

Managing EAL Primary -Assessing Writing

Teachers' TV (2005) Managing EAL Primary -Assessing Writing

<http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/managing-eal-primary-assessing-writing>

Synopsis

At St Anne's RC Primary School in Lambeth, Year 2 teachers are using a writing assessment framework, with the support of an EAL specialist. The programme looks at the practical use of this assessment framework for writing which incorporates features of assessment for learning or formative assessment. The programme focusses on a Y2 more advanced bilingual learner. The framework sets and monitors language targets for EAL pupils, focusing on the language structures as well as the content of pupil writing.

www.naldic.org.uk/eal-initial-teacher-education/resources/eal-literacy provides useful pre or post session reading for trainees.

Relevant sections

00:00 – 01:08 School staff describe a new EAL programme they are using with learners

01:08 Class teacher talks about the difficulty of assigning National Curriculum writing attainment levels to pupils learning EAL, because the attainment levels assume native-English speaker competence.

1:38 Class teacher describes some of the structures outlined in the assessment framework; introduction to Joseph, a Year 2 pupil whose first language is Portuguese. Joseph is using his knowledge of Portuguese to learn and use English.

2:32 Local authority EAL specialist discusses the demands of writing in English for children learning EAL: genres, structures, vocabulary, purposes must all be made explicit. Making these features explicit also benefits all learners.

4:23 Two class teachers examine Joseph's writing and comment on his use of connectives, adjectives, tenses, overall meaning and vocabulary; they discuss Joseph's writing targets

8:00 Joseph in a science lesson, using a writing framework to scaffold and construct complex sentences comparing materials

10:17 Brief comment from Joseph on his weekly targets

10:58 Teachers re-evaluate Joseph's writing, comparing his writing sample to earlier writing; they note that Joseph is beginning to take more risks in his written English

Principles of Good Practice

- Actively encouraging comprehensible output

- Drawing the learner's attention to the relationship between form and function; making key grammatical elements explicit
- Developing learner independence

Teaching Points

00.00 The approach described in this programme is part of the Primary National EAL strategy. Strategy training materials for classroom teachers have recently been produced (DfES, 2006) which trainees may encounter in schools.

01.08 A Language in Common (QCA, 2000) introduced pre National Curriculum (English) 'Steps' 1 and 2 and a division of Level 1 into Threshold and Secure as assessment indicators for bilingual pupils in reading, writing, speaking and listening. These describe pupils at very early stages of language development and may not be appropriate to effectively assess bilingual pupils' writing in Key Stages 1 and 2. In this school, teachers have found that the summative assessment of early stage bilingual learners NC English competence contained in A Language in Common (2000) does not help them in identifying and highlighting what learners need to do next in their additional language learning across the curriculum. As a result they have begun to look more closely at formative assessment relating to bilingual learners' writing across curriculum areas. Trainees are unlikely to find these approaches outside settings which contain significant numbers of bilingual learners.

1.38 Pupils learning EAL face increasingly complex demands of their writing as they go through primary school. This is why it is important to pay attention to pupils' writing in English even when they seem to understand spoken communication well. This pupil has been learning English for four years, since he started in the Foundation Stage but point out that Cameron and Besser's (2004) work on writing at KS2 shows that differences in the writing of bilingual and monolingual pupils persist well into secondary schools.

2:32. Pupils learning EAL are supported by extended work around interesting oral, written and visual texts, where teachers draw continuous connections between macro (context, audience, purpose) and micro (sentence, grammar, spelling) levels of language. By exploring different contexts and language choices that make up written and spoken genres, pupils will begin to understand and use a range of informal and formal structures and develop awareness of audiences for speech and writing. Refer to EAL and English

04.23 Bilingual learners will be helped by a focus on both form and function of genres, structures, vocabulary, and purposes. Cameron and Besser's (2004) work suggests that explicit teaching, collaborative discussion and activities can help pupils recognize the specific features of the language and texts that they hear and read. An example might be how verbs show the timing of events or which words go with which i.e. collocations. It is important to emphasise that learners should meet and learn words as part of phrases and in meaningful language rather than just on their own. Pupils can be helped to 'notice' these things for themselves especially when this work goes across subject areas, not just in NC English.

10:17 Assessment for learning involves pupils in understanding and discussing their own learning. The current focus on this can create difficulties for bilingual learners. For example, some EAL learners may be very knowledgeable about a particular subject/topic but cannot express what they know through English to the same level, or they simply cannot express what they don't know and what they need to know.

Task

Ask trainees to reflect on the Framework for assessing EAL writing. Student teachers often

benefit from practice in assessing, with tutor guidance, examples of student's reading, writing or speech at different stages of bilingual development. Provide an example of learner text from across curriculum areas for trainees to work with.

Why this resource is useful for training on EAL

- Supports trainees to begin to learn how to identify the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language
- This programme can be used to help primary trainees to understand that pupils learning EAL have specific needs related to learning written English and to consider how to make effective provision to meet these through an explicit focus on language structures as well as the content and meaning of writing.

When might this resource best be used?

Running the session after one placement would mean that most trainees would have had a chance to assess at least one piece of work to provide material for the session. Where students have worked in mainly monolingual settings, these can be provided by the tutor

Resources

Teachers' TV (2005) Managing EAL Primary -Assessing Writing
<http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/managing-eal-primary-assessing-writing>

Teachers' TV (2005) Managing EAL Primary - Assessing Speaking
<http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/managing-eal-primary-assessing-speaking>

References and Further Reading

Bourne, J. and McPake J. (1991) Partnership Teaching: Co-operative Teaching Strategies for Language Support in Multilingual Classrooms. London : HMSO

Cameron, L. and Besser, S. (2004) Writing in English as an additional language at Key Stage 2 London: DfES. Available at
<http://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Research%20and%20Information/Documents/R586.pdf>

Cooke, S. (1998) *Collaborative Learning Activities in the Classroom: designing inclusive materials for learning and language development*. Leicester, England : Forest Lodge Education Centre

Gibbons, P. (2002) *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH : Heinemann

South, H (1999) *Working Paper 5 - The Distinctiveness of English as an Additional Language: a cross-curriculum discipline*. Watford : NALDIC