

## Brief Research Reports

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### Paul Hamlyn Foundation-funded NALDIC International Survey (2002-2005): EAL Assessment

In 2002 NALDIC supported by a grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, embarked on an international survey project on EAL assessment frameworks. The main task of this survey was to undertake a systematic description and analysis of a sample of EAL frameworks in English-speaking countries. EAL practitioners had known for some time that there was a range of different policies, frameworks and practices for EAL assessment in English-speaking countries; in the case of Australia there are several state level frameworks. There was a need for detailed information on at least some of these assessment frameworks to provide a broader public knowledge base for EAL practitioners working in this country. It was also felt that with increased knowledge of the assessment systems in countries such as Australia and the USA, we would be more equipped to understand our own assessment practices in a comparative and evaluative way.

The project team comprised Sibel Erduran (Bristol University), Hugh South (chair of the research team, NALDIC), Constant Leung (King's College London), Pauline Rea-Dickins (Bristol University) and Katie Scott (Bristol University). Working within the available time and financial resources, it was decided that the team would look at six EAL assessment frameworks in four countries: Australia, Canada, England and the USA. The research team studied all relevant publicly available official publications related to the focal frameworks, and a broad range of related professional, academic and research papers. Where necessary or appropriate members of the research team also sought clarification and elaboration from other colleagues who had relevant expertise. The six accounts presented here, written by Katie Scott, are summary versions of the full descriptions and analyses undertaken by the research team.

In these summary accounts we have tried to provide both description and, where appropriate, evaluative comments. Our evaluative stance is consistent with NALDIC's published statements on assessment over the past several years. A key concern has been to extent to which the assessment frameworks we report here are conducive to the development of sound and fair

EAL assessment and teaching practices within mainstream education. Some of the assessment literature is theoretically and technically complex, for reporting purposes we have tried to keep the use of technical terminology to a minimum. Readers will find that the term 'ESL' is used widely. This reflects the fact that EAL is not necessarily the preferred term in countries such as Australia. A combined set of references appears on page 29.

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## **Australia: ESL Development - Language and Literacy in Schools Vol.1 & 2 (co-ordinated by McKay, P., National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, 1992)**

### **Context and Aims**

The ESL Bandscales, Assessment Activities, Observation Guides and Reporting Formats, contained within *ESL Development: Language and Literacy in Schools* (McKay *et al.* 1992), were developed over an eighteen month period for use in schools. This involved nationwide consultation and piloting with both ESL specialist and mainstream teachers, these being the intended primary users of the framework: the intended context of use includes direct ESL teaching, cooperative ESL teaching and ESL-informed mainstream teaching. Separate ESL Bandscales are provided for Junior Primary, Middle/Upper primary and secondary, these being linked to stages of schooling in Australia.

The ESL Development Project had a wide brief, but two key purposes were identified by the developers of the ESL Bandscales in conjunction with ESL specialists and the funding agencies (the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia and the Department of Employment, Education and Training), these being:

- for teaching/learning purposes: to assist teachers of ESL learners (ESL specialists and mainstream teachers) in schools to identify ESL learners, to understand better the language learning processes of these learners, and to assess and record their progress in English and in English across the curriculum;
- for reporting purposes: to provide a means of reporting to other teachers, to parents and learners, and to administrators about ESL learner proficiency development in English (McKay *et al.* 1994, Vol 1: A16-17).

Whilst having an administrative function, the scales are predominantly pedagogical in focus in that they are intended primarily for use by teachers, whether ESL specialists or mainstream. Feedback from teachers using the framework has generally been positive<sup>1</sup> and the input of teachers

in writing and revising the descriptors may have contributed to making them accessible.

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<sup>1</sup> A three-year validation project on the ESL Bandscales commenced in 2004, funded jointly by participating institutions and the Australian Research Council. This is being undertaken by principal investigators from three Universities (QUT, JCU and Macquarie University) and Education Queensland, Brisbane Catholic Education Commission, and AISQ (Association of Independent Schools Queensland). The project examines the validity of the descriptors in representing ESL learners' progress with a view to refining them if necessary.

### **Overview**

The ESL Bandscales describe ESL Development at three phases of schooling: Junior Primary, Middle/Upper Primary and Secondary, taking account of multiple entry points into the school system and enabling descriptions of the varying influences on ESL learners at different phases. At Junior Primary and Middle/Upper Primary there are 7 levels and at Secondary there are 8. The discrepancy arose in the development and refining of the levels and reflects the project team's and the teachers' view on the number of levels necessary to represent the differences between ESL learners in each phase.

There is a description of what learners can do and possible language issues for each level in the four macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, for Middle/Upper Primary and Secondary learners, there is an additional description at Level 1 for reading and writing (1b) to cater for learners with a low literacy background. For Junior Primary and Middle/Upper Primary, at each level there is a summary followed by a more extensive description. Some descriptions include additional background information (e.g. Junior Primary ESL Speaking: Level 1), or a sample (e.g. Junior Primary ESL Speaking: Level 3). For Secondary learners above Level 1, the description is broken down into 'language ability across a range of personal, social and general school contexts', 'application and extension to academic learning contexts' and 'suggested implications for placement'.

The content of the descriptions is deliberately inconsistent as not all aspects are relevant at all levels. However, in terms of deciding where to provide samples of learner language, included in some descriptors but not all, it is not clear what criteria were used. A potential strength of the framework is that explicit notes are given regarding script-different learners in some cases (e.g. Middle/Upper Primary Reading: Level 2) and on particular groups of learners (such as Junior Primary Group 2: L1 Home-based Literacy Background With Some Exposure to English) which provide insight into the specific needs of different groups

### Teaching and learning

Learners are viewed as moving from beginning ESL towards the levels expected for mainstream language and literacy development as their proficiency develops. The relationship between the ESL Bandscales and mainstream language and literacy development is graphically represented below. Although this model perhaps underplays the moving nature of the learners' target, it does highlight the progressive complexity of language use as learners move from Junior Primary to Secondary, reflecting the increasing demands of the mainstream curriculum. In relation to this a teacher commented that she found it extremely helpful in reframing her understanding of her learners' development (Breen *et al* 1997).

Throughout, the descriptors relate to 'typical' classroom activities across the curriculum, written in highly accessible prose, as in the following example from Junior Primary Reading: Level 4:

Are able to retell stories with guided questioning and prompting from the teacher. (e.g., What happened then? Oh they ..., did they! What did they do then?)

May rely less on teacher support when reading individually than when reading aloud in front of the class or group (McKay *et al.* 1994, Vol 1: B20).

