EAL in National Curriculum subjects - Primary

Contributing Author
Maggie Gravelle

Introduction

This professional module is intended to give guidance to ITE providers and tutors in preparing student teachers to understand the needs of young EAL learners. It is intended to be an introduction to EAL for student teachers in the primary phase. It could be used to:

- inform course design and content,
- recommend further reading
- suggest tasks and activities and
- design assessment and evaluation tools

An understanding of the needs and abilities of EAL learners is essential for all teachers.

> *The great majority of teachers across the country may now expect to work with minority ethnic pupils at some point in their career, and mainly white schools in almost all areas may expect to admit minority ethnic pupils more frequently than in the past.*
> (Cline et al, 2002:2)

In many areas of the country the number of bilingual learners and the diversity of languages and backgrounds from which they come are increasing.

> *Those recommended for the award of QTS should know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.*
> (TDA, 2007)

The session explores the role of the primary teacher in relation to providing EAL learners with support for their learning of English and through English, and access to the curriculum. It suggests a number of activities and portfolio tasks which would extend students' knowledge and understanding.

Although there is a place for specific lectures or workshops/seminars on the subject of EAL, students' engagement with the issues will be deepened if subject tutors in all areas of the curriculum incorporate some of the thinking presented into their own teaching.

Pre -session readings

Students should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with some of the resources on this website, in particular

Tutors may wish to familiarise themselves with the section on Language and Curriculum which provides more detailed information on approaches to the teaching and learning of English as an additional language.

Role of the primary teacher

For all pupils, whether when they first enter formal education or arrive from another country in the middle of a school year, their initial entry to primary school can be a daunting experience. The environments of home and school are normally very different but these differences are accentuated if the routines, language, staff and resources are all unfamiliar. Early Years practitioners are skilled in making children and their families feel welcomed, but teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 may be less accustomed to thinking about these issues. Yet they all know that learning will be hindered if pupils feel insecure and uncomfortable.

Task 1 - 45 minutes

> What makes a welcoming school?
> Imagine you are a new pupil in an unfamiliar school. What would help you to settle in? Discuss in pairs.
> Share with another pair and compile an audit. (20 minutes)
> Watch Teachers' TV programme – The Multilingual School
> http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/ks1-ks2-english-the-multilingual-school (15 minutes)
> Using the ideas presented add to your audit (10 minutes)
> National Strategy self evaluation grids could be used to support this activity

In order to make a new arrival feel welcomed and included, teachers need to consider and take decisions on a number of issues;

a) Information
There will be varied amounts of information about a child available to the teacher. This will include personal information such as name, age, ethnicity, country of origin, religion and educational information about previous schooling and educational experiences.

Task 2 - 15 minutes

> What information is essential or helpful?
> What does a teacher need to know about a new arrival to make decisions about his/her needs?
> What additional information might be helpful?
> Discuss and list (15 minutes)

Initial Assessments includes a comprehensive list of the type of information which may be useful and guidance on its collection. LAs and schools generally devise their own admission forms. In addition, Hall (1995) and Smyth, (2003) have a number of examples and Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years (DfES, 2006), includes a section on audit tools on the accompanying CD-Rom.

Much of this information is sensitive. It is essential to pronounce children's names correctly and to agree on the spelling. Teachers will need to know about the home language(s) and about children's and parents' levels of fluency and literacy in English and other language(s) so that communication can be effective. Matters of ethnicity and religion are complex and parental identification should be respected (Harris, 1997). Several of the contributions in this section make reference to the need for information about pupils so that teachers can build on their existing knowledge and experience.

b) Language

> *Language is all around us, we hear and see language in the home, in the media, in the street, as well as in the school environment. Language forms the essence of thought.......It forms the basis of learning in all curriculum areas.*
> (Conteh 2006:2)

Language is central to learning and yet for many of us its very ubiquity means that we take it for granted. Although some of us may only speak English we all use a range of registers and alter our language to suit different contexts. Others will have learnt a foreign language at school but may be more confident in reading it than in speaking it. Some will have relatives, partners and friends who use more than one language in their daily lives. Some will understand conversations in the home and yet not use these languages themselves, or prefer to use the language of their peers. Others may have become fluent and literate in several languages from an early age.

Task 3 - 30 minutes

What is our language repertoire?
In pairs talk about your own language(s). (It is useful if tutors model this for students)
Do you change the way you speak with different groups? Do you sometimes use slang or local dialect and at other times speak 'posh'? Have you ever been aware of changing your accent? Do you understand more than one language? Are there members of your family who speak more than one language? Do you use more than one language and if so with whom and for what purposes? Can you read and write all the languages you speak?
Create a language web or matrix.
Feedback, summarising how language/languages are used within the group.

