



Guidance

Curriculum and
Standards

Primary

National Strategy

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years

Unit 3

Creating an inclusive learning culture

**Headteachers,
teachers and
teaching assistants
at Foundation Stage
and Key Stages 1
and 2**

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Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years

Unit 3

Creating an inclusive learning culture



Defining terms

EAL stands for English as an additional language and recognises the fact that many children learning English in schools in this country already know more than one other language and are adding English to that repertoire.

Bilingual is used to refer to those children who have access to more than one language at home and at school. It does not necessarily imply full fluency in both or all of their languages.

Advanced learner of EAL is a term used by Ofsted to describe children who have had considerable exposure to English and are no longer in the early stages of English language acquisition. These are children who, often born in this country, appear to be fluent in ordinary everyday conversational contexts, but require continued support in order to develop the cognitive and academic language necessary for educational success.

Minority ethnic group is used in this publication for all those groups other than the white British majority. Although children from these groups may well form the majority in some school contexts, they are still members of groups in a minority nationally and will continue to be referred to as children from minority ethnic groups. Most children learning EAL are from minority ethnic groups. School Census data shows that only a very small percentage of EAL learners are white.

Acknowledgements

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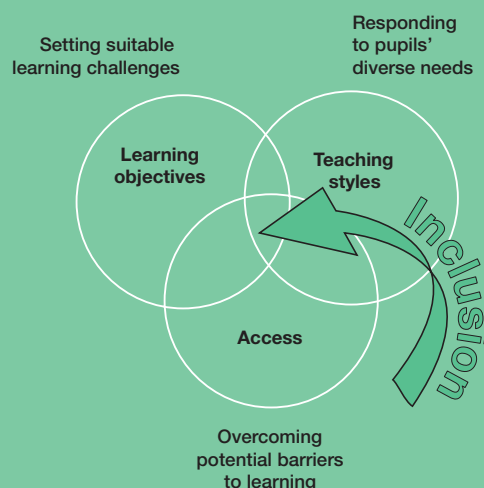
Preface

This publication aims to support schools and settings in promoting the progress and achievement of all learners.

It is underpinned by the three principles of the National Curriculum inclusion statement:

- Setting suitable learning challenges
- Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

The Primary National Strategy model of three circles of inclusion illustrates these three principles in practice, and has been used to ensure that this publication will support the learning of children with diverse needs.



Teachers will need to further adapt the materials for individual children. Some examples of how teachers who have used the materials have done this for their classes have been provided. These are examples only – the particular choice of appropriate learning objectives, teaching styles and access strategies lies with the informed professionalism of the teacher, working with teaching assistants, other professionals, parents/carers and the child.

General introduction

This is Unit 3 of a set of materials: *Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years*.

The materials consist of the following:

Introductory guide: supporting school improvement

Unit 1: **Planning and assessment for language and learning**

Unit 2: **Creating the learning culture: making it work in the classroom**

Unit 3: **Creating an inclusive learning culture**

Unit 4: **Speaking, listening, learning: working with children learning English as an additional language**

Professional development modules (PDMs) linked to the units and designed to support school-based CPD

Three fliers: **First language for learning, ICT for EAL and Information for school governors**

A '**route map**' providing an overview of and some guidance for using these materials



A **CD-ROM** containing a variety of additional materials which are referred to throughout the pack



A **DVD** providing some exemplification, particularly of the material related to speaking and listening



An apple symbol is used to highlight practical strategies for teachers.

Although the content has been organised in this way there is a great deal of overlap between the different units. For example, building on previous experience is explored in this unit but it is also addressed in Unit 2 *Creating the learning culture: making it work in the classroom*. There is also overlap between the different sections of this unit because aspects interrelate. Valuing and building on children's knowledge of other languages, for example, contributes to the school ethos and is part of a culturally inclusive curriculum.

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Introduction

The education system must provide the right conditions for learning to support equality of opportunity for all children. This unit looks in detail at the ways in which schools can create conditions which support the achievement of children learning EAL.

It builds on:

- the Introductory Guide to these materials which explores the role of leadership in developing school improvement strategies that promote an agenda of equality and raise the attainment of bilingual children;
- the conceptual framework about how learning develops which has been set out in *Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years*.

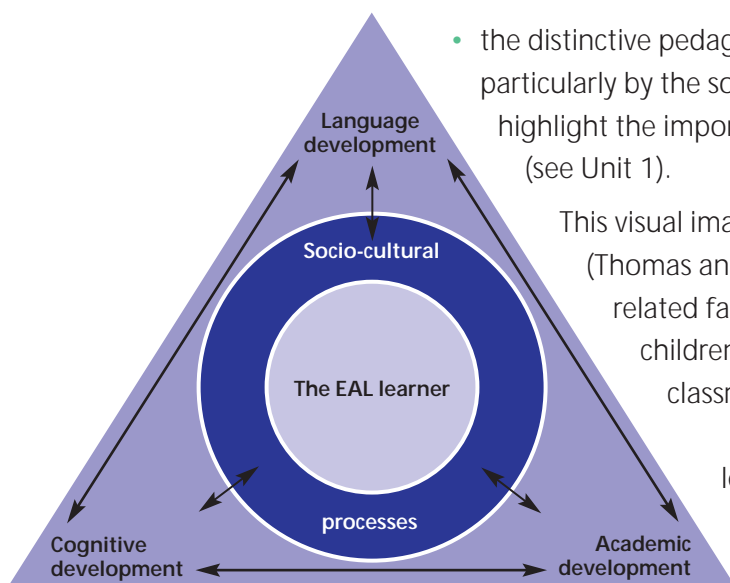
Learning:

