not the case. These trends are illustrated in Figures 5.9 and 5.10.

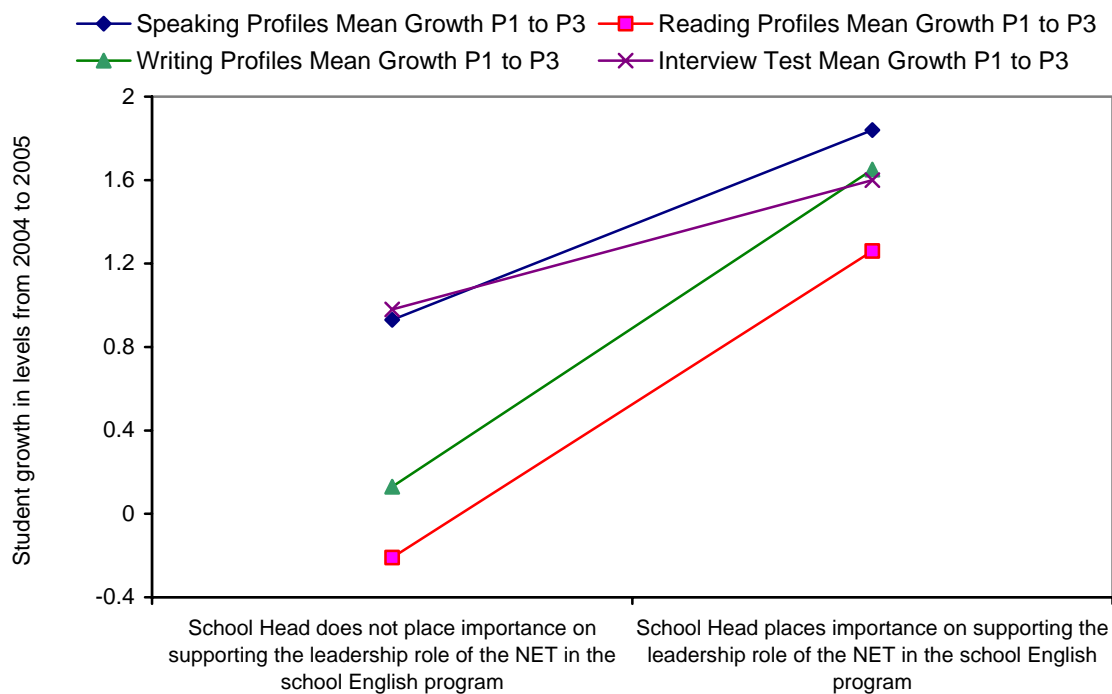


Figure 5.9. Relationships between students' development in English proficiency from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006 and value placed by School Heads on supporting the leadership role of the NET in the school English program.

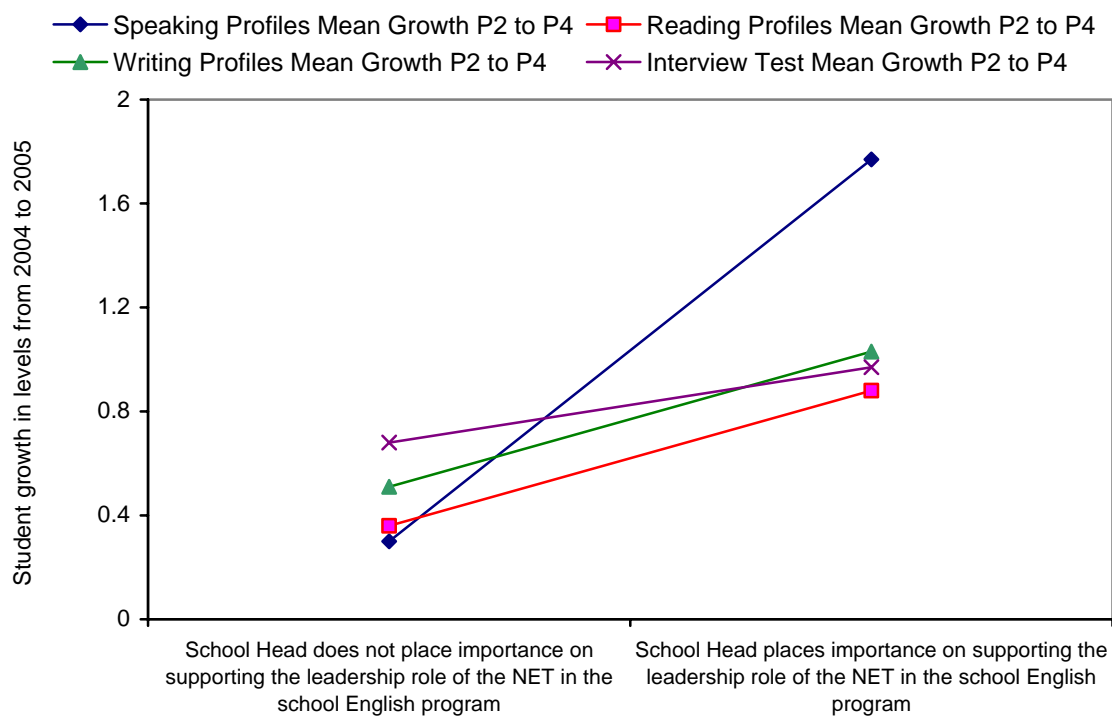


Figure 5.10. Relationships between students' development in English proficiency from P2 in 2004 to P4 in 2006 and value placed by School Heads on supporting the leadership role of the NET in the school English program.

Change and Stability in School Heads' Support for the PNET Scheme

There was considerable stability in the opinions of the School Heads over the evaluation period, in terms of support for the PNET Scheme and ideas about the role and contribution of the NET.

Table 5.1 presents proportions of School Heads in each year of the study who agreed with statements about the NET in their school. Some questions were not posed on the 2004 survey. However, in both 2005 and 2006 most of the School Heads reported that they wanted the NET to make an active contribution to English Panel meetings and run more professional development workshops at the school. Most wanted more NETs at their school, and only a small number of School Heads reported that they would prefer not to have a NET at the school.

Across all years of the evaluation, a majority of School Heads wanted the NET to stick closely to the school's established English curriculum, and the proportion of School Heads who felt it was important for LETs to learn from the NET decreased from 2004 to 2006. This indicated ambivalence on the part of some School Heads, who simultaneously wanted the NET to run more training for the LETs and yet did not place importance on the LETs learning from the NET.

Table 5.1. *Stability and Change in School Heads' Opinions from 2004 to 2006*

| School Head Opinion | % 2006 School Heads Agree | % 2005 School Heads Agree | % 2004 School Heads Agree |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| NET should actively contribute to English Panel meetings | 98.1 | 97.7 | N/A |
| Would like the NET to run more PD at the school | 97.1 | 97.7 | N/A |
| Would like to have more NETs in the school | 92.3 | 97.7 | 89.8 |
| NETs should stick to the school's established curriculum | 80.4 | 90.7 | 71.9 |
| LETs should learn from the NET | 59.6 | 64.1 | 71.9 |
| Would prefer NOT to have a NET at the school | 5.8 | 3.9 | 3.9 |

Summary

Over the three years of the evaluation, it was clear that co-planning and co-teaching between NET and LETs had become a firmly embedded practice in schools in which a NET was deployed. Most of the School Heads and LETs indicated that co-planning meetings between the NET and LETs at their school were regularly timetabled within the school day, valued highly by the teachers, and well-structured, with roles shared and rotated between the NET and LETs. The NETs largely agreed with this assessment, although more NETs than LETs viewed the co-planning meetings as unstructured in format. However, the size of the school and NET deployment in more than one school impacted negatively on opportunities for individual LETs to meet the NET and work collaboratively to plan lessons and co-teach.

In most schools, the NET was routinely included in relevant school activities, with many of the School Heads, LETs and NETs agreeing that the NET was encouraged to participate in and contribute to school events. In a small minority of schools, the LETs and NET agreed that the NET had become marginalised and excluded from the life of the school. There was, however, a need to formalise the role of the NET and to introduce an internal monitoring process within the school. This has been described in this chapter as a standing item in the agenda of the English Panel meeting. The recommended action is that this standing item should address the role and deployment of the NET in the school, the conduct of co-planning meetings, the use by LETs of materials and strategies recommended by the AT or the NET, and the use of innovative strategies for teaching English. This should be minuted and reported to the central project management and signed off by the School Head.

There was evidence of an impact on development of student proficiency in terms of the support of the School Head for the inclusion and integration of the NET, and in particular in the skill areas of reading and writing, and this emphasised a need for all School Heads to be fully informed of the implementation of the PNET Scheme at their school, and to ensure their support, knowledge and understanding of the Scheme and their involvement in the Scheme.

Most NETs and LETs and all School Heads affirmed that the deployment of the NET in the school took EMB guidelines into account in terms of classroom teaching, and provision of time for curriculum planning and professional development. Indeed, a majority of School Heads, LETs and NETs agreed that the school not only acknowledged EMB guidelines for deployment of the NET, but adapted the guidelines to school goals to provide most benefit to teachers and students. However, the qualitative investigation revealed some schools where deployment guidelines were imperfectly understood, or even actively resisted.

The value that School Heads placed upon various aspects of their role in the promotion of English at their school and provision of support for the PNET Scheme was clearly influential. Students at schools where the School Head placed particular importance upon supporting the leadership role of the NET in the school English programme tended, on average, to demonstrate more growth in English proficiency than students in schools where this was not the case. All School Heads need to be reminded of the central role they play in ensuring the success of the PNET Scheme at their school and supporting the development of English language proficiency for their students. Regular and structured monitoring and reporting processes through the English Panel meetings may help this process.

In summary, the patterns, trends and relationships presented in this chapter indicated support for the PNET Scheme in most of the Hong Kong primary schools participating in the evaluation, and emphasised the importance of this support at school level for the continuing success of both the PNET Scheme and development of student proficiency in English language studies.

Chapter Six: Support for the PNET Scheme

Allocation of NETs to Schools

In 2006, almost 7% of the schools taking part in the evaluation did not have a NET working with students, and 67% were sharing their NET with another school. The number of students currently enrolled in P1, P2, P3 and P4 varied considerably across participating schools, from a minimum enrolment of less than 50 students at these year levels to a maximum enrolment of more than 700 students from P1 to P4. In practice, this meant that in some small schools the NET might be deployed to work with less than 100 students and a correspondingly small number of teachers, while in other schools the NET might visit only on alternate weeks and be a scarce resource, shared thinly across many teachers and students. For example, in some participating schools the NET visited every second week and there were more than 600 students enrolled at P1 to P4 level.

Impact of Size of School and Sharing a NET

The negative impact of sharing a NET between two schools in terms of LETs' opportunities to collaborate with the NET in teaching and planning was illustrated in Chapter 1 of this report.

In general and across year levels, there was a negative correlation between the ratio of NETs to students in schools and student proficiency and development of proficiency in English. Where NETs were shared between schools and the number of students enrolled at P1 to P4 level was large, both students' achievement and their growth in proficiency were negatively impacted.

Figures 6.1 to 6.4 illustrate relationships between student development of proficiency in English and the number of students enrolled at P1 to P4 level in schools that had their own NET. Figures 6.5 to 6.8 illustrate the relationships between student development of proficiency and the ratio of NET to students in schools that were sharing their NET with another school.

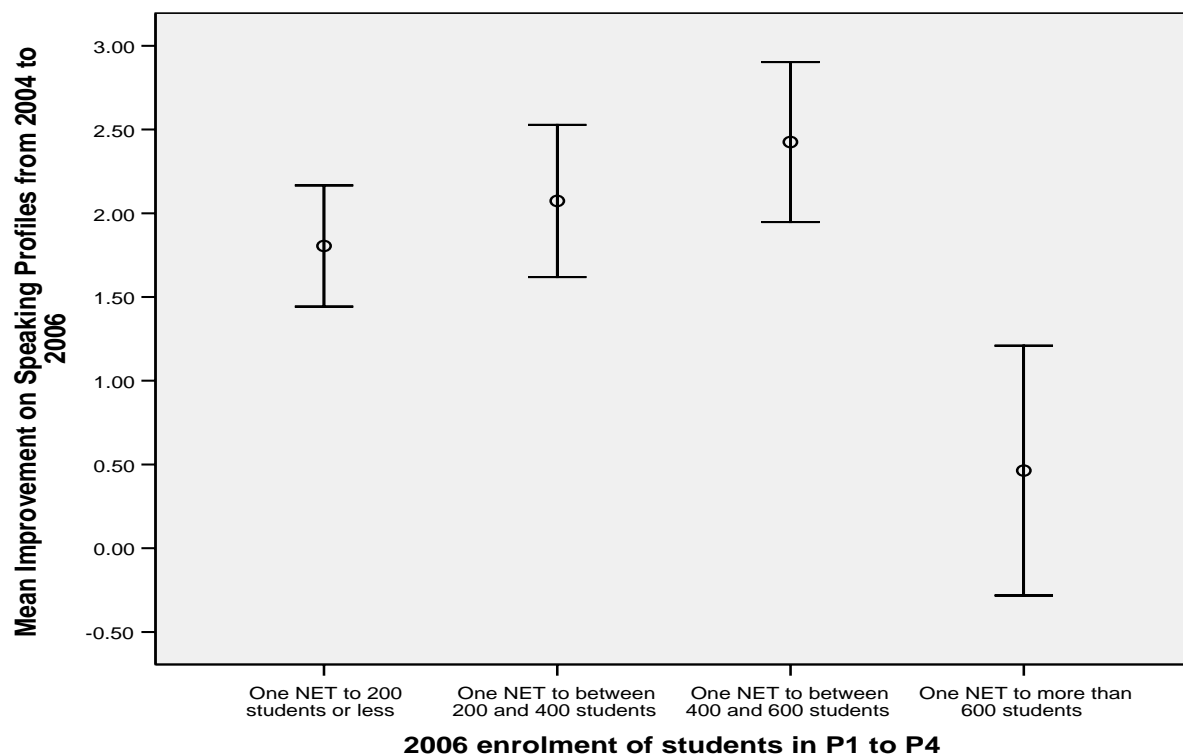


Figure 6.1. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Profiles of spoken English and ratio of NET to students in schools with their own NET.¹

Figure 6.1 emphasises the potential effectiveness of the NET. Clearly once the NET to student ratio of 1 to 400 was broken the impact deteriorated. The NET was simply shared between too many students and teachers.

¹ On this and subsequent similar graphs, the bars on the graph denote + or – two standard errors from the mean.

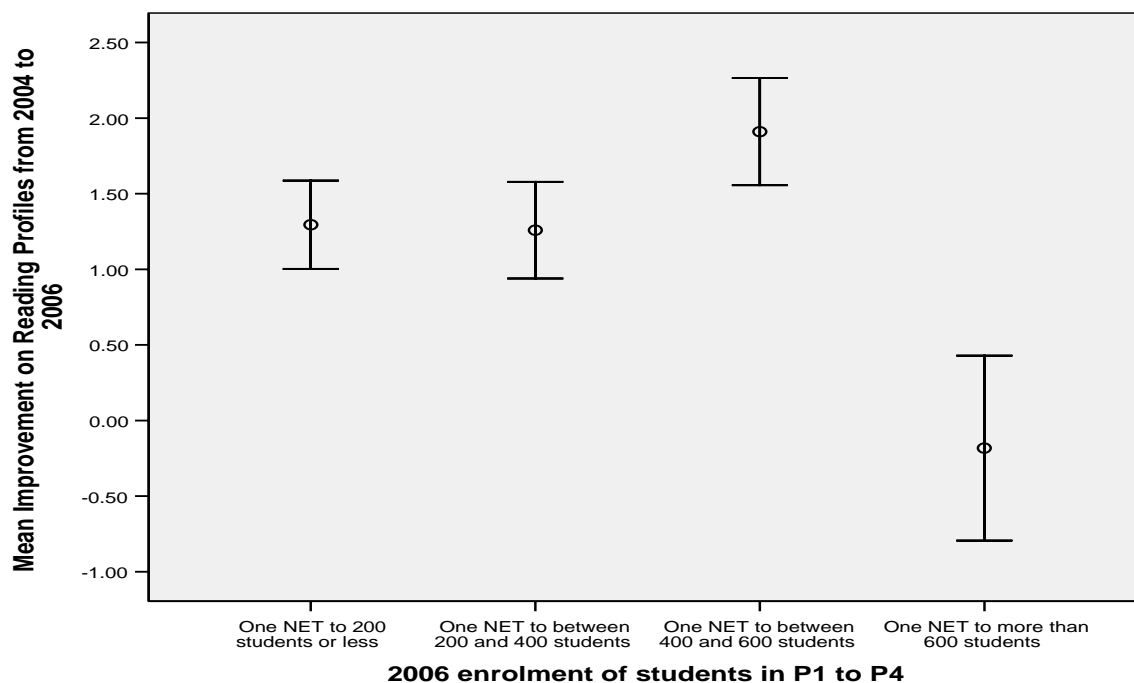


Figure 6.2. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Profiles of reading English and ratio of NET to students in schools with their own NET.