Britain is becoming increasingly multilingual and yet bilingualism is still regarded as 'a problem' by some teachers.

Task 4 -25 mins

What are the languages of our area?
There are regional differences in the languages most widely spoken.
Find out about the languages of your locality or school.
Summary national tables for pupils' first languages in 2008 may be useful. Many LAs and most schools collect local information about languages. These may be found on local EAL websites

It used to be thought that children would be confused by growing up using two or more languages. But the literature suggests that far from this being the case bilingualism has many advantages. However, teachers need to be aware that children who are not yet fluent in English will find learning through an additional language challenging. Teachers need to think about how they communicate in order to maximise understanding on the part of the pupils and how to encourage them to use English in a secure and supportive environment.

c) Grouping.

One of the decisions that most teachers will need to make when a new pupil arrives is what group they should join. Many teachers feel that they will be best placed in a low ability group which is often supported by additional staff and where the activities will not be too demanding. But bilingual learners are not necessarily of low ability and will be hampered in their learning if they are not challenged. They also need to hear English being used fluently and competently in the development of learning. It is the responsibility of teachers to provide EAL learners with cognitively demanding activities but to support them in understanding and using the language that this might entail.

It is often helpful to team a new arrival with a buddy or peer mentor. This individual may change from time to time. It may be a child who speaks the same home language and is more fluent in English and can therefore communicate readily as well as translate. It may be a monolingual child who is confident and curious and willing to assume responsibility for others.

d) Assessment

There is often pressure on teachers to assess EAL learners as rapidly as possible. It is sometimes felt that fluency in the first language also needs to be tested, although the reasons for this need to be clarified since it is not a usual assumption that English-speaking children entering primary school lack fluency.

Most tests of learning also involve language so that bilingual learners may be doubly disadvantaged if they have neither covered the content nor have the ability, at this stage, to express their understanding in English. Teachers need to consider the reasons why they need to assess a bilingual learner and then select the most appropriate method. Often early assessment will take the form of observation. This approach is advocated by the QCA, 2000 where it is suggested that a profile of the learner is built up based on evidence of what he or she has achieved. Initial assessments and Assessment examines these issues in much greater detail.

Task 5 - 30 minutes

Reasons for assessment
In pairs compile a list of reasons why you may wish to assess pupils.
Compare your list with another pair and in a group of four decide which methods of assessment would be most suitable for each objective.
You could complete the table below, which contains an example.

Reason for assessment	Method of assessment
To provide appropriate English language support.	Collect samples of written and spoken English in a variety of contexts.

e) Curriculum

Leung and Franson (2001) point out that teachers have to resolve a dilemma when considering EAL learners in mainstream classes. They need to think about the time devoted to teaching curriculum content as contrasted with teaching the English that is necessary to access and express understanding of that content. It is quite clear from the National Curriculum Inclusion statement as well as from Every Child Matters and Excellence and Enjoyment that teachers have a responsibility to '*support the learning of children with diverse needs*' (DfES 2006:3). This includes access to the curriculum and the development of English alongside '*recognition and understanding of their own bilingualism and confidence in using their whole language repertoire for learning.*'(DfES 2006:12).

EAL learning in National Curriculum Subjects covers several areas of the primary curriculum and offers suggestions for how learning can be personalised and made accessible for pupils learning English as an additional language.

Pupils with EAL and the curriculum

Language and Curriculum provides useful pre-reading and additional information for tutors and trainees concerning policy and approaches.

