

ACTA Background Papers No. 3

The Distinctiveness of English as an Additional Language: a Cross-curriculum discipline

A handbook for all teachers

A paper prepared by the National Association for Language
Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC), ACTA's sister association
in the United Kingdom.
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Dr. Penny McKay	ACTA President
Colleen Combe	ACTA Vice President
Jacinta Webb	ACTA Secretary
Laura Commins	ACTA Executive Officer
Members of the 1999 ACTA Council and other TESOL colleagues	

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Contact details for enquires regarding this publication can be found on the ACTA website:

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ACTA President's Foreword

I have very great pleasure in establishing a link between ACTA and our sister association, the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) through the publication of this NALDIC Working Paper as an ACTA Background Paper.

Our NALDIC colleagues have very generously given permission for ACTA to reprint and distribute Working Paper 5 *The Distinctiveness of EAL: a cross-curriculum discipline* through ACTA. I would like to thank the Chair of NALDIC, Helen Abji, the Editor of this paper, Hugh South, and the contributors to the paper for their willingness to share their work with ACTA members.

NALDIC is introduced in the Notes on Contributors on the following page. It is an association which was set up in relatively recent years to represent the views of ESL teachers and the needs of ESL learners in schools in the U.K. It may surprise ACTA members to hear that the ESL profession in the U.K. has been much less supported by funding for teaching and research than we have in Australia in the past. Access to the National Curriculum is decreed as an 'entitlement' for all; this has meant that many arguments for ESL teaching have been able to be rejected as discriminatory since they lead to 'reduced access'.

In past years, our U.K. colleagues have looked across to Australia with some envy, as we have expounded on our highly professional and well organised ESL programs, our language policies and our research programs. Unfortunately, now we too find ourselves in a defensive position in Australia, brought about by a similar mainstreaming initiative, where literacy becomes the 'entitlement' and the measure of accountability leading to a threatened sidelining or 'outstreaming' of the ESL profession and ESL learners.

The NALDIC paper was written firstly in relation to ESL students in schools, as this is the primary learner group of NALDIC. However, since most of the paper presents a theoretical perspective, it will also be valuable as a reference and guide (particularly as a framework for future work) for ACTA members in the adult sector.

The publication of this paper through NALDIC reflects the continuing efforts in the U.K. to present principled justification and clear articulation of arguments for the need for ESL teaching. We now join the U.K. in that need, and welcome the opportunity to take advantage of their work. We will be able to build on the groundwork done by NALDIC. We hope that this publication will be the beginning of continued sharing of ideas and publications between ESL professionals in our two countries.

Dr. Penny McKay,

President, Australian Council of TESOL Associations

Notes on Contributors

The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum is a professional organisation for those concerned with the achievement of bilingual pupils.

NALDIC's aims include:

(i) the dissemination of information:

- current developments in the fields of English as an additional language (EAL) and bilingualism;
- language teaching and learning across the curriculum drawing on the practice of colleagues working with pupils of all ages and backgrounds;

(ii) representing the views of teachers and other professionals on educational issues which affect the teaching and learning of bilingual pupils.

NALDIC Working Papers are produced from time to time by working groups of members in response to current issues within the Association's areas of educational interest. They are intended to influence policy and practice and to disseminate information to a wide audience. This audience includes class and subject teachers, EAL specialists, senior staff in schools and local authorities, and inspectors and advisers.

This Working Paper, *The Distinctiveness of English as an Additional Language: a cross-curriculum discipline*, arose from discussion in a NALDIC seminar group, was developed through the collaboration of a working group of members, and completed following consultation with the NALDIC General Council in July 1999. We would like to thank all those who contributed to the process. In particular we wish to acknowledge members who contributed to generating the text:

Helen Abji

Lynne Hannigan

Constant Leung

Carrie Cable

Gillian Humble

Hugh South

Anna Chapman

Ian Jones

Amy Thompson

Charlotte Franson

Cressida Jupp

Manny Vazquez

Edited by Hugh South

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum

NALDIC

Working for Pupils with English as an Additional Language

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE: a cross-curriculum discipline

Introduction

The twentieth century has seen significant global movements of communities, which have had important effects on teaching and learning in schools, colleges and universities. In the UK there are many pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL), and their future achievement in the education system will be critically determined by their success in learning English. Responding to the learning needs of bilingual pupils depends upon taking account of four main factors which define their situation as learners:

- the process of learning a second or additional language;
- cognitive development which is closely related to first language development;
- socio-cultural background;
- the learning context.

English as an additional language (EAL) is concerned with all four factors. It is situated within mainstream education but it is also a distinct area of education. This handbook attempts to set out the parameters within which it is possible to see clearly what is 'distinctive' about EAL.¹

In the past EAL (or ESL²) has been regarded as a defined 'subject' in education in this country, and it continues to be viewed in this way in some other countries. However, the recent conceptualisation of EAL in England has not brought about a clear understanding of what it represents. In the current context EAL needs to be more widely understood and recognised as a significant field of teaching and learning which is responsive to the learning needs of more than 500,000 bilingual pupils in the school population. This is vitally important for giving recognition to the distinct position of bilingual pupils, for improving their achievement, and for the future of the professional focus on EAL.

EAL is primarily about teaching and learning language through the content of the whole curriculum. As currently conceptualised, it takes place within the mainstream and within all subjects. This makes it more difficult to recognise as a distinct area of education. EAL has a knowledge base from theory and research, and it has its own principled strategies for teaching in the mainstream context which promote language learning alongside content learning. EAL teaching has natural affiliations with English teaching as a mainstream subject, with modern foreign language teaching, and with English as a foreign language teaching, each of which are discrete subject areas, but EAL pedagogy is applied in all areas of the curriculum. The learning of English for pupils with EAL takes place as much in science, mathematics, humanities and the arts as it does in 'subject' English. It also takes place within the 'hidden curriculum', and beyond the school it is affected by attitudes to race and culture in the wider society.

¹ The handbook does not attempt to address the related issues of first language provision, bilingualism, or race equality. However it is important to recognise that although the focus here is on EAL, these issues are crucial aspects of the context for teaching and learning EAL.

² English as a second language (ESL) implies a knowledge of a 'first' language only, in addition to English, whereas EAL acknowledges that pupils may have a knowledge of more than one other home or community language.

NALDIC believes that everyone involved in education should have an understanding of what is distinctive about EAL. The 'visibility' of EAL as a field of education is closely linked to the 'visibility' of bilingual children. If the distinctiveness of the field of EAL is not recognised, the quality of provision for bilingual pupils will deteriorate; if there is a loss of focus on what is distinctive about their educational needs, they will become increasingly 'invisible' in the education system.

The sections of this handbook provide different perspectives on EAL as a field of education and, as a whole, they reflect the relationship between theory and practice. They define the knowledge base, focus on the range of learners, provide a perspective on the task that faces the EAL learner, set out teaching strategies that have been established by practitioners, and summarise some key theoretical perspectives that have been influential. Each section is intended to have independent validity while at the same time being complementary.