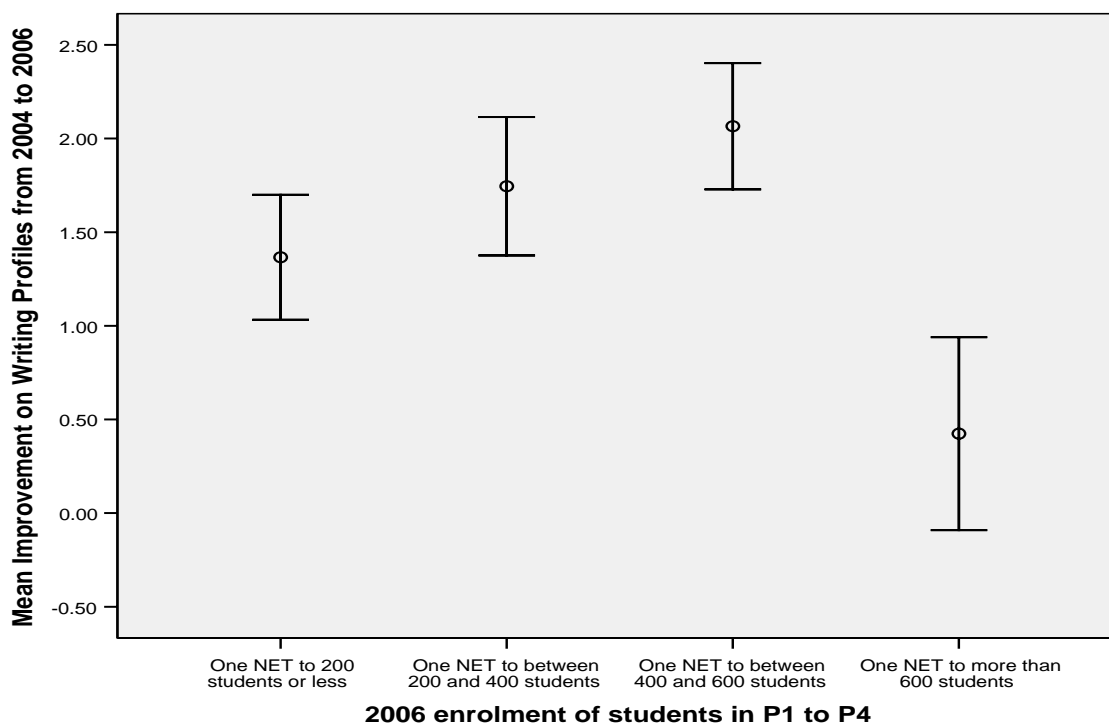


Figure 6.3. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Profiles of written English and ratio of NET to students in schools with their own NET.

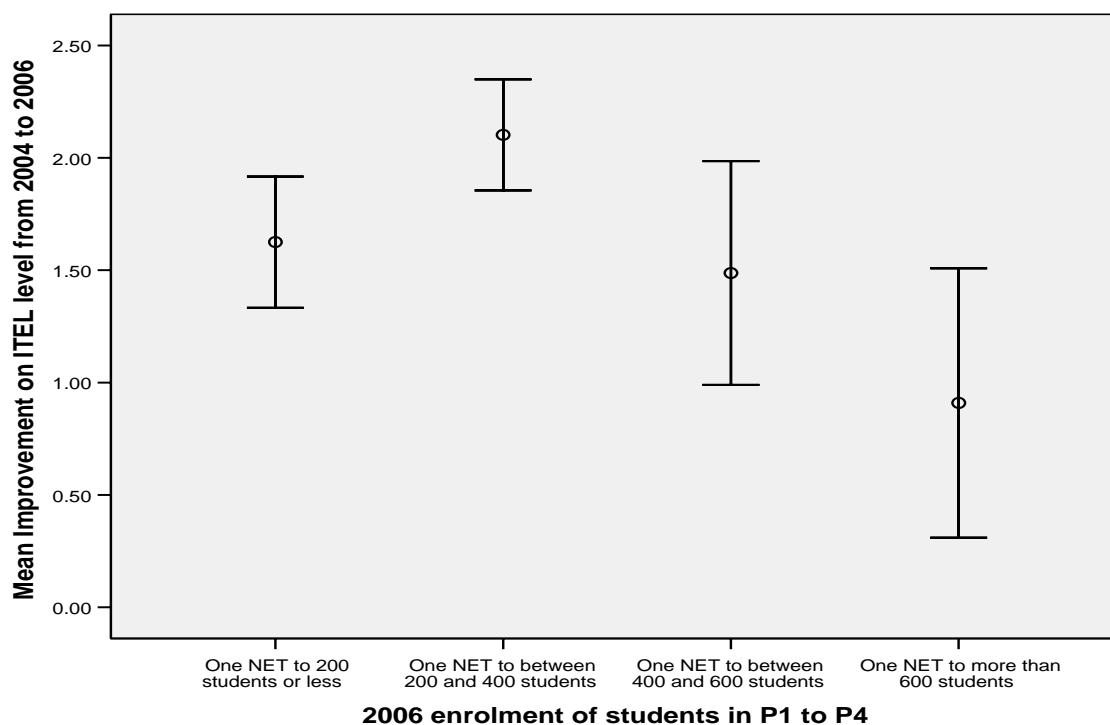


Figure 6.4. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Interview Test and ratio of NET to students in schools with their own NET.

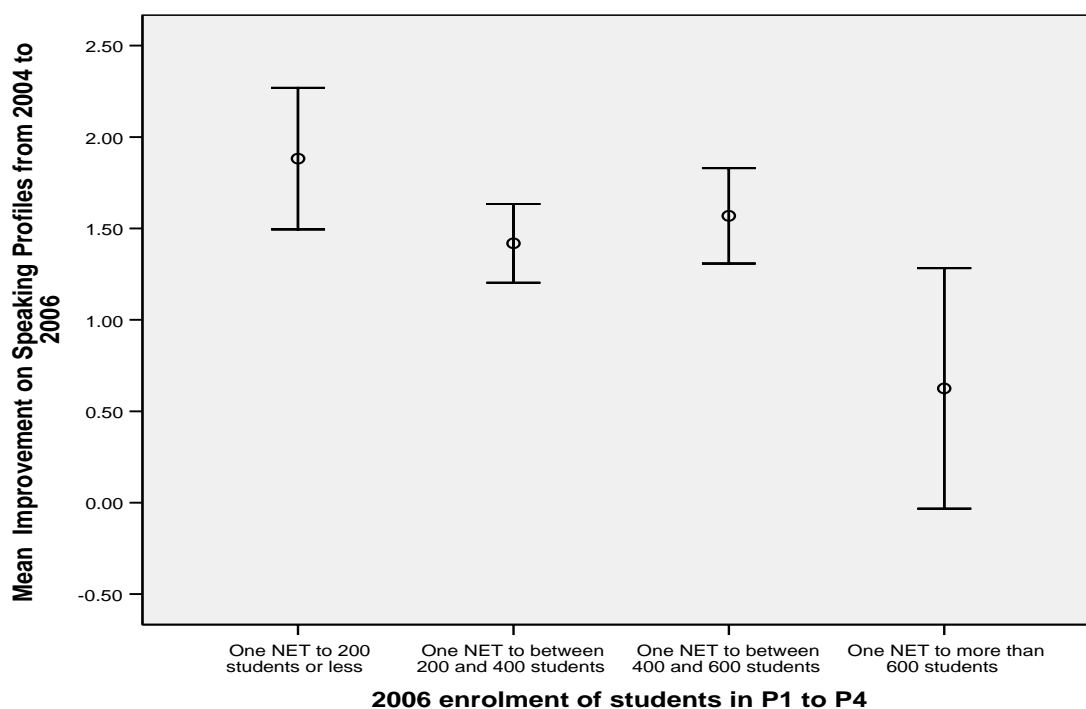


Figure 6.5. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Profiles of spoken English and ratio of NET to students in schools that were sharing a NET with another school.

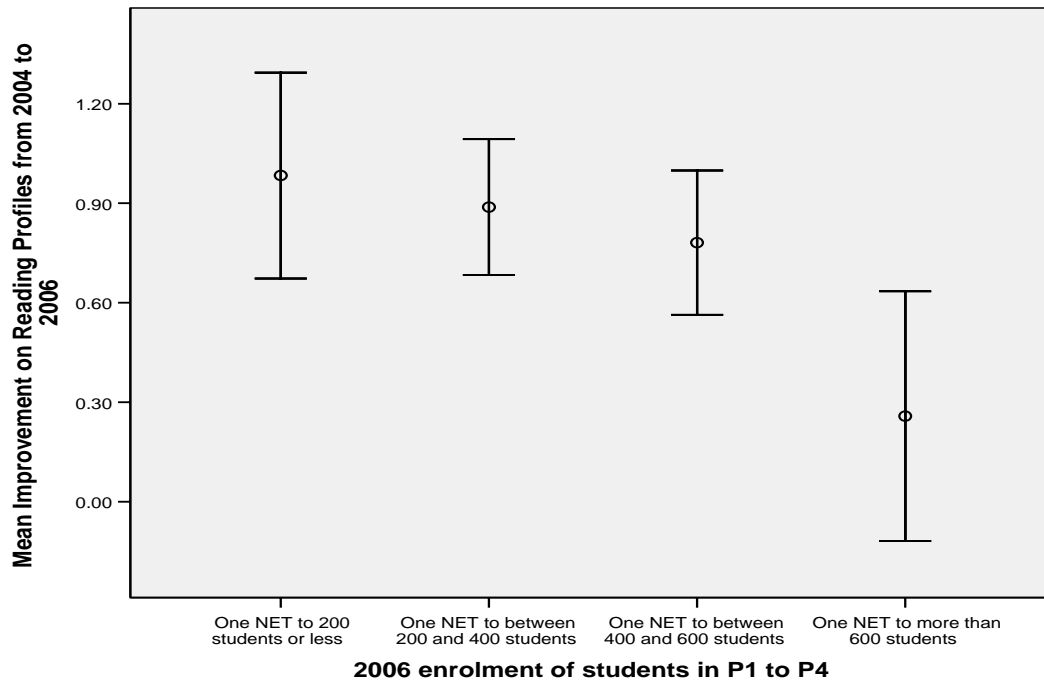


Figure 6.6. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Profiles of reading English and ratio of NET to students in schools that were sharing a NET with another school.

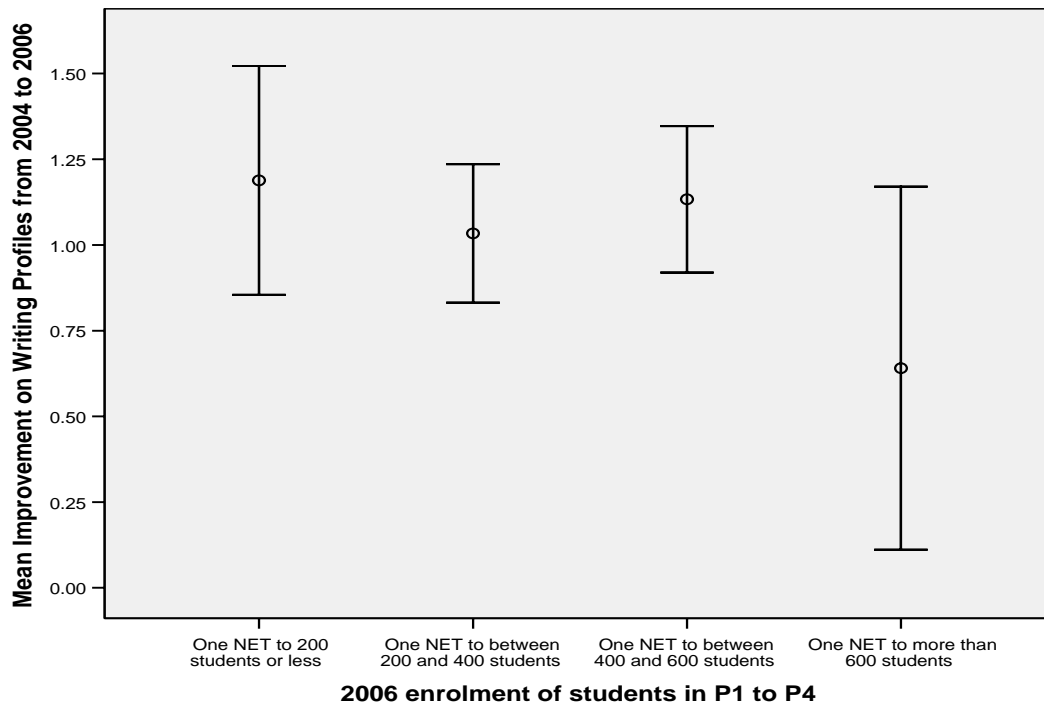


Figure 6.7. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Profiles of written English and ratio of NET to students in schools that were sharing a NET with another school.

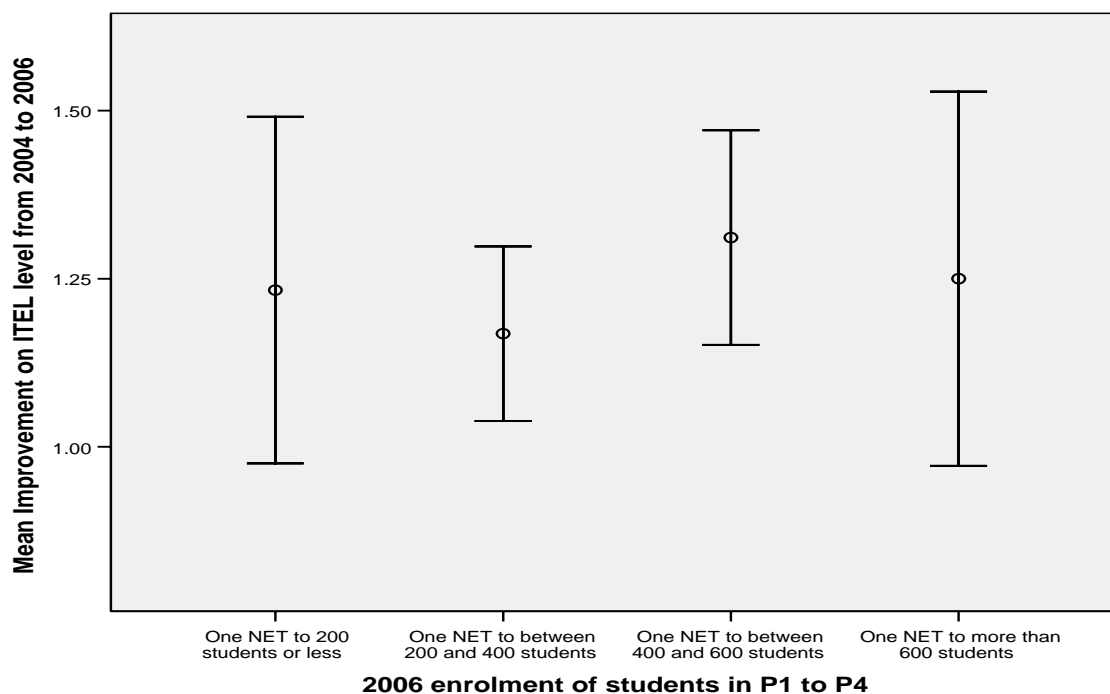


Figure 6.8. Relationships between average development of student proficiency on the Interview Test and ratio of NET to students in schools that were sharing a NET with another school.

