

The Distinctiveness of EAL Pedagogy

In the past EAL has been regarded as a defined 'subject' in education in this country, and it continues to be viewed in this way in many other English speaking countries. The current conceptualisation of EAL in England is as an 'aspect' of compulsory education and as a 'subject' ([ESOL](#)) in post compulsory provision. Student teachers will benefit from an understanding and recognition of EAL as a significant field of teaching and learning.

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.

Teachers who have acquired expertise in EAL, whether they are specialists or class or subject teachers, will:

- understand progression in 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 or specialist colleagues.

The following principles which underpin good practice for pupils learning EAL can be used as a framework to support the development of trainees' understanding. For example, they are identified in [Developing language in the mainstream classroom](#) and further exemplified in [Approaches to EAL within ITE](#)

Principles which underpin good practice for pupils learning EAL

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 schema). In second or 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 KWL (Know, Want to find out, Learned) charts, brainstorming in small groups or pairs, discovery tasks, enabling use of first language.

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'(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, time-lines, outlines of causal sequences, videos, computer graphics, web pages etc.

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, using oral feedback to move learners towards the forms of language used in writing, questioning strategies.

Drawing the learner's attention to the relationship between form and function; key grammatical elements are pointed out and made 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 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 express doubt (e.g. 'may' and 'might') in texts, modelling and extending its use, providing opportunities for practice; talking about ways of expressing politeness when asking for something; noting how paragraphs present information in different subjects; how subtitles are used.

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 dictagloss; note-taking; teaching study skills.

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