- is affected by individual differences;
- depends on affective dimensions such as self-esteem and motivation;
- builds on previous experience;
- is socially mediated;
- is influenced by the social, cultural and political context in which it occurs;

- the distinctive pedagogy for EAL which has been influenced particularly by the social constructivist theories and those which highlight the importance of socio-cultural and emotional factors (see Unit 1).

This visual image, adapted from the work of Virginia Collier (Thomas and Collier 1997), describes the main inter-related factors that define the learning situation for children learning EAL as they operate within the classroom or setting.

At the heart of the process is the child learning EAL with his or her first language, previous experience of learning, aptitude, learning style and so on.



Acquiring EAL in the Primary School Context: adapted from Thomas and Collier (1997)

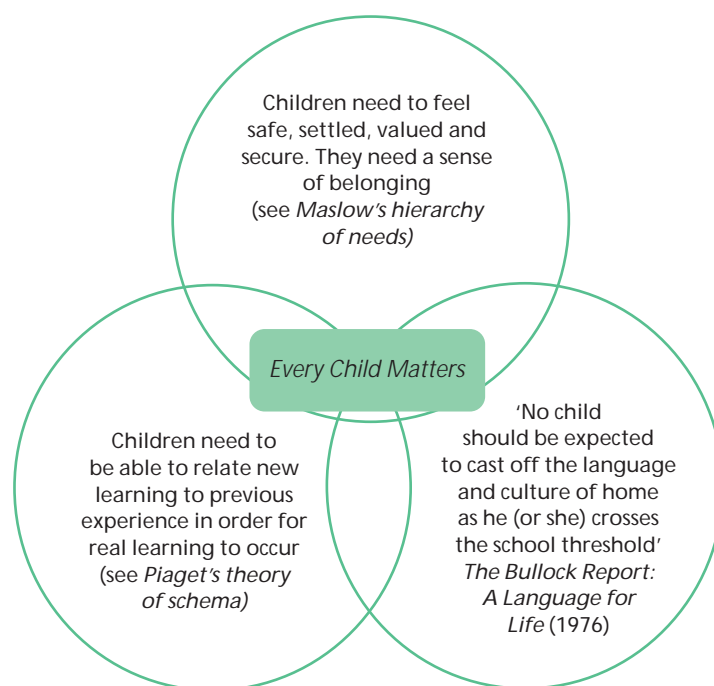


In common with all learners, those learning EAL will be affected by attitudes to them, their ethnicity, culture, religion and language(s) within the school, in their neighbourhood and in the wider world. Their social and cultural experiences will impact on their language acquisition as well as their cognitive and academic development.

Anxiety levels need to be low and internal motivation and confidence high for optimal additional language development (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981). For these conditions to apply, children need to feel accepted – they need a ‘sense of belonging’.

Attention to the conditions for learning is crucial in enabling children learning EAL to move beyond a functional level to acquire the breadth and depth of language needed across the whole curriculum and in ensuring that they achieve what they are capable of.

The strategies suggested in this unit are underpinned by three important and interrelated propositions about conditions for learning which apply to all children.



Ensuring these conditions for children learning EAL and learning through EAL requires particular attention and specific additional action on the part of schools.

There is a statutory framework for this action which includes:

- the National Curriculum 2000 inclusion statement;
- schools' duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.



The National Curriculum (2000) is prefaced by a statutory statement referring to the effective inclusion of all children. This statement is rooted in three key principles:

Setting suitable learning challenges

For EAL learners, this means ensuring that cognitive challenge is kept appropriately high. Children can be supported to achieve ambitious learning objectives through the provision of contextual and linguistic scaffolding.

Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs

Children learning English as an additional language come from a variety of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, have a range of different experiences of learning English and are at different stages of EAL acquisition. Schools need to use a range of teaching styles and strategies to meet diversity of needs.

Overcoming potential barriers to learning

Schools need to ensure that they tackle structural barriers such as racism and perceived barriers such as EAL, and provide access to the curriculum.

The Primary National Strategy has exemplified this statement in an operational model shown in the preface to these materials.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires schools to:

- tackle racial discrimination;
- promote equality of opportunity;
- actively promote good relations between members of different ethnic groups.

Schools also have a number of specific duties which they must meet. These include the duty to prepare and implement a policy for race equality and the duty to regularly review this and all their other policies, including curriculum schemes of work, to assess their impact on race equality. Schools are expected to identify and remove any barriers which may affect the achievement of particular groups of learners or prevent them from being involved in any of the school's activities.



