

# Rationale for planning for children learning English as an additional language

The renewed Framework for literacy and mathematics provides an excellent opportunity for practitioner dialogue in planning for the learning and teaching for bilingual learners who may be beginners or advanced learners of EAL.

It provides a clearer set of outcomes for learning progression in literacy and mathematics for all children from Foundation Stage to Year 6 and just beyond and thus:

- raises expectations about the achievements of bilingual learners
- supports specific planning for personalised learning to provide access to the curriculum
- secures appropriate intervention for those children who need it.

The incorporation of speaking and listening strands into the renewed Framework makes explicit the centrality of speaking and listening not only as a communicative skill in its own right but also as the bedrock of literacy and mathematics development.

Planning, teaching and learning for children learning EAL should be underpinned by the following **key principles**:

- Bilingualism is an asset and the first language has a continuing and significant role in identity, learning and the acquisition of additional languages.
- Cognitive challenge can and should be kept appropriately high through the provision of linguistic and contextual support.
- Language acquisition goes hand-in-hand with cognitive and academic development, with an inclusive curriculum as the context.

## Planning for language development and access to the curriculum

Planning for EAL learners is most effective when:

- it is part of the planning process of the whole school and the whole class and is embedded in the usual planning format
- it takes account of the language demands of the curriculum, both subject-specific vocabulary and the appropriate language forms associated with content
- contexts for learning are relevant, motivating and culturally inclusive
- it provides opportunities for speaking and listening, collaborative work and other strategies for language development
- the role of additional adults with EAL expertise and/or bilingual or multilingual skills is clearly indicated and they are either involved in the planning process or have plans shared with them at the earliest opportunity
- consideration is given to the language of the task, how the children are grouped, use of first language for learning and how both language learning and language use will be assessed.

*DfES (2004) Excellence and Enjoyment: Planning and assessment for learning: Designing opportunities for learning Sect. 2 Part 3 (Ref: 0502/2004G)*

EAL learners have to learn a new language while learning through the medium of that new language. This presents two main tasks in the school or setting: they need to learn English and they need to learn the content of the curriculum. To ensure that they reach their potential, learning and teaching approaches must be deployed that ensure both access to the curriculum at a cognitively appropriate level and the best opportunities for maximum language development.

Planning for EAL learners requires careful consideration of the curriculum context and provision of appropriate scaffolding to enable access to the curriculum. It is also important to identify the academic and cognitive language demanded by the curriculum and to plan for how this will be modelled by adults and peers and the opportunities that will be provided to rehearse and use the language in meaningful contexts.

Research shows that language support is best provided within the curriculum wherever possible, as time out of subject lessons for additional language tuition is ultimately likely to cause the learner to fall further behind in the curriculum.

For a list of key research documents and a detailed explanation of EAL pedagogy, see DfES (2004) *Introductory Guide: Learning and teaching in the primary years* (Ref: 0344-2004G) and DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 2132-2006DCL-EN)

For guidance on the use of additional adults with EAL and bilingual expertise, see unit 3 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0013-2006PCK-EN).

# Strategies for supporting children learning EAL by scaffolding learning and keeping cognitive challenge high

The renewed Framework also includes an overview of literacy and mathematics learning within each year group and thus provides clear guidance on the cognitive challenge to be provided.

## Pupil groupings

EAL learners need to hear good models of language from peers and adults. They are more likely to make progress in their language development and learning when working alongside peers with similar cognitive ability and greater linguistic proficiency.

## Using bilingual approaches

Where bilingual approaches are employed, it is important that the first language is used not only when communication has broken down or just to interpret the occasional difficult word. For conceptual development to occur, children need opportunities to hear and use extended stretches of the language, and where possible, for children to meet new learning first in their strongest language. Children who already know broadly what they are going to hear in the new language will have hooks on which to hang their new learning.

## Contextual and linguistic support

Careful consideration of contexts can support bilingual learners in meeting the demands placed upon them in the classroom or setting. Tasks can be made more, or less, supportive depending on the extent to which they are embedded in a supportive context.

Ways to make contexts more supportive include:

- ensuring that children are able to build on their previous experience
- scaffolding tasks through prompts, frames, graphic organisers, etc.
- providing carefully planned opportunities to listen and speak in a wide range of situations across the curriculum, particularly with more proficient users of first and additional language.

For further guidance, see DfES (2003) *Speaking, Listening, Learning: Working with children in Key Stage 1 and 2* (Ref: 0623-2003).