At the same time, the developers were concerned not to oversimplify or lose sight of the complexity of second language and literacy development. The framework draws explicitly on Cummins'

(1984) pedagogically-oriented distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Bachman & Palmer's (1990) theoretical model of second language competence. There is also a concern for the cognitive-affective dimension in language learning which is reflected by comments such as:

May tire easily and appear to tune out because of the effort required to listen and observe (language overload) (McKay *et al.* 1992, Vol 1: B4).

The division into skills areas, with scales for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, seems to correspond to the way in which the teachers using them conceptualise language learning. The inclusion of references to particular groups of ESL learners in the descriptors (for example, groups of learners with different writing scripts in their first languages) highlights group-specific features of second language proficiency development. Indeed, second language development issues are woven into all aspects of the framework, which highlight specific ESL features of language and literacy development and use. These aspects of the scales give them a strong EAL/ESL flavour, providing a clear picture of the learners and what they face in accessing the curriculum. In addition, examples are given of learners' language which may be helpful in interpreting the descriptors, providing a means of moderating teachers' interpretations and thus reducing the potential for a mismatch between teachers' expectations on the basis of the descriptors.

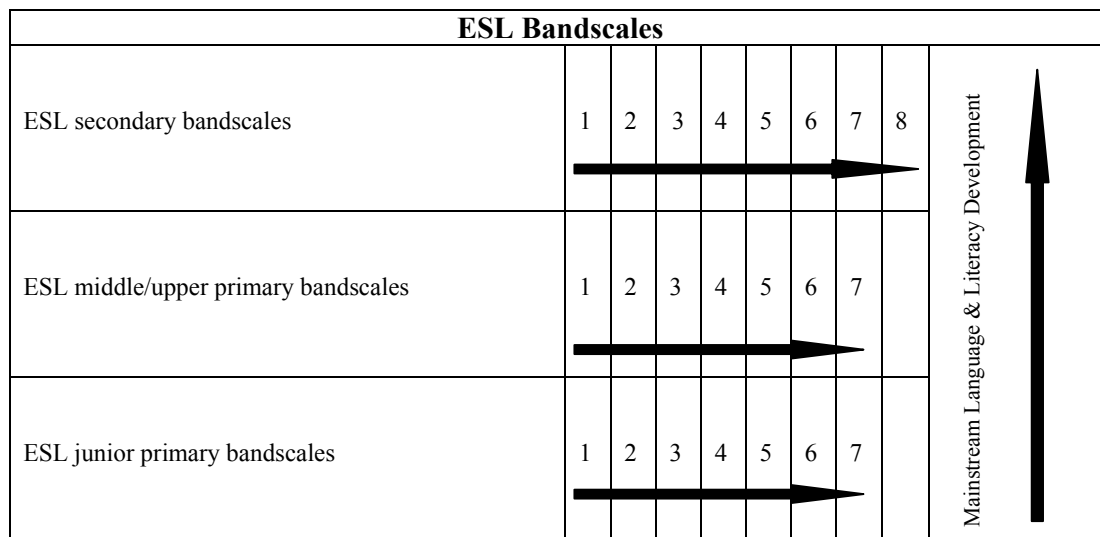


Figure 1: ESL Bandscales in Relation to Mainstream Language and Literacy Development (McKay *et al.*, 1994, Vol. 1:A17)

## Assessment

The framework also provides exemplar assessment activities, which, it is stressed, are not standardised assessment tasks. The guidance explicitly states that these will need to be adapted, if not entirely rewritten, for use in individual classrooms, illustrating awareness of the individuality of both learners and classrooms, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach. A range of activities/tasks are given for a particular topic or theme in a curricular area, representing 'typical' curriculum content in the context of use, designed to lead up to a planned assessment activity linked to a particular language skill or skills (e.g. speaking). The exemplars suggest the main aspects of language use to be assessed, and these are linked to Observation Guides (one for each language skill, with an additional guide for Beginning Literacy). The observation guides deliberately do not include indications of levels of language proficiency development since these are already contained in the ESL Bandscales. However, this leads to a potential problem: when writing the descriptors in the ESL Bandscales, the writers (including teachers) in applying a model of language proficiency with levels of progression, but not all the observation categories are covered in each description. There is therefore a dissonance between the descriptors and the lists given in the observation guides that teachers need to reconcile in their assessments and reporting.

In addition, the exemplar assessment activities give a proficiency level (beginning, lower, intermediate, higher, all) which deliberately does not relate to the descriptions in the Bandscales to avoid prejudgement. However, this is problematic since the activities themselves represent 'scales' and therefore include a notion of proficiency.

On the basis of the assessments, teachers are to fulfil both the pedagogic and administrative purposes of the framework, as described above. This involves undertaking a range of assessments, awarding the learners ratings using the ESL Bandscales and recording the ratings. Two reporting formats are given, (i) a Framework for Recording and (ii) a Summary ESL Profile Report. The former has a largely pedagogical function, providing a format for regular ongoing recording of assessments, which are to be accompanied by samples of language and student self-assessment. The ongoing records feed into the more formal Summary ESL Profile Report used for reporting to other teachers during

transition to other classes and schools, to administrators, and to the learners and parent(s) (corresponding to the second purpose above). However, this report contains a great deal of information in addition to ratings, including biographical information completed on enrolment, notes about the family, language background and schooling experience (to be completed with input from the parent(s) where appropriate). In the Summary of Progress, completed twice a year (at least), a distinction is made for secondary learners between BICS and CALP proficiency, consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the ESL Bandscales. The summaries also ask:

What experiences and teaching have helped/would help the student's language and literacy development? Record outcomes of any discussions with other staff including bilingual teacher assistants, L.O.T.E teachers, librarians and ESL teacher. (McKay *et al.* 1994, Vol. 1: F16, F17).

The learners are also asked to reflect on their experience of learning and perceived progress and there is a section for discussion with the parent(s) to be recorded. Thus comments are included from as many of those involved as possible and this, together with the breadth of the summary reports reflects the concern of the developers of the framework to provide meaningful and in-depth information about the individual learner which can inform ongoing teaching and learning.

## Concluding remarks

The framework provided in *ESL Development: Language and Literacy in Schools* is comprehensive and ESL-specific in which the learner perspective comes across strongly. Assessment is viewed as an integrated part of the curriculum and classroom practice and the framework provides a basis for both summative and formative assessment through the provision of detailed information which can be summarised for reporting purposes. Despite some of the problems identified (see earlier discussion), the Bandscales represent a major effort in developing a curriculum- and classroom-sensitive approach to EAL assessment. We understand that the use of this framework of assessment is being evaluated by a team of experts at this moment. We look forward to seeing the outcomes of this evaluation.