Key messages

The school ethos plays a key role in determining the extent to which children feel safe, settled, valued and secure and whether they have 'a sense of belonging'.

School ethos includes the school's vision and values, the way the school tackles racism and bullying, the quality of relationships, and the messages communicated through the physical environment.

Research clearly shows that bilingual children will make greater progress if they know their knowledge of their first language is valued and the school respects their cultural and religious traditions. The following research exemplifies this:

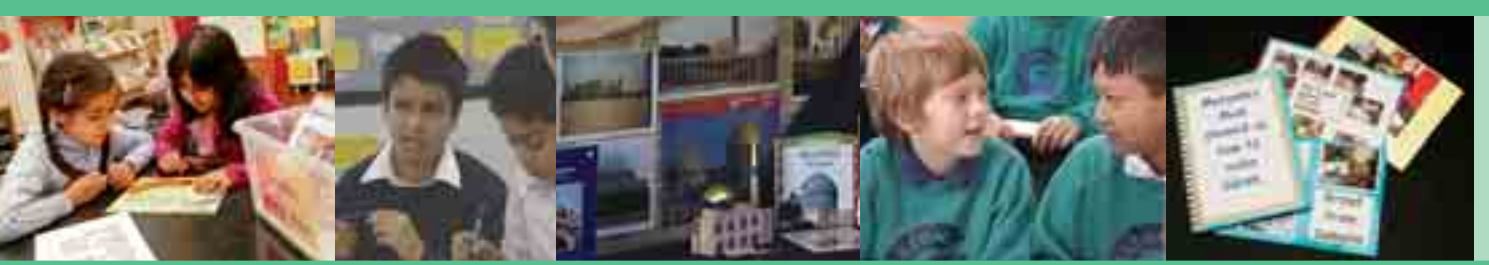
Jim Cummins (1988) summarised international research into educational provision for bilingual children and identified as a key factor in achievement, the extent to which schools incorporated the languages and cultures of children from minority communities into the curriculum.

Virginia Collier reported very similar findings from her long-term in-depth study of schooling in America (Thomas and Collier 1997).

Maud Blair and **Jill Bourne** (1998) in their research into the characteristics of successful schools in this country emphasised the importance of a culturally inclusive curriculum.

Building on previous experience is facilitated when starting points and contexts are familiar or when teachers or other specialists are able to support children to make connections with what is familiar. When starting points and contexts are far removed from children's experience and when children feel their teachers know little or nothing about them, or have little or no interest, children are less likely to engage with learning.

Developing partnerships with parents, carers and minority communities is important too if we are to ensure that children from minority ethnic groups are not made to feel as though school and home represent two separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart. Teachers have much to learn from parents, carers and families about children's previous experiences, interests, enthusiasms and achievements beyond the school.



A sense of belonging is promoted when:

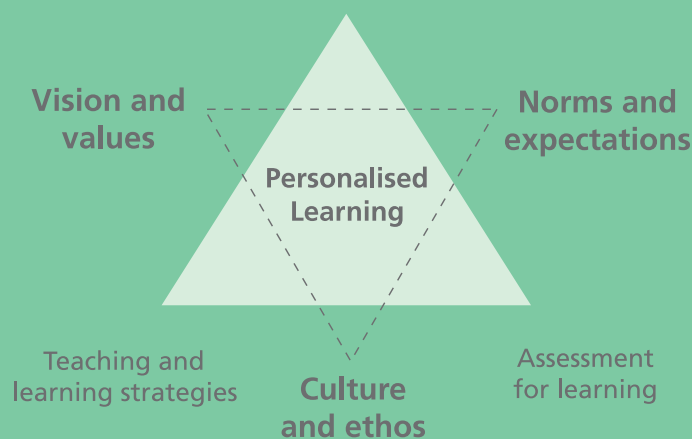
- children's ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds are included and reflected positively across the curriculum;
- there are staff in school from the child's own background;
- teachers model values and behaviour which promote equality and justice;
- the racism that is endemic in society is acknowledged; racist behaviour is recognised when it occurs, the damage it can do is appreciated and appropriate action is taken to prevent it;
- parents, carers and families from minority communities are acknowledged as key partners and empowered to play a role in their children's education.



Section 1 Ethos

A school teaches in three ways: by what it teaches, by how it teaches and by the kind of place it is.

Personalised learning



Although curriculum choices, contexts and resources, and learning and teaching approaches are crucial for achievement, it is the school ethos which plays the central role in the way children experience their schooling.

Creating an ethos within which children from minority ethnic groups feel safe and secure depends on the implementation of school policies on behaviour, bullying and racism, and the quality of relationships within the school.

Racist incidents must be recognised, taken seriously and responded to effectively. This should include name calling, so-called 'victimless' incidents such as racist graffiti, and incidents that happen beyond the confines of the school. All staff must be seen to be fair and consistent in their treatment of pupils.