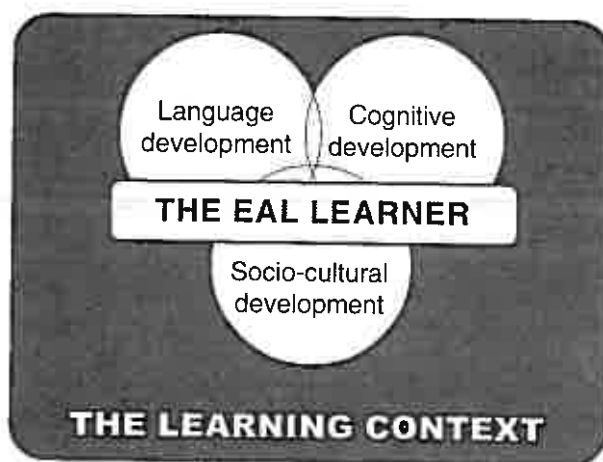
This handbook is addressed not only to educators who teach bilingual pupils but to all teachers, since an understanding of bilingualism and EAL should be a part of every teacher's professional knowledge. It should therefore be accessible to students in initial teacher training courses. It is intended to provide a framework for extending teachers' understanding and to serve as an essential reference point for continuing professional development. We hope that it will be widely used by schools, LEAs and teacher training institutions.

The Learner of EAL and The Field Of EAL: A Conceptual Model

One of the aims of this handbook is to show that there is an active relationship between theory, research and practice. Teaching EAL learners requires more than common sense and experience: questions about learners and classroom problems cannot always be easily answered. Such questions lead to research and the development of hypotheses and theories about why and how EAL pupils learn in certain ways. At the same time, theories in other related fields (for example, a theory of grammar in linguistics) may have a particular significance for the field of second/additional language education. This is the cross-disciplinary background to EAL teaching and learning which ultimately influences both practice and policy.

The introduction referred to the main factors which define the learning situation for pupils with EAL. The conceptual model below brings these factors together.

The learner of EAL and the field of EAL: a conceptual model



One way of thinking about the learning situation for pupils with EAL is to consider the learner in relation to the three areas defined by the circles. The process of learning a second or additional language is related to the pupil's cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural development. These processes interact within a particular learning context, the classroom, which is in turn influenced by wider community and societal factors. At the heart of the process is the individual learner with his or her unique personality and individual intellectual and emotional strengths. All of these factors influence the learning process. Pupils' existing and developing social and cultural experience, for example, will affect progress in their learning of a new language. **Language development** includes first language development and this will have a significant impact on second language learning and on cognitive development. **The learner** embraces the many different characteristics of EAL learners (which are further set out in Section 3), and includes first language knowledge and development³. **The learning context** is primarily to do with the influence of teaching and learning in the classroom, but it is also incorporates ways in which provision for EAL and attitudes towards pupils learning EAL are reflected in the school as a whole, and in the wider society beyond school. Critically, if pupils' identities and their existing knowledge and experience are undermined through their social and institutional experience, their learning will also be undermined. Educators should see their roles "in terms of promoting social justice and equality of opportunity" (Cummins 1996: 164). Successful provision for EAL needs to take place in a school context which effectively addresses race equality issues.

The diagram also provides a framework for thinking about the contribution which theory has made to EAL as a field of education. Again, the learner can be considered in relation to the three main domains: linguistic, cognitive and socio-cultural. At the centre of the learning process is the individual learner, and the process is located within a particular context.

These domains of knowledge are inter-related and studies reflect different emphases and perspectives. Within each domain there are different theoretical positions which have influenced the ways educators have viewed and responded to learners. For example, within the different general approaches to language, systemic functional linguistics emphasises the importance of social interaction rather than the formal linguistic system in isolation. In this approach, language users are regarded as social beings and meaning is generated through social interaction. Language and literacy forms are viewed as ways of realising meaning in systematic ways within specific social contexts. This has been an influential approach within the applied linguistics field.

The model used in the diagram above, whether it is viewed in relation to the learning process or to EAL as a field of education, informs the whole of this document. In setting out what is distinctive about EAL, the position taken is that it is a defined and established field of study. At the same time it is important to recognise that it relates to other disciplines. Before focusing on the pupils, and on teaching and learning, some of the key related fields of study are set out in the next section.

³ The focus of this booklet is on EAL. However learning a second/additional language cannot be separated from first language knowledge and development which is of critical importance.

NALDIC Working Paper 3: *Guidelines on Bilingualism* sets out principles and implications for bilingualism and first language development.

The Knowledge Base for EAL

EAL/ESL is a recognised discipline which draws on several fields of study.

These include:

- Bilingualism
- Second Language Acquisition (SLA)
- Linguistics
- Cognitive Psychology
- Social and Cultural Ethnography
- Curriculum Studies
- Theories of Teaching and Learning
- Language Assessment and Testing

This section provides some examples of ways in which EAL has drawn on these different fields of study.

From **bilingualism** we know that:

- the learner is able to draw on existing knowledge of language;
- first language development supports the learning of the second or additional language;
- second and additional language learning outcomes are influenced by age, first language development, and types of educational provision;
- second and additional language learning has similarities with the process of first language learning, but important differences in the process arise from the learning context; for example, bilingual pupils may use their second language in innovative and different ways (interlanguage⁴).

From second language acquisition we know that:

- the age of the learner impacts on aspects of second language learning differently;
- accessing prior learning acquired through the first language is important;
- although learners may acquire fluency in conversational English quite quickly (approximately 2 years), it takes much longer (7 years or more) to acquire the level of proficiency in academic English which is required for learning and production within the school curriculum.

From **linguistics** we know:

- how rules of grammar and meanings are related;
- how grammar works;
- how discourse functions in different contexts.

⁴ Interlanguage is a term used to take account of ways in which second language learners generate their own forms as they attempt to realise proficiency in the target language. It has been shown that this language has systematic rules and is dynamic, evolving over time. A similar process takes place in first language acquisition but age, first language development, knowledge and the learning context mean that the use of interlanguage in the learning process will be different for second language learners.

From cognitive psychology we know:

- that individuals have different learning styles;
- about the strategies that learners use to process information for language learning;
- about the communication strategies that learners use.

From social and cultural ethnography we know:

- how communities use language in different ways;
- how learning a language is part of wider social and cultural learning;
- that cultures are dynamic.

From **curriculum studies** we learn to ask:

- what should be the content of additional language learning;
- how such learning is related to broader social and educational goals.

From theories of teaching and learning we learn to ask:

- how different teaching approaches influence learning;
- how learning may be accomplished in different ways;
- how planning and classroom organisation may take account of the EAL learner.

From language assessment and testing we learn to ask:

- what should be assessed and how it should be assessed;
- what progression in learning may be expected of pupils with EAL and how this can be delineated;
- how to distinguish between the progress and attainments of pupils learning EAL and those pupils with SEN who may also be learning EAL.

As in all fields of study, understanding gained from these related disciplines helps to generate the core knowledge base which defines EAL as a distinct discipline. This is constantly being refined and developed through the interaction of classroom practice, research studies, and theoretical developments in EAL and bilingualism.