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## Australia: ESL Companion to the English CSF - Curriculum and Standards Framework II (Victoria: Board of Studies, 2000)

### Context and Aims

Published by the Victoria Board of Studies in 2000, the *ESL Companion to the English Curriculum Standards Framework (ESL Companion to CSF)* is described as an 'adjunct' to the *English Curriculum and Standards Framework II*:

providing a framework for the development of appropriate programs for the many students in Victorian schools who are learning English as a second language (ESL). These students are a diverse group, being of different ages, at all stages of learning English, and from differing first-language backgrounds. (p.5)

As such, the framework is technically related to English as a subject, although it is designed to cover communication across the curriculum. It is intended for use primarily by teachers working in ESL programs throughout primary and secondary schooling. However, it is also supposed to serve a purpose in familiarising mainstream teachers with 'the type of curriculum and learning outcomes appropriate for ESL learners' (p.5).

*The ESL Companion* provides:

- an overview of the broad stages of English language development through which an ESL student passes
- a set of outcomes describing what might be expected of ESL learners given optimum learning conditions
- an outline of the major components of ESL curriculum (p.6).

### Overview

*The ESL Companion* is divided into three bands to allow for multiple points of entry to the school system. Within these bands are different stages: All students within the beginner or preliterate stages will be below the mainstream levels (shown next to their corresponding bands on the left of Table 1). However, those in higher ESL stages will be progressing (at different rates) towards the levels of the *English CSF*, although not necessarily those within their own Band. It is envisaged that there will be a gradual shift from using the ESL stages to the *English CSF* levels as these become more appropriate.

There is no pre-specified timescale for language development due to the diversity of learners in terms of age and prior experience of learning in both their first language and English (especially relating to literacy). There is recognition of the long-term nature of language development and the need for support over an extended period of time. The framework explicitly states that younger learners may be able to cope with the demands of the mainstream classroom sooner than older learners (hence the difference in the number of stages in the different Bands), but that transition between learning settings (e.g. from ESL programmes or classes to mainstream classes; there is provision for intensive English classes for new arrivals in some Australian education authorities) may have an impact on the demonstration of language proficiency and this needs to be taken into account. The fact that the demands of the mainstream curriculum become increasingly complex as learners progress through the Bands also needs to be considered.

English CSF Levels	Band	ESL Companion Stages
Level 1 (end of preparatory) Level 2 (end of Year 2)	Lower primary (years P to 2)	A1 (beginner) A2
Level 3 (end of Year 4) Level 4 (end of Year 6)	Middle/upper primary (years 3 to 6)	BL (preliterate) B1 (beginner) B2 B3
Level 5 (end of Year 8) Level 6 (end of Year 10)	Secondary (years 7 to 10)	SL (preliterate) S1 (beginner) S2 S3 S4

Table 1: Structure of ESL Companion Stages

The curriculum focus descriptors and learning outcomes are divided into interrelated strands: speaking and listening, reading, and writing. Within these, there are four substrands:

- communication: correlating to the Texts substrand of the *English CSF*, but extending beyond this to provide a specific ESL focus on producing and responding to spoken and written texts both for social purposes and across the curriculum
- aspects of language:
  - contextual understanding, focusing on understanding and ability to use English appropriately in a range of contexts, both sociocultural and situational (i.e. the relationship between text, context, purpose and audience) linguistic structures and features, focusing on effective use of and control in communication, through explicit instruction as well as incidental learning
  - strategies, focusing both on what learners bring with them from their first language and what might be developed in Australian classroom to help them in acquiring and communicating in English.

In addition, the framework provides annotated samples of ESL learners' writing, illustrating language features and achievement of learning outcomes at each of the eleven stages, although not encompassing the full range of learning outcomes.

### **Teaching and learning**

There is no explicit statement on the theoretical underpinning of the *ESL Companion*, which appears to adopt a generalised model of second language communicative competence, widely used in Second Language Acquisition studies over the past twenty years.

The need for explicit, targeted language teaching, the provision of extra time, learning support and exposure to English are emphasised,. Through effective, systematic and explicit teaching of language skills, students will be given opportunities to learn through using English:

Through language use, students convey and discover information, work through ideas and express feelings. Students learn how language works and how to use it well. (p.5).

Embedded within the framework are notions of what constitutes effective pedagogy, such as teacher modelling of language and conventions of interaction, learners developing understanding and language skills through practice and repetition of conventions/activities, and the promotion of active learning and learning from peers. However, the overall emphasis seems to be more on the products of learning rather than the processes that enable learning. One shortcoming of this orientation towards learning outcomes is that the sensitivity to students' cultural backgrounds expressed in principle is not followed through in the suggested learning outcomes or in the descriptions of teaching contexts. In addition, the learning indicators used as examples throughout the document are somewhat generalised statements, lacking the detail which would be of use to teachers as opposed to programme developers, for example.

### **Assessment**

No sample assessment tasks or recording instruments are provided within the framework. However, the phrasing of some of the learning outcomes and indicators are highly suggestive of curriculum-based assessment, e.g. 'Demonstrate awareness of aspects of spoken English that are necessary for communicating and learning in a range of school contexts' and 'use some terminology of subject learning areas, e.g. poem, recipe, experiment' (p.67) and although nominally linked to the English curriculum, the assessment descriptors are meant to be used in all curriculum areas.

The assessment descriptors, referred to as learning outcomes and indicators, are set out as instances of non-context-specific performance, e.g. 'Respond to controlled spoken English in familiar exchanges ...' (p.39). Teachers can use these descriptors (and the associated indicators) as reference points to make observations of student language performance in relation to the levels of attainment within the framework. Most of the descriptors require interpretation and teachers will have to put them in their own context. The work samples of student writing are useful in helping teachers see how some of the descriptors can be interpreted in practice.

The guidance and discussions in this framework are highly suggestive of a formative orientation. Although the learning outcomes are not explicitly linked to any statement on formative assessment, the introductory text makes a point of asking the reader to read them in conjunction with the

curriculum focus statement which always precedes the descriptors for the four language modes at different levels. For instance, in relation to Level A2 Speaking and Listening it is stated: ‘Students are provided with a wide variety of opportunities and contexts in which to listen to and talk to others. Teachers scaffold the talk, helping students to articulate and share experiences ...’ (p.36). In addition, a classroom-based orientation to assessment is evident in both the learning outcomes and indicators, for example in references to learning outcomes as relating to communication in social situations and in the classroom, with evidence provided by interactions such as following classroom discussions and negotiating with peers in small group tasks.

### **Concluding remarks**

*The ESL Companion* is clearly set out and closely related in structure to the CSF to make it user-friendly in the Victoria ESL context. As an adjunct the main framework, rather than a discrete framework, it provides a considerable body of ESL-specific information and, with training and experience, teachers would be able to use the descriptors of this framework to make reasonably accurate observations.

*Postscript:* In 2005 the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority published a document entitled *ESL Companion to the New Victorian Essential Learning Standards*. The CSF is now a curriculum reference to support the new standards document.