The ethos of the school also plays a part in the extent to which the child feels valued and accepted and ultimately achieves to the standard of which he or she is capable. Schools communicate an inclusive ethos in a range of ways including by their admission arrangements, their staffing profile, the environment, the way they welcome families from diverse backgrounds, the way they communicate and the extent to which they listen to and consult with children, parents, carers and communities.

However, it is largely through relationships and the physical environment that children experience the ethos of their school.



Relationships

Relationships are part of ethos and they are the aspect of school life that springs to mind most readily when people look back on their school days – people remember their teachers more than they recall particular lessons.

This can be put to the test quite simply by asking a group of adults to recall a particular incident from their school days. Most people will remember something connected to a relationship. Often people remember unfair treatment by a member of the school staff or by another pupil and the way it made them feel.

Poplin and Weeres in *Voices from the Inside* (1992), an in-depth study of students' experiences in multilingual schools in North America, concluded that relationships were the single most important factor affecting students' achievement in school.

Relationships lie at the heart of learning. When good relationships were established with teachers, students could overcome other potential barriers to achievement.

Students thought relationships were good when learning and teaching approaches allowed them to express and share their own experiences. These approaches had the effect of affirming or validating their identities and made them feel good about themselves.

Relationships had a negative impact on achievement when students did not feel adequately respected, cared for, affirmed or understood.

Teachers in the study reported that they did not always understand students who came from a different cultural background.

The US Commission on Civil Rights (1973) found that contributions from white American students were praised more, and their contributions used and built on in lessons more, than those of Mexican American students.

A higher percentage of white students reported feeling that at least one teacher took a special interest in them.

www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/diversity/cambridge_diversity.pdf



Although most teachers and practitioners try to use positive language when they interact with children in order to make them feel good about themselves and build confidence, some evidence suggests teachers are likely to interact more with children from a background similar to their own and tend to interact less with children from backgrounds they know little about.

When children from minority ethnic backgrounds are learning English as an additional language they often take longer to respond to oral questioning than their peers. This can also act as a disincentive and may result in teachers interacting far less with children learning English as an additional language than they do with other children.

A class divided

Jane Elliott's famous study, conducted in her own classroom in the mid-1960s and recorded in the film *The Eye of the Storm*, clearly shows the negative impact of overt discrimination on children's self-esteem. She deliberately set out to give negative messages to children in her class in order to teach them how it would feel to suffer discrimination. She told her class that blue-eyed children were better than brown-eyed children and reinforced the message by giving the preferred group privileges. She created a negative stereotype by characterising the behaviour of the brown-eyed children as typically 'slow', badly behaved and so on. The brown-eyed children's achievement was affected immediately and the children themselves knew that the reason was because they no longer felt good about themselves.

Negative messages are more often unintentional but research shows that even unintentional negative messages result in children feeling rejected or invisible and impact on children's learning.

When teachers overlook children time after time, children's motivation will be affected. They may become withdrawn. This may, in turn, lead to a lowering of their teachers' expectations of them, which could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Note: For practical suggestions see the 'Relationships' theme in *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning* (SEAL) (DfES 1361-2005 G).





Identity

During the course of an individual's life, he or she develops a unique sense of identity which is made up of a combination of different identities and loyalties including gender, age, culture, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, language, position in the family, roles, interests, enthusiasms, talents and skills and socio-economic factors.

Shamim's identity is made up currently of the following components: her identity as a young girl; a Muslim; a pupil in Year 6 of the local Church of England primary school; her Pakistani heritage; her roles as a daughter, a younger sister to three brothers, an ice skater, a member of the school netball team, an avid reader, a good cook and so on. She is part of a working-class Lancashire family; her father is a prominent trade unionist who works in a local factory.

A typical week may include a pre-wedding ceremony where, laughing and joking in Punjabi with other girls and women, her hands and feet are decorated with elaborate henna patterns and she learns to play the dholi (a drum traditionally played at weddings by women). On another day she plays netball for the school with her mainly English team mates. On Friday evening she recites verses from the Qu'ran and says prayers with her mother. On Saturday she helps her sister-in-law make chapattis and pizza before going ice skating with a group of Asian friends. Because this group of girls includes Gujarati speakers they speak English together. She spends most of Sunday reading a novel from the library.

These multiple 'identities' and loyalties do not always have equal status; they may be at variance with each other on occasions and aspects which take precedence will also change over time.

The more children's personal identity is affirmed in school and their confidence raised, the more they will actively and enthusiastically participate in their learning. When children see that their teachers are interested in them, ready to listen and keen to learn more about them this has the effect of making children feel their experience is valued.



A YouGov survey commissioned for Islam Awareness Week 2002 by the Islamic Society of Britain found that 73% of people surveyed said they knew little or nothing about Britain's Muslim community. The two largest Muslim communities in the UK (Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups) are underachieving in schools. It is therefore particularly important that teachers know something about the Islamic way of life in order to meet their needs appropriately. This will include finding opportunities to reflect Islam positively across the curriculum and being able to recognise and challenge 'Islamophobia'.*

* a term used in *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: The Parekh Report* (2000) to describe a pernicious and prevalent form of racism based on cultural antagonism towards Muslims.