The Pupils Learning EAL

Pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) share many common characteristics with pupils whose mother tongue is English, and many of their learning needs are similar to those of other children and young people learning in our schools. However, these pupils also have **distinct and different needs** from other pupils by virtue of the fact that they are learning in and through another language, and that they come from cultural backgrounds and communities with different understandings and expectations of education, language and learning. This section sets out some of the variables.

A number of factors will have an impact on the development of pupils' language skills and their ability to apply these skills to their learning across the curriculum:

- the age at which pupils enter the educational system;
- their previous experience of schooling and literacy in their first language;

- their knowledge and understanding of languages and of school curriculum content;
- schools' responses to home and community expectations and understanding of the education system;
- support structures for learning and language development at home and at school.

Pupils with English as an additional language are not a homogeneous group.

- Some pupils are born in the UK but enter school speaking little or no English and have limited or no experience of literacy in their first language.
- Some pupils are born in the UK but enter school speaking little or no English. However, they have some experience of literacy in their first languages.
- Some pupils start school in the UK between the ages of 5 and 16 without literacy or oracy skills in English but with age equivalent skills in literacy and oracy in their first languages, and sometimes in other languages as well.
- Some pupils enter the school system between the ages of 5 and 16 without literacy or oracy skills in English and with limited or no literacy skills in their first language due to disrupted schooling.
- In addition some pupils have suffered emotional and psychological trauma as a result of family loss or social and economic disruption to their lives in their countries of origin.

What can we say about pupils learning EAL in our schools?

Learners may:

- have varied cultural, social and economic backgrounds;
- have varying levels and kinds of school experience;
- have an established basis in learning EAL on which to build further progression;
- have different expectations of schooling and education;
- have had disrupted or little formal education;
- have had varying experience of using and hearing English;
- be born in the UK, arrive before formal schooling begins or arrive later;
- come from established or new communities;
- be isolated, refugees or be with other members of the same language/cultural/ethnic group;
- have experienced racism;
- have experienced trauma, mental or physical ill health.

Learners may:

- speak and read and/or write different languages for different purposes;
- have knowledge of more than one language system;
- be literate in one or more languages;
- be new to the Roman script;
- feel positive, negative, confident, or sensitive about their other languages;
- make links between prior learning and new learning.

Learners may:

- be at different stages in terms of English language proficiency;
- have acquired other languages before beginning to acquire English;
- have begun to acquire another language prior to acquiring English;
- be learning another language at the same time as learning English.

Learners will be using English:

- to communicate socially;
- to construct relationships;
- to understand systems and procedures (including the cultural rules of the classroom and school life);
- to develop conceptual knowledge;
- to construct and explore ideas;
- to make links with prior learning;
- to access other learning across the curriculum;
- to negotiate meaning.

Learners differ in terms of:

- motivation;
- home support and facilities;
- perceptions of themselves as learners;
- learning styles.

Pupil learning will be influenced by:

- the school's knowledge and understanding of their previous experience and learning and how it enables them to make use of this;
- the implementation of the school's policy and practice for race equality;
- the school's provision of a physically and socially safe and non-threatening learning environment;
- teachers' knowledge and understanding of second / additional language development;
- teachers' ability to assess individual needs and plan for individual language learning;
- teachers' ability to integrate the teaching of language and curriculum content;
- teachers' ability to motivate pupils and support the lengthy process of second/additional language learning.

Both within and across communities there will be different understandings of:

- the purposes of education;
- what constitutes literacy;

- the role of parents in relation to education;
- the role of the school;
- home/school relationships.

Teachers and educational policy makers need to be aware of the range of variables outlined in this section in relation to both individual learners and groups. These variables will also be significant when interpreting the overall task which learning EAL entails which is outlined in the next section.

The Distinctiveness of the Learner's Task

The previous section set out a range of variables in the learners. However, it is also helpful to conceptualise the overall, 'macro' task for pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL). This section describes this task which is central to an understanding of what is distinctive about EAL within education. It is very important that policy, planning and teaching decisions at all levels always take account of the task for the learner. Yet it is easy to lose sight of the learner's perspective. There are two main reasons for this.

1. Once pupils learning EAL have acquired a very basic communicative competence, it is easy to assume that their understanding of English and engagement in learning is much greater than it actually is.
2. Pupils with EAL are learning in mainstream classrooms where the needs of all pupils have to be met. It is not always possible for teachers to take account of the distinctive learning situation of pupils learning EAL. If EAL were a separate subject (like a modern foreign language) the *raison d'être* for the class would clearly be learning a language; this is less clear for pupils with EAL in the mainstream context. Neither the adults attending a language class in an FE institution nor their teachers are likely to forget either the purpose or the difficulty of their task. Yet in the context of the mainstream classroom, the EAL learner's task can easily be forgotten.

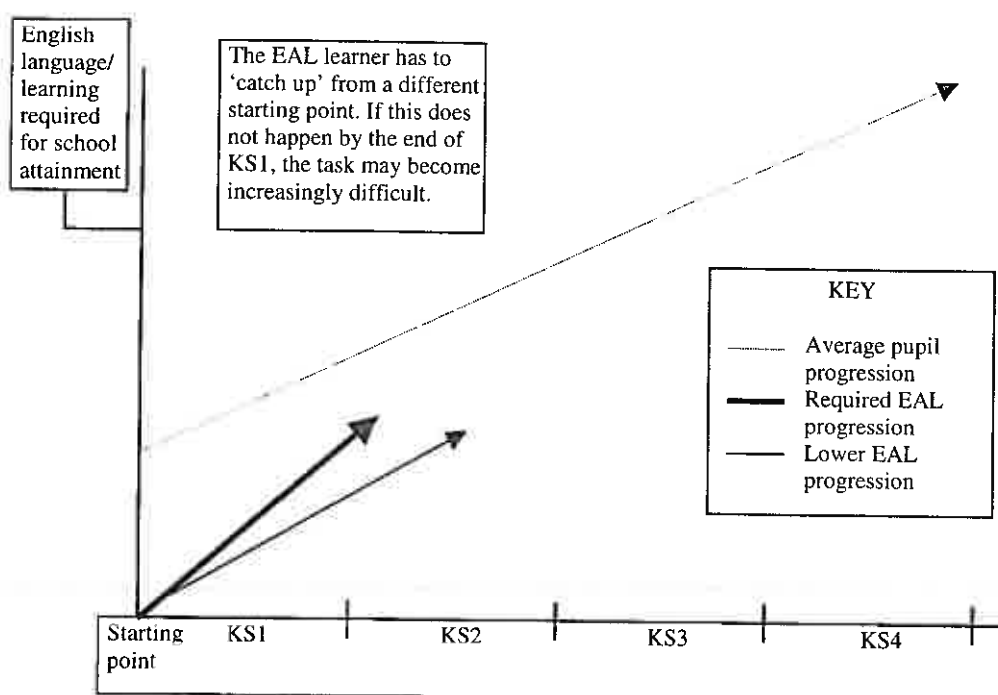
How can the EAL learner's task be conceptualised? It will vary from individual to individual, depending on such factors as age, educational and cultural background, and socio-economic status. However, by taking an example it is possible to highlight common factors and enable variables to be more clearly identified.