On the use of bilingual strategies, see unit 2 pp. 11–15 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

For further details of the Cummins Quadrant as an aide-memoir for teachers in keeping cognitive challenge high by providing contextual support, see unit 1 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

For further details on building on previous experience and scaffolding tasks, see unit 2 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

For further guidance on providing planned opportunities for speaking and listening, see units 2 and 4 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

Each of the subjects of the National Curriculum presents particular linguistic challenges for children learning English as an additional language. However, the broad curriculum also potentially offers an ideal context for the learning of an additional language. Not only does each subject have its own unique vocabulary which will be acquired only where the child has a reason to use it and/or a need to understand it, but each subject presents different opportunities to develop, use and apply the language structures appropriate for different purposes.

Literacy offers many opportunities for children to hear and use language for a range of purposes, as well as to develop metalanguage to talk about their reading and writing.

- Aspects of fiction and non-fiction present specific opportunities and challenges for children to develop abstract language to talk about language, for example persuasion and story resolution.
- Fiction and non-fiction also provide opportunities to develop and use specific kinds of language such as figurative language including imagery, metaphorical language and similes, idioms such as 'have green fingers' or 'keep it under your hat', euphemisms such as those used in advertisements by estate agents 'with lots of potential', 'scope for modernisation' and humour.
- Reading and writing fiction as well as non-fiction involves use of time (first), logical (therefore) and causal (because) connectives. In addition, writing fiction involves use of connectives to draw attention (meanwhile) and inject suspense (suddenly).

For further information, refer to unit 2 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN) and DfES (2001) *Developing Early Writing* (Ref: 0055/2001) and DfEE (2000) *Grammar for Writing* (Ref: 0107/2000).

## Mathematics

Mathematics offers opportunities to develop cognitive language as well as subject-specific vocabulary, which sometimes carries a different meaning to that of everyday language (e.g. table, point).

- Children will learn a range of ways to talk about calculations including: (X) add (Y) equals; (X) plus (Y) makes; What is the sum of...?; What is the total of...?; How many are there altogether?; What is the difference between...?; subtract (X) from (Y); (X) times (Y) equals; (X) lots of... or sets of...; divide (X) by (Y); count; partition, estimate.
- Problem-solving provides opportunities for children to use modal verbs such as 'might', 'could' or 'couldn't' and 'must' to reason and predict.
- Learning about shape and space offers opportunities to use the language of comparison: longer; longest; heavier than and positional language such as over; next to; on; to the left of; in the middle and so on.
- Data handling provides opportunities for children to formulate questions as well as interpret and explain findings.
- To explain the strategies and reasoning used, children need to use logical connectives such as if...then...; therefore and because, and time connectives such as 'first'; 'next'; 'after that' and 'finally' to sequence their explanation.

The electronic Framework provides easy access to supportive resources such as the bank of mathematical vocabulary which needs to be incorporated into the planning.

## Planning for new arrivals

New arrivals who are beginners in English may benefit from a planned programme of some teaching in small withdrawal groups alongside some teaching with the whole class in the short term. They are more likely to learn English and make rapid progress in accessing the curriculum with peers who provide good models of language and learning than in lower ability sets and groups.

The progression in the key strands for literacy and mathematics in the renewed Framework is particularly supportive for new arrivals as it enables practitioners to identify starting points by tracking back along key strands such as sentence construction and text cohesion for language and literacy, and tracking back or forward as appropriate for starting points in the mathematics curriculum.

For additional information on meeting the needs of newly arrived older children, see DfES (2005) *Aiming High: Meeting the needs of newly arrived learners of EAL* (Ref: 1381-2005) on [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/newarrivals](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/newarrivals) and [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary).

## Isolated learners of EAL

Practitioners planning to provide access to the literacy and mathematics curriculum for isolated learners will be supported by access to guidance and resources which the electronic Framework provides. For additional information, see the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) (2005) *Working Paper 8: Teaching isolated bilingual learners* (available from NALDIC at [www.naldic.org.uk/](http://www.naldic.org.uk/)).

DfES (2002) *Supporting pupils learning English as an additional language* (Ref: DfES0239/2002). Unit 5 (New arrivals and isolated learners) provides examples of annotated weekly planning for the literacy hour. You can download this from [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63381](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/literacy/63381).