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## Australia: South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework - English as a second language (ESL Scope & Scales) (South Australia: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, 2001)

### Context and Aims

The *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework: English as a second language* (ESL Scope & Scales) is intended for use in conjunction with the *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework* (SACSA Framework). It was developed by the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), South Australia from 1999 to 2002 in a process which included piloting in schools and evaluation.

The *ESL Scope & Scales* are intended to provide curriculum and assessment tools for use by both mainstream teachers and ESL specialists in supporting ESL learners at all stages of schooling - primary and secondary. The framework is cross-curricular and is inextricably linked to the main SACSA Framework. The setting for the *ESL Scope & Scales* is clearly the school context, with the classroom providing the forum in which learners develop the language they will need to function effectively both in and out of school. The onus is therefore on teachers to ensure that ESL learners are able to access the curriculum and ensure equity - a key term used repeatedly in the documentation. The *ESL Scope & Scales* are explicitly described as providing support materials to teachers for programming and reporting. However, they also serve a third purpose, that of identifying ESL learners for the allocation of funding. This was not part of the rationale for the development of the framework and raises the issue of the uses to which such a framework might eventually be put. The definition of ESL has been broadened in the *ESL Scope & Scales* to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island learners who are now recognised as

facing language issues in accessing the curriculum in Standard Australian English (SAE).

### Overview

The *ESL Scope & Scales* are divided into four bands: Early Years (R, 1, and 2), Primary Years (3-5), Middle Years (6-9) and Senior Years (10-13). Each band includes the range of scales considered relevant to that band:

- Early Years - Scales 1-6
- Primary Years - Scales 1-9
- Middle Years - Scales 1-13
- Senior Years - Scales 1-14

It should be noted that the South Australian authorities state that the division of bands is pragmatic (taking into account social, physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions of learning) and not necessarily based any theory. The scales describe a learning continuum, so that, for example, a Year 3 ESL learner may be anywhere between Scale 1 and 7, as illustrated below (Fig 2).

Learners at the lower end of the Scales will not necessarily be able to meet the expectations of their Band in SAE and teachers are therefore advised to refer to Key Ideas in the Scope for earlier Bands when planning lessons. Thus in the Primary Years Band (shown above), for learners below Scale 7, teachers will need to refer to the Scope for the Early Years Band. On the other hand, if a Primary Years Band learner achieves Scale 8 in year 4, they will be deemed to have sufficient language to meet Standard 2 and will no longer be considered an ESL learner. Careful assessment is considered important at all transition points.

		Primary Years								
Year level								3	4	5
Standards							1		2	
ESL Scales		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ESL learners	Year 3									
	Year 4									
	Year 5									

Fig. 2: Structural relationship between Scales, Curriculum Standards, Year Levels and Curriculum Bands (Primary Years) (DETE 2001:5)



Within the Bands, the Curriculum Scope is intended to provide programming support to inform teaching and learning. The Scope first sets out the range of experience learners may have had in English, both SAE and other varieties of English. The Early Years Band stresses the need for intensive support and interaction between teachers and children. The Middle Years and Senior Years Bands highlight the potential mismatch for learners between their language competence in social contexts and that in formal, academic contexts. The Curriculum Scope consists of two strands: *text in context* and *language*. *Text in context* specifies the range of contexts and aspects of communication, texts and genres which need to be learned within the Band (directly related to the mainstream curriculum). The *language* strand 'outlines the language demands that need to be addressed in supporting learners of ESL across the curriculum'. (p.4)

The Scales 'describe a language and learning continuum for Standard Australian English and are to be used in identifying an ESL learner's level of achievement in Standard Australian English' (ibid), thus providing a reporting mechanism. They give a single outcome for both *text in context* and *language* strands. The rationale for this is that the elements of the *language* strand express the *text in context* strand, and keeping the number of Outcomes to the minimum makes the Scales easier to use:

This means that it is possible to program for ESL learners using the Scope and its strands of *text in context* and *language*, assess using assessment tools that use the same strands and strand components and then report using the Scales. (p.7)

In addition to the Curriculum Scope and Scales, each band contains an Introduction, outlining the aims of the framework, texts and contexts for ESL (which relate to Learning Areas in the SACSA Framework as a whole). It also identifies the range of ESL learners. There is a section on language and culture (emphasising the diversity of ESL learners and the importance of acknowledging prior learning in other languages and dialects) and on first and second language learning. A contrast is made between those proficient in a first language and those who are not. Emphasis is placed on providing a positive experience and supportive environment for the latter). There is also a glossary of terms and an overview summarising the key points of the Curriculum Scope and Scale Outcomes.

### Teaching and learning

The *ESL Scope & Scales* do not offer any explicit statement on a theoretical position in relation to EAL development. By virtue of its existence it draws attention to EAL issues; some of the opening glossing of terms such as genre repeatedly highlights the focus on EAL students. But no explicit theory or model of EAL development is indicated in the EAL-related documentation. The framework operates a complex set of theoretical concepts and terminology such as 'text in language' which embraces both spoken and written language use, and appears to have drawn heavily on systemic functional linguistics in using analytical constructs such as field, tenor and mode, which does not necessarily have an EAL orientation.

A possible advantage of adopting this set of complex theoretical and analytical concepts is that the level of detail enables aspects of language use to be specified with considerable clarity. However, difficulty in coping with the terminology is an issue in terms of training/professional development; whilst some ESL specialist teachers will have studied functional systemic linguistics, for others, particularly for non-specialist mainstream teachers (who are themselves to be trained and guided by ESL specialists), the terminology may be difficult to understand and the glossary is indispensable. Furthermore, the division into *text in context* and *language* in the *ESL Scope & Scales*, in addition to genre, field, tenor and mode, presents teachers with a large number of categories to deal with, resulting in a great deal of information to digest. This is particularly so in the Senior Years Band which contains the full range of scales from 1 to 14. Some teachers might have classes which enable them to consider only one band, minimising the volume of information they need to assimilate. However, for those teaching the Middle Years and Senior Bands, if they have late entrants to the school system, they may well have to take on board the *Scope and Scales* of an earlier band/s.

In terms of teaching and learning, the theoretical underpinning to the *ESL Scope & Scales* is expressly constructivist, in line with the main SACSA Framework and both the theoretical aspects and the origins of Essential Learnings, which arose from the constructivist approach, are explained in the main Framework. The SACSA Framework contains a section on the 'family of theories' underpinning the Framework and accompanying materials. The key notion is of

learners as 'active in the process of taking in information and building knowledge and understanding' (p.5). They do so by "[constructing] new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past understandings" (ibid). Thus, learning is viewed as a spiral and "This view of learning calls for holistic approaches to planning, teaching, learning and assessing" (ibid). To this end, the Framework:

does not represent a prescribed body of knowledge or authorise a particular way of going about teaching. Rather, it describes a set of parameters within which educators work to design their own teaching, and promotes contexts within which children and students construct their own learning. (ibid).