The persistence of the decline of proficiency improvement with increasing Student to NET ratio indicated that there ought to be a review of the allocation policy in line with optimum growth and achievement levels. More than anything, these graphs show that the NET Scheme is remarkably effective, and has the potential to be even more so.

The number of students enrolled in a school at P1 to P4 level, and thus the ratio of students and LETs to any one NET, was clearly linked to student development of proficiency in English, both in schools with their own NET and in schools that were sharing a NET with another school.

While deployment of NETs across more than one school has been consistently unpopular with teachers in every year of the evaluation, it seemed that the impact of the ratio of NETs to students in large schools should also be taken into consideration when deployment decisions are made.

Several examples of schools that were ignoring NET deployment guidelines were revealed in responses to the teacher questionnaires and a few cases were found in the 21 schools visited in the qualitative investigation. One teacher wrote in her comments on the questionnaire:

- *This school cares about both the NET Scheme and the learning of English. However, the senior staff ignore many of the deployment guidelines, resulting in decreased effectiveness of the schedule. In my opinion, the reasons for the guidelines should be properly explained as well as the EMB vision for the NET Scheme. The school seems to value the PR generated by having a NET teach every child more.*

The deployment of NETs across two schools was generally recognised by teachers as a necessity due to the need to share a scarce resource. However, working in two schools imposed strains on the NET. Typical of comments made by NETs was the following: *It is taxing for the NET to be placed in two schools, as it involves quite a number of different year level meetings every week albeit once a fortnight in each of the two schools.* One of the more successful NETs among the schools visited during the qualitative investigation revealed that the pressure of working in two schools had taken its toll both personally and professionally:

- *My work here is very rewarding, as the English staff are keen to learn new strategies and they seek and value my expertise. However, being a NET in two schools means that I cannot be as fully integrated into the school or have as extensive an impact as I would like. There are programmes I want to pursue, but I cannot give them sufficient support so they can't be effectively implemented. After three years in two schools, I am getting very physically and mentally tired by the demands of my job. I am really looking forward to my third contract when I shall be in one school only, due to the closure of the other.*

Another NET described the complex workload patterns that often resulted from two-school deployment:

- *Unless you've got two schools that are very close and also maybe traveling on the same road ... You see what's happened with mine, not only were they logistically far apart to start with, but the first year, I was at least teaching P1 and P2 and they both wanted Phonics. So for the first term, I could actually duplicate a lot of it. Second term I couldn't because they went to the whole language curriculum and the other ones were still on the textbook. The second year we had no P1s in the other school, so I had P1, 2 and P2 and 3. This year I have P1, 2, 3, 4, next year I have P1, 2 and I'm also going to teach one, co-plan and teach one lesson with P3. So I've got 1, 2, 3 here, 4, 5 there. So it's just getting bigger and bigger. Erm... there's a change of textbook in the other school because the children that are left will transfer lock, stock and barrel into another school. So they are taking on that school's textbook. So every single thing next year is different. So it's just getting bigger and bigger which when you've got two schools that just... magnified.*

The base-partner school arrangements caused strains not only on the NET but also on the curriculum. Discontinuity in the delivery of the curriculum was remarked upon by teachers in a number of schools. In *one* school, LETs mentioned problems associated with the alternate week policy which made planning unrealistic as it had to be done too far ahead. At best, in this school planning was for activities scheduled to take place two weeks hence. However, unexpected events, public holidays and other interruptions sometimes meant that the time between planning and implementation was even longer. This caused problems for the teachers:

- *Sometime we may not see the NET if there is a holiday. When the NET comes, she may have forgotten what she taught before ... The NET may forget something, well, she needs to catch up the teaching progress and see which topic has been taught. For instance, if we have discussed with the NET this week, it is better for her to teach in the next week. However, the NET may not be able to come until next two weeks. If there are some holidays, the NET may come to our school after three to four weeks ... Sometime we have some school functions and we may not have lesson on that date.*

Discontinuity also impacted on teacher-student relationships in the classroom:

- *It is not good for the students as well ... If the NET just comes occasionally, students are not familiar with the NET and that is also not good. Some students are afraid of the NET and feel unhappy to have the NET's lesson. If the students always see the NET, they can be more familiar with the NET ... Some students don't understand what the NET says and thus fear to have the NET's lesson. The NET may invite the student to answer the questions. If the student can't answer it, the student may lose confidence. As a result, some students are afraid to have the NET's lesson.*

These perceptions were reinforced by the NET. While she appreciated the opportunity to work in two different teaching contexts, she regretted the negative impact of alternate week deployment:

- *Well, it's difficult to get a sort of a continuum in what you are doing. I mean I quite like working in the two schools because you see two different pictures of how things are working. But as far as continuity of the programme, it is difficult because you rely on the teachers and the classroom teaching assistants when you're not there. And I mean they do a fabulous job I'm not criticizing them but when you come back again, you have to pick up every week you're picking, picking up again rather than having a real feel for what's going on.*

Induction of NETs into Schools

In 2006, most of the School Heads, LETs and NETs were very positive about the systems that their schools had developed to induct a new NET into the life of the school. As illustrated in Figure 6.9, 80% of NETs, 85% of LETs and 89% of School Heads reported that the school had established a system so that a new NET was warmly welcomed into the school, introduced to all LETs and senior teachers, and given support to settle into Hong Kong and the life of the school.

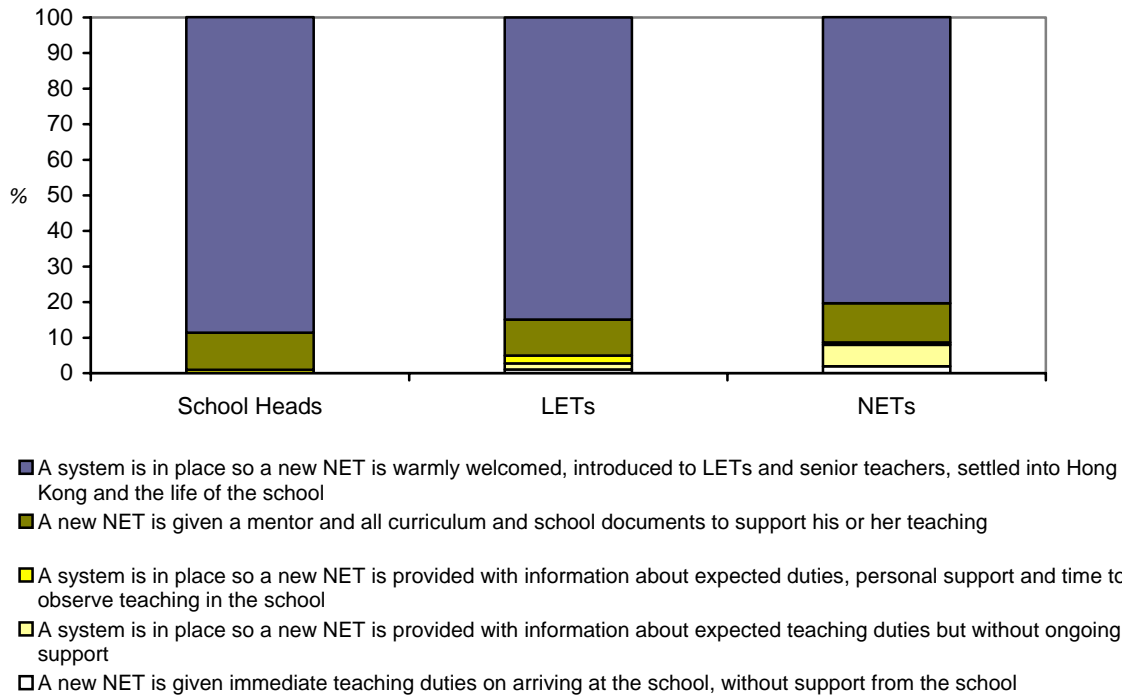


Figure 6.9. Induction of a new NET into the school as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

Teacher Participation in Professional Development Courses, Seminars and Workshops

In 2006, the centralised professional development courses, seminars and workshops provided and led by the ATT were well-attended and supported by teachers and school leadership, building upon support for these courses evident in the previous years of the evaluation. Almost 85% of the NETs and 53% of the LETs had taken part in the programme of centralised courses, seminars and workshops arranged by the ATT, with participation rates for specific courses described in Table 6.1.

However, participation by individual LETs in particular courses was low, as attendance at courses was shared across a large group of LETs in any one school. Clearly the schools expected the LETs and NET to disseminate information and materials from the courses among colleagues when they returned to the school. However, in practice this meant that

an individual LET had much less opportunity than the NET to take part in and benefit from the centralised program of courses, seminars and workshops led by the ATT. This, coupled with low rates of involvement for individual LETs with the ATs and high proportions of LETs who expressed concern over their capacity to teach and use English, clearly indicates an area of opportunity to effect improvements in the PNET Scheme.

Table 6.1

Participation Rates of the NETs and LETs in Centralised Courses, Seminars and Workshops led by the Advisory Teaching Team

| Professional Development Course, Seminar or Workshop led by Advisory Teaching Team | Participation by NETs (%) | Participation by LETs (%) |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Collaborative lesson planning | 60.3 | 20.2 |
| Effective co-teaching practice | 50.0 | 9.2 |
| Making reading meaningful | 45.6 | 14.9 |
| Textbook adaptation | 35.3 | 9.6 |
| Introduction to phonics | 45.3 | 13.0 |
| Language camp | 16.3 | 4.1 |
| Story telling and reading aloud | 51.7 | 18.4 |
| Formative assessment | 46.2 | 3.3 |
| Poetry | 40.8 | 4.4 |
| Shared reading | 55.9 | 25.2 |
| Supported reading and independent reading | 42.9 | 12.8 |
| Setting up a school-based reading programme | 36.7 | 6.9 |
| Assessment for reading – classroom strategies | 38.0 | 3.8 |
| Shared writing | 22.7 | 10.5 |
| Rubrics and use of portfolios | 34.7 | 1.4 |

LETs teaching P1 and P2 students in 2006 were more likely than other teachers to have attended centralised courses, seminars and workshops. Of the teachers who attended the professional development courses, seminars and workshops:

- More than 85% of LETs and 93% of NETs responded that they had been able to share many of the ideas and materials gained from the courses with other teachers at their school.
- 94% of LETs and NETs responded that they had been able to use the ideas and materials in their own teaching of English.

In addition, 65% of NETs and 88% of LETs had attended professional development courses, seminars or workshops on the teaching of English that were conducted in their schools. Of the teachers who attended school-based training courses:

- 97% of NETs and almost 98% of LETs found the courses effective in terms of improving their own English teaching.
- 93% of NETS and 94% of LETs had been able to use the ideas and materials presented in courses delivered in their schools.

The importance of professional development cannot be overestimated. More LETS must have the opportunity to access training and support, and to build upon their confidence and competence as teachers of English and to develop their own language skills.

School Support for Teacher Participation in Professional Development Courses

In most schools, NETs and LETs perceived school support for teacher participation in professional development courses (Figure 6.10) and sharing of ideas gained from those courses (Figure 6.11) as strong.

- Most LETs and almost all School Heads responded that their school actively encouraged and supported attendance at professional development courses by NETs and LETs, and almost 70% of the NETs shared this perception.
- 94% of the School Heads reported that they placed a high priority on their responsibility to liaise with the ATT to support the professional development of the school's English teachers.
- 96% of School Heads perceived that the centralised workshops provided by the ATT improved the confidence of LETs in terms of their ability to teach English.
- All School Heads stated that their school encouraged NETs and LETs to use and share ideas gained from professional development through school-based curriculum planning, while 89% of LETs and 67% of NETs concurred with this position.
- 90% of School Heads stated that the ideas and materials gained from centralised workshops provided by the ATT were being actively implemented in classroom practice in their schools.
- Only 2% of the NETs and LETs perceived their participation in professional development and training as being discouraged, either actively or by default, by the school, and none of the School Heads supported this position.

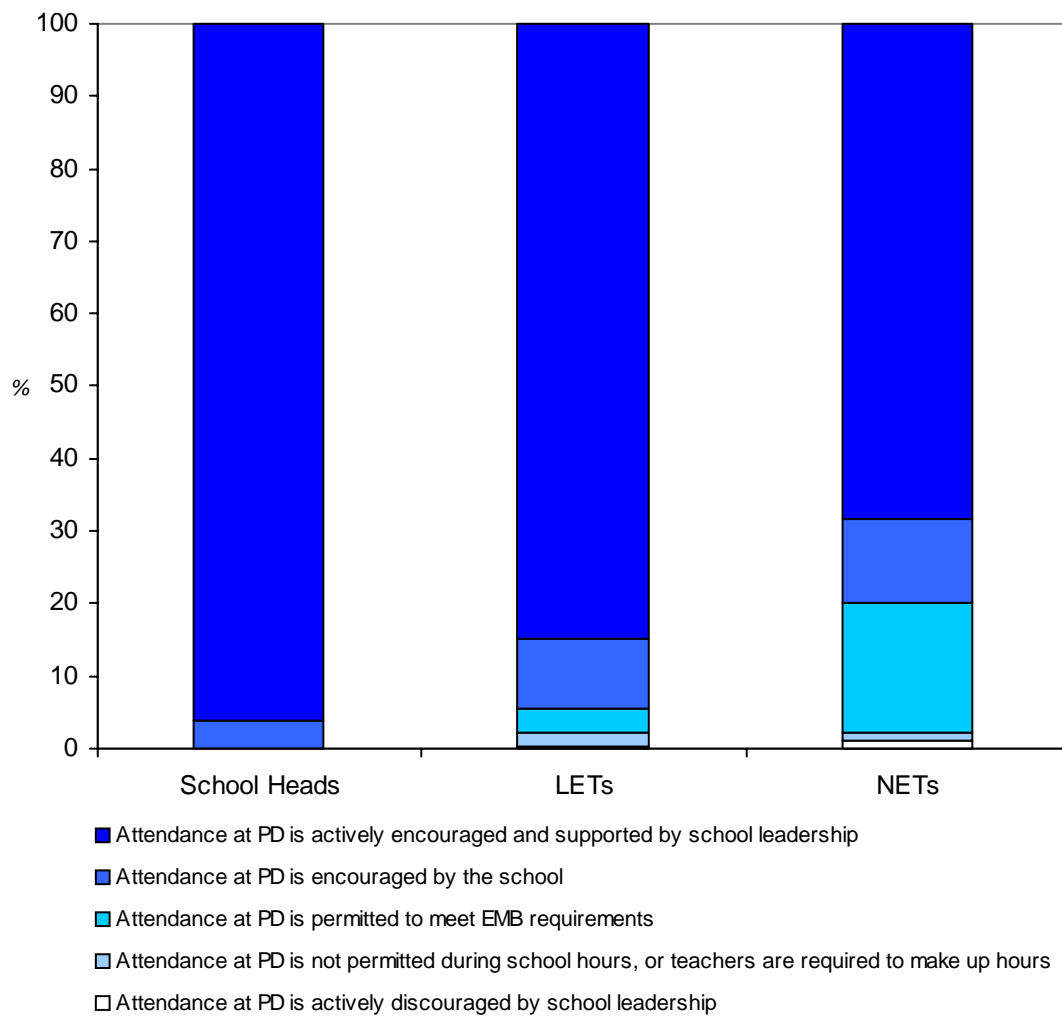


Figure 6.10. School support for teacher attendance at PD courses, seminars and workshops, as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