Sabeela - a four year old Urdu speaker entering school

There are many children starting their formal education in the nursery or reception class who come from settled communities (for example, from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds) and who are at the earliest stage of learning English. Let us assume that such a child is called Sabeela. What is the task that faces her?

We know that nearly all children have made remarkable progress in learning their mother tongue by the time they are five years old. It is a level of language development that is assumed to be in place for educators to build on. It has taken place for Sabeela too, but for her it is in a language which is not used in school. So, as the following diagram shows, her starting point is different.

Starting school - the EAL learner's task



Sabeela's primary task is to learn English. At the same time she will need to:

- engage in learning through the curriculum;
- go through the daunting process of learning to socialise with children in the language she has yet to learn;
- learn the social practices of the classroom and the school which are culturally embedded.

These are likely to be far less consistent with her home background than for the majority of children.

We also know how important the Early Years are for children's cognitive development. Much of the significant growth in the acquisition of new concepts occurs through children's knowledge of language. However, the linguistic basis of much of this new learning is not accessible to Sabeela. At the same time, the use of her mother tongue is likely to be increasingly unavailable to her in the school setting so that the language which has so far been a central aspect of her development as a normal child in the home will have little significance for her as a learning tool in school. In terms of the educational setting, she may be effectively cut off from the cultural and cognitive content already established through her mother tongue and which has shaped her identity. Her school experience will radically alter this identity.

So Sabeela's immediate task is to be able to learn when the most significant means for learning, her mother tongue, is in large part inaccessible to her. More than this, her task is to 'catch up' in English with the other children quickly. If she manages to approximate to this level by the end of Key Stage 1, she may do well in the education system, although it is important to remember that her development in English will not be complete at this stage and will require continuing support. But if she fails to make sufficient progress by this time, her task is likely to

become more difficult because the demands of the curriculum depend increasingly on literacy skills in English, and on the knowledge which the children have acquired in school. And 'catching up' is basically **her** problem. No-one waits. The curriculum moves on. Sabeela is faced with a **moving target**.

This example has highlighted the task facing the EAL learner:

- to progress from a radically different starting point from other children;
- to learn a new language;
- to learn the curriculum in a new language;
- to acquire the appropriate social skills;
- to accommodate the new language, values, culture and expectations alongside the existing ones she has learned at home.

This has to be achieved in a relatively short time, and attainment will be measured against a constantly moving goal or target. Relative to the learning task that faces the majority of children, this is clearly a 'distinctive' task.

Similar diagrams could represent the task for pupils at different ages. For older pupils who enter the education system with different home and educational experiences, the task will vary. The school curriculum increasingly requires an understanding of abstract concepts, relying heavily on previous knowledge, literacy skills and an ability to work independently. Learning will tend to have less contextual and interactive support than for a child of Sabeela's age. But whatever the age of the pupil's entry into school, the distinctive nature of the EAL learner's task is to 'catch up' with a moving target by engaging in learning an additional language simultaneously with learning the curriculum content, skills and concepts. In addition, while rates of progress will depend on the range of variables shown in Section 3, the learning and social context within the school will play a part in making the task easier or harder⁵.

Mapping the 'macro task' from the EAL learners' perspective, taking account of their starting points, will help teachers to understand the learner's situation and to plan teaching strategies which are appropriate for pupils learning EAL. This is the focus of the next section.

The Distinctiveness of EAL Pedagogy

English as an additional language (EAL) pedagogy is the set of systematic teaching approaches which have evolved from classroom based practices in conjunction with the development of knowledge through theoretical and research perspectives. These approaches meet the language and learning needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. They can be used in a wide range of different teaching contexts.

EAL pedagogy is therefore about using strategies to support English language development and learning **in context**. It is also about teaching EAL and it therefore has its own content demand. This means not only different classroom contexts, but also the wide range of factors which the pupils bring to the learning situation and which influence it. These include level of English, prior knowledge, age, socio-economic and cultural background, literacy in and

⁵ See Section 3 for a list of key school factors which pupil learning depends upon.

knowledge of L1, motivation and attitude to learning, learning style and identity. These are all specific to the learner's situation and define it as distinctive.

EAL pedagogy recognises the need for pupils to be able to use the additional language for both social and academic purposes. It acknowledges the time taken for all learners to gain fluency in the spoken and written language of the academic curriculum, whilst taking into account the need for pupils to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding of all curriculum subjects.

Teachers who have knowledge of specific EAL teaching and learning strategies, whether they are specialists or class/subject teachers, will:

- understand progression in second/additional language learning;
- be able to assess pupils' understanding of curriculum content and use this information in their planning;
- draw on pupils' bicultural and bilingual knowledge and experience;
- incorporate first language knowledge and use appropriate staff resources where available;
- take account of the variables that apply in different contexts, and capitalise on the potential for working in partnership with their mainstream/specialist colleagues.

This section sets out:

- five principles which underpin the concept of good practice for pupils learning EAL;
- a planning framework to show the relationship between core and additional planning required for pupils learning EAL;
- a commentary on the framework diagram including strategies that will support learning.

Principles which underpin good practice for pupils learning EAL

1. Activating prior knowledge in the pupil.

Rationale

Bilingual pupils' experiences will vary, as will their use of English and knowledge of culturally specific frameworks for learning. Learning involves integrating new information ('input') into their existing mental model of the world (or schema⁶). In second/additional language learning, prior knowledge of content and language plays a major role in helping to make second language input comprehensible.

Examples

Finding out what pupils know about a topic through questioning, supporting self-monitoring and using KWL⁷ charts, brainstorming in small groups or pairs, discovery tasks, enabling use of home language.

⁶ See Section 6 for an example of the relevance of schema theory and literacy development.

⁷ Pupils first list what they already **know** about a topic, then what they **want** to find out, and when they have completed the topic, they record what they have **learned**.

2. The provision of a rich contextual background to make the input comprehensible.

Rationale

Pupils learning EAL require opportunities to draw on additional contextual support to make sense of new information and language. Content learning for pupils learning EAL can be greatly improved through the use of visual support. This can help learners to conceptualise learning tasks that are being presented to them, or in which they are engaged, even when their knowledge of the target language is limited.

Examples

There is a distinct difference between a visual aid (for example, a picture of a frog) and 'key visuals'⁸(for example, a diagram of the life cycle of a frog). Key visuals or graphic organisers are linked to tasks which support the development of conceptual and language knowledge. They provide a summary of information but they also show a structure for the information. They also offer opportunities for pupils to engage in active learning experiences. Visual support and graphic organisers might include: maps, diagrams, charts, tables, semantic webs, graphs, timelines, outlines of causal sequences, videos, computer graphics, web pages etc.

3. Actively encouraging comprehensible output.

Rationale

Learners are actively encouraged to produce spoken and written language from an early stage of the lesson(s) onwards. This is important for both cognitive and linguistic development. The active use of language provides opportunities for learners to be more conscious of their language use, and to process language at a deeper level. It also brings home to both learner and teacher those aspects of language which will require additional attention.