Although no single methodological approach is advocated, both the SACSA framework and the ESL Scope & Scales involve learners interacting in tasks and activities for which they need exponents of language. Learners make language choices in accomplishing tasks and the demands placed on the learners in terms of language use become increasingly complex as they progress to higher Bands. Learning is cyclical in two dimensions, that of the underlying constructivist theory and in terms of developing language proficiency.

The diversity of learners' backgrounds and prior learning experiences is emphasised in the Introduction to the *ESL Scope & Scales*. So too is the importance of learners building on their existing repertoires of understanding and knowledge in line with the constructivist principles of the SACSA Framework. However, the Scope and the Scales themselves lose the strong sociocultural flavour of the Introduction and the SACSA Framework: the inclusion of affective factors influencing learning, such as the learner's health, motivation and self-esteem, is not reflected in the body of the Scope and Scales. This may be due to the fact that the description of language in the *ESL Scope & Scales* in terms of systemic functional linguistics divorces it from the SACSA Framework. The use of genre, field, tenor and mode does not correspond with teachers' own description of language learning or that of the SACSA Framework which relates to skills areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

#### **Assessment**

The Scales are not themselves an assessment instrument, but provide a reporting mechanism and a means of facilitating formative assessment to inform teaching and learning. However, the

lack of a clear articulation between the constructivist perspective on learning and the concepts such as genre and analytical categories such as field and tenor may cause difficulties for teachers in their attempt to diagnose and record student development. The assessment descriptors are stated in the form of criteria for de-contextualised performance, e.g. 'Demonstrates understanding of main ideas ... in a short story' (p.44). There seems to be a lack of fit between some of the concepts involved. These performance descriptors are, however, accompanied by explicit examples of language items and expressions which can be very helpful for teachers.

In the SACSA Framework, assessment is seen in the context of ordinary classroom activities and forms part of the teaching cycle. The assessment descriptors are intended to be used in all subject or learning areas, and there is an increasing bank of materials for teachers to draw on. Assessment tools are provided on the SACSA website ([www.sacsa.sa.edu.au](http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au)) in both the general assessment section (which indicates projects that are particularly applicable to ESL learners) and also the ESL-specific section. The section ESL Scope and Scales Moderated Evidence explicitly and comprehensively addresses the use of the Scales. It offers examples of completed and blank proforma, and teacher moderated assessment; the examples of teacher-moderated assessment can also be used by teachers to moderate their own assessments. The constructivist perspective of the wider curriculum framework (of all subjects) which emphasizes active student learning is reflected in the approach to assessment and in some of the discussion in the EAL document. It is very likely that this perspective will encourage teachers to privilege teaching and learning, and to see assessment as part of that activity.

#### **Concluding remarks**

The *ESL Scope & Scales* strongly reflect the instructional context and, as such, notions such as Learning Areas, Essential Learnings and Key Competencies will be familiar to both ESL specialist and mainstream teachers. Whilst basing the framework on systemic functional linguistics has considerable implications for teacher development and training, the framework does provide a tool which potentially enables precise observation and interpretation of the English development of ESL students across the curriculum and at all stages of schooling. In particular, at the level of specificity, the *ESL Scope & Scales* are oriented to formative

assessment embedded within classroom activities, as well as fulfilling a summative function through the combination of teacher assessment and standardised tasks and tests

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## Canada: Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 - English as a second language – for adults (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000)

### Context and Aims

The *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a second language – for adults* (CLB) provide descriptors of communicative proficiency for adult immigrant ESL speakers. The Benchmarks are part of a suite of documents: *CLB 2000: Theoretical Framework*, *CLB 2000: Additional Sample Task Ideas*, and *CLB 2000: A Guide to Implementation*. The CLB were developed throughout the 1990s in a process funded primarily by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (with additional funding from provincial governments). They are intended for use in curriculum design and language programme implementation throughout Canada. These are viewed as a reference framework for teaching and learning and as an assessment tool. They are also seen as providing a common language for professionals to share information. The aim is to provide a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency in English, a means of describing successive levels of achievement and placing learners on a continuum of ESL performance, either for diagnosis (placement) or evaluation (exit determination).

The CLB are designed for use with adult immigrants who need to demonstrate their language skills in English to prospective employers or to enter non-ESL/EFL courses. As such, unlike the other frameworks examined, the context of use is not the mainstream classroom, but designated ESL/EFL programmes conducted by specialist

teachers and therefore the instructional context is not highlighted.

### Overview

The CLB are divided into three stages: Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Proficiency as below: In each stage, Global Performance Descriptors are provided, which broadly describe what the learner can do in each skills area (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) at different points in that stage: initial, developing, adequate and fluent proficiency. There is then an overview of what may need to be taught or learned, e.g.:

- knowledge of the task, purpose;
- knowledge of audience;
- knowledge of content/topic and related vocabulary; and
- knowledge of the appropriate discourse for a task.

For each of the twelve benchmarks, there are brief descriptors of 'what the person can do' in each skills area, examples of tasks and texts (basic exponents which might be expected to occur in texts and an indication of the type of task that might be used to rate competence), and performance indicators (suggestions of what the assessor might look for) in relation to:

1. Social interaction
2. Instructions
3. Suasion (getting things done)
4. Information

BASIC BENCHMARKS 1-4		INTERMEDIATE BENCHMARKS 5-8		ADVANCED BENCHMARKS 9-12			
READING		WRITING		LISTENING		SPEAKING	
Initial	Initial	Initial	Initial	Initial	Initial	Initial	Initial
Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing	Developing
Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate
Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent

Table 2: CLB Structure

## Teaching and learning

Although not tied to any particular instructional method, the CLB are described as task-based. The development of communicative competence is viewed as being accomplished most effectively through tasks which enable an integrated approach to language learning. The CLB are transparently functional in approach and are based on a "fusion" of, among others, Bachman's (1990) model of communicative language ability and Celce-Murcia *et al's* (1995) pedagogical model of communicative competence. The CLB are therefore based on a construct of language proficiency rather than on theories of second language acquisition. Language specifications are subsumed by the more performance-oriented concept 'function'. They take:

a functional view of language, language use and language proficiency" with a corresponding focus on "communicative proficiency", defined as "the ability to communicate: to interact, to express, to interpret and to negotiate meaning, and to create discourse in a variety of social contexts and situations (p.6).

The authors state categorically that the CLB are not intended to reflect a natural sequence of ESL development, since devising a sequential approach is deemed problematic with learners from different linguistic backgrounds and with different needs, and also as there is no one-to-one relationship between function and form. Development in communicative proficiency is viewed as comprising the ability to use progressively more effective, accurate, appropriate and fluent language in increasingly demanding communicative contexts.