Identity: social and emotional aspects of learning

The Primary National Strategy SEAL materials *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning* contain a specific theme focused on personal identity – 'Good to be me'.

In addition, Appendix 7 of the Guidance booklet accompanying the materials focuses on cultural differences in the experience and expression of emotions.





So how can teachers find out more about their children's lives beyond the school?

The School Census collects information about children's ethnic origin, first languages and whether or not they are learning EAL. In addition to this it is good practice also to collect information about the child's faith background.

Teachers need to know something about the languages and literacy practices of families, their cultural traditions and their religious traditions. They should find out about any supplementary schooling or religious education the child receives.

General information can be obtained from books, websites, local community organisations and so on. Other sources of information include the children themselves, parents and carers, and bilingual colleagues.

Finding out more from parents and carers about children's daily lives at home depends on teachers first establishing an atmosphere of respect and trust. Each family will be different. Levels of religious orthodoxy, patterns of language use, views about education, aspirations and so on will all vary from one family to the next (see pages 36–38) and are constantly evolving. Finding out more from the children depends on establishing a collaborative ethos in the classroom.

Establishing a collaborative ethos in the classroom

We know from Poplin and Weeres' (1992) research that collaborative approaches to learning and teaching which allowed students to express and share their own experience had the effect of affirming or validating their identities and boosted their self-esteem.

Children are more likely to be willing to share their home experiences when they know their teachers respect them, value their home culture and their first language, and want to understand the complexities of their lives.

It is important to guard against giving children the impression that the cultural norms, values and beliefs of the teacher are the only ones that have any place in school. Encouraging active and collaborative



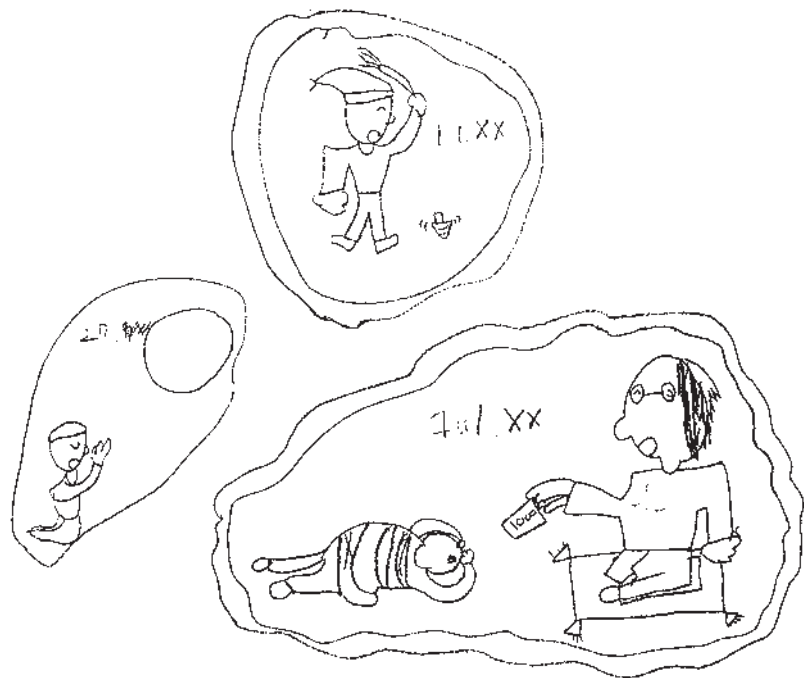
learning promotes equality by helping children to see that what they know, think and feel has value too.

Children should be explicitly taught the skills they need to become efficient, active and collaborative learners. Collaborative approaches to learning and teaching promote equality of opportunity and support the achievement of EAL learners when:

- groupings facilitate the use of first language as well as English;
- there is an atmosphere where ideas will not be dismissed;
- everyone's knowledge is seen as equally valuable;
- meanings are generated by adults and children working together;
- the classroom becomes a true collaborative learning community.

Teachers' efforts to reflect the complexity of children's actual cultural experiences in the curriculum are unlikely to be successful unless children are provided with opportunities to work in this way.

When teachers give children from different backgrounds the opportunity to tell them about their experiences the results can be quite surprising. This boy's drawing illustrates things he did during the summer holidays which his teacher could never have predicted.





A confident sense of personal identity has an important impact on affective aspects of learning such as self-awareness, motivation and the ability to empathise.

Empathy is the ability to step outside your own goals, habits and beliefs, and put yourself in other people's shoes ...

... When it comes to learning to learn, empathy has an important role to play. In history, drama and literature, understanding a complex situation demands an empathetic appreciation of the positions of different participants. In science, the ability to think what it might be like to be a hermit crab, or even (as Einstein famously did) to imagine what the world would look like if you were riding on a ray of light, enriches the learning experience and offers new insights into information.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years, Creating a learning culture: conditions for learning, Section 1

For this and more about empathy and other social and emotional aspects of learning see *Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years* and *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)*

In order to learn about diversity children need to first understand that:

- different groups of people do things in different ways;
- although people are different they are also similar in important ways as well;
- the way different groups of people do things is always changing – cultures are dynamic;
- this variety applies to points of view and opinions as well as experiences and behaviour.