Examples

Using peer tutoring, collaborative learning, drama and role play, opportunities for scaffolded teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interaction, questioning strategies, using oral feedback to move learners towards the forms of language used in writing, scaffolded writing activities.

4. Drawing the learner's attention to the relationship between form and function; making key grammatical elements explicit.

Rationale

Whatever language is needed to talk about the content, it should be used in ways that allow learners to take note of the language itself. Attention should be drawn to language and how it is used to express the content knowledge. This can mean explicit comment on forms, structures

⁸ A term borrowed from the work of Mohan. See Section 6 for further discussion.

and functions of the language that is used to convey the content, as well as in more indirect ways of calling attention to language.

Examples

Drawing attention to the grammatical forms used to recall past events or to ways of expressing doubt (e.g. 'may' and 'might') in texts, modelling and extending their use, and providing opportunities for practice; talking about ways of expressing politeness when asking for something; noting how paragraphs present information in different subjects and how subtitles are used.

5. Developing learner independence.

Rationale

Learners need increasingly to become more independent in their use of a range of learning strategies, drawing on metacognitive (e.g. organisational planning), cognitive (e.g. grouping/classifying) and social-affective (e.g. co-operation) awareness. The teacher has a key role in encouraging pupil independence through the selection of planned activities, and by assisting learners to apply strategies which develop self-reliance.

Examples

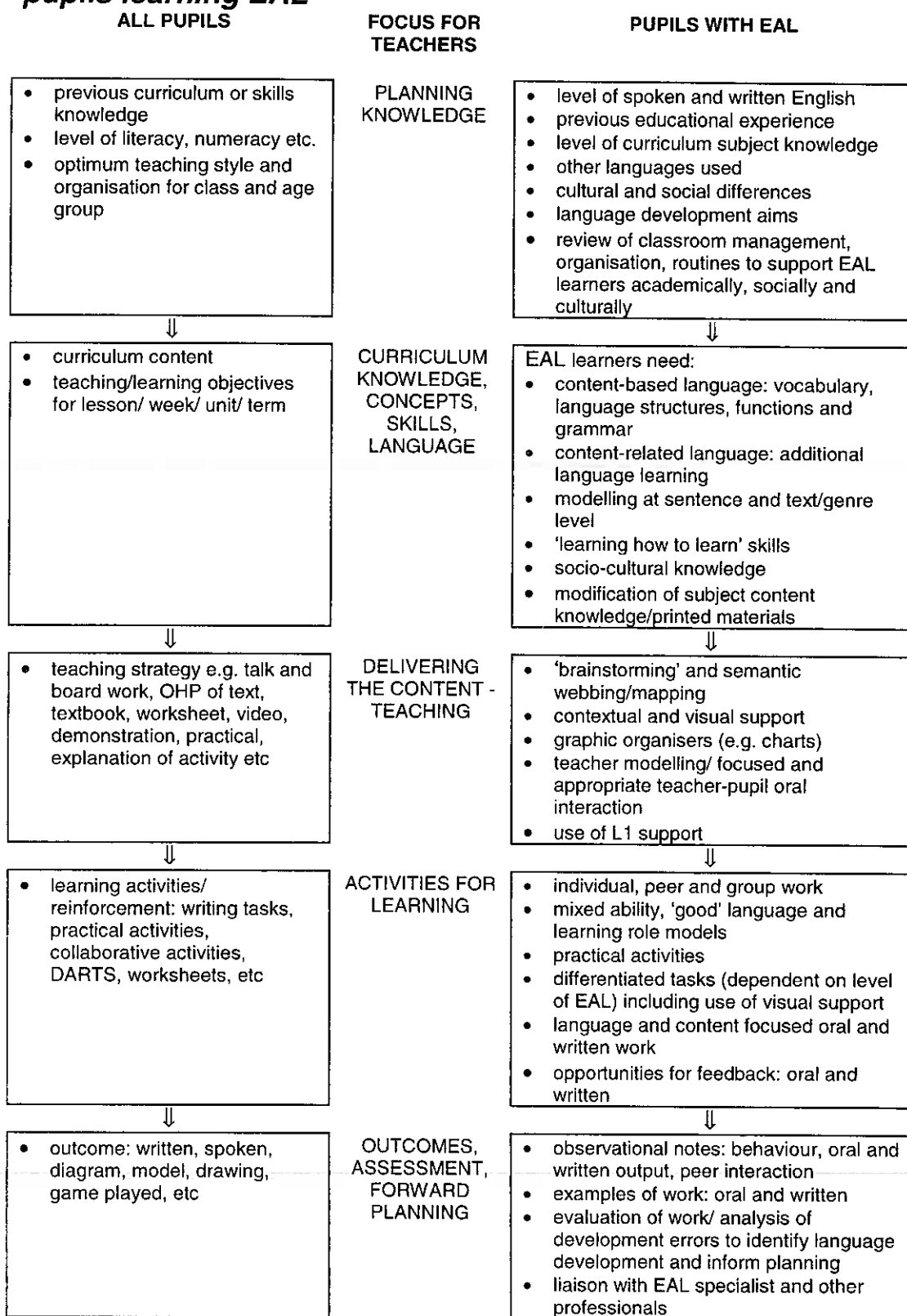
Providing opportunities to model and extend what has been taught; scanning texts to look at sub-headings and diagrams prior to reading; using diagrams to demonstrate knowledge; using dictogloss⁹; note-taking; teaching study skills.

Planning and teaching which takes account of pupils learning EAL

The diagram on the next page outlines the stages of planning and delivery which take place over a lesson or series of lessons. The left side shows the core teaching and learning decisions; on the right is the added dimension of expanded planning for the EAL learners. The distinctiveness comes not only from the type of learning strategies, but also from the breadth of strategies that the teacher needs to draw on.

⁹ The teacher reads a short text which the pupils reconstruct from notes they have made and using cues from the surrounding text.

Planning and teaching framework which takes account of pupils learning EAL



Explanation of the framework diagram

Planning knowledge

Effective practice for EAL learners is based on:

- knowledge of the background experience and language profile of the EAL pupil to identify variables;
- knowledge and understanding of pupils' prior knowledge or level of skills;
- knowledge of school policies on the teaching of EAL pupils¹⁰;
- understanding of a range of teaching and learning styles;
- ability to analyse language and cognitive demands of lesson contents for EAL learners, and an understanding of how they can be used to promote language as well as content learning;
- high expectations;
- an understanding of expected progression and appropriate targets.

Curriculum knowledge, concepts, skills, language to be taught in lesson/week/unit/term

In all cases where EAL pupils are in mainstream classes, knowledge and skills to be taught are determined by:

- long and medium term curriculum planning within the National Curriculum;
- previous formative assessment of pupils' progress.

PLUS for EAL pupils in particular:

- long and medium term language planning, determined by the level of English of pupils in the class;
- short term goals, informed by formative assessment of pupil progress in EAL;
- the language demands of content at vocabulary, syntax and discourse levels, and embedded, contextualised meanings;
- the social and cultural contexts related to learning and the curriculum content, and pupils' ability to use appropriate strategies;
- the development of independence by explicit teaching of learning strategies;
- experiential learning (for younger pupils) or other ways of providing contexts which support understanding and engagement.