## Links to the Early Years Foundation Stage

*The Early Years Foundation Stage framework for learning and development from birth to five sets out requirements for practitioners to plan and deliver an enjoyable and challenging curriculum across all six areas of development from which no child should be excluded. None of the six areas can be delivered in isolation from the others; they are equally important and dependent on one another.*

*For children learning English in addition to other language/s spoken at home, the EYFS recognises the importance of maintaining and developing that home language for children's cognitive, personal and social development in direct accordance with the advice set out in this paper.*

*Some children for whom English will be learned in addition to the language/s of the home may be in settings as babies; practitioners need to ensure they and the child's parents or carers have a shared understanding of language development, the benefits of bilingualism and the importance of maintaining and developing the language of the home, this understanding is crucial to the development of all communication language and literacy skills and underpins all potential learning.*

*Practitioners should value linguistic diversity and provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in their play and learning. These children will be at many stages of learning English as an additional language.*

*Learning opportunities should be planned to help children develop their English and support should be provided to help them take part in other activities by, for example:*

- *building on children's experiences of language at home and in the wider community by providing a range of opportunities to use their home language(s), so that their developing use of English and other languages support one another*
- *providing a range of opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening activities in English with peers and adults*
- *providing bilingual support, in particular to extend vocabulary and support children's developing understanding*
- *providing opportunities for children to hear their home languages as well as English, for example through use of audio and video materials.*

## Children learning English as an additional language: assessment for learning

Sound and consistent assessment for all children should be based on a strong and purposeful range of learning and teaching strategies. When procedures for effective assessment for learning (AfL) are in place, teachers have a systematic way of building up a picture of each child or group of children which contributes to an ongoing dialogue about their needs and will better support personalisation of their learning. In the case of bilingual children, the systematic identification of language development needs is key to this, but not of course the sole consideration.

*It is vital that there is a strong correlation between outcomes of assessment and teaching. This is dependent on good subject knowledge and therefore teachers of all bilingual children need to be aware of the language development, as well as the learning needs of pupils in a particular subject area when making a judgement about performance and achievement.*

*Aiming High: Meeting the needs of newly arrived learners of EAL (Ref: 1381-2005)*

The renewed Framework will provide detailed guidance and help on AfL, including how to determine the level at which to pitch the teaching of specific aspects of literacy and mathematics, assess learning on a day-to-day basis; review children's progress periodically and identify areas for development.

In a learning to learn curriculum, AfL involves children and teachers thinking about their own learning skills and dispositions, as well as curriculum matters. All children need to know where they are in their learning, where they are going and how to get there. For bilingual learners, an explicit identification of their own skills in English and in one or more other languages by the children themselves may help to strengthen the whole picture of achievement and provide useful insights for the teacher and children of where to go next. Bilingual learners as with all children should be encouraged to reflect on how they learn and how they can improve as learners through setting learning targets as well as curricular targets which may include skills, attitudes and behaviours. However, when involving bilingual learners in self-evaluation, it is important to ensure that children understand what is required of them and that the school is sensitive to individual and cultural attitudes towards describing personal and social achievement.

The full range of evidence from summative as well as day-to-day assessment should be used formatively to inform planning and teaching. So the range of assessment for bilingual learners may include:

- initial assessment or profile on entry to school
- collection and analysis of qualitative data such as question level analysis, work sampling, oral language sampling to inform curricular and language development targets
- day-to-day assessment such as the use of observation, questioning and dialogue to check for understanding and assess progress in language as well as curricular learning
- involvement of children in peer-evaluation or self-evaluation with reference to success criteria for learning
- involvement of parents and carers in providing evidence, supporting analysis of evidence and supporting learning
- use of first language by learners to show what they know and can do
- assessment of proficiency in first language for specific purposes such as confirmation of a diagnosis of the presence of a special educational need.

The conditions under which assessment takes place are as important as the strategies and instruments of assessment.

For further guidance on conditions that enable bilingual learners to show what they know and can do in language and curricular learning, see DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

## **Initial assessment (early profiling)**

When children arrive in school, at any age, it will be necessary to find out as much as possible about them in order for appropriate educational arrangements to be made. Where a child is new or relatively new to English, detailed background information as well as a snapshot of current performance is vital for planning learning and determining appropriate support. It is important to ensure that materials used for initial assessment are as free as possible from cultural bias. For older children, this initial assessment will provide important information for setting up an appropriate programme of support. It may be useful to allow a short settling-in period before assessing skills in English.

For assessing children's knowledge and understanding of mathematics for early stage learners, see DfES (2002) *Assessment toolkit to support pupils with English as an additional language* (Ref: 0319/2002).

## **First language assessment**

First language assessment can be very useful as part of initial assessment procedures when a child joins the school as a late arrival and previous educational experience is not known.