Thomas and Collier (1997) suggest that we can illustrate the main factors which affect bilingual learners in the primary school using the diagram below.
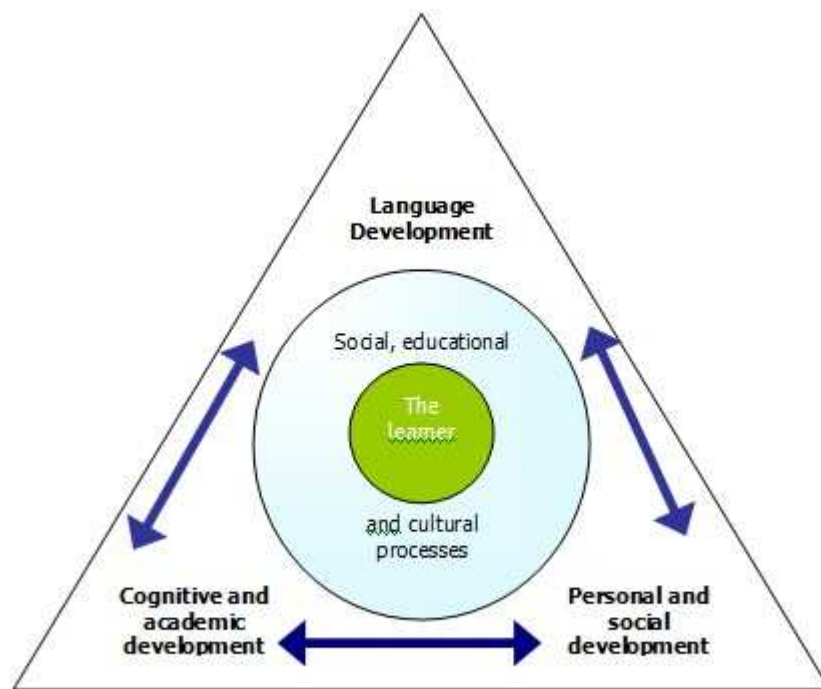

Fig 1
Adapted from Virginia P Collier 1994

(See Collier, 1995)

The learner at the centre of the process is influenced by a range of social and cultural factors from family, community, school and the wider society. Within this context the pupil is developing language, knowledge and understanding and the teacher needs to appreciate the complexity as well as the opportunities this situation presents and plan accordingly. The

teacher also needs to understand the richness of the experiences that the learner brings to the situation.

Task 6 - 30 minutes

What does Rabina know?

Read the extract below, taken from Barratt-Pugh (1994). With a partner discuss what Rabina already knows and understands about language and communication.

It is 11.30 on a cold but bright September morning. Rabina is sitting with her mother, next-door neighbour and older sister, looking curiously at the 'lady' who has just been invited in. The 'lady' keeps gesturing towards Rabina and smiling, she has brought some books and gives them to Rabina. Rabina moves rapidly away from the books and the 'lady'. Her mother says something in Punjabi and Rabina picks the books up. In between the 'lady' speaking in English, Nasreen translating into Punjabi and her mother replying, Rabina combines her knowledge of Punjabi with a few English words that she recognises and begins to piece the puzzle together. This is her new teacher.

If we step back and take a brief look at other events that Rabina is involved in during the day we find a number of equally complex meanings being constructed through a variety of linguistic interactions. In the morning Rabina has been using Mirpuri Punjabi to play with Imran, argue with Nasreen and ask her parents if she can go to her friend's birthday party. In addition she has been trying to make sense of a variety of English dialects while watching television. After lunch Rabina will go to the corner shop and use a Yorkshire dialect of English to buy some sweets and milk. If she meets friends on the way she may switch between English and Punjabi depending upon the shared language and the context of their talk. Later in the afternoon she will go to the mosque to study the Koran in Arabic. Finally, before going to bed Nasreen might tell her a story written in Urdu. Nasreen is learning Urdu at the community school as Urdu is the language of the wider community and Rabina will probably join her next year.

Planning needs to take account of socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of learning, as well as the cognitive demands of the curriculum content. As Cable notes, *'The content of the curriculum, language and pedagogic approaches will affect the degree to which learners feel they can identify with what is being taught and the degree to which they feel 'insiders' or 'outsiders' in the learning process'.*

a) Socio-cultural aspects

It is not easy for the fish to see the water it is swimming in and British primary teachers, like those anywhere, have become so accustomed to the procedures and rituals of school life that they don't always explain, let alone question them. Parents who have experienced different systems or expectations of education may well be surprised and anxious about aspects of schooling that we take for granted.

In a study of Polish pupils in London schools (Sales et al, 2008) it became clear that many parents were confused about the system of differentiation which labels some children as of

low ability. In Poland children would be expected to do extra work at home, if necessary, in order to keep up with the rest of the class. Polish parents in the study felt that their children were often condemned to be permanently identified as 'of low ability' and that they could support them better if they knew what they were learning in school. In Poland, they explained, 'we have exercise books we can always look through and see what they are doing.' (Sales et al. 2008:34)

Expectations and socio-cultural norms are discussed by Robertson and Drury in relation to two young children, Amadur and Mohiuddin, on their entry to Nursery. Their teacher, Mrs. Goode, had energy and enthusiasm which bewildered the boys rather than helped them to settle into the Early Years setting. As Robertson and Drury suggest, an alienating environment, however well intentioned, can serve to hinder language development and learning.

