

Language and literacy in EAL learning

QTS Standards

Q18 **Q19** **Q25**

>[Language Demands](#)

>[Spoken language](#)

>[Developing reading in EAL](#)

>[Developing writing skills in EAL](#)

All student teachers, irrespective of their subject and phase specialisms, are expected to pay attention to the language needs of bilingual pupils, and to promote English as an additional language development through their teaching. Under QTS standard Q25, they are expected to *'know how learners acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, and they take account of this in order to inform and modify their teaching'* (TDA, 2007). They are required to *'help learners to transfer and apply knowledge and skills'*. They are also expected to *'know how to personalise learning, and they gauge accurately what can be achieved during the lesson'*. As EAL is not a specialist subject in initial teacher education, there is sometimes a tendency to assume that speaking, reading and writing in an additional language across the curriculum will develop 'naturally' in a school environment. However, in order to meet Q18 and Q19, student teachers will need to understand the particular needs and skills of bilingual pupils in order to have a *'full and accurate understanding of the needs of each learner so that they can deploy a range of skills to tailor provision in ways that challenge, promote achievement and secure progress'* (TDA, 2007)

It is sometimes believed that the development of reading and writing in EAL will emerge from the exposure to and the use of spoken English. Alternatively, it is sometimes suggested that the teaching of the more 'technical' aspects of English language such as rules and conventions of pronunciation and grammar will lead to wider EAL development, including reading and writing in EAL for learning purposes. However, from professional experience and research, we know that the development of reading and writing do not always automatically follow speaking and listening; and this is true whether we are talking about first or additional language. We also know that the development of EAL in a curriculum context involves a much wider process than the learning of the formal aspects of English.

Learning an additional language is not just a simple process of acquisition of new linguistic knowledge and skills; it also has an affective and cultural dimension. Ideally, teachers would like to see bilingual pupils develop a sense of affiliation to English, in addition to their home and/or community language(s). This means helping pupils to feel comfortable with the English language in school and its many specific ways of use in the curriculum context.

Helping bilingual children to learn to speak, read and write in English in school is part of a general and long-term experiential process involving at least the following:

- learning to use English for communication in both the spoken and written forms within the wider context of learning the curriculum content
- learning about the English language (e.g. rules of grammar and social conventions of use).

Student teachers will need to understand the nature of the challenges inherent in learning to speak, read and write in an additional language, and the ways in which they can support bilingual pupils in facing these challenges.

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References

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