¹⁰ See SCAA (1996) *Teaching English as an Additional Language: A Framework for Policy*. Page 5

Delivering the content

Teachers have a wide range of teaching strategies to select from. For pupils learning EAL the following may be particularly helpful:

- scaffolding (oral or written) as a step to independence in the planned phasing of lesson input, for example through the use of writing frames, statement banks and oral frameworks;
- exploiting previously used language to activate prior knowledge and link to pupils' experience; using brainstorming, discovery tasks, questioning and KWL techniques;
- providing rich contextual support for understanding through experiential activities (including games), visual support including *realia*, artefacts, video, charts etc;
- use of key visuals or graphic organisers to present curriculum concepts or knowledge with reduced language input;
- the integration of speaking/ listening/ reading/ writing in English, using one language skill to support/reinforce another;
- judicious use of L1 (oral and written) for content learning, discussion and the development of new concepts;
- talk and interactive questioning, supported by board-work, diagrams, OHP, IT, etc;
- modelling the use of the key language features;
- using oral strategies such as questioning, repetition, and remodelling to support pupil use of this key language;
- using different forms of questioning - closed and open, concrete and abstract, and higher order questions;
- use of culturally accessible learning materials;
- demonstration.

Activities for learning

Learning activities enable pupils to actively engage with the knowledge, skills and understanding that are the focus for the lesson. Activities will depend on the age of pupils, previous learning, lesson objectives and time available. A wide range of tasks may be used requiring the use of some, or all, of the four language skills.

For pupils learning EAL it will be important to consider:

- encouraging the active use of new language in context (through collaborative activities in pairs and groups, planned grouping to provide good models of language use, opportunities to plan and rehearse feed-back, drama and role play, questioning/response/recording activities);
- drawing attention to features of written English by working with DARTS-type activities. Directed activities related to text (DARTS¹¹) encourage active reflective reading with opportunities for feedback. They are based on two types of reading activities: reconstruction

¹¹ For further information about the use of DARTS see Davies, F. and Green, T. (1984)

or completion activities and analysis activities. Examples include text completion, sequencing, prediction, diagram completion or construction, text marking, labelling, matching sentence halves, true-false statements, making summaries, segmenting text. They can be used to draw attention to the relationship between language function and form;

- opportunities to draw on previous understanding and experience;
- encouraging use of home and community language for content learning, discussion and the development of new concepts;
- providing scaffolding (e.g. oral frameworks, writing frames, sentence banks) to support learner independence and to model the language to be learnt and practised.

Outcomes

Pupils' responses to classroom tasks are a particularly important means for teachers to:

- draw together the learning that has taken place;
- provide additional reinforcement if necessary;
- gain information for formative assessment purposes;
- focus on future learning.

For pupils learning EAL they also provide opportunities to:

- plan supported oral feedback, which recognises and encourages the use of the targetted language objectives, and which also recognises that a written outcome may not reflect the pupils' full understanding of the topic;
- recognise the quality of participation and achievement in a way which reflects an understanding of the nature of the task for the EAL learner;
- use outcomes and feed-back to focus on future work and to encourage motivation;
- assess language learning as well as content learning and task completion in accordance with appropriate EAL assessment procedures.

Frequently Asked Questions: Theoretical Perspectives which Inform Practice

One of the aims of this handbook is to highlight the relationship between theory and practice. Section 1 provided a conceptual model for considering the learner of English as an additional language (EAL) and also the field of EAL; Section 2 delineated the key fields of study which have informed EAL as a field of education; Section 5 focussed on practice by outlining some of the key issues in teaching and learning EAL. The relationship between pedagogy and the knowledge base is dynamic. In this section our concern is to provide examples of perspectives which have been influential in the field through commonly asked questions.

The examples chosen are not meant to be representative of the field as a whole; nor do they do more than give a brief indication of the extensive studies from which they are taken. They are intended to be a window into the fields of enquiry which inform the ways in which educators respond to the phenomenon of learning an additional language in the context of mainstream schooling.

What is the normal development of English as an additional or second language for young children who need to learn EAL when they start in the nursery or reception classroom?

A number of researchers have examined the early stages of learning English. Young children often go through a 'silent period', 'echo' single words, develop 'formulaic' language and begin to generate 'telegraphic' speech in the early stages. Tabors (1997) points out that during this time children may experience the 'double bind' of needing to be able to socialise with their peers in order to learn the target language but at the same time they have not learned sufficient language to be able to socialise successfully. This has important implications for early years educators who need to help children learning EAL through this process.

How long does it take to learn a second language?

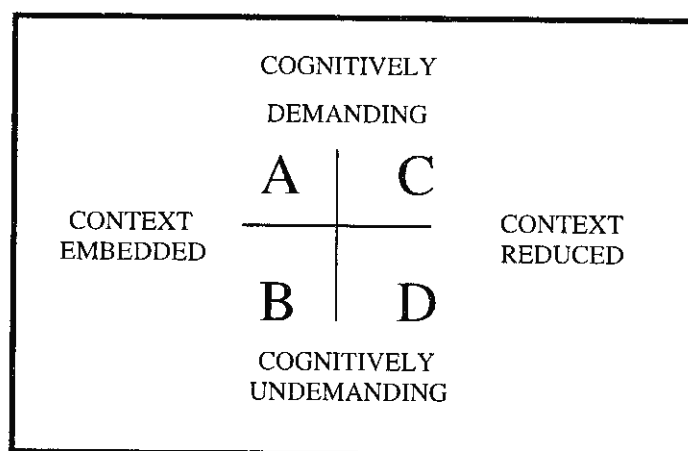
A natural question is to ask how long it takes pupils to learn ESL/EAL in the context of schooling. Collier (1995) provides evidence which suggests that it takes seven years for a pupil learning EAL to acquire a level of English to an academic level comparable to their peers who speak English as a first language. In some cases it may take longer. Individual differences in the rate of acquisition and the level of proficiency achieved are to be expected. This evidence, as well as classroom experience, suggests that pupils need continued support over a period of several years if they are to achieve satisfactory levels of academic achievement.

Some of our EAL pupils seem to be orally proficient but they have difficulties with the higher order skills needed to understand and complete some classroom tasks. How can this be explained?

What seems apparent is that language learning is much more complex than one might imagine, with different layers of proficiency. Cummins (1984a) distinguishes between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in second/additional language learning. BICS is a useful shorthand way of describing the development of social language skills which is often highly contextualized whether in the classroom, playground or street. CALP, on the other hand, describes the more de-contextualized, abstract language use increasingly required for the school curriculum. Pupils at an early stage of learning EAL will benefit from highly contextualized activities whereas more proficient learners of English will need developmentally appropriate tasks which become less contextualized and more cognitively demanding.

Cummins (1984b) elaborated the distinction between BICS and CALP into a framework relating to the cognitive and contextual demands made by particular tasks.