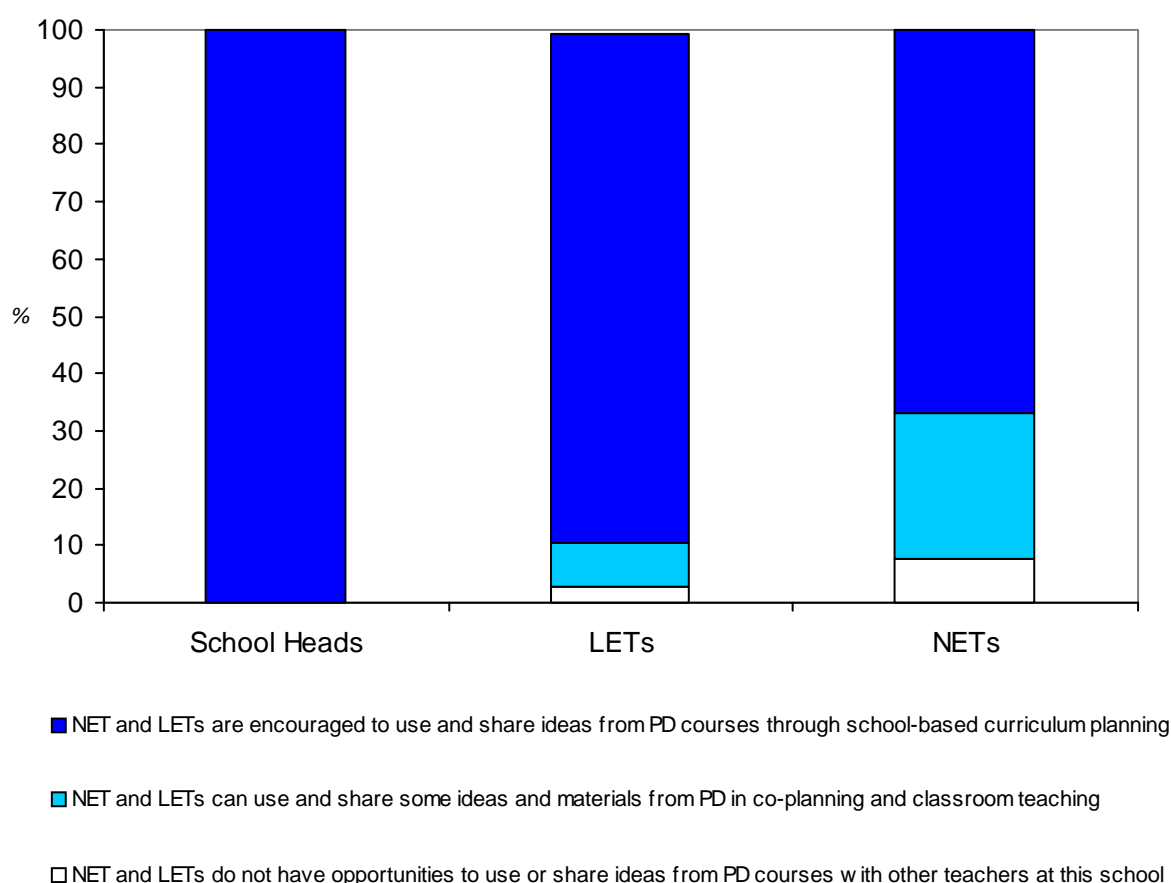


Figure 6.11. Support for teacher implementation and sharing of ideas and materials from PD courses, seminars and workshops, as perceived by School Heads, LETs and NETs.

However, the question arises that, if all School Heads support LET attendance at professional development and use of ideas from these courses and workshops, why do some of the LETs and NETs feel otherwise. The discrepancy between the reports made by School Heads and teachers needs to be resolved and more opportunities provided to the LETS for professional development coupled with ongoing monitoring of the use and impact of that professional development in schools.

During the qualitative investigation, there was noticeably more discussion of professional development among NETs than among LETs. The perception was gained that LETs were often too busy to attend professional development workshops and, in some cases, that they were restrained from attending even when they wanted to. One NET regretted the fact that it was generally he alone who attended professional development workshops which he found to be excellent:

- *And having the curriculum guide and the professional development I really think the EMB is doing a good job with that. I know a lot of NETs do complain about that, but I think it really has helped a lot. I just wish that I was able to take teachers here from the school to the PD. So far that hasn't happened because although the panel chair and the English department has said it's fine, and the Principal has said it's fine, the teachers are too busy to take that time off or they have been too busy so far.*

Another NET highlighted what may be an underlying problem – that LETs were constrained professionally from being receptive to professional development by the fact that they were involved in an educational mode which made professional development unnecessary. They would not be open to ideas which might contradict their professional practices:

- *The PNET Scheme is a necessary and powerful tool for educating HK students and furthering the professional development to a more western pedagogy. However the Scheme is bogged down by an unwillingness on the part of some LETs to accept new teaching methods. But this is not entirely the LETs' fault since schools are judged upon the results of standardized testing. This along with large class sizes prohibits the acceptance of western style methods such as a smaller teacher-student ratio.*

Primary Literacy Programme – Reading (KS1)

The Primary Literacy Programme – Reading (KS1) [PLP-R (KS1)] was a two-year programme that had been produced by the ATT, and piloted in some schools during the second two years of the evaluation of the PNET Scheme. The PLP-R was designed to provide direction and guidance for the teaching of literacy, with a particular emphasis on reading. It supported the establishment of schools and classrooms that were enriched for the teaching and learning of English, and the use by teachers of shared, supported, guided and independent teaching strategies for reading.

The study and sampling designs of the current evaluation were not established to permit a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the PLP-R (KS1) on student learning to be conducted. However, by the third year of the evaluation almost half of the students participating in the PNET Scheme evaluation were in schools that were also piloting the PLP-R (KS1), and some informal comparisons could be made between outcomes for students who were or were not involved in the Programme.

Figure 6.12 summarises average student gains on the Profiles of reading and writing in English for students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006, in terms of whether or not they were attending schools that had been piloting the PLP-R (KS1) in 2005 and 2006. There was no discernible impact of the PLP-R (KS1) in terms of student outcomes on the scales of spoken English, and so these have not been presented. Rather, participation in the PLP-R (KS1) was specifically related to the development of student proficiency in reading and writing in English.

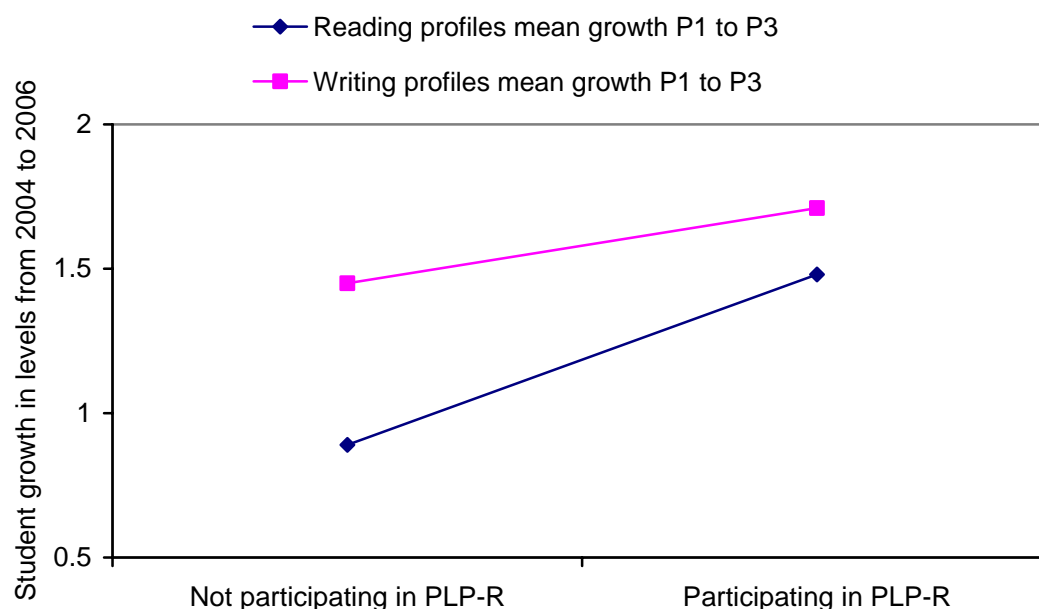


Figure 6.12. Relationships between participation in PLP-R and average improvement for the students who were tracked from P1 in 2004 to P3 in 2006.

School participation in the PLP-R (KS1) could also be related to changed practices in the classroom teaching of reading in English.

Teachers at schools participating in the PLP-R (KS1) were more likely than other teachers to be incorporating shared reading of English materials, shared teaching of reading lessons with the NET, teaching strategies and materials from the AT, and supported reading of English texts in their teaching. There was no difference between teachers at schools with or without the PLP-R (KS1) in terms of matching reading materials to student ability levels. Rather, this was a well-supported teaching strategy in most of the schools. These comparisons are illustrated in Figures 6.13 to 6.18.

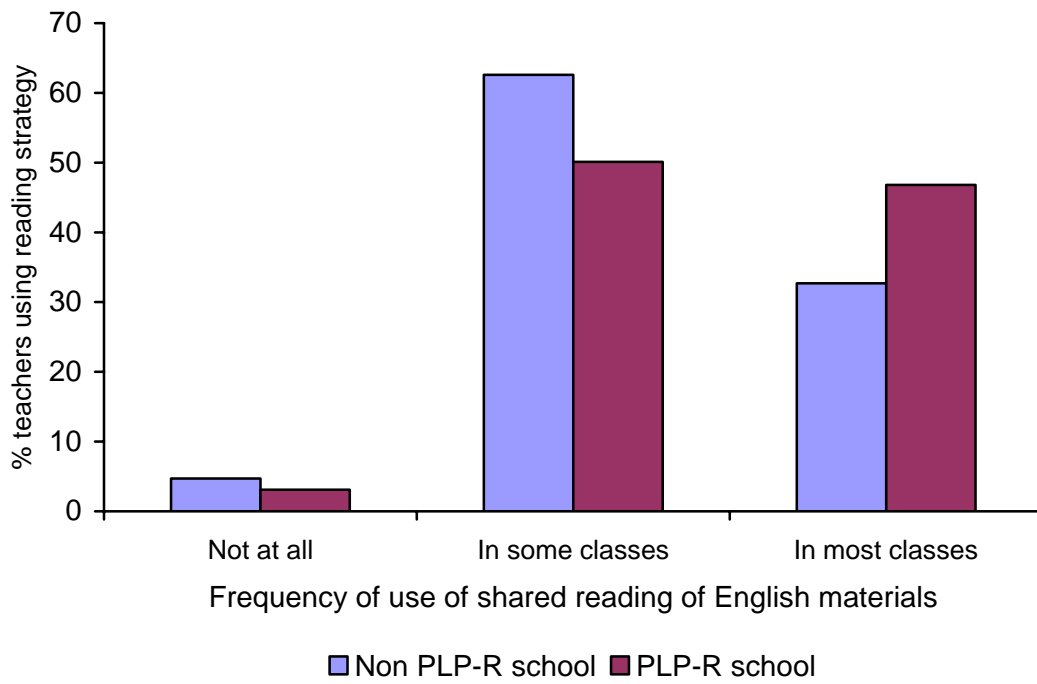


Figure 6.13. Frequency of use of shared reading of English materials by LETs in PLP-R (KS1) and non PLP-R (KS1) schools.

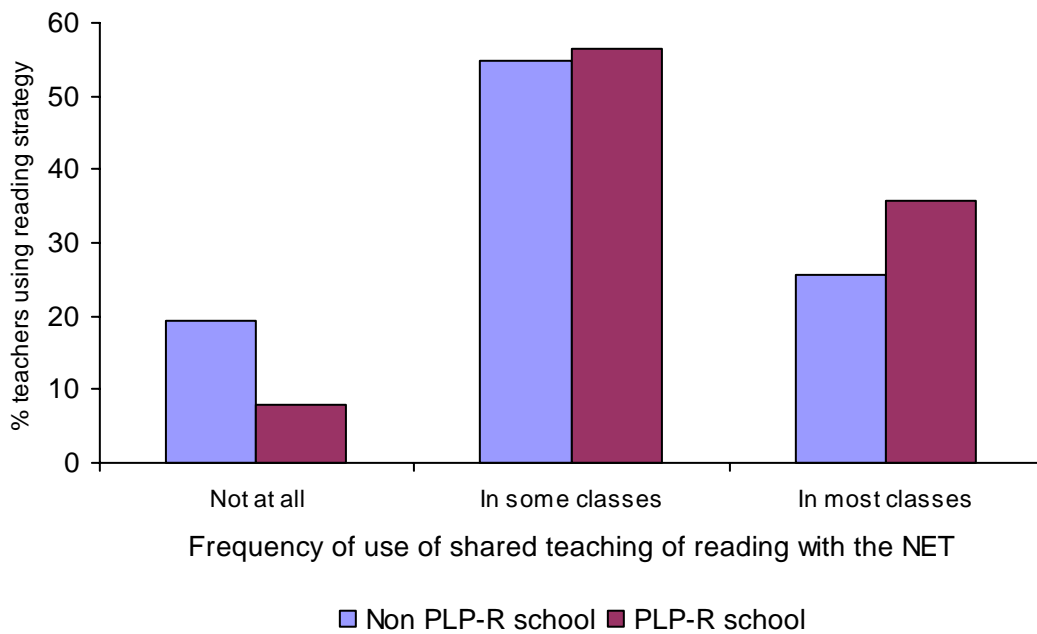


Figure 6.14. Frequency of use of shared teaching of reading with the NET by the LETs in PLP-R (KS1) and non PLP-R (KS1) schools.

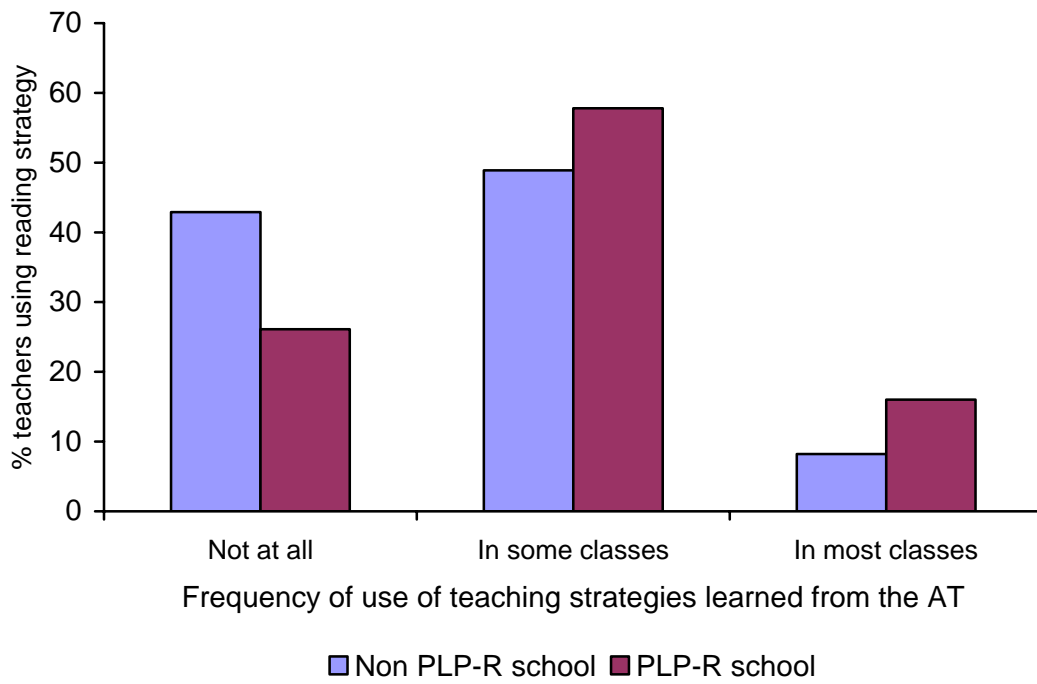


Figure 6.15. Frequency of use of teaching strategies learned from the AT by the LETs in PLP-R (KS1) and non PLP-R (KS1) schools.