Children who have developed a confident sense of personal identity are more likely to be able to:

- empathise with and respect the points of view and opinions as well as the experiences and behaviour of people with different cultural and religious traditions;
- reflect critically on diverse cultural norms;
- be open to change and development themselves.



When teachers succeed in establishing a collaborative ethos in classrooms where children's diverse identities are affirmed, these classrooms can become places where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious background.



Children will feel safe, settled, valued and secure when teachers and practitioners:

- recognise the central role of relationships in learning and teaching;
- understand and empathise with the social and political factors that impact on children's lives;
- know something about children's languages and their cultural and religious traditions;
- have high expectations;
- build confidence and self-esteem;
- are consistent and fair;
- model and promote values, attitudes and behaviour supportive of equality;
- value diversity and bilingualism;
- encourage children to learn actively and collaboratively;
- are prepared to listen to children and learn from them on occasions;
- recognise parents, carers and families as key partners;
- incorporate children's own interests and experiences into day-to-day teaching.



Note: The Primary National Strategy SEAL materials *Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning* contain a range of supportive materials, including the themes: 'Changes', 'Good to be me' and 'Getting on and falling out'.



The physical environment



The physical environment plays an important role in how valued children from diverse backgrounds feel in school. Children are more likely to feel valued and develop a sense of belonging when their ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background is reflected positively in the displays in their classroom and around the school. Schools which serve a very diverse and transient population may not be able to provide this for all children at all times; however, creating an environment which clearly shows that diversity is valued is more inclusive of all children than a Eurocentric environment, and it is important to remember that unless this is consciously attended to the default setting will tend to be white, Eurocentric and middle class. This applies to the curriculum and the resources as well. Powerful messages are communicated to children through the environment. The message communicated by such an environment is that the children who really 'belong' are the white children who share a language, culture and religion with the white teachers who form the majority in most schools in this country.

In order to counter this impression care should be taken to ensure that:

- positive images of minority ethnic people populate visual displays;
- people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds are represented in non-tokenistic and non-stereotypical ways;
- the work of children from diverse backgrounds including children learning EAL is on display.

Special occasions including religious festivals should be acknowledged and celebrated in school including through displays. Advice should be sought from a practising member of the faith in order to ensure that displays of this nature are appropriate and sensitive.

People who live within a culture do not always realise that even things they take for granted and think of as culturally neutral, such as the colours used to back display boards, create borders and mount pictures, may seem very Eurocentric to other people with different cultural traditions.

Staff from minority ethnic backgrounds may be able to suggest fabric, colours and colour combinations, patterns and designs which will give the displays a flavour familiar to learners from their communities.



Children's diverse linguistic backgrounds should be reflected in the school environment. Including examples of writing in different scripts will send a message to children and communities that their communities' languages are recognised and valued by the school.

Schools should ask themselves questions about the messages that are conveyed by the school entrance and the school brochure for parents, carers and local communities. Do they make the inclusive ethos of the school clear?

Do displays reflect the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the school?

Are links with local communities explicitly mentioned?

Do community groups use the school?

Are notices translated into the main community languages?

Resources should:

- provide positive images and role models;
- reflect and value children's linguistic and cultural heritage, religion and lifestyles;
- challenge bias, prejudice, racism and stereotyping.

There should be a rich range of material in reading areas, role-play areas and graphic areas which includes dual-language and community language books, newspapers and magazines.

Classroom organisation should provide a comfortable and flexible environment to minimise unnecessary anxiety and promote independence.

Section 2 Valuing and building on children's knowledge of other languages

Research has established that when children feel they have added a new language to one that continues to have value in their lives, bilingualism confers intellectual advantages. It also shows conclusively that bilingual children benefit from continued opportunities to develop their first language alongside English. Providing opportunities for children to use their first language for learning supports access to the curriculum and the development of additional languages (see Unit 1 pages 11–12 for a more detailed rationale, and Unit 2, especially pages 14–17 for advice on bilingual strategies).

Children also need to feel proud of their bilingual skills and their linguistic heritage.

In order to achieve this and to provide the necessary conditions for children to feel comfortable using their first language for learning in the school context, children's other languages should be reflected and celebrated. Some opportunities to value other languages through the environment are described in other units. Further opportunities to celebrate and build on children's bilingualism are described here.



Finding out about children's other languages

In order to value linguistic diversity and build on bilingual children's knowledge of languages, schools must first find out as much as they can about children's other languages.

Although the School Census asks about children's first language and whether or not they are learning EAL, schools may not get to know about the bilingual skills of children unless their parents and carers think they are going to need support to develop English.

More than 300 languages are spoken by children in London schools, making it the most linguistically diverse city in the world.

Pakistan has four regional languages which do not have an accepted written form. Urdu is the official language for administration purposes and education across the whole country. Literate adults read and write in Urdu. Urdu is a language that many Pakistani and Indian heritage British Muslim children learn in madrasahs and community schools. It is therefore not uncommon for parents and carers to record Urdu as the family's language when in fact the child's first language is a regional language. Most Pakistani heritage families in this country speak Punjabi or a variety of Punjabi such as Mirpuri.