Framework for mapping the relationship between contextual support and cognitive demands in tasks



Teachers can 'place' learners within this framework in order to help them judge the types of tasks which are suitable for the pupils' level of understanding. Learners will need to progress from quadrant B (context-embedded, cognitively undemanding) to quadrant A (context-embedded, cognitively demanding) and then to quadrant C (context reduced, cognitively demanding). Hall (1995) warns that activities which are cognitively undemanding and context reduced (quadrant D), such as colouring in or copying from the board without understanding, should be avoided for EAL learners¹². Curriculum content in school is increasingly less contextualised and requires higher levels of conceptual understanding. Additional contextual and linguistic support, often referred to as 'scaffolding', can enable EAL learners to complete a

¹² See Cummins (1996) and Cline & Fredrickson (1996) for discussion of this framework.

task successfully without being denied cognitively challenging work. The use of writing frames is an example of scaffolding learning.

Are there ways in which the thinking skills required in the curriculum can be developed in association with language development?

The school curriculum is underpinned by thinking skills. Pupils learn to describe, compare, predict, sequence, evaluate, justify and so on. Learning is about developing thinking skills. These thinking skills are expressed through different uses of language. For example, comparison is a thinking skill, involving the language of comparison: 'greater than', 'the longest', as well as 'but', 'however', and 'on the other hand'. Adjectives are used to describe objects or features being compared.

The challenge for the teacher responsible for developing EAL is to identify the thinking skill involved in a particular activity and link the language to it. One approach to this task has been developed in Canada in response to the needs of EAL learners. 'The knowledge framework' proposed by Mohan (1986) is a systematic framework which relates the thinking skills found in the school curriculum to the corresponding language skills¹³. In addition, Mohan introduced a third component, the 'key visual', arguing that representation of knowledge through various types of graphics organisers and visuals can support learners of EAL. Taking the thinking skill of 'comparison' referred to above, corresponding key visuals could be a tick chart or Venn diagram. If we consider the thinking and language skills of sequencing, a visual representation of the passage of time could be a time line or a cycle diagram. Used as the basis for an activity or task, such 'key visuals' can assist understanding of concepts and also the development of related language skills.

Is second language learning similar to first language learning?

Second language development has many similarities with first language development. However, the school context for second language learning is very different from the first language learning context. There are also other important variables including age and the degree of need to communicate.

We need to remember that there are several ways of viewing language learning. Some researchers approach it from a cognitive perspective, others emphasize the importance of the social interaction in which language is used to make meaning. Some regard language acquisition as a discrete ability, others view it within general learning ability, like learning to walk. We don't know exactly how people learn a second language but we do know that it involves the interplay of several influential factors: mind, self, culture, brain, and language (Bialystok and Hakuta 1994). Spolsky (1989) would support this view, arguing that we need to consider each learner individually (age, intelligence, aptitude, attitude and motivation, for example) within the context of learning, including the interactions with the peer group, teacher and society.

¹³ See NALDIC Occasional Paper 1 and NALDIC News No. 3 and No. 6.

Why do some pupils with EAL appear to know the meaning of individual words but sometimes do not understand the meaning in context as intended by the writer?

Learners interpret the meaning of new input by drawing on information based on their experiences which are stored in their minds. Schema theory offers an explanation of how information is stored and is used to make sense of new experiences. It is important to understand that this information is socially and culturally located and this will influence the way pupils learning EAL interpret what they experience in the classroom. For example, in order to understand the sentence, 'The policeman held up his hand and stopped the car'¹⁴ we relate what we read to something familiar, to a schema which will account for the event described. Most people would assume that a traffic policeman is involved, and that there is a driver in the car who puts on the brakes. A considerable amount of knowledge about cars and the behaviour of policemen is required to make this interpretation. However, if the policeman were known to be Superman and the car without a driver, a very different schema would be required to understand the text.

Words have multiple meanings and are used with different emphases. Native speakers of a language acquire knowledge of variation in word meanings through their use in different contexts. For example, the word 'match' has three common meanings, calling upon different schemata: a sporting game ("Did you see the match?"), something to light a candle with ("Be careful with the match"), and a verb which instructs pupils to find similar objects ("Match the pentagons"). A second language learner has to have all three schemata available to make sense of the word in context.

The learner also needs to develop an understanding of how language is used in discourse. For example, comprehension may be dependent upon recognising that a writer is using irony. Language carries complex meanings through associations, inferences, culturally understood referents, ambiguities, juxtapositions, and so on. Meaning conveyed through words may be much more than 'the sum of the parts.' Acquiring this richness in language use is part of what it means to be a member of a 'speech community'. Understanding meaning in context therefore requires, amongst other things, background experience which gives access to the full range of language use within a speech community. Developing a second or additional language to this level requires time, exposure and opportunities to internalise and realise meanings through interaction.

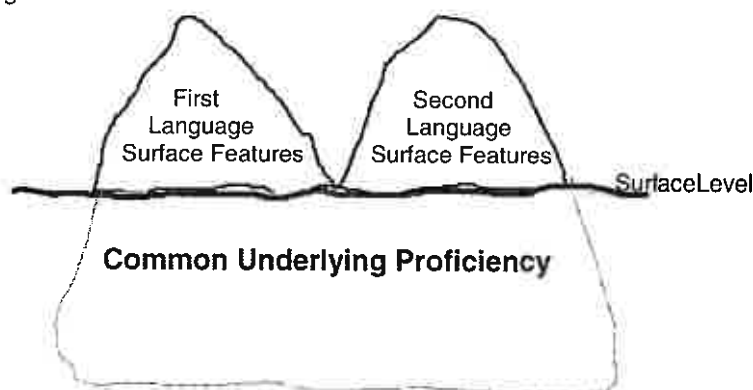
It is easy for a native speaker of English to assume familiarity with culturally embedded assumptions which pupils learning EAL may not have acquired. They come with their own schemata based on their own experience. Teachers need to recognise this and accommodate such differences. For example, when introducing a new topic, pupils can be asked to 'brainstorm' an idea or concept. This group activity can bring out differences, and provide the teacher with an opportunity to explain concepts, starting from the learners' understanding, rather than presuming a shared common understanding.

¹⁴ Discussion of this example can be found in Carrell and Eisterhold. (1987)

Why is it claimed that strong first language development helps the learning of a second or additional language?

One important aspect of the first/second (L1/L2) language relationship is the recognition that concepts learned in the L1 transfer to the L2. Cummins (1984a) used the diagram below to illustrate this point.