First language can be used to:

- enable access to formal tests and to allow children to demonstrate competence in subjects other than English
- give indications of a child's general language development, particularly where there are concerns about progress.

First language assessment should focus on the language commonly used in the home setting, language previously encountered in school and language in familiar contexts. Gaps in areas of language which should be familiar to children in their first language may indicate learning difficulties.

Detailed early profiling of the child's language skill and educational experiences will ensure more effective planning for support and appropriate placement. Generally, bilingual children should be placed in chronologically appropriate year groups. Initial placement in low-ability or younger groupings is not helpful because children new to English are known to benefit more from access to strong models of English language and confident learners.

It is not recommended that specialist staff adopt separate scales or measures of performance for making judgements about levels of English language fluency. Locally devised fluency scales create additional work and do not necessarily provide reliable or consistent information that can be used for tracking progress or setting targets.

For further guidance see DfES (2005) *Aiming High: Meeting the needs of newly arrived learners of EAL* (Ref: 1381-2005).

## Useful assessment tools

Schools are not expected to provide additional records for children learning EAL that duplicate performance information held elsewhere in the school. It is particularly important that any records of progress kept by staff providing additional support are streamlined with core school assessment procedures. For bilingual learners, tests standardised against a monolingual population are not always a reliable basis on which to base decisions on ability. As with all learners, it is better to draw from a range of evidence that allows the child to demonstrate potential as well as current performance. This range may involve the following.

- National Curriculum levels and the QCA EAL extended scale for English, sometimes called the 'EAL steps'. These provide a helpful point of reference for marking progress for children new to English when considered in the context of all the available information about the bilingual learner. The EAL steps provide a best-fit measure which leads into National Curriculum English measures. It is not recommended that adapted versions of the EAL steps are produced for summative assessment purposes.
- Quantitative data collected through the National Curriculum tests as well as other tests can be used formatively, and in addition, QCA extended scales can be used for early stage learners.
- Question level analysis of National Curriculum statutory and optional tests in English and mathematics will provide further evidence. Tools in the pupil achievement tracker enable individual children's attainment in relation to each assessment focus to be compared with prior attainment, school norms and national norms.
- Conscious, considered and confirmatory observation of all children as they engage in tasks and activities provides evidence of learning and language use across the curriculum. Observation involves watching, listening and taking notes in a variety of contexts to develop a picture of a child's participation and skills across a range of activities. Assessment involves analysis of those observations in order to understand the learning that is taking place.
- Samples of children's oral use of language in social as well as academic contexts across the curriculum, recorded on audiotapes or scribed by adults, provide a rich source of evidence for analysis of the linguistic development and proficiency in EAL. When taking samples, it is important that the planned activity allows for the use of focus language. Comparison of oral and written language is particularly useful for ongoing assessment of language development and for setting curricular targets.
- Written work from across the curriculum will be analysed at text, sentence and word level in order to provide vital assessment evidence to inform teaching and learning. For EAL learners, such writing samples should also be assessed in terms of the use of English and evidence of specific issues to inform the setting of language development targets.

For information on use of questioning, oral and written feedback, use of learning objectives and success criteria, and use of first language in assessing learning, see DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years: Planning and assessment for language and learning* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

For further guidance, see QCA (2000) *A language in common: assessing English as an additional language* (Ref: QCA/00584) and DfES (2005) *Marking progress: Training materials for assessing English as an additional language* (Ref: 0196-2005) at [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/raising\\_achievement/763697/?section=4](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/raising_achievement/763697/?section=4)

Also see L Cameron and S Besser (2004) *Writing in English as an additional language at Key Stage 2* (Ref: RR586 (report) or RB586 (brief)).

## Curricular targets

Tracking progress against curricular targets enables practitioners and leadership teams to ensure all children make progress against age-related expectations. The progression mapped out for the strands for literacy and mathematics supports the process of curricular target-setting.

In addition to curricular targets for reading, writing and mathematics, practitioners working with bilingual learners should also identify aspects of EAL development that require particular attention in planning for teaching and learning. The curricular targets related to language development may require a whole-school focus, for example for explicit teaching of accurate use of the full range of determiners and the range of verb tenses as well as subject-verb agreement.



There may also be aspects required for particular groups of children, for example accurate use of a range of prepositions and prepositional phrases. It is important to share these targets with children in language they understand and to support clarity with visual displays of target statements exemplifying what they mean in practice.