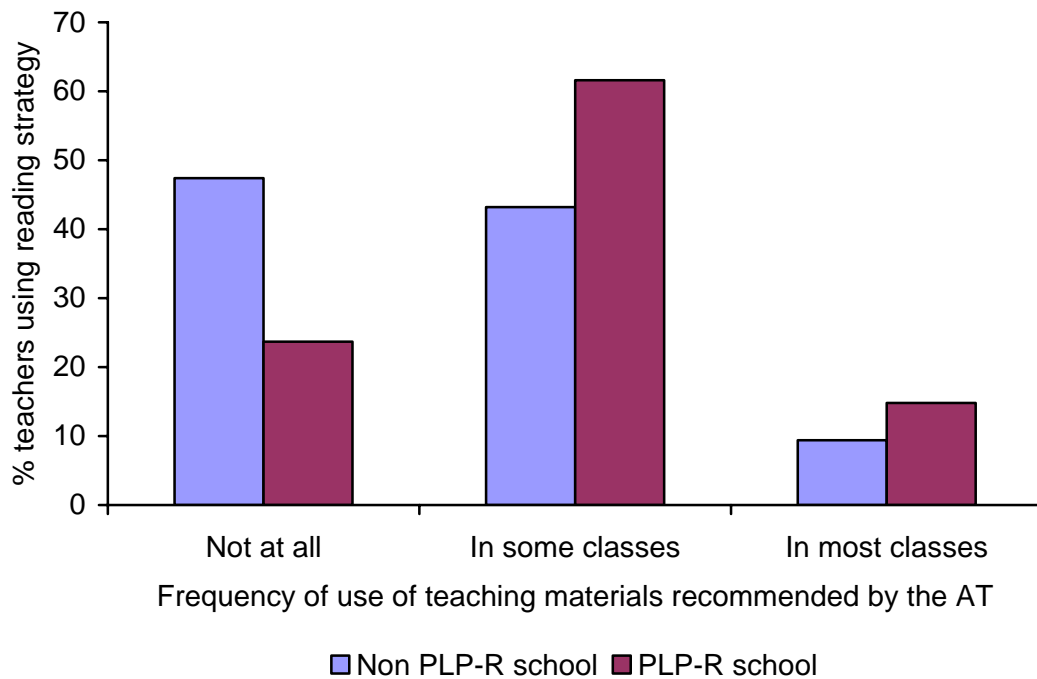


Figure 6.16. Frequency of use of teaching materials recommended by ATs by the LETs in PLP-R (KS1) and non PLP-R (KS1) schools.

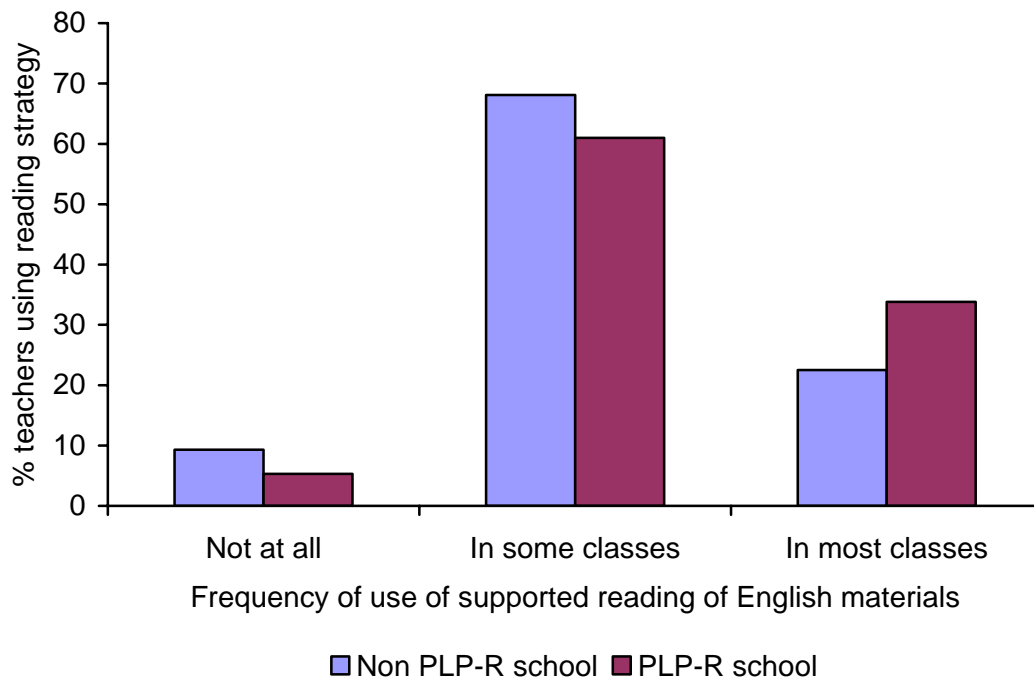


Figure 6.17. Frequency of use of supported reading of English materials by the LETs in PLP-R (KS1) and non PLP-R (KS1) schools.

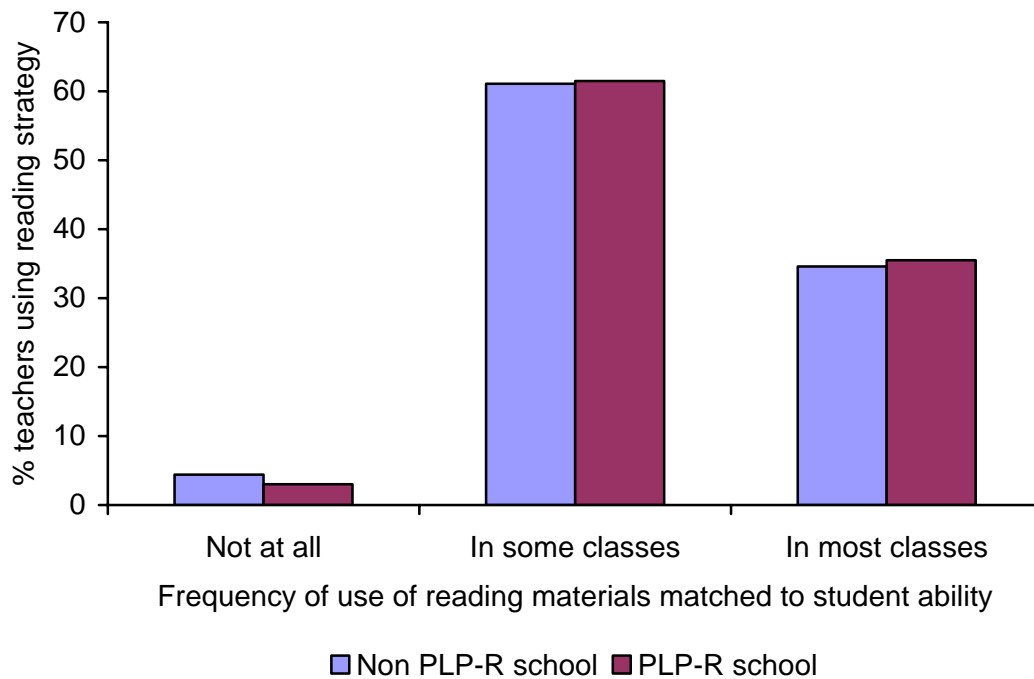


Figure 6.18. Frequency of use of reading materials matched to student ability by the LETs in PLP-R (KS1) and non PLP-R (KS1) schools.

The patterns illustrated in Figures 6.13 to 6.18 suggest a link between participation in the PLP-R (KS1) and increased incorporation of shared and supported reading strategies in classroom teaching, and also increased receptivity to the PNET Scheme. Teachers at schools participating in the PLP-R (KS1) were more likely to team teach with the NET in reading lessons, and to be using ideas and materials suggested by the AT, for the teaching of English.

Access to the support, training and materials provided as part of the PLP-R clearly improved students' achievement in reading and writing in English, but the question is why? The PLP-R is a resource programme and may be associated with increased levels of professional development. Does it provide direct support to the local teachers? Is the NET involved in this procedure and as a mediator?

In visits to PLP-R schools during the qualitative investigation, there was a clear impression of NET and LETs working towards a common goal. There were numerous examples of schools where the NET was providing invaluable contributions relating to shared reading and Phonics, but this involved taking lessons away from the mainstream curriculum with the result that local teachers had to squeeze their normal teaching into fewer lessons. The non-mainstream lessons were perceived as NET-directed lessons and co-planning was sometimes only half-heartedly taken up by LETs who would co-teach the lessons more as assistants to the NET. One NET recounted her experience of working in three different curriculum modes at different levels – non-mainstream teaching of reading and Phonics at one level, complementing the textbook at another, and PLP-R at a third. Co-planning for the first two modes was generally a one-sided affair, “*whereas with PLP-R it's more of a partnership*”.

In other schools, LETs felt that adopting PLP-R gave them greater opportunities to enhance the teaching of English by having greater focus on enjoyment: [referring to the objectives of the PNET scheme] *Especially the fourth point – ‘develop children’s interest in learning English’ through the PLP-R programme*. PLP-R also provided opportunities to address generic skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving:

- *I think more or less we can cover the generic skills here. And for the critical thinking you just mentioned, for example, for P3 class, the NET, after the shared reading, teaching of big book. The NET will ask the students what problem is it and how the solution they need to help the character in the story. So I think that's a kind of critical thinking. After this, to solve the problem, after reading a story.*

It was often the case that the introduction of PLP-R more closely matched the skills and experience of NETs and created a fortuitous combination:

- *And also the programme is from EMB, the primary literacy programme in reading. That's why we are very lucky to have the NET who is the expert in literacy programme in Australia. She helps us a lot in, in teaching students the strategies of reading.*

The adoption of PLP-R seemed to give greater direction and purpose to NET-LET collaboration. One NET was looking forward to the promise PLP-R offered to enhance the teaching of reading skills:

- *We've just gone on to PLP-R. So we haven't started that yet. But I'm hoping that that is going to help with the word attack, phonics and sort of basic reading strategies and writing. So I'm hoping that's going to give a good basis like of the core literacy skills.*

In LETs' description of typical PLP-R activities in another school, the impression of purposeful collaboration was palpable:

- *For the PLP-R lesson, we need to do a lot of assessment by observation. So when the NET is teaching, then we also have the LET, that is the local teacher, and a CA, a classroom assistant in the classroom. So, two of us, that is the LET and the CA, will be very busy with doing the observation, marking down all all the performance. So even if the LET, the local teachers is teaching, then the NET will also help to do the assessment by observation, grading them on certain behaviours according to a scale. We have so many descriptors describing their performance.*

Summary

Centralised professional development courses, seminars and workshops provided and led by the ATT were well-attended and supported by teachers and school leadership in 2006. This built upon and extended support for these courses that was evident in the previous years of the evaluation. However, individual LETs reported quite low rates of participation in training and workshops. There is an opportunity here for improvement of the implementation of the PNET Scheme through increased participation of LETs in training, with associated opportunities to form stronger working relationships with both the NET and AT and to build confidence as users and teachers of English. Improvements in attitudes to lifelong learning in English will need to start with the local teachers of English, and then in turn motivate similar attitudes in students.

Although the current study was not designed to evaluate the PLP-R (KS1), there were indications that participation in the programme was linked to student progress in reading proficiency in English, and to changed teaching practices by the LETs. The PLP-R seemed to provide structured opportunities for LETs and NETs to collaborate and support each other in the classroom.

Chapter Seven: Effective PNET Schools in Hong Kong

An effective school is one in which the students achieve better than expected levels of proficiency, given the school's intake of students. That is to say, on average the students achieve better than could be expected given the relationship between achievement and home background for all students in the system. By definition, an ineffective school is therefore one in which the students achieve less well than expected given the school's intake of students.

What is meant by 'given its intake of students'? In general, students from some types of home background tend to have higher achievement scores than students from other home backgrounds. These can be designated as supportive or non-supportive homes. What is meant by a 'supportive or non-supportive home' from the perspective of English language studies? 'Supportive' homes are usually defined as those in which there are many opportunities and advantages for the student, perhaps because the parents have a high level of education and can thus provide a more enriched environment, and where there are many possessions in the home because the parents have sufficient money to buy those possessions. A supportive home in terms of English language studies will therefore have many books, and some of those books will be in English. It is true that a student from a home with many books has more opportunity to read than a student from a home where there are few books. In Hong Kong, students from many homes tend not to have opportunities to practise English outside the school, and their mother-tongue is very different from English. All of these factors can be formed into a construct called 'home background support'. In a sense, these variables are proxy measures for the support that the parents are able to provide for their children's learning of English in school.

There were 117 schools in the 2006 sample. It was of interest to identify the schools that were most effective and the schools that were least effective and then identify those variables that were associated with large differences between the two groups of schools. Variables with large differences between the group of most effective schools and the group of least effective schools were identified and these are discussed as the intervention points for the PNET Scheme.

Method of Analysis

A home background factor (a principal component) was formed of the variables listed in Table 7.1, with the loadings shown. These variables were used because they were the ones that exceeded a factor loading of 0.3 and contributed most to the interpretation of the factor of home support, which was clearly a factor of support for English Language development in the home.

Table 7.1. *Home Background Variable Factors*

| English Language Support | Loading |
|--|---------|
| • Whether the child has English language books in the home | 0.670 |
| • Whether the child has books in any language in the home | 0.661 |
| • The highest level of education that the child's mother (or female guardian) has completed | 0.652 |
| • Whether the child has English language story books | 0.646 |
| • The highest level of education that the child's father (or male guardian) has completed | 0.642 |
| • Whether the child has English language text books | 0.527 |
| • Whether the child speaks English outside school | 0.509 |
| • Whether there is a person at home who looks at the child's English language work | 0.501 |
| • Whether the child has a Chinese English dictionary | 0.442 |
| • Whether there is someone outside school who makes sure the child has done his or her English language homework | 0.428 |
| • Whether there is an English-speaking servant (maid) at home | 0.394 |
| • Whether there is a private corner for the child to learn in the home | 0.349 |
| • Whether there is someone outside school to help the child with his or her English language homework | 0.324 |
| • The number of hours in a typical day the child spends reading books | 0.318 |

The correlation between this home support factor and reading achievement was 0.30 and with spoken language achievement it was 0.41. As expected, students with higher values on the home background support factor tended to obtain higher scores both in reading and in spoken language. The correlation between the two achievement scores was 0.49.

By comparison, correlations were not as strong between student achievement and the attitudes parents expressed towards English. Parent attitude was correlated to spoken language as 0.15 and with reading development as 0.18. Clearly, attitudes expressed by parents were not as strongly related to language development as were the support structures in the home.

A home attitude factor (principal component) was formed from the variables listed in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2. *Home Attitude Variable Factors*

| Home Attitude to English | Loading |
|---|---------|
| • Parent encourages child to learn English | 0.776 |
| • Parent is pleased when child tries to use English | 0.772 |
| • Parent likes child to go to English classes | 0.747 |
| • Parent believes English is important for child's future | 0.718 |
| • Parent likes child to get a good report in English | 0.715 |
| • Parent always supports child in learning English | 0.714 |
| • Parent is happy that child learns English at school | 0.699 |
| • Parent likes child to read books in English | 0.690 |
| • Parent believes learning English is important | 0.674 |
| • Parent believes it is useful for child to learn English | 0.668 |
| • Parent believes everyone should learn English | 0.638 |
| • Parent believes it is good when the child speaks English with friends | 0.629 |
| • Parent often talks with child about the importance of good English | 0.584 |
| • Parent believes it is part of a parent's role to help the child in English | 0.574 |
| • Parent wants to know more about child's English learning | 0.570 |
| • Parent believes English will help the child to get a better job | 0.565 |
| • Parent believes that learning English is a fun part of school for the child | 0.495 |
| • Parent takes time to help the child in English homework | 0.484 |
| • Parent reads books to the child in English | 0.482 |
| • Parent believes parents who don't help their child in English are negligent | 0.462 |

A linear regression analysis using a fully saturated model was conducted for each of the initial class groups between the 2004 measures of spoken language as represented by scores on the interview test of spoken language and the Speaking Profile and the 2006 scores on these measures. The regression was then conducted after having controlled for the home background support factor, which was assumed to be outside the control of the school. This enabled an expected score to be calculated for each student and the differences between the expected and observed scores (residuals) were assumed to be linked to school variables. The students with positive differences (their achieved score was greater than predicted) were interpreted as students who had spoken language scores that were better than could be expected – after taking the home background into account. Conversely, students with negative differences had scores that were worse than might be expected.

The residual (actual minus predicted) scores were then averaged over schools so that a school with a very high mean residual score was identified as a 'more effective' school because it had many students whose achievement scores were much higher than expected. (This procedure also avoids aggregation effects that would have occurred if the procedure had been carried out only at the between school level).

It is important to note that this definition of a ‘more effective’ school made it possible for a school to be designated as effective even if it had a relatively low raw mean score – perhaps even considerably lower than the average for all schools in the sample. Similarly, a school with a relatively high mean score might, after taking the home background of its students into consideration, be designated as a ‘less effective’ school. Two groups of schools were formed: ten most effective schools and ten least effective schools as indicated by differences between expected and the actual mean scores for their students.