Cummins' 'dual iceberg'



The diagram envisages a 'dual iceberg' in which the tops of the icebergs represent the surface features of the two languages. Below the surface level of the water, however, they are not separated. This represents the learner's cognitive and linguistic awareness which can be applied through both languages. Cummins postulated that a 'common underlying cognitive/linguistic proficiency' enables concepts to transfer from one language to the other. This theory reinforces the importance of strong development in L1 for pupils learning L2. The evidence of research shows that development of L2 benefits from the continuing development of L1. Along with other researchers, Cummins proposed that EAL learners need to reach a certain level ('age appropriate competence') for them to gain cognitive benefits from becoming bilingual. The danger is that if this threshold level is not reached there may be negative effects. Although not universally accepted, 'the threshold hypothesis' may help to explain why some bilingual pupils fail to make the progress required when taught only through English. The level of English needs to be efficient to enable cognitive and academic learning to take place. The delay caused by learning English only, may lead to longer term underachievement.¹⁵

There are many reasons for supporting the maintenance and the development of pupils' home and community languages. These are set out in NALDIC Working Paper 3: *Guidelines on Bilingualism*. The central importance of first language development has implications not only for the responses teachers are able to make in school, but also for supporting its maintenance and development in the home and in community language classes. Given the complexities of supporting first language development of pupils learning EAL in a multilingual society such as England it is essential that EAL teaching support is of the highest quality and of sufficient length of time to ensure successful linguistic and cognitive development.

¹⁵ See Section 4: *The distinctiveness of the learner's task*.

Pupils learning EAL sometimes make slower progress than expected. If they do, should they be regarded as having special educational needs?

Section 4 used the example of a young bilingual pupil to describe the distinctive task for the EAL learner. However, this does not imply that such pupils have special educational needs (SEN). The process of learning a language should not be equated with SEN. This principle has important implications for planning. For example, the placing of EAL pupils within groups, enabling them to draw on prior experience, and providing them with scaffolded English language support, should help them to engage with the curriculum at an appropriate cognitive level.

On the one hand there is a danger of diagnosing a learning difficulty for a pupil with EAL where one does not exist; on the other hand, there is a danger of failing to identify and follow up a learning difficulty where one does exist. It is important that where pupils with EAL are thought to have a special educational need, the issue is not ignored. It can be extremely difficult to make a judgement about whether a concern arises from the process of learning EAL or whether the pupil may have a special educational need. It will be very important to gather as much information about the pupil as possible, taking account of the delivery of the curriculum and the pupil's home context, first language, and culture.

It is beyond the scope of this handbook to deal with this complex subject. Cummins (1984a) has been influential in drawing attention to the dangers of over-assessment. Readers are also referred to Hall (1995) and Cline (1995) (NALDIC Occasional Paper 4).

Postscript

There are a number of important issues for teachers of pupils learning EAL which are beyond the scope of this handbook. These include: first language development and bilingual teaching in the school context; EAL and Special Educational Needs; race equality, EAL and bilingualism; assessment of EAL and assessment of first language development; and contexts for the delivery of support to pupils learning EAL. Some of these issues have been addressed in previous NALDIC publications; others will be taken up in future NALDIC publications.

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NALDIC WORKING PAPERS

NALDIC Working Papers are produced from time to time by working groups of members in response to current issues in the Association's areas of educational interest. They are intended to influence policy and practice and to disseminate information to a wide audience. This audience includes class and subject teachers, EAL specialists, senior staff in schools and local authorities, and inspectors and advisers.

NALDIC WORKING PAPER 1: *Bilingual Pupils Learning English as an Additional Language: Guidelines for Classroom and School Practice* (published 1997) is a statement of the principles which underpin effective practice of teaching and learning English as an Additional Language.

NALDIC WORKING PAPER 2: *Guidance on OFSTED Inspections: Pupils for whom English is an Additional Language* (published 1997) provides guidance on inspecting EAL and makes suggestions to class teachers on curriculum delivery which supports language development in the classroom.

NALDIC WORKING PAPER 3: *Guidelines on Bilingualism* (published 1998) sets out the values, principles and implications to inform policies and practice at Local Education Authority, school, and classroom levels.

NALDIC WORKING PAPER 4: *Guidelines on Baseline Assessment for Bilingual Children* (published 1998) sets out the key issues in baseline assessment for bilingual children and offers guidance for practitioners and scheme providers. It includes sections on children at an early stage in their learning of English and a check-list on provision for bilingual pupils.

NALDIC WORKING PAPER 5: *The Distinctiveness of English as an Additional Language: a cross-curriculum discipline* (published 1999) is a handbook for all teachers which brings into focus what is distinctive about English as an additional language as a field of education. It offers a clear presentation of the knowledge base, the learners, teaching and learning, and some theoretical perspectives which have influenced current understanding. It provides a clearer way of conceptualising EAL than was previously available in summary form to teachers, and by bringing together theory and practice, it offers sound principles for teaching and a basis for developing an understanding of the field.

NALDIC LITERACY PAPERS: *Provision in Literacy Hours for Pupils Learning English as an Additional Language* (published 1998) draws on the experience of EAL specialist teachers who worked in LEAs piloting the National Literacy Project. It provides guidance on meeting the needs of EAL learners in the delivery of Literacy Hours.

The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC)
South Herts LCSC
Holywell School Site
Tolpits Lane
Watford WD1 8NT: UNITED KINGDOM.

Web site: www.naldic.org.uk

Enquiries and requests for papers: hugh_south@hertsccl.gov.uk

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Summary Points

- The paper sets out to describe what makes ESL an educational endeavour that is distinct from other fields.
- The process of learning a second or additional language is related to the learner's cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural development. These three areas are interrelated and are informed by well established bodies of theory, research and practice.
- The ESL/EAL field is a recognised discipline which draws upon several fields of study, such as Bilingualism, Second Language Acquisition, Linguistics, Cognitive Psychology, Cultural Studies, Curriculum Studies, Theories of Teaching and Learning and Language Assessment and Testing. These disciplines provide the core knowledge base that defines ESL/EAL as a distinct discipline.
- Students learning English as a second or additional language share many common characteristics with their English mother tongue peers, but they also have distinct and different needs from other learners by virtue of the fact that they are learning in and through another language and that they come from cultural backgrounds and communities with different understandings and expectations of education, language and learning.
- The 'macro-task' for ESL/EAL learners is to learn a new language, to learn the curriculum in the new language, to acquire appropriate social skills and to accommodate the new language, values, culture and expectations alongside those they bring with them from their cultural and family background. The distinctive nature of their task is to 'catch up' with a moving target by engaging in learning another language simultaneously with learning curriculum content, skills and concepts.
- ESL pedagogy uses strategies to support English language development and learning in the school context. Specific strategies to teach about and through the language include: activating prior knowledge, providing a rich contextual background to make the input comprehensible, actively encouraging comprehensible output, drawing attention to the relationship between form and function, making key grammatical elements explicit and developing learner independence.
- The answers to commonly asked questions about second language learning can be drawn from research and theory in the field. For example, to the question of "How long does it take learners to catch up?" evidence suggests it takes seven years to acquire a level of English to an academic level comparable to their English speaking peers. Different layers of proficiency can help explain why learners can be competent socially in English, but not in de-contextualised academic tasks. Another finding from research is that strong first language development helps the learning of a second or additional language.
- The process of learning a second or additional language should never be equated with learning difficulties. When students appear to be having problems with language and with literacy, they should be seen as progressing through the normal path of second language acquisition, which has its own well documented stages of growth. They should not be placed into classes with mother tongue peers with learning difficulties, but should be provided with scaffolded English language support which enables them to engage with the curriculum at an appropriate cognitive level.