For further guidance and exemplification of curricular targets which take account of language development, see the CD-ROM DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years: Planning and assessment for language and learning* (Ref: 0519-2006G).

## **Distinguishing between EAL and special educational needs**

*The identification and assessment of the special educational needs of children whose first language is not English requires particular care. It is necessary to consider the child within the context of their home, culture and community.*

SEN Code of Practice 2001 5.15

It is essential that teachers and practitioners do not assume that children have special educational needs simply because their home language is different from the language of teaching in school. It is important that teachers and practitioners feel confident in their ability to distinguish between English language development needs and issues of learning where there is cause for concern about a child's educational progress. Recently published research shows that work is needed to assess whether these children's needs are being met appropriately, or whether their EAL status is leading to an under-estimation or over-estimation of the nature and severity of cognition and learning needs. For further details and findings see G Lindsay, S Pather and S Strand (2006) *Special Educational Needs and Ethnicity: Issues of over- and under-representation* (Ref: RB757) at [www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB757.pdf](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB757.pdf).

## **Assessment for learning and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

The EYFS is the statutory Framework for learning and development from birth; practitioners need to be aware of the importance of maintaining and developing languages other than English in partnership and mutual understanding with parents and carers.

Assessment for learning requires teachers and children working together to decide 'where the children are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there'. In an early years context, assessment for learning is an ongoing process of gathering information through careful observation and using this to inform the next steps for learning.

- The use of observation to support both formative and summative assessments is a key skill needed by Foundation Stage practitioners to build on children's prior knowledge in order to support their learning. The principles underpinning the EYFS place the role of observation central to effective teaching, stressing 'the need to plan for the individual child using sensitive observations and assessment schedules; routines and teaching must flow with the child's needs'.
- Observation in the Foundation Stage involves watching, listening and taking note in a variety of contexts to develop a picture of a child's skills across a range of activities; assessment involves analysis of those observations in order to understand the learning that is taking place.
- It may be helpful sometimes to record extracts of children's developing spoken English, either by writing, or taping and making a transcript later, in order to analyse speech. Where possible, first language skills should also be assessed.
- Practitioners need to make observations regularly across a range of contexts to assess progress and develop a picture of children's communicative behaviour across all areas of learning.

By the time they reach the end of the EYFS, the majority of children will have achieved the Early Learning Goals in all six areas, and some children will have exceeded the goals. Almost every child has the potential to achieve the goals, although each child's journey towards them will be different. Although some children learning EAL may be less likely to achieve some of the goals, especially in communication, language and literacy (CLL), this should not be assumed. For all scales of the Foundation Stage profile, except for points 4 to 8 of the CLL scales, children's learning can be assessed in the home language. It is strongly recommended that practitioners assess these areas in the home language for their own records and confirm progress with parents and carers.

At the end of the EYFS, practitioners should consider the information gathered about children's learning and development over time and summarise their knowledge in the EYFS profile. The profile, which is a statutory assessment, forms the basis of reports to parents on children's general progress and achievements at the end of the key stage, as well as providing information to be passed on to the child's next teacher.

DfES (2006) *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Consultation on a single quality framework for services to children from birth to five* (Ref: SESCO6-18)

DfES (2005) *Leading on Inclusion* (Ref: 1183-2005G) at

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/1146355](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/1146355)

# Children learning English as an additional language: speaking and listening

The National Curriculum programme of study for speaking and listening identifies the knowledge, skills and understanding required for speaking, listening, group discussion and interaction, and drama. The incorporation of these strands into the revised Framework for literacy and mathematics makes explicit the centrality of speaking and listening not only as a communicative skill in its own right but also as the bedrock of literacy and mathematics development.

The progression in the four strands of speaking and listening in the renewed Framework supports practitioner dialogue for raising expectations of bilingual learners. Most children learn their first language at home without any difficulty. When children learning English as an additional language enter the school or setting, they need to maintain their first language, learn English and access the school curriculum through the additional language. They need plenty of exposure to oral language in meaningful contexts and plenty of opportunities to use oral language with their peers as well as with adults in the service of a whole range of different purposes.

Children learning EAL, like all children, need:

- an understanding of purpose and audience
- the opportunity to activate prior knowledge of the topic or to make connections with something familiar
- to hear from other, more fluent speakers the language they will be expected to use
- to have language modelled for them
- thinking time as well as time to process and mentally rehearse their own speech for extended contributions
- to have their contributions scaffolded with, for example, talk frames with linguistic prompts or graphic organisers
- opportunities to listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternatives; to build on their own and others' ideas to develop coherent thinking; to express their views fully; and to help each other reach common understandings.