Issa and Eve provide an example of how a Turkish teacher could use pupils' knowledge about a concert given by a popular singer to support their understanding of estimation in mathematics. Familiar contexts are also discussed by Mogra in connection with the ethos of acceptance and respect necessary in an inter-faith classroom and by Safford and Collins in consideration of the careful selection of texts to which children can relate. Bosanquet and Griffiths, in their guidance on the Geography curriculum remind us that, 'it is important to recognise that the cultural and physical environment of Britain may feel very alien to newly arrived pupils and teachers cannot always assume that pupils will be aware of what may seem to them to be basic concepts.' They give examples of aspects of the environment, such as the role of the police and the nature of pedestrian crossings, which may have different connotations for some pupils. At the same time they confirm that bilingual learners may well have direct experience of countries and ways of life that can add to the knowledge of the whole class.

History is a subject which has very specific socio-cultural contexts. Cooke suggests that a range of historical and cultural examples can help pupils to understand wider historical concepts. Even though pupils may not be familiar with Aztec customs and artefacts they can use their existing knowledge to make informed guesses about their use and place in society. Smyth, Tharia and Gravelle discuss the importance of giving children an opportunity to draw on their existing scientific knowledge for example in experimenting with water.

Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES, 2006) emphasises the importance of providing culturally familiar contexts for learning and warns against tokenism and stereotyping. We need to recognise that culture is a complex concept. Cultures are as varied as the peoples who make, follow and realise them They are not homogenous and we should be wary of making assumptions based on a partial understanding of children's backgrounds. Excellence and Enjoyment suggests that we should, 'give children the opportunity to come up with examples and analogies of their own.' (DfES 2006:35) This requires an ethos and atmosphere in which children feel secure and valued, but it also requires sensitivity and flexibility on the part of the teacher so that children are not made to feel that they 'represent' or need to 'answer for' their community. Teachers probably need to spend more time to observe and listen rather than instruct and ask.

It should also be remembered that cultures are not static. It has sometimes been observed that immigrant communities can cling to practices that may have become obsolete in their countries of origin but equally they can absorb aspects of the host cultures which change their own rituals. This is as true of indigenous cultures as of those brought from other countries.

Neither are cultures transparent. Many of our ways of behaving have become ritualised and routine to the extent that we often do not notice their prevalence. Schools, in particular, can be bewildering and intimidating when they are unfamiliar. What are children, and parents, to make of regulations about lining up, walking in pairs, raising your hand to ask or answer a

question, sitting on the floor, using a pencil but not a rubber and countless other rules? It is important that, as far as possible, these are made clear and explained.

Task 7 - 30 minutes

School routines

Make some notes about the first twenty minutes or half an hour of the school day in the school in which you had your most recent practice. Try to include as much detail as possible;
Where did pupils and parents wait at the start of the day?
Was there a time before which they were not allowed on school premises?
What did they do if it was wet?
How was the start of the day signalled?
Were pupils required to line up and if so in what way?
How did they enter the school and with which adults, if any?
What did they do with outdoor clothing?
How did they enter the classroom and what did they do immediately on entry?

Now compare your account with a partner from a different school and try to explain the differences between the two schools and the reasons behind the routines.

### b) knowledge and understanding of the curriculum

The National Curriculum is a statutory entitlement and includes a statement on Inclusion which requires teachers to take responsibility for ensuring that all pupils have access to the curriculum. It suggests that teachers of pupils learning English as an additional language should;

• Use accessible texts and materials
• Provide support by using ICT or video or audio materials, dictionaries and translators, readers and amanuenses
• Use home or first languages
(DfEE, 1999)

These are examples taken from one section of the document which suggest ways of ensuring access. There are several other examples in the document.

The Primary Strategy document (DfES, 2006) adds that, *'Cognitive challenge can and should be kept appropriately high through the provision of linguistic and contextual support'*. Thus, it is clear that teachers bear a considerable responsibility for supporting children's language development and for providing access to the curriculum.

Many authors refer to Cummins' quadrant as a useful tool for guiding teachers in their planning of support.