The Punjabi language has a very different status for Sikh families. They read and write Punjabi using a script called the Gurmukhi script. However, Pakistani Muslim speakers of Punjabi are unlikely to be able to read this script.

Gujarati, spoken as a first language by the majority of Indian heritage families in this country, has a written form but it cannot be assumed that speakers of this or any other community language have necessarily had the opportunity to develop literacy skills in that language, particularly in the case of parents and carers born in this country.

Parents and carers may assume the school will not recognise the name of their language, particularly if it is a regional language without a recognised written form, as in the examples in the case studies overleaf. The more the school engages in a dialogue about community languages, the more it will be able to build up an accurate picture of children's linguistic skills and build an inclusive culture to support achievement and progress.



An accurate picture of the languages spoken in the school supports the recruitment and deployment of staff with appropriate language skills and the purchase of resources such as dual-language books, audiotapes and so on.

Examples from the experience of schools

A special questionnaire was sent to parents and carers of children in Year 2, together with a letter which told them the school was very proud of the fact that many of the children could speak other languages as well as English; the school wanted to find out as much as they could about their children's other language skills.

Parents and carers were asked to indicate on a form which language(s) their child could speak fluently, speak a little, read and/or write, including information about any languages used for religious purposes. The letter was translated into the main community languages of children in the school and a completed exemplar form was enclosed.

The survey resulted in a much more detailed picture of the full language repertoires of the children. It showed that children who this school had hitherto thought of as monolingual speakers of English as a first language also spoke fluent Gujarati. Other children who the school had recorded as speaking Urdu as a first language turned out to speak Punjabi fluently and know 'just a little' Urdu.

A girl who had been making relatively slow progress and who seemed withdrawn turned out to speak Baluchi, one of the four regional languages of Pakistan but a language none of the other Pakistani heritage children in the class could speak or understand. The child's mother had said they spoke 'Pakistani language'. The school had assumed the child's family came originally from the Punjab like all the other Pakistani heritage children in the class and that this language would be Punjabi.



When a child arrived at a school from the Democratic Republic of Congo the headteacher hoped staff would be able to communicate with him in French. Later she found out that although French is the official language very few people speak it. The parents gave Lingala as the boy's language, but subsequent conversations with the family revealed that this was another language officially recognised for business purposes and so on but spoken mostly as an additional language. In fact the boy's first language was one of the Democratic Republic of Congo's 700 local languages and dialects, a language the family considered to be of such low status that they had not even mentioned it.

'We have admitted Pakistani heritage children from Denmark and Norway this year. Children from one of these families spoke Punjabi as their first language but their early schooling was in Danish and they had some literacy skills in that language. The child from Norway speaks Norwegian as her first language and knows a little Urdu learned in a religious school in Norway. Last year a child arrived from Holland. He had learned to read and write in Dutch although his first language was Somali. Another child in our school of Somali heritage spent many years in a refugee camp in Kenya before coming to the UK and speaks Swahili as a first language. Some of our Pakistani heritage families speak English as their first language. We never take anything for granted!'



Investigating attitudes towards the use of other languages in school

Some bilingual children may think their home language has no role in school; they may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable about using it. Researching children's attitudes to using their home languages in school is a good way to get these feelings out in the open so they can be discussed.

Strategies to do this can include interviewing a group of children:

- Do children feel comfortable using their first language in school?
- Do children think they can use their first language to learn?
- What do children think teachers' attitudes to their first language are?

Note: Bilingual staff may obtain a different response to this question.

A group of schools in Lancashire used a language attitude questionnaire to survey attitudes to the use of the first language. It included questions about which languages were spoken, who they were spoken with, where they were mostly spoken and the purposes they were used for. Children were asked which language they felt was their strongest language. They were also asked how they felt about using their first language in school as a tool for learning, whether they considered it important to know another language and how that knowledge could benefit them. They also had to say what importance they attached to being able to speak in their first language.



Note: The language attitude survey used can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM.



Pupils from multilingual primary schools debated the issue of first language use in school in front of an audience in Haringey Civic Centre. Children from different schools and from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including speakers of Creole languages, used a range of media to present their arguments.

Each group came up with a range of advantages, and comments made by those who opposed it were deftly countered by children who clearly felt strongly about the role their first language played in their sense of personal identity.

Two of the groups used role-play to portray teachers who opposed the use of languages other than English in their classrooms. One child said that when his first language wasn't accepted it felt like the school didn't want him.

Another group used role-play to show how a personal experience during a holiday abroad helped to change a teacher's views. She couldn't speak a word in the language of the country she was visiting but expected everyone to speak English. Initial frustration and anger gave way to a dawning realisation of the central role her first language played in her life. This prompted a rethink about what she 'put her pupils through'.



See Unit 4, page 51, for an exemplar whole-class speaking and listening teaching sequence where children present a spoken argument about the benefits of being bilingual.