Low performing students existed in almost every school. For spoken language, the schools were placed in rank order from the most effective to the least effective school and then ten schools at each extreme were taken in order to identify on which variables there were differences.

The aim of the analyses presented here comparing the most and least effective schools was not to establish precise measures of the effects of various variables on mean student scores as might be undertaken using complex and hierarchical causal modelling. Rather, the aim was to identify a summary list of variables that will be of interest to policy makers and to others undertaking further analyses of the data.

Most and Least Effective Schools

The first comparison made was between the most effective ten schools and the least effective ten schools. This has been defined as the adjusted difference on variables after home background influence has been removed. Where the difference between the ten most and the ten least effective schools exceeded two standard errors of measurement on the variable this was regarded as an important difference, and the variables that were identified in the analyses are presented below.

LET access to resources

- Has access to teaching materials provided by NET Section PD seminars/courses
- Has access to apparatus for laminating teaching aids
- Has an English area to work with the students
- Has access to advice or support from the NET

LET strategies

- Uses plays and drama activities in English teaching
- Uses grouping based on learners' abilities
- Uses ideas and methods derived from lessons co-taught with the NET

LET responses to the NET

- Has time to co-plan English classes with the NET
- Finds teaching English easy
- Finds that working with the NET is an added responsibility
- Has students who are able to use English in the classroom
- Has students who use English during their lessons
- Perceives that the NET makes too many changes to classroom teaching

NET and AT characteristics

- NET age in years - Older NETs
- NET years of experience in teaching English
- NET frequency of co-teaching with each of the local English teachers of students at the school
- NET frequency of meetings with each of the local English teachers of students at the school to discuss student performance, lesson planning, staff development or related matters
- NET perception that meeting with the local English teachers was effective in terms of improving English learning and teaching at the school
- NET attendance at meetings of the English Panel
- Meetings of the English Panel conducted in English
- NET perception that meetings of the English Panel were effective in terms of improving English learning and teaching at the school
- NET perceived that AT supports development of new teaching methods at the school
- NET organises extracurricular activities for students related to teaching English
- NET arranges professional development opportunities for local teachers
- NET reviews and develops curriculum materials

NET and Professional Development Courses, Seminars and Workshops

- NET attended professional development courses, seminars or workshops on the teaching of English arranged and provided by the school or any other institution.
- NET perceived that these courses, seminars or workshops were effective in terms of improving English learning and teaching at the school
- NET was able to implement (use) ideas or materials provided in the courses, seminars or workshops in English teaching at the school.
- NET usually attends meetings of the English Panel
- SET contributes to the classroom teaching of the NET and local teachers.
- SET provides information about school procedures for the NET.

NET teaching strategies

- NET uses English teaching materials supplied by the SET or LETs
- NET uses formal assessment of students' production of English
- NET uses textbooks for the teaching of English
- NET team teaches with the SET or local teachers
- NET sets homework specifically related to English
- NET uses supported reading of English materials
- NET uses plays and drama activities in English
- NET uses interactive multimedia materials in English
- NET uses group work on oral interaction

NET attitude

- NET perceives that the School Head and senior teachers have supported him or her in the school
- NET follows the PNET guidelines
- NET perceives that the local teachers have been very helpful
- NET spends extra time working with the students
- NET found the induction programme for the PNETs provided useful information
- NET believed that NETs who won't work with the local teachers should be counselled to change their attitude
- The NET is deployed across every level of the school

Comments on Results

The first point to make in this summary is that the factors associated with the most and least effective schools were calculated independent of home background. The analysis co-varied out all effects of the home background factors identified at the beginning of the chapter. After controlling for the support available in the home background, the adjusted language scores in 2006 were compared to the baseline scores from 2004, which were also controlled for home background. These were the gains in language that were under the control of schools. The ten schools in which students showed the greatest average gain on language scores controlled for home background were then compared with the schools where students showed the least amount of average gain, in terms of a range of variables that described the activities of the NET Scheme. Those variables that showed at least two standard errors of difference were identified and these were listed above. These were the variables that differentiated the most and least effective schools within the NET Scheme. No causal implications are drawn from this analysis. Rather, it is for policy makers to decide which of these factors should be emphasised through resource allocation, professional development, redirection of the NET activities and AT support.

Local Teacher Use of Resources

The importance of the LETs' use of the NET in the most effective schools was emphasised by the influence on materials and advice. Interestingly, when these were coupled with a specialist English area in the classroom the effectiveness of the school was enhanced.

Strategies

The influence of the NET on LETs' teaching strategies was also emphasised, especially when coupled with group work or social interaction activities that encouraged and enhanced the use of spoken language and which encouraged the teacher to use additional English when co-teaching with the NET.

Responses to the NET

Local teachers who enjoyed teaching English also coped with the changes made by the NET and the additional duties that working with the NET brought to the classroom. They made time to co-plan with the NET. These factors were integral to the identification of effective PNET schools. It was also apparent in the most effective schools that the students used English in the classroom. If links between these can be made, it would seem that the NETs in the most effective schools were apparently taking responsibility for co-planning, directing change and additional exercises in the classroom and had been teamed with teachers who encouraged students to use English in class.

NET and AT Characteristics

It appeared that older and more experienced NETs were associated with more effective schools. However, more effective schools were also schools in which there was frequent cooperation and interaction between NET and LETs and this was most commonly observed across all schools when younger NETs and LETs worked together. A particular feature of effective schools was that they combined more experienced NETs who also participated frequently in co-teaching, meetings, and planning student assessment and staff development with the LETs to encourage English teaching and learning.

Meetings with LETs were influential in terms of improving English learning and teaching at the most effective schools. These meetings apparently took place in English Panel meetings, in classrooms and informally in other settings. The main point was that the NET interacted frequently and positively with LETs in the most effective schools. They arranged professional development, helped to develop and review teaching materials and organised extra curricula activities. This would seem to describe the expected activities of all NETs, but it seems that in the least effective schools the interactions between NETs and LETs were less positive, less structured and less frequent. What was also clear was that the English Panel meetings were often conducted in English in the most effective schools, and the NET attended those meetings. Moreover the Panel meetings focused on the means of improving teaching and learning of English in the most effective schools.

It was also evident that, in the more effective schools, the AT was active in developing and introducing new teaching methods. In particular, it was important that the AT clearly supported and promoted innovation in teaching methods and that LETs and NETs recognised and valued the role and contributions of the AT. The difference between more and less effective PNET schools was related to the impact of the AT and the NET and the extent to which the NET was able to meet the expected requirements of their deployment.

NET and PD Courses

A factor in the success of the most effective schools was the attendance of the NET and LETs at professional development courses organised and conducted by the ATs and by the NET Section, and the impact of these courses on teaching and learning in the school. NETs and LETs in the most effective schools had access to innovative teaching resources and materials provided by their AT, and were able to implement and share new ideas in their schools. This was apparently due to the opportunity to transfer the messages, materials and strategies gained during professional development to the school setting. This, coupled with the attendance of the NET at the English Panel meetings, seemed to suggest that in the most effective schools a part of the Panel meeting was used to discuss and transfer ideas from the professional development programme. The meetings were also used to provide information about the school procedures to the NET. The importance of the professional development programme and opportunities within the school for communication, staff development and transfer of knowledge and procedures seemed to be underlined by these data.

NET Strategies

In effective schools, the NET had adopted a series of strategies that mixed the old with the new. The emphasis on text books remained a standard strategy in the schools as did formal assessment. However, the NET in effective schools was also responsible for introduction of strategies and materials supplied by the AT and mixed this with the materials provided by the SET and LETs. This may have denoted a NET who understood how changes were introduced and started at the stage of professional development and awareness the local teachers had attained, and then identified how and when to introduce change. A part of these procedures was the process of co-teaching, group interactions such as plays and drama, and reading activities. The overall approach seemed to be a tendency to use existing local materials and methods and mix these with new ideas, social interactions and professional development.

NET Attitude

In the most effective schools, the NET clearly felt welcomed by the School Head and senior staff and was overtly supported by them and by the local teachers. NETs in the most effective schools were following the procedures and deployment guidelines for the NET as set by the directors of the PNET Scheme. It was apparent that, in the most effective schools, the NETs enjoyed their work in the schools and spent additional time with students and staff. There were clear signs of job satisfaction expressed by NETs in

effective schools. NETs in effective schools had also been properly inducted, or at least the NETs in the most effective schools indicated that their induction was successful. These NETs also appeared to know the importance of building strong working relationships with local teachers and emphasised that those NETs who did not do so should be provided with additional support.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the identification of variables associated with the differences between effective and ineffective schools. An 'effective' school was one in which average student achievement was above that which could be expected from the type of student intake into the school. An 'ineffective' school was one in which average student achievement was much worse than could be expected given the student intake into the school. The quality of the student intake into the school was measured by a composite home background variable consisting of the extent to which the student spoke English outside the school, access to books at home, the level of the parents' education and indicators of support for language studies.

The ten most effective and ten least effective schools were identified and the differences on many independent variables were calculated in terms of the overall standard deviation.

The overwhelming impression was that where the NET was able to follow the deployment guidelines set out by the PNET Scheme, and was interacting with local teachers, leading change in teaching and learning strategies, transferring messages, materials and strategies provided by the ATs and gained from professional development courses provided by the ATs and the NET Section,, attending English Panel meetings that were conducted in English, and generally acting as a fully integrated member of the teaching staff, there were clear advantages in terms of student outcomes. It seemed that the deployment guidelines for the NET were appropriate, and where they were followed in schools the PNET Scheme was effective in supporting the development of language proficiency for students.

Chapter Eight: Summary and Conclusions

This chapter examines several issues related to the overall PNET Scheme. It summarises, collates and synthesises the information presented in earlier chapters with the purpose of drawing conclusions and making recommendations to the programme leadership.

The chapter is presented in several sections. The first deals with the PNET Scheme and its expectations. The next section deals with the schools as organisations and how these institutions aid or inhibit the effectiveness of the PNET Scheme. The following section deals with the students and their levels of achievement and attitudes. Next we address the influence of the major players - the NETs, the ATs, the LETs and SETs and the School Heads. The chapter then explores processes such as the professional development and support programme and overall programme management and system management. The final section presents a series of recommendations that are proposed to help improve the PNET Scheme and by extension lead to greater gains in the language proficiency of the students.

A. Expectations of the PNET Scheme and its goals

The Primary NET objectives as set out in the terms of reference for the evaluation study were to:

1. *Provide an authentic environment for children to learn English.*

The extent to which this has been achieved is debatable. In some schools, there were restricted opportunities even for teachers of English to use the language. These limited opportunities to interact with a native speaker cannot be regarded as a success. Authentic language experiences involve more than classroom textbook-related activities, but the presence of the NET does help to remove the chances of English being taught through the medium of Cantonese or Putonghua. Some considerable thought needs to be given to the issue of the context of learning English. HKSAR has several television channels and print media that use the English medium. There has been little evidence of the use of these community resources in teaching and learning of English by the teachers or the students.

2. *Develop children's interest in learning English and establish the foundation for lifelong learning.*

This has not been achieved. The attitudes of children towards learning English are clearly formed in the home and are relatively fixed by the time they arrive at school. The lack of change in attitude development from P1 to P4 suggests that the school programmes do little to change firmly held attitudes. It may be that students lack role models in the school and that the role models of the home and the community are dominant in the young students' minds. At the age groups of students in the PNET Scheme, the rationale for learning English in terms of future goals would have little or no meaning, and modelling would be expected to have the strongest influence. The role and example of the local teacher is central to this.

The lack of incentive to learn English for many students is a pity since this is the age when language development can be most successful.

3. *Help local teachers develop innovative learning and teaching methods, materials, curricula and activities suited to the needs of local children.*

This goal has been partly achieved. Some new strategies have been introduced. In fact this may be the most successful aspect of the PNET Scheme. The NETS and ATs have introduced many new materials and strategies, and the acceptance and use of these new materials and strategies by LETs differentiate between the most and least effective schools in the PNET Scheme. Local teachers have retained many of the old procedures and mixed with some new and innovative strategies. This is a good start and further progress can be expected when the new and innovative strategies and materials are linked with targeted intervention approaches in accordance with developmental learning theories such as those of Vygotsky and Bruner, as well as the many language development theories. Where schools have embraced the goals and objectives of the PNET Scheme, and provided a supportive environment for the NET and LETs to collaborate, co-teach and co-plan, there have been positive outcomes for students.

4. *Disseminate good practices in language learning and teaching through region based teacher development programmes such as experience - sharing seminars/ workshops and network activities.*

The extent to which this has been achieved is unclear. For the most part it may be too early to tell how the PNET Scheme has altered the teaching practices in Hong Kong. The additional programme, PLP-R(KS1), may be being more successful in terms of dissemination of materials. The effect on teaching strategies is yet to be determined.

B. The schools

The analysis of school effectiveness highlighted many characteristics of the success of PNET Scheme schools. These characteristics were consistent with the literature on effective schools. One summary research study by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) described effective schools as having eleven specific characteristics. Their review of the literature revealed the following key characteristics of effective schools:

1. **Professional leadership:** firm and purposeful; a participative approach; the leading professional takes responsibility for academic progress in the school.

Leadership in English language development has been shown to be a critical component of an effective PNET school. School Heads need to have a direct influence on teachers and the effectiveness of the teaching-learning relationship. This has been shown to be the case in the most effective schools, and the Head's lack of involvement and lack of shared perception of the role and implementation of the PNET Scheme was a characteristic of the least effective schools.

Professional leadership requires identification of a clear sense of purpose for the Scheme. It was important also to recognise the leadership role of the NET in the school and the extent to which the NET promoted curriculum planning that was designed to improve student learning. In the effective schools, the NET worked in conjunction with the LETs and the English Panel to promote teaching strategies that were designed and monitored in terms of their capacity to improve student learning. The NET's participation in decision making about student learning and the programme implementation was shown to be a critical aspect of the way in which the English department was run in effective schools. Finally, the effectiveness of the connections between staff performance and professional development on the one hand and student learning outcomes on the other were shown to hold in the effective schools.

Over the three years of this study the role of the School Head has been seen as pivotal to the success of the Scheme in the school, and this makes the PNET Scheme similar in many respects to most other school effectiveness studies. Leadership is central to success. In demonstrating this, studies of leadership have highlighted such aspects as the clear statement of vision and purpose, an emphasis on participation and a responsibility of the leader for the academic outcomes of the school. This evaluation has presented sustained evidence that there were participating schools in which the School Head did not share the teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the PNET Scheme, the role or importance of the NET in the school, and in some cases there was a lack of awareness of which staff were undertaking professional development training. In the face of such lack of connection to the PNET Scheme, the School Head could not be regarded as providing support or leadership. But this was not true of all schools. Where the School Head played an integral role in the induction, monitoring and accountability of the Scheme, the school emerged as one of the more effective schools in terms of language growth for the students, independent of factors over which the school had no control.

While much of the leadership focuses on the role of the School Head, this would be an inappropriate sole focus in the PNET Scheme. The NETs themselves have a leadership role within the school and in particular within the English language programme. The evaluation has shown that this has not always been recognised by the school, the local teachers and unfortunately by some of the NETs themselves. In various ways and in some of the schools, the expected role of the NET has been reduced to a specialist teacher, a mentor in professional development, a resource to be deployed across the school and a teacher with whom to share teaching duties. The NETs themselves at times expressed relief that they did not have to attend English Panel meetings, and as such had little influence on the procedures or content of the meetings, which in many instances were conducted in Cantonese thus formally excluding the NET.

2. **Shared vision and goals:** unity of purpose; consistency of practice; collegiality and collaboration in pursuit of educational goals.

This is an extremely important aspect of the goal of improving English language proficiency, establishing positive attitudes towards the use of the language and embedding life long learning ambitions for the students. There were several mitigating factors working against the goals and the vision of the PNET Scheme. First, the reluctance, or lack of opportunity or motivation, of the local teachers to practise their English meant that there was far less modelling and scaffolding available to the students than would be ideal. The lack of change in curriculum, in teaching strategies and especially in assessment strategies over the period of the study tends to indicate that the practices are ingrained, that change is difficult to achieve and that the vision of the PNET Scheme is not shared in some of the schools.