Range of contextual support and degree of cognitive involvement in communicative activities
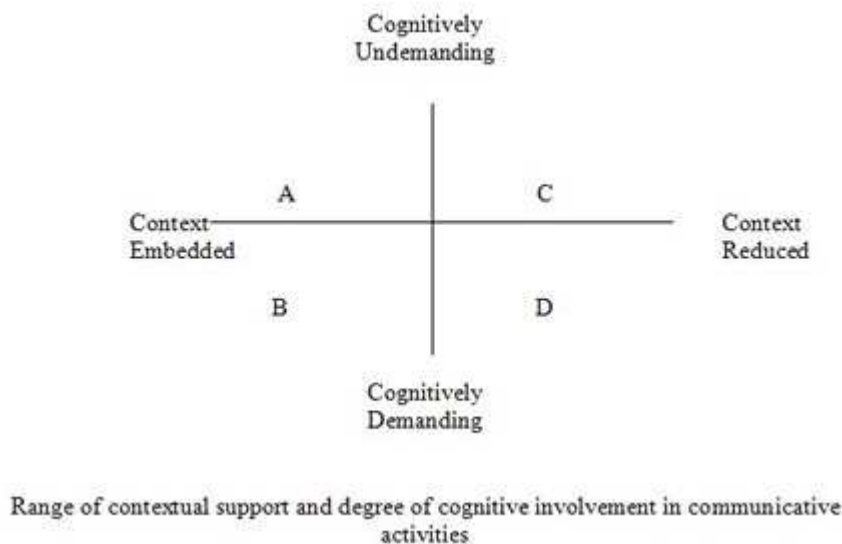
Cummins, 1984

This suggests a relationship between cognitive demands and the range of contextual support that is required. Where activities are context embedded pupils can negotiate meaning through the clues that are provided, for example illustrations, role play, gesture and practical tasks. If there is reduced context then learners have to rely to a greater extent on linguistic cues to meaning. So, if a task is both cognitively challenging and in a context reduced situation, learners of EAL are likely to have considerable difficulty in understanding. This is not to suggest that pupils with EAL should be given simple activities, but to alert teachers to the need for increased contextual support, particularly where concepts and knowledge are new and demanding. As Conteh (2006:11) argues,

> *Beginning with context-embedded activities and gradually moving, with talk and action, towards less embedded activities means that children are never left without support, and at the same time are being encourage to move to the new knowledge with is the object of the activity*

Bosanquet and Griffiths, in the guidance on Geography describe the practical work in the school grounds that pupils were engaged in. They discuss the use of photographs as ways of recording and reminding pupils of different aspects of the environment. Safford and Collins discuss the existing knowledge that pupils will have about the nature of stories and story language and, often, of books. This can serve as the foundation for extending their experience into texts which are new to them. Mogra suggests a number of activities which empower pupils by drawing on their existing knowledge of religious celebrations. By sharing this information in interesting, practical and accessible ways pupils extend their understanding and respect for religious diversity. Issa and Eve emphasise the importance of providing a variety of practical activities in Maths. They suggest that children's understanding will be reinforced by approaching concepts from in different ways, for example handling shapes, describing and comparing them, finding examples of them in the environment as well as drawing them and talking about their properties.

Pim shows what a rich resource ICT can provide. He describes the use that can be made of visuals to explain aspects of environmental change but also warns about the complexity of some of the language. Teachers need to be alert to the dangers of simply providing vocabulary or key-word translations in isolation from the context and explanation. The use of practical models and experiments make Science concepts accessible and enable children who have limited English to engage with challenging ideas.

Task 8 - 45 minutes

What concepts are being developed? What strategies are being used?

Watch Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years DVD, Section 3, Year 5 Maths lesson. (25 minutes) As you are watching make a note of the concepts that are being taught and the way in which understanding of these is supported.

Share your ideas with a partner and feedback to the whole group.

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c) Language

Much of the learning that we all do throughout our lives is language-based. We read books and articles, we discuss ideas, we listen to explanations, we talk about problems that we are trying to solve, we look for information on the internet, we scan newspapers and journals and in many other ways use language to develop our knowledge and understanding. Bilingual learners have used their first languages to do this all their lives but, depending on their fluency and confidence in English, might struggle to do the same in an English-speaking environment. So in school many of them are learning a new language and new knowledge and concepts simultaneously.

Teachers have the responsibility for both the learning and the language development that takes place in the classroom. When pupils begin to understand a new concept, perhaps through doing an experiment or solving a problem, they are also being introduced to the language that expresses that understanding. For EAL learners, as we have seen, much of that understanding will depend on non-linguistic strategies such as pictures and diagrams, practical activities, gesture and facial expression. But as confidence increases more use will be made of spoken and written language to express and explore the ideas.