The CLB are intended to be learner-centred, but at the same time are instruction-dependent and learners are only likely to be able to access and interpret the Benchmarks through their teachers. The extent to which instruction can be tailored to individual learning styles, abilities and needs presumably depends on a number of factors, such as the approach taken by the teacher, the range of learners in a programme, the duration of the programme of study and the curriculum/syllabus followed. The CLB do refer to the rate of learning differing between learners and the likelihood of progression slowing in the higher levels, but the learner comes across rather more strongly in the *Theoretical Framework* than in the Benchmarks, in which there is an apparent emphasis on performance. The *Theoretical Framework*, however, gives a picture of learners

developing their English through negotiation of meaning and focus on form: accuracy is not the primary criterion for success and therefore, for example, a learner indicating incomprehension is treated as positive, being a negotiating move.

## Assessment

The CLB also have a function in terms of assessment and evaluation, forming the basis for the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) (which tests from Benchmarks 1-8, with 8 representing the point at which a candidate is ready to enter post-secondary studies) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment (CLBLA). The CLBA assesses listening and speaking through a single interview, reading through passages and responses to short answer/multiple choice questions and writing through 'real' tasks.

For performance monitoring, evaluation and the Benchmark achievement report, ratings are given for all four categories contained in the Benchmark descriptors: social interaction, instructions, suasion and information. The ratings are as follows:

- 1 - unable to achieve yet
- 2 - needs help
- 3 - satisfactory Benchmark achievement: pass
- 4 - more than satisfactory achievement

For speaking and writing, learner performance is evaluated (i) globally (30% of overall rating), a holistic evaluation of 'overall effectiveness' of communication in any given task, and (ii) analytically (70% of overall rating) for 'some qualitative aspects of the communication'<sup>2</sup>. For the analytic ratings, the assessors select criteria depending on the task and its requirements; in speaking, the suggested criteria are divided according to whether the task is monologic or interactional. Listening and reading are assessed through comprehension questions, rated as:

- 1 - learner responds correctly to fewer than 50% of the questions
- 2 - learner responds correctly to fewer than 70% of the questions
- 3 - 70%-80% of the questions
- 4 - more than 80% of the questions

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<sup>2</sup> It is suggested that the ratings be weighted so that the holistic rating comprises 30% of the overall rating and the analytic rating 70%.

In listening and reading, the pass rate is set at 70%-80% to allow for error in evaluation. However, in the assessment of speaking and listening, the notion of what constitutes 'effective communication' or 'satisfactory achievement' is dealt with not in the CLB, but in the Theoretical Framework and there are therefore issues in terms of consistency of application and moderation.

In order to attain a Benchmark in any one skill, the learner needs to 'pass' on four competency areas (social interaction, instruction, suasion and information) with a pass being represented as a mark; there is no opportunity for variation in competence in difference areas and this raises issues in terms of recognising a spread of abilities for an individual. In addition, there is a tension between the description of the competencies as being only indicative of the range of a person's language ability at a Benchmark level and the express purposes of the framework to provide an accurate description of learner's ability in English and to enable description and measurement of communicative proficiency.

Language use in the Benchmarks spans three contexts: the community, study and the workplace. Learners are presented with situations they might face in these contexts in Canada, such as interviews and making telephone calls for specific purposes. However, a distinction is made between these contexts only in Stages II and III and no rationale is given for the lack of distinction in Stage I. In addition, there is no indication of how the distinction between contexts might be applied in evaluation and reporting, or whether such distinction is necessary or desirable. It is possible that a learner might attain a Benchmark in assessments which address language use in only one context, but the format for reporting does not provide for this.

In addition to their diagnostic (placement) and summative (evaluation) purposes, the CLB also have a 'monitoring' function during a programme of study, enabled by the inclusion of the more detailed analytic ratings. However, a formative orientation to assessment is not highlighted and no provision is made in the reporting format for additional comment to supplement the ratings given.

As with teaching, assessment is seen as being best undertaken through tasks which are specifically designed to assess observable aspects of language proficiency and not non-linguistic skills. The notion of task-based learning is therefore

embedded in the required task-based performance and it is questionable whether the framework would be amenable to use with other approaches. As the document is intended to be used by syllabus designers and assessors, it would seem that this is intended to have an impact on teaching, with the perception that gearing programmes to assessment through the CLB would be beneficial.

### **Concluding remarks**

The CLB are clearly laid out and comprehensible. However, as the focus is on life in Canada and inculcating learners with cultural understanding of the Canadian context, the framework does not aim to raise awareness of the potential diversity of the learner population or the specificities of the diverse context of learning, although reference is made to the need to cater to different learning styles. Perhaps because teachers are expected to concentrate on the English language, there is little reference to first language (other than English) use by the learners.

In terms of the intended uses of the CLB, learners' rate of progression is determined by the programme of language instruction in question. For example, a particular teaching programme may not aim at taking learners from one Benchmark to another, but at development and progress within a Benchmark. This is clearly very different from the English school context in which EAL learners have to cope with the progressive demands of the National Curriculum independently of English language support.

For the reasons given above, the CLB framework is of limited immediate relevance to the work of EAL teachers in our schools, although there are aspects of the framework which would apply equally in the UK EAL context, such as the inclusion of gesture in conversation management and the positive treatment of an indication of incomprehension as a negotiating move.

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## England: A Language in Common - Assessing English as an Additional Language (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000)

### Context and Aims

*A Language in Common: Assessing English as an Additional Language* was published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority for use in mainstream schools with EAL learners.

The framework is primarily intended to help teachers:

ensure that all their pupils develop as competent and confident speakers and writers of English... [focusing] in particular on ways of assessing the early progress pupils make in learning English as an additional language (EAL), in such a way as to ensure that pupils' attainment is appropriately linked to their full national curriculum entitlement (p.5).

In addition, the framework is to help teachers, schools and LEAs to work together to:

1. reach a common understanding of the nature of the standards for each step and level;
2. agree the nature of the evidence needed to standardise judgments;
3. develop understanding of how the standards relate to different groups of pupils;
4. build on the information gained to enhance pupils' learning. (p.4)

The EAL-oriented pre-Level 1 and Level 1 assessment descriptors provided in the framework are intended to supplement the National Curriculum Level English (subject) descriptors - they are therefore not cross-curricular in design - and relate only to early stage EAL learners (see next section).

### Overview

The framework consists of four parts:

*Part 1: Background to assessing English as an additional language:* an overview of key issues in assessment and specific issues relating to EAL learners.

*Part 2: A common scale for assessment:* descriptions of the sub-scales for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, followed by descriptions of evidence for each stage.