Effective PNET schools demonstrated that a clear understanding of the programme goals and procedures was held by the English Panel and the NET and this was shared by the School Head. These goals were typically focused on student learning, sustained improvement and problem-solving. Effective PNET schools, through co-planning, co-teaching and the English Panel medium, created consensus among staff about the aims and values of the PNET Scheme and English-teaching programme and how they could be consistently and collaboratively put into practice. Steps were taken to ensure that the curriculum, teaching and learning and professional learning arrangements were consistent with the PNET Scheme's vision and goals.

3. **A learning community:** an orderly atmosphere; an attractive working environment.

There is no doubt that a school is a learning community. Why then would research emphasise the importance of this attribute of an effective school? What constitutes a learning community? In the case of an effective school this generally means that all parties connected with the school are engaged in learning and this is meant to include the teachers as well as the students. What then constitutes teacher learning? In the case of the PNET schools, it needs to be a deliberate and purposeful programme of professional development delivered both externally and internally, aimed at improving the English language teaching and learning skills of teachers and the English attainment and attitude development of the students.

This evaluation found clear evidence that, in effective schools, the language attainments are improving among the students, but the attitudes towards learning and using English are static. It is also clear that, in the most effective schools, the teachers are practising their language skills and the professional development, led by the NET, is embedded in the school ethos. This then is the standard to be set for all schools in the PNET Scheme. The leadership of the NET, the efforts of the teachers to practise and use English, the effect on the children's language and attitudes are positive in the effective schools. All parties are focused on learning

English, developing new strategies and teaching practices and making the English language a priority. Less effective schools are simply not making these inroads into the language curriculum.

Effective PNET schools took the trouble to ensure that staff and parents shared common visions, values and objectives. They worked collaboratively, through co-planning, co-teaching, professional development and English Panel meetings that were inclusive of the NET, to enhance the curriculum, teaching strategies and assessment of students. These schools fostered openness, dialogue, inquiry, risk-taking and trust. They were attempting to try new materials and strategies, often provided by the NET and the AT, but also at times produced by the local teachers as well. In such contexts, the local teachers felt that they could make informed and responsible decisions about innovative teaching strategies and try them with confidence.

4. **Concentration on teaching and learning:** maximisation of learning time; academic emphasis; focus on achievement.

Effective PNET schools focused their programmes on teaching and learning. They deployed their NET and other resources strategically to enhance teaching and learning, rather than using the NET as a specialist visiting teacher or as a relief resource spread thinly across too many classes and students. The latter situation was exacerbated in situations where NETs were deployed in very large schools and/or more than one school. In effective schools, the professional development activities and programmes were aimed at improving the teaching-learning relationship and were participated in by most of the local teachers as well as the NET who was responsible for the dissemination of ideas, materials and strategies among the local teachers. Professional learning programmes provided by the ATs paid particular attention to developing the subject and pedagogical knowledge of teachers. Targeting and differentiated teaching, however, seemed to be absent from both the professional development content and in the discussions and programmes at the school level.

The effective schools managed the time spent on macro skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing and much of this was discussed and planned collaboratively between the NETs and the local teachers. The schools had identified a specific range of strategies that were designed to bring about improvement in the teaching-learning relationship. Moreover, through formal and informal monitoring, they analysed how effective the strategies had been and where improvements could be gained. These were not characteristics of less effective PNET schools. The link between professional development and student learning was especially marked in the effective schools. While the overall link was positive, it was pronounced in the most effective schools. The most effective schools were also identified as having better management of staff deployment, and especially the NET.

5. **Purposeful teaching:** efficient organization; clarity of purpose; structured lessons; adaptive practice.

Teachers in the effective schools demonstrated that they had a grasp of how students learned English and appeared to target instruction through grouping and other means of class management. These teachers had a commitment to teaching and using the language and acknowledged the importance of practising the language as a means of developing their discipline. They reported using teaching strategies matched to the learning styles and needs of their students. Purposeful teachers contextualise their teaching practices through the use of public media and a variety of resources including English outside the classroom. In the effective PNET schools, views about teaching and learning were shared by the teachers and School Head

6. **High expectations:** emphasise the strong relationship between high expectations and effective learning.

It was clear that the more effective PNET schools and teachers expected that every student had the ability to learn and made efforts to ensure that every student was successful. This was independent of the base of language from which the students started. The effectiveness of the school was judged after the home background of students was controlled, and the effect measured by the increase was an adjusted language performance. Some schools that began with low achievement levels among students were identified as effective because the students improved much more than expected given home background factors and the language proficiency at the start of the evaluation study. These schools had maximised opportunities for students to succeed, and teachers had adapted their teaching to assist both high potential and under-performing students. These schools had high expectations for all students in the English program.

7. **Accountability:** monitoring and reporting achievements and the manner in which responsibilities and roles have been discharged.

A characteristic of the effective PNET schools was a sense of being accountable for the achievement of the students as well as the use of resources and time. Student performances were routinely evaluated using formal assessment procedures. There was a sense of the use of data and of collaborative efforts to improve student outcomes.

Despite the observed situation in the most effective schools, a strong culture of accountability has not been established within the PNET Scheme. Guidelines are provided and the better schools did report consulting these to check if they were implementing the Scheme effectively. The generally shared perception of the

implementation of the Scheme by the Head, the local teachers and the NET indicated that there was an internal reporting system within the schools, but there did not seem to be any strategic approach to this. Panel meetings and minutes reported to the Head of the school may address this in part, as would regular reports on gains made by students. Student outcomes are dominated from P3 level by external testing programmes and performance on these tests may influence how teaching and learning occur within the school. More effective schools reported supplementing these with other forms of school based assessment, but the link between assessment and targeted instruction was not noticeable in any of the data describing the school programme. More is made of this point later in this chapter. Co-planning between NET and LETs and evaluation built into the co-planning procedure were used in the more effective schools, but more could be done with this even in the most effective schools in an attempt to help improve student learning outcomes and attitude development. Few schools reported any programmes aimed at celebrating or recognising achievements in English. When lower achievement levels were identified, many of the effective schools addressed these directly and made significant and important gains in student language development.

C. Student achievement in the PNET Scheme

There were several indicators that the PNET Scheme was successful and there were signs that it could be improved. Among the signs that it was succeeding were the data that showed the improvement over time at a single grade level. This was especially true at P1 and P2 levels, but less so at P3 and P4. This, in fact, is a supporting argument for the success of the PNET Scheme, since the involvement of the NET at P3 and P4 was diminished relative to their involvement with students in P1 and P2.

There appear to have been some gains in English proficiency as a direct result of the PNET Scheme. Whether this was sufficient return on the considerable investment is not known. More than 600 million dollars is a vast sum to invest in language development. However, the evaluation has indicated that the return can be improved and the recommendations made in this chapter indicate ways in which this can be achieved. It appears from the data that the NET combined with the PLP-R enhances literacy gains above and beyond the effect of the NET Scheme alone. How this is achieved, however, is unclear. What is persistent throughout the data, however, is that the NET effect is always moderated through the LET, and hence the relationship of the NET to the LET and the effect of interactions with the AT are crucial to the success of the Scheme.

Gains in language proficiency are observable but linking them directly to the PNET Scheme is more difficult. Maturation explains a great deal of the language growth observed for students. Some students, and the aggregate of students in some schools, showed no gains at all and some have even declined in performance over the three years of the program.

Changes in demographics and immigration from the mainland have meant that the language profile of the schools is altering. Adjustments to the local programme may be needed to cater for this change, not only in the demographic profile, but in the attitudes and expectations of the families that may accompany such a change.

D. Key players

This section examines the roles and relationships among the key players and how these people impacted on the teaching and learning of English in the schools that participated in the evaluation.

1. The ATs

It is evident that the role of the AT was important when it was examined for the effectiveness of professional development for teachers. The model was established such that the AT would provide professional development for the NETs and for the local teachers, but there were relatively few individual local teachers with the opportunity to attend a range of centralised professional development workshops. Where they did attend, however, the impact in terms of their teaching and outcomes for their students was marked. The link between professional development and student achievement was especially noteworthy. It is rare to see such direct evidence of the effect of professional development on teacher behaviour and changes in student achievement. However, this can be improved and the success can be used to increase the effectiveness of the professional development programmes. More local teachers need to be given the opportunity to take part in professional development and the nature of professional development needs to differ for NETs and LETs. In other words, the nature of the professional development could be better targeted to the specific needs of teachers. The teachers' responses to the value of professional development were not uniformly positive, but reasons for this were difficult to discern. Some possible improvement strategies are proposed in later sections dealing with professional development specifically.

There is a clear case to support investment in the professional development and language skills of LETs. Whether this is best achieved through timetabling within the school to allow more contact and collaboration between LETs and NETs, or more LETs being given opportunities to meet the AT on school visits and to attend school-based or centralized professional development, may depend on a number of factors including the size and location of the school. For larger schools, school-based professional development conducted by the AT, NET and SET might be recommended. LETs in very large schools that currently share a NET seem to be the most disadvantaged in terms of time to work with the NET and the AT.

2. NETS

The NETs' role is central to the PNET Scheme. Their collaboration with local teachers, their inculcation into the system and into the school is important and unless this is successful the Scheme cannot succeed. The mentoring role of the NET needs to be enhanced through additional and separate professional development to the programme developed for the LETs. Coaching in mentoring, in collaborative strategies and in targeted intervention are essential for the NETs. For example, if the NET does not demonstrate targeted instruction aimed at students' level of proficiency and readiness to learn, LETs will not have opportunities to change these practices.

In most schools, the NET was routinely included in relevant school meetings, with many of the School Heads, LETs and NETs agreeing that the NET was encouraged to participate in and contribute to all school events. In a small minority of schools, the LETs and NET agreed that the NET had become marginalised and excluded from the life of the school, but this was an unusual situation. Despite this small proportion of schools in which the NET had become marginalised, there remains a need to formalise the role of the NET and to introduce an internal monitoring process within the schools. In this report, this has been described as a standing item on the agenda of the English Panel meetings and a recommendation has been made that this standing item address the role and deployment of the NET, the use of materials and strategies recommended by the AT or the NET, and the use of innovative teaching strategies. This should be minuted and reported to the central project management, and signed off by the School Head.

While there is an overall positive image in the schools of the format of co-planning meetings between NETs and LETs, the discrepancy between teachers' perceptions and those of School Heads underlines the lack of information being reported to some School Heads. Again, there is a role for the NET to document activities related to the PNET Scheme and to report to the central project office via the English Panel meetings and a sign off by the Head of school. Under these circumstances, all would understand the role and functions of the NET, and the Panel meeting would take on a formal monitoring role through an agenda standing item as recommended above.

3. LETS

The local teachers clearly benefit from direct professional development. The 'cascade' model, in which teachers are expected to disseminate the ideas from professional development within their schools, was partly successful but can be enhanced. The data illustrating the impact of direct professional development for LETs on students' learning are compelling and point to the need for additional direct professional development for more LETs. The optimum would be a professional development programme for all LETs.

Possibly the data of most concern, in terms of impact on student outcomes and teacher competence and confidence, were related to the extent to which the local English teachers practise the use of English outside the school. Very few (2%) of the teachers indicated that they regularly spoke English outside their work environment. Indeed, almost 44%

responded that they never or rarely ever spoke English at home, and 54% said that they did so only occasionally. In a group of teachers who specialise in English, such a low rate of practice is a matter of considerable concern. This is an area where action must be taken. If the teachers do not have opportunities to practise their own use of English, it is hardly surprising that their students reflect this attitude. The lack of opportunities for teachers to develop their English proficiency, and the feelings of concern that some teachers expressed over their own competence with English and as teachers of the language, needs to be addressed at a system level. Teachers should be encouraged, supported and rewarded for taking opportunities for practising English, in both spoken and written form. This might be achieved through video and written media, participation in meetings and cultural activities conducted in English. This situation poses a strong challenge for the PNET Scheme. The system expects parents to be supportive of English studies, it expects the NETs to collaborate with the LETs and introduce new ideas and materials, and that the students will practise their English outside school and develop positive life long attitudes towards learning English. The LETs, too, must be challenged to demonstrate their commitment to learning and using English, and acting as models of good practice for students. Of all the issues to address this may be the most serious, and requires system intervention of a strong nature.

It is clear that the system is providing the resource support that is needed in the classroom and that every teacher has sufficient materials and support. Because of this, more should be expected of the teachers in terms of their English language practices. It is also clear that the provision of new forms of resources and strategies may not be having the impact on teaching practices that might be expected. Textbooks remain the most common form of instruction. This strongly suggests a teacher-centred approach, dominated by the text and focused on whole class instruction. Clearly something is not working. The remedy is not to remove resources, but there is a lack of understanding or an apparent failure to communicate about changes to teaching practices in order to improve language proficiency.

The observation that English Panel meetings are being primarily conducted in Cantonese in many schools, even though a NET is allocated to the school, and the fact that the teachers do not regularly use English outside the school, supports the argument that the NETs should attend English Panel meetings. An indicator of school support for the PNET Scheme may be the amount of co-planning between NET and LETs, and the general inclusion of NETs in relevant meetings and school events. It is increasingly apparent, however, that additional opportunities for the NETs to meet and collaborate with LETs, and specifically to encourage the practice of English among LETs, are clearly needed. This should include the presence of NETs at English Panel meetings. This would enable the NET to report on work done and to check with LETs and SETs regarding practice and follow up of professional development, co-planning and its implementation, and instances of co-teaching. The English Panel meeting needs to be used as a review session within the school for the impact of the PNET Scheme. Further discussion of co- planning is presented below.

4. The School Heads

The role of the School Head is essential to the success of the PNET Scheme. There is an apparent disparity between the perceptions of the School Head and those of the LETs and NET in terms of what is happening with the Scheme within some of the schools.

School Heads need to be 'hands on'. Their role is more than provision of support. It needs to include involvement in school policy, provision of time allowance for LETs, knowledge about induction of the NET, monitoring the effect of the professional development programmes, both internal and external, and local activities designed to enable co-planning and collaboration in teaching and preparation between NETS and LETS.

In order to achieve this ideal, it is possible that School Heads may also need professional development directed to the management of the PNET Scheme. It may be prudent if a small number (i.e., less than ten) School Heads were identified who were excellent in managing and supporting the Scheme at their schools. This group would be made up of those individuals who can provide sound advice on the management and administration of the Scheme to other School Heads, including interaction with English Panel Chairs, with NETs, SETs and LETs who are actively involved and who report through the English Panel or directly to the School Head.

These School Heads could provide a mentoring role for other School Heads in the PNET Scheme. Networking systems of School Heads who already exist in the system could be used to enable school visits, both to and from the successful School Heads. Mentoring by School Heads for School Heads is likely to have a more serious impact than any other methods of intervention at the management and school policy level.

There was evidence of an impact on development of student proficiency in terms of the support of the School Head for the inclusion and integration of the NET, and in particular in the skill areas of reading and writing, and this emphasised the fact that all School Heads need to be informed, and to ensure their support, their knowledge and understanding of the Scheme and their involvement in the Scheme.

The importance of the School Heads and their involvement, knowledge, understanding and support for the PNET Scheme is inarguable. There is a clear relationship between the support of the School Heads and student achievement. The strength of the relationship underpins its importance. Hence it is crucial that the School Head is fully informed of the implementation of the PNET Scheme at the school, and this reinforces the recommendation for an internal reporting process between the NET, the English Panel and the School Head.

E. Professional development

It is clear from the data that the role of the AT in professional development is critical to the success of the PNET Scheme. There are several changes that need to be introduced to the approach and the scope of the professional development.

It is also clear that the variation within class in terms of student language proficiency is considerable. Within any class, students are spread over many levels. The field of language instruction has been aware for many years that proficiency levels are important information in determining what kind of teaching and resource allocation to use with instruction. The predominant approach to teaching and learning across the system, as described by the LETs in every year of the evaluation, is whole class instruction from a text book. This is not likely to succeed, with the variation within class so high in terms of achievement. Many times, the data have shown that the better students are developing and developing fast. There is also considerable evidence that students of low proficiency are not developing well, if at all. Some (almost 10%) have lost ground in terms of English language proficiency over the past three years.

These observations signal a need for a change in the mode of professional development and for a change in teaching practices. Text book dominated, whole class instruction must be replaced by targeted instruction aimed at the level of language where the student is ready to learn. The best estimate of their readiness to learn, (in Vygotskian terms) is their current proficiency level and the level immediately above. This has further implications.