Talk is central to learning. It allows pupils to explore ideas in a tentative, flexible and perhaps temporary way which permits rethinking and restructuring. For many children listening and speaking will come more readily than reading and writing. Pupils with EAL will listen to English being used for learning and will be encouraged to use firstly social and later more academic language to express their understanding.

To make this possible teachers need to be aware of the likely language that the learning will entail and to plan for this to be used in a supportive and systematic fashion. Gibbons (2002) suggests that teachers need to be alert to a number of aspects of language in the curriculum. They need to ask themselves;

• What spoken language demands there will be
• What pupils will need to listen to
• What texts pupils will be reading
• What genres will be introduced
• What aspect of grammar the tasks will entail
• What specific vocabulary will be required

Each area of the curriculum will have a certain amount of subject specific vocabulary. This is often new to all pupils and will be explained by teachers. More difficult for many pupils is the general vocabulary that is used in a special way. Children may think of 'spring' as a season or a jump rather than a place where water comes out of the ground. They may picture someone steering a car when they hear 'drive', rather than a private road. Illustrations or translation

can help to explain individual items of vocabulary. But language is more than a series of words and EAL learners will have to learn a range of grammatical structures. The use of articles and appropriate tenses can be difficult. Teachers can help by modelling and by using repeated structures to give pupils practice and confidence.

A particular activity may involve the language of comparison and contrast and this can be explicitly modelled, demonstrated and taught. Some learning will centre around description or a task may contain explanations of cause and effect which also demand a particular type of language with typical structures. The Geography KS1 guidance suggests that as well as key vocabulary students give thought to tenses (particularly the use of the simple present), the language of classification and of comparison. Issa and Eve point out that as well as specialist mathematical vocabulary e.g. equilateral, probability, remainder, estimate, division, sum of, there are everyday words such as volume that have a specific meaning in mathematics. Safford and Collins give very clear examples, based on the work of Gibbons, of the links between content and language in their guidance on the English curriculum. They also describe how successful many bilingual learners are in expressing their understanding of language variation.

Cooke has identified a number of aspects of language development that are necessary for a full understanding and expression of historical concepts. He illustrates this with examples from a range of areas from the History curriculum. Pupils, for example, need to understand ways in which historical accounts generalise from specific examples. Cooke suggests a staged and supportive way of embedding that understanding through the use of visuals and talk as well as examples. He also recommends the use of Mohan's Knowledge Framework (Mohan, 1986) as an aid to planning. Pim also describes how to use ICT to scaffold the language that pupils might need in making a tourist brochure about their locality. Examples of writing frames are given in Science guidance which will help pupils to use scientific genres in their own writing. Smyth, Tharia and Gravelle also suggest that issues of language be addressed explicitly through a discussion of famous scientists and the language that they needed to use in order to explain their ideas and discoveries.

Excellence and Enjoyment (DfES 2006) gives a number of examples of language use in a range of different subject areas. It suggests that;

> *not only does each subject have its own unique vocabulary which will be acquired only where the child has a reason to use it and/or a need to understand it, but each subject presents the opportunity to further develop, use and apply the language structures appropriate for different purposes.*

Task 9 - 45 minutes

What language might pupils need to understand and use?

Select a curriculum subject and an aspect of the Programme of Study for a specific year group and think about some typical language that might be expected of learners. Complete the table below, taken from Gibbons (1991). One example is given and further examples can be found [here](#)

Topic	Activities	Language Functions	Language Structures	Vocabulary
Persuasive writing	Write a letter to the council about a local issue	Reasoning, arguing, explaining	If…then, when …happens … follows.	Sir, yours sincerely, because,

Conclusion

Subject guidance that is given suggests approaches to teaching curriculum subjects in the primary and Early Years Foundation phases. It has highlighted the need for teachers of children with English as an additional language to be alert to their experiences and needs and to plan accordingly. It is important that student teachers take these responsibilities seriously if they are to demonstrate achievement to meet he new teachers' standards which apply to all teachers in England from September 2012. Within these standards every teacher must: '*Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils*' . They must *'have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them*'.

This professional development module has offered a summary of the relevant research and theory connected with EAL and a number of activities which may help students to develop their understanding. It has suggested that planning needs to consider the socio-cultural context, the cognitive and the linguistic aspects of learning. A framework which has been used by some teachers is given below as an aid to planning.

	What does the learner bring to the task?	What does the task demand of the learner?	What support needs to be planned for?
Social			
Linguistic			
Cognitive			

(Gravelle 2000:8)

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Resources

A powerpoint presentation to enable tutors to lead the session is downloadable here.

Further reading and Bibliography

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