Celebrating children's bilingualism

School or classroom displays can celebrate children's language skills by:

- listing the names of the children who speak each language;
- showing places in the world where this language is mostly spoken;
- including a few facts about each language;
- including the same sentence written in the scripts of the various community languages with a romanised transliteration to allow comparisons to be made.



Dual-language books are particularly valuable where parents and carers are literate in their community language. They are then able to read the story or to retell it in the child's first language if this is a regional language or dialect without an accepted written form, e.g. a story written in Urdu could be told in Punjabi; a story in Bengali could be told in Sylheti.

Some community languages, e.g. Turkish, Portuguese and Swahili, use roman script. Where scripts are different, they must be presented equally professionally and given equal prominence on the page. They should include quality texts written and illustrated by speakers of the community language as well as the dual-language versions of well-known favourites which are now readily available. They should be appropriately challenging and interesting. Topics should include fiction featuring British children from minority groups as main characters. Avoid books where children from minority ethnic groups are portrayed as unusual or exotic.

Urdu, Farsi and Arabic books open and read from right to left, although dual-language textbooks usually follow English conventions. Most Muslim children will be introduced to this convention when they start attending religious education classes in the madrasah at their local mosque, if not before. Draw attention to examples of books which follow different conventions as part of teaching children about front and back covers of books and the orientation of print on the page.

Books written in community languages, newspapers, calendars and so on should be included in reading areas and children who can read them should be praised and encouraged to do so.

Dual-language books

Including some dual-language books in the library and in classroom reading areas sends out the message that children's bilingualism is something the school values and wishes to celebrate. This is true even when children have not had the opportunity to develop literacy skills in their first language.

Positive messages about linguistic diversity in the environment will, however, be completely undermined if children and their families pick up contrary messages from staff in schools. Comments such as *We have a much better intake this year – more of the children are coming to school speaking English* clearly contradict the idea that bilingualism is valued in the school.

It is a mistake to think that future success depends on which language is spoken in the home. It is the quality and quantity of language a child develops before they start school which is important, not which language they develop. Children who do not establish their heritage language in the home before they start school and become immersed in English are unlikely to establish it later.





Building on children's knowledge about language



In the Primary Framework (2006) the literacy strands 'use knowledge of syntax, context, word origin and structure to establish meaning' and 'creating and shaping texts' incorporate objectives which provide many opportunities to build on bilingual children's knowledge of other language systems, for example as follows.

- children identify everyday words which have been borrowed from other languages. Bilingual children could provide examples of recent 'borrowings' from their languages. They could also identify words borrowed from English by their languages.
- children collect and explain the meaning and origins of proverbs. Bilingual children can collect examples from their first languages and compare them with similar English examples.
- children practise and extend vocabulary through inventing word games such as puns, riddles and crosswords. Bilingual children can learn about the multiple meanings of common English words through riddles such as *What has a mouth but no face? What is the similarity between a clock, a coin, and a person?*

What do you call a man with one hair?

Iqbal
(ik or eyk means one
and bal means hair);



What did the green peas say?
Nothing, they just muttered.
(mutter means green peas)



What did the lonely banana say?
I'm a kela.
(Kela means banana and
akela means alone)





Another enjoyable way to build on bilingual children's knowledge of languages is to collect examples of jokes which rely on double meanings but can only be understood by people from bilingual communities. These jokes play on words common to Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati.

Collecting and explaining jokes such as these provides a motivating context for talking about language and supports children to learn new vocabulary in English.



In the word structure and spelling strand in the renewed framework for teaching literacy, children learn to use knowledge of word structure to extend vocabulary. Bilingual children could share examples of 'code switching' and borrowing.

Words which have entered the English language from the other languages spoken by local communities could be collected and displayed. Examples from South Asian languages could include: *loot, bungalow, shampoo, bangle, yoga, chapatti, pyjamas, jungle, curry, chutney, dinghy, veranda, dungarees*. Examples from other languages include *lottery* (Dutch), *paper* (Egyptian), *athlete, democracy* (Greek), *breeze* (Portuguese) and *yoghurt* (Turkish).

Words which have entered South Asian and other community languages from English could also be collected. These words will include a great deal of technical vocabulary as well as everyday words such as *bus, doctor, plate*.

Sometimes 'borrowed' words are used a little differently in the new language. Bilingual communities in this country will use more words borrowed from English than do speakers of the language overseas.



In the sentence structure and punctuation strand, children learn to write accurate sentences, varied for meaning and effect and using knowledge of grammar. This is a useful opportunity to incorporate the process of 'code switching' from one language to another as vocabulary from one language is modified in order to match the grammar of another. For example: *pyjama* has to become *pyjamas* as pyjamas, trousers and so on are plural in English. Plurals are not formed by adding 's' in South Asian languages so *samosa*, the plural of *samosa*, has to change to *samosas* to fit in with English conventions. The converse also happens: the English *pants* becomes *pant* to fit the conventions of South Asian languages.



Collecting these examples to create displays will help all children to learn that living languages are changing all the time and being influenced by a whole range of factors. New words are being accepted while others die out.