Teachers must be aware of the proficiency level of their students, not their score on a competency test. Measures of the proficiency level of students, provided by training the teacher to use proficiency scales such as those in the *English Profiles* and directly interpretable from the *ITEL* test, are essential pieces of data that teachers must have available for every student. It is distressing to see a programme such as the PNET Scheme hampered by classroom teaching and learning strategies that make the assumption that “one size fits all,” when it is widely recognised and understood that this simply does not work.

The instruction and curriculum model proposed above needs to be implemented in conjunction with the UK effective schools approach, in order to provide a policy infrastructure at the school level and a professional development approach at the system level. The professional development, materials development and coaching, mentoring and collaboration must, without exception, focus on what the student is ready to learn, on the appropriate teaching intervention that will facilitate learning for students at each level of proficiency, the materials that link to the intervention and, from a system level, the overall resources and strategies that will enable this to be scaled up. Moreover this overall strategy needs to be communicated to all stakeholders, explained and demonstrated via the NETs and ATs. Mentoring by School Heads and ATs is an essential part of the improvement of language in Hong Kong.

It is clear that the NETs and ATs are having an effect on changing the English language curriculum. It *is* changing, and the students *are* learning. The NETs are received positively in most of the schools. The question posed for the evaluation, however, is how to improve an apparently successful system. A method for implementing change across multiple levels is illustrated in Figure 8.1.

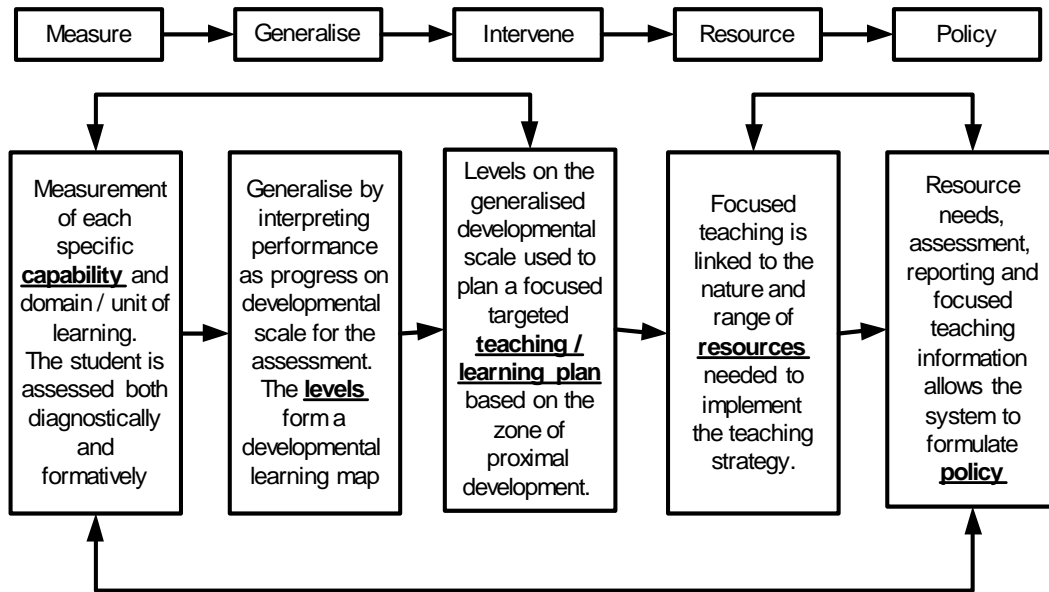


Figure 8.1. A Model of Change from Measurement to Policy.

Change to the curriculum involves, at a minimum, three approaches, as illustrated in Figure 8.2. In the language education programme there is a need to change the teaching and learning strategies, the assessment and reporting procedures and the curriculum and resources. If these are not changed, the chance of introducing sustainable change in the classroom is minimised. In the PNET Scheme, emphases are placed on teaching and learning and on curriculum and resources. There needs to be a shift in the assessment and reporting procedures, but perhaps this applies to the entire system. Regardless, reporting of language development must be done in terms of proficiency and not in terms of discrete skills or test scores. Then, once the change in reporting is achieved, the five step procedure outlined in Figure 8.1 can be implemented.

This procedure represents changes in curriculum. If a child's level of proficiency is known by the teacher, it makes little sense to teach the child at another level, to target teaching to the average level of the class. If the teaching intervention is focused at the level of language readiness, then the PNET Scheme and PLP-R resources can be matched to the child's readiness. The AT plays an important role in this strategy. Providing resources and demonstrations of how to use resources and materials, needs to be targeted to the language proficiency of students. Different interventions, even with the same materials, will be needed for children with different learning styles and different levels of

proficiency. If this is not done, the overall average of achievement may rise but it will be because of the more able students developing over time and through maturation. The weaker students will remain behind. There are many indications in the data and the report of the qualitative investigations that this is what is happening in many schools. The more able students are confident to approach the NET and are actively benefiting from interaction with the NET. The less able students are not able to take similar advantage of the presence of a NET in the school.

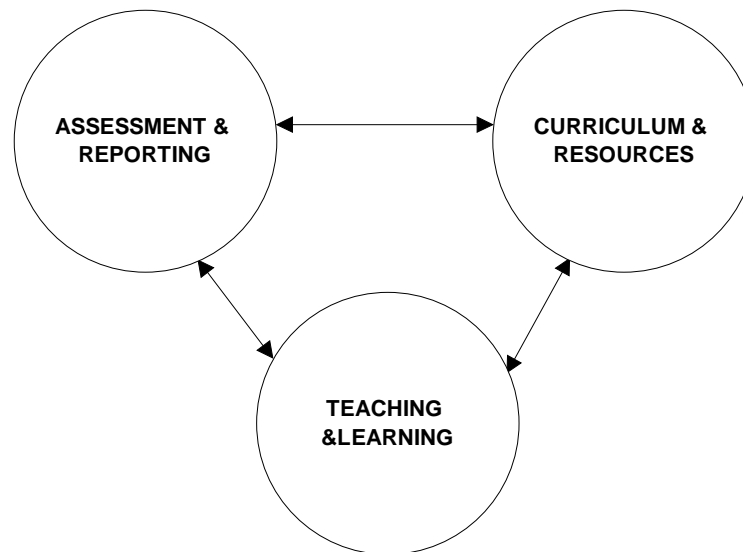


Figure 8.2. Approaches to curriculum change.

F. Program and System Management

There was evidence of importance placed on collaboration between NETs and LETs, and the level of collaboration was important in terms of outcomes for students. However, opportunities for NETs to work with individual LETs had diminished over the evaluation period, and this was linked to the size of the school, deployment of NETs in more than one school, and pressure to provide access to a NET to all students. This is an area that requires urgent attention and focused professional development for both LETS and NETS.

The largest impact of the PNET Scheme was observed for students at P1 level. There were diminishing returns after that for the Scheme, although overall student growth in language proficiency was increasing.

While student attitudes to learning and using English were stable across year levels and years of the evaluation study, it was clear that they were strongly related to proficiency in English. The direction of influence is not able to be discerned. However, there needs to be a concerted effort to improve attitudes towards learning English after P1. The stability suggests that:

- a. Attitudes are formed before students enter school
- b. Attitude development in schools is negligible.
- c. Those students with more positive attitudes are more likely to develop their English language proficiency.
- d. Methods of developing more positive attitudes are urgently needed, at least to the level of valuing the English language.

Concerted efforts are needed to encourage parents to support the use of English outside school. This would be part of the attitude development agenda.

Differences in the rate of students' development of proficiency in spoken English were stronger than in literacy skills, based on their opportunities to speak English outside school, perhaps because of a more general lack of opportunity to read and write in English outside school. This is an aspect that needs to be addressed through the school and the media to stress the importance of home support for English and for opportunities to practise.

G. Recommendations

1. Succession planning

How long the PNET Scheme can be sustained is unclear. If the Scheme can be improved to demonstrate clear gains in English language proficiency and attitudes for students, then it may be an investment with substantial returns for the Hong Kong SAR. In order to sustain the Scheme, improvements are mandatory.

- *An investigation is needed to identify the influence of immigration and the changing economic and ethnic profile of the community on the language goals of the SAR and on the curriculum in the schools.*

2. Collaboration and co teaching, co planning

The importance of collaboration between teachers, and support for collaboration, cannot be stressed strongly enough. The English Panel meetings have to become a central organisational and administrative platform for the implementation and monitoring of change in schools. If the Panel meetings are not dealing with academic matters related to the teaching of English, they should be. If they are conducted in a language other than English and exclude the NET, they must not. These meetings can have a profound influence on the success of the PNET Scheme.

- *English Panel meetings in NET schools must be attended by the NET. A standing item in the agenda must address the English curriculum and the teaching and learning program. The NET should report on activities conducted during the period between meetings, in terms of:*

- *the dissemination of professional development*
 - *new strategies for teaching English*
 - *co-planning activities and the practices implemented as a result*
 - *co-teaching strategies and mentoring that accompanied this practice*
 - *achievement monitoring of students following formal assessments*
 - *gains in language and evidence of shifts in attitudes*
 - *goals and strategies in development and that have been tried as methods to address language development*
 - *classroom management strategies that will aid improvement in every student, whether strong or weak in English*
 - *targeted use of teaching and learning materials and resources*
 - *theoretical underpinnings of approaches that have been trialled.*
- *A formal record of these English Panel discussions should be minuted and copies filed for the Panel, one copy sent to the School Head and one copy to the programme coordination unit.*
 - *Professional development is needed for the NETs in evaluation strategies aimed at monitoring and reporting to the English Panel meetings.*

3. Teaching

- *The deployment of the NET should be determined by the needs of the English programme in the school. It appears that in many schools the NET is regarded as a supplementary teaching resource. Deployment should be decided upon by the English Panel as a result of discussions and on going evaluation in collaboration with the Panel Chair and the School Head. The reasons for the deployment should be documented and reported through the accountability procedures recommended above.*

4. Variation in resource and strategies

It is tempting to recommend that the teaching resources in the classroom should be varied, because it is clear that high performing schools and classes use a wide range of teaching and learning resources. However, an unspecified increase in resource range may not achieve any more than normal gains. Using the same resources for all students in the class, regardless of proficiency or learning needs, may be counterproductive and would result in exactly the kind of increased variation in achievement levels as demonstrated in the study. The best students go ahead, the lower students are left behind. This is the situation in the achievement levels monitored in this evaluation.

- *Resources in English classes should be evaluated by the NET and the English Panel for their appropriateness to the proficiency level of the students and used in targeted teaching for groups of students across the proficiency range in the class.*

5. Assessment

Related to targeted intervention and use of resources is a change in the style of assessment. Links are needed with the Hong Kong project studying and developing school-based assessment. But strong lobbying is also required to ensure that the assessment leads to improvement in learning. This can only happen if the interpretation of the assessment data leads to a clear understanding of the students' readiness to learn and this is rarely the case when the interpretation is expressed as a number or test score.

- *Assessment strategies need to be competency-based and interpreted in terms of the language skills and attitudes that the student is ready to learn. NETS and local teachers need professional development in this form of assessment and its link to readiness to learn for students.*

6. Oral language opportunities for teachers and students

The importance of spoken English practice cannot be sufficiently stressed, but it needs an entire cultural change if such practice is to succeed. Teachers need opportunities to practise English and their proficiency needs to be monitored.

- *Classroom strategies that encourage student to student, student to teacher and teacher to teacher use of English need to be identified and made mandatory for classes, taking into account the different levels of proficiency of both the local teacher and the students. Immediate action is required in this regard and the role of the AT in identifying these strategies and providing the professional development is central to the success of these strategies.*
- *Local English teachers must be encouraged and rewarded for practising English. Prizes and awards for spoken English usage are needed. The Scheme's coordination unit should devise ways of monitoring the use of English and this must start with the language medium of the English Panel meetings involving the NET. Regardless of the difficulty encountered, English teachers must know how to speak the language and must be sufficiently professional that they will practise and act as role models to their students.*

7. Schools

Schools in the PNET Scheme must provide a structured and managed approach to the Scheme. Schools that nurture the Scheme and follow the ideals espoused in the effective schools research and apply these to their school, have been identified as successful in terms of improved student outcomes. School Heads need professional development in managing and supporting the PNET Scheme.

- *A group of School Heads from successful schools should be identified and invited to form a mentoring group for the overall Scheme and for other School Heads. These mentoring School Heads should form a working team, and provided support through discussion groups, leadership and school effectiveness programmes, professional reading programmes and mentor training.*

8. NETs

The NETs' role is pivotal to the programme. It is a complex role. The NET is responsible for collaboration with the LETs in at least one school and in many cases in more than one school. Some NETs need to interact with more than twenty teachers. The role involves co-teaching, co-planning, mentoring, planning professional development, and dissemination of strategies and materials. Most of the impact of the NET on the student is mediated through the LET despite the co-teaching role. The primary purpose of co-teaching is to help the LET to confidently and competently use innovative and effective strategies and materials in their own teaching. Accountability in terms of the role of the NET is not as defined as it might be.

- *The NET should be required to attend English Panel meetings, which must be scheduled for a time when the NET is present in the school to allow for the situation where the NET is shared across more than one school.*
- *At English Panel meetings the NET should be required to report on the topics documented in recommendation 2.*
- *As a result of these requirements, professional development should be provided for the NETs in evaluation strategies and evidence-based decision-making that would enable sound recommendations to be made to the Panel, the School Head and to the NET Section, EMB.*

9. LETs

The LET is the channel through which the impact of the NET, the AT and the PNET Scheme on teaching and learning is mediated. LETs are the major contact for the children learning English and form the most influential role model in the schools.

As such their behaviour, their use of language and their enthusiasm for English will undoubtedly influence the way the children respond to learning English. There is much to do in this regard.

- *The local English teacher must be sufficiently proficient in English to be able to participate effectively in meetings conducted in English.*

- *The local English teachers must speak English in front of the students at every opportunity and make sure that the quality of language demonstrates an appreciation and enthusiasm for speaking English.*
- *The local English teacher must attend professional development programmes both inside and outside the school and the programmes should be delivered by the NET and the AT. The School Head must allocate timetable space to allow both NET and LETs to attend professional development.*
- *The local English teacher should be required to report to the English Panel on the professional development, the co-planning and co-teaching activities, and on the use of innovative strategies and materials. Their reports should address staff development needs and effectiveness of each strategy and material use and ought to address student learning and be supported by verifiable evidence.*
- *LETs will need and should be given professional development in evidence-based decision-making and evaluation to enable accurate and defensible reporting of the effectiveness of strategies and materials introduced as part of the PNET Scheme.*

10. System

There is a range of matters that need to be addressed at the system level.

- *The ATs should target professional development to demonstrate developmental learning and targeted intervention.*
- *The system should define and implement an accountability procedure for PNET schools, NETs and LETs and this accountability should include procedures or reporting as set out in recommendation 2.*
- *Professional development should be provided to LETS and resources made available for this strategy. This requires a shift in professional development as outlined above.*
- *The emphasis on development of new materials might be diminished, and increased attention given to how materials can be used for different students at specific levels of English proficiency.*

11. Professional development

- *Professional development for LETs and NETs must emphasise the targeting of instructional intervention in the classroom and emphasise targeted instruction and evaluation.*

- *Professional development should be provided to the ATS and the NETs on how targeted intervention can be implemented and evaluated; this professional development can take the form of professional reading and discussion groups facilitated by senior staff in the coordination unit.*

12. *School Heads*

- *Professional development is needed for School Heads via a form of mentoring on how to successfully manage the PNET Scheme, induct a NET, evaluate the impact on the students and report to the coordination unit.*

13. *Long term strategy for PNET Scheme*

- *The Education and Manpower Bureau should set out strategies for the PNET Scheme over three, five and 20 years and means of evaluating the Scheme. There may not be any need for further intensive studies such as this evaluation, if the ongoing accountability procedures outlined in these recommendations are implemented.*

14. *System monitoring*

- *Methods of collecting, collating, analysing, interpreting and reporting the accountability cycle information should be developed and documented.*
- *Reporting guidelines for NETs, LETs and School Heads need to be set out and disseminated with appropriate training for each of these groups.*

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