*Part 3: Examples of pupils' attainments in English:* samples of work, together with

comments on achievement, presented as case studies.

*Part 4: Profiling and monitoring attainment:* notes on effective profiling and its uses.

The scales comprise two additional descriptions for attainment in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing before EAL learners reach National Curriculum Level 1 (Steps 1 and 2) and two additional descriptions within Level 1 (Threshold and Secure). Steps 1 and 2 are phrased in terms of broad categories of language communication, e.g. 'Pupils understand simple conversational English' (Step 2, Speaking and Listening). The additional Level 1 descriptors are slightly reformulated versions of the National Curriculum English (subject) descriptors. The framework provides no EAL-oriented descriptors beyond Level 1 as beyond this point it is considered that the National Curriculum Levels are relevant and appropriate in assessing all learners and the framework states:

Underlying the concept of the extended scale is the strong expectation that most EAL pupils will move rapidly through the early steps and the graduated level 1. For pupils who enter school already literate in another language, the passage from a step or threshold level directly into national curriculum level 3 or above should likewise be a realistic expectation, as illustrated by the description of pupils' work in Part 3 of this booklet. A clear goal for all pupils in terms of the level of competence in English required to participate fully in the secondary school curriculum is the attainment of national curriculum level 4. The progress from step 1 to level 4 can be described in each mode along the following broad lines:

- **listening:** some evidence of pupils' responsiveness through short bursts of attention, to the ability to fully understand and participate in discussions with peers;
- **speaking:** ability to say a very few words, to being able to sustain talk adapted to different purposes and circumstances;
- **reading:** evidence of early familiarity with conventions of print and books, to being able to sustain independent reading of challenging texts, understanding both literal and implicit meanings;
- **writing:** experiments with letters and symbols of English, to being able to write accurately in lively and interesting ways for different purposes. (pp.10-11)

In other words, EAL development, beyond the very early stages, is to be assessed against a set of universal language scales designed implicitly for the English as a mother tongue student population. Therefore this framework can be characterised as a limited EAL framework.

The scales are not meant to be age-differentiated, but are considered suitable for pupils regardless of the age at which they enter the school system. This view is offered in the guidance despite the fact that the National Curriculum Levels themselves are implicitly age-differentiated, since they relate to different stages of schooling: Levels 1 and 2 relate to early primary, Levels 3 and 4 to middle/upper primary, and the higher Levels to secondary.

### Teaching and learning

According to this framework:

All pupils learning English as an additional language – whether they are young children, late arrivals encountering English for the first time, or pupils whose home language is not English but who have grown up in England - have to know and be able to use:

- the sounds of English;
- its grammatical structures and conventions;
- the meaning of words and phrases;
- contextual understandings, including non-verbal features.

They also have to learn to integrate the four language modes - speaking, listening, reading and writing - and cannot rely on only one (p.10).

There is no explicit description of how the levels were developed or on what theories or principles of language acquisition or development they are based. However, references to certain EAL-specific characteristics of learning, e.g. potential lapses in concentration after a extended period of listening, reflect an EAL-awareness. However, there is also reference to evidence which:

... suggests that young EAL learners go through a similar process of sorting out English grammar as children brought up in an English-only environment. Similar 'developmental errors' are shown by both groups, for example in the way they generalise about how to use past tense inflexions, forms of the negative, auxiliary verbs, and forms of questions. They also need help with how to adapt language according to its context of use, whether written or spoken (p.8).

This perspective minimizes the differences between EAL learners and mother tongue English learners and, just as importantly, blurs the differences between different types of EAL pupils, e.g. pupils who are new to English and new to the English school system, and those who are from British minority communities with a home language other than English. This reduces the level of EAL specificity in the framework. Similarly, although it is acknowledged that children will learn at varying paces and demonstrate uneven profiles in relation to the different skills areas, there is little about this that is sensitive to EAL developmental trajectories.

The framework, as its title suggests, is predominantly concerned with assessment. The teacher's role is primarily seen as that of providing a model of language and strategies, and that of the learner as taking up teachers' modelling. Although Part 4 situates the case studies in the classroom, there is little explicit discussion on the issues of integrating teaching and learning issues within the overall theme of this publication.

### Assessment

The framework adopts a universalist perspective on EAL assessment: in essence it is argued that the general framework of assessment, without systematic and extensive extension, is applicable to EAL. The expectations of teachers of EAL learners are outlined as follows. Teachers should:

- be clear about the purpose of the assessment, distinguishing summative, formative and diagnostic aims;
- be sensitive to the pupil's first or main other language(s) and heritage culture;
- take account of how long the pupil has been learning English;
- assess in ways that are appropriate for the pupil's age;
- focus on language, while being aware of the influence of behaviour, attitude and cultural expectations;
- recognise that pupils may be at different levels of attainment in speaking, listening, reading and writing (p.8).

In assessing EAL learners, teachers are asked to interpret the descriptors in context and infer language attainment from a form of guided observation. The scales themselves are followed by a more detailed description of the evidence that might be looked for at the different stages of development, together with examples of pupil performance, some of which (but not all) provide elements of background information, e.g. the age



of the pupil, home language, length of time in the UK and/or school, level of literacy, or experience of learning in English. These are in turn followed by descriptions of evidence for each stage, supported by the examples of pupils' work, with a description of the context in which they were collected and comments on their attainment. The framework states that:

The purpose of this exemplification is to show how judgements take into account the diverse qualities of achievement in learning to use English. There is cross-reference to the standards and expectations of the national curriculum programmes of study (p.3).

The document acknowledges the differences between summative and diagnostic assessment. It states that 'there is a need to balance positive recognition of what a pupil understands and communicates, despite his or her limited grasp of English, and the identification of features of the pupil's developing English which are most likely to benefit from particular attention' (p.8). The two pre-Level 1 Steps and split Level 1 descriptors are phrased in terms of student actions in a classroom context. The work samples of pupil writing (and the other sample assessment activities in within the NC) are also drawn from ordinary classroom learning activities. As stated above this framework is part of the mainstream English (subject) assessment provision (with a small extension). In that sense, there is a built-in perspective and structure for formative teacher assessment. The assessment requirements of the National Curriculum comprise both formal summative assessment (e.g SATs) and classroom-based teacher assessment which can include formative teacher assessment. However, despite the acknowledgment of the importance of "diagnostic assessment", most of the examples presented seem to be largely summative, and there is little attention to formative practices, for example, in terms of discussing feedback.