*The indications are that far more attention needs to be given, right from the start, to promoting speaking and listening skills to make sure that children build a good stock of words, learn to listen attentively and speak clearly and confidently. Speaking and Listening, together with reading and writing, are prime communication skills that are central to children's intellectual, social and emotional development.*

J Rose (2006) *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading*

## Planning for speaking and listening

Planning for EAL learners is most effective when it is part of the planning process of the whole school and the whole class and is embedded in the usual planning framework.

It should take account of the language demands of the curriculum and identify opportunities to develop specific language for specific purposes. The planning exemplification accompanying the electronic Framework includes a focus on planned opportunities for speaking and listening as a tool for learning. For bilingual learners, planning should:

- identify the form of language most appropriate for the purpose as well as the vocabulary in order to model this for children learning English as an additional language
- identify opportunities to use bilingual strategies, including how children will be grouped in order to facilitate this, and roles of any bilingual adults who share children's first language or languages
- provide pair work and small group opportunities to work with peers who are more proficient speakers both of their first language and of English
- Provide opportunities for children to reflect on their choice of language in different situations and the range of possible reasons for switching between these.

While speaking and listening provide many benefits for children learning EAL, teachers and practitioners will need to be aware that oral communication may also pose challenges and try wherever possible to overcome these.

- Oral language moves very quickly, sometimes making understanding difficult.
- Oral language often contains fragments of sentences, colloquialisms and figurative language which can present barriers to understanding.
- The pace of oral language may make it difficult for the child to contribute meaningfully.

## Speaking

For children learning English as an additional language, speaking skills are required for a range of purposes other than communicating. They are essential for developing cognitive ability as well the language of specific curriculum areas and it is important that spoken language is given status if it is to support such development. Teachers need to pay attention explicitly to language structures as well as vocabulary and the use of these for a range of cognitive functions.

Language learning styles vary and some children will not want to speak until they feel confident they can produce an accurate and complete utterance. Different children will have different attitudes towards learning by experimenting and some will feel more comfortable than others about taking risks. A silent period, where children are learning receptively by listening, is a natural stage that many early-stage learners of English as an additional language go through. Practitioners can support children in the early stages best by ensuring anxiety levels are kept low and by not exhorting them to contribute orally until they feel ready to do so. They will benefit from:

- the opportunity to build on their previous experience including their first language
- hearing good models of English used for purposes that are clear
- pre-teaching or preparation in their first language
- working with a talk partner who speaks their first language as well as English
- working on practical tasks in small groups
- Visual support such as pictures and props, etc.

## Listening

Listening in any situation where the context is reduced will present particular challenges for children learning EAL. They may need a scaffold to activate prior knowledge and experiences, through the use of pictures and props by speakers, providing a listening focus, providing note-taking frameworks and pre-teaching specific vocabulary.

Children should be encouraged to check their understanding by discussing in their first language as well as English with their peers. Visuals could be developed which help children to anticipate the way in which the talk may be structured and support the identification of key points and so on.

Listening to stretches of unfamiliar language makes great demands on an EAL learner's ability to concentrate. Children need good listening to be modelled for them. This may include:

- making eye contact with speakers
- asking the sort of questions good listeners ask – not only questions about content but also, for children learning EAL, questions about language, for example, 'What does [X] mean?'; 'Can you repeat that, please?'; 'I didn't quite understand'; 'Can you say that another way, please?'
- comments to show speakers you are actively making sense of what you hear, for example, 'Oh yes, I've seen one like that before'
- Comments that signal to speakers that you are ready for them to move on, for example, 'Go on...and after that?'

## Pronunciation

Although generally speaking children learning English as an additional language acquire intelligible pronunciation through listening to their peers as well as adults, some attention to pronunciation may help to counter stereotyping, and teachers should correct errors likely to cause problems by modelling and recasting. However, it is equally important to ensure that all children are familiar with, and respectful of, a range of accents including local accents, accents deriving from a first language other than English, and World English accents such as those heard on television (Australian, Indian, English, American). This can be achieved by providing plenty of opportunities for children to listen to speakers with a range of accents.

## Group discussion and interaction

Highly supportive contexts for children learning EAL are provided by mixed-ability groups, groups which include more expert speakers of English and groups where there are children who share a first language. Work in speaking and listening should be planned to make effective use of the range of groupings possible according to gender, age, first language, number of children, ability and confidence. On occasions it may be useful to group children together who share a common cultural heritage or a