### **Concluding remarks**

*A Language in Common* needs to be considered in relation to other National Curriculum documentation concerning EAL learners with which it is intended to be closely inter-linked. It adopts a highly 'EAL is more or less the same as English as a mother tongue' view, not least in terms of the lack of recognition of the linguistic (EAL and other languages) and cognitive demands placed on EAL learners across the curriculum and at different stages of schooling. The advantage of this framework lies in its relative simplicity; teachers can use more or less

the same assessment arrangements and criteria for all pupils. However, this particular view of EAL raises many issues, particularly in the current context because schools are having to work with a wide range of EAL pupils, from long-term bilingual pupils from settled communities to new arrivals (from EU member countries, for instance) for whom English is a brand new language. Professionally teachers know that these diverse groups of pupils require different responses in terms of teaching and assessment. The lack of EAL specificity raises questions of validity of assessment outcomes. In addition, the framework does not sufficiently address the complex relationship between assessment, teaching and learning, nor does it encompass a conceptualisation of language as comprising more than an abstract notion of 'language' which emphasises generalised 'communication' on the one hand and aspects of grammar on the other. A one-size-fits-all approach can also contribute to an impoverished professional view of EAL.

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## USA: ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Alexandria, VA, 1997)

### Context and Aims

The ESL Standards, developed by the TESOL Task Force in the USA during the 1990s, outlines a framework for language education for linguistic minority students. The ESL standards describe the proficiencies in English that linguistic minority students need to acquire in content domains across the curriculum, including English language arts.

Overall the aim of the framework has been designed to provide educators with guidelines for teaching linguistic minority school students in a variety of contexts. The locally (state level) administered nature of school education in the United States means that there is a range of different ESL provision and approaches. The document provides a systematically designed pedagogic framework for educators who work with linguistic minority students at elementary (primary), middle and secondary school levels. It is also expected that curriculum developers and programme coordinators are likely to refer to the document to develop more detailed

local ESL curricula. Furthermore, it may be used as a reference for educators such as counsellors, school social workers and psychologists who provide additional services to linguistic minority students. The framework is therefore intended to fulfil a wide range of purposes to meet both local school-level and systems-level demands.

### Overview

The ESL Standards articulate the developmental English language needs of linguistic minority learners and highlight particular instructional and assessment issues that must be addressed if linguistic minority learners are to derive full benefits from teaching and achieve high standards across the curriculum. The document is organized into grade-level clusters: pre~K-3, 4-8 and 9-12. The standards are framed around three goals and nine standards. Each standard is further explicated by descriptors, sample progress indicators, and classroom vignettes with discussions and these are differentiated for the three grade-level clusters.

<b>Goal 1</b> To use English to communicate in social settings		
<b>Standard 1</b> Students will use English to participate in social interactions	<b>Standard 2</b> Students will interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment	<b>Standard 3</b> Students will use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence
<b>Goal 2</b> To use English to achieve academically in all content areas		
<b>Standard 1</b> Students will use English to interact in the classroom	<b>Standard 2</b> Students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form	<b>Standard 3</b> Students will use appropriate language strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge
<b>Goal 3</b> To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways		
<b>Standard 1</b> Students will use the appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting	<b>Standard 2</b> Students will use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting	<b>Standard 3</b> Students will use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence

Fig. 3: ESL standards for pre~K-12 students: summary of goals and standards (TESOL, 1997:8-10)

The standards have clear goals that reflect three overarching areas in which students need to develop competence in English: social language, academic language and sociocultural knowledge. The nine content standards indicate more specifically what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction. The descriptors are broad categories of discrete, representative behaviours that students exhibit when they meet a standard. The sample progress indicators list accessible, observable activities that students may perform to show progress toward meeting the designated standard. These progress indicators represent a variety of instructional techniques that may be used by teachers to determine how well students are doing and they can be achieved by all students at some level of performance. The vignettes provide instructional sequences drawn from the real-life experiences of teachers and are classroom-based scenes that demonstrate the standards in action and describe student and teacher activities that promote English language learning. The discussions connect the vignettes to the standards and selected progress indicators, explaining how the instructional activities described in the vignettes encourage students to meet the relevant standard and highlight the students' use of English

**Teaching and learning**  
The framework is underpinned by principles of language acquisition, derived from research and theory about the nature of language, language learning, human development and pedagogy, namely that:

- Language is functional
- Language varies
- Language learning is cultural learning
- Language acquisition is a long-term process
- Language acquisition occurs through meaningful use and interaction
- Language processes develop interdependently
- Native language proficiency contributes to second language acquisition
- Bilingualism is an individual and societal asset (p.6).

'Language' is viewed as comprising more than English syntax and grammar, including different functions of language relating to both societal and academic purposes. It is seen as dynamic and varied and there is a strong adherence to these qualities of language in the framework. Recognition of the diversity and flexibility of language is expected to be manifested in the

learning environment and to be promoted through teaching.

There is much emphasis on providing motivating learning contexts (e.g. through use of visual aids like videos), as well as the implementation of strategies such as problem solving in pairs, whole class and small group discussions and role-playing. The vignettes provide instructional sequences drawn from real-life experiences of teachers and they are intended to be representative of (a) a range of learners in terms of gender, national origin, socioeconomic status; (b) the types of educational settings; (c) the geographical regions and communities in the US; (d) the characteristics of teachers who provide ESL instruction. These give a flavour of the implementation of the framework in the classroom, supported in some cases with transcript-like samples of interactions between teachers and students, and the related discussions provide a link between teaching strategies and learning outcomes.

#### **Assessment**

Assessment is comprehensively addressed in separate document *Scenarios for ESL Standards-Based Assessment* (published by TESOL in 2001). These are explicitly linked to the ESL Standards, with each scenario relating to a specific goal, standard and grade level and the descriptions reflect the vignettes in the ESL Standards.

The ESL Standards emphasise the importance of contextualised assessment, that is integrated into classroom practice within an assessment cycle. Teachers are intended to design and adapt assessment activities, as well as using department- or district-mandated assessment formats, to suit their own instructional context and the various purposes of assessments. Assessment is viewed as an ongoing, systematic process in which the additional linguistic, cultural and academic demands on linguistic minority learners are acknowledged, enabling language development. To this end, planning is key, establishing a fit between purpose and approach.

There is a very strong focus on formative assessment, both in the Scenarios and in the ESL Standards themselves. The discussion on assessment is related to the vignettes which highlight issues of language development and teacher actions in classroom settings which can assist and promote language development.

### **Concluding remarks**

The framework balances breadth - the scope of the framework making it potentially useful to teachers, those involved in education more widely, curriculum developers and programme coordinators - and depth through the use of vignettes to translate abstract terms into classroom situations. The result is a comprehensive and detailed framework setting standards for ESL teaching and learning, although some descriptors require further rendering to foreground the English language component in classroom activities. Indeed it is explicitly stated that local school districts and schools are invited to extend the performance descriptors to specify the requisite language knowledge and skills. Thus, while the descriptors do not directly spell out language items for assessment, they can be used to develop language assessment activities and items in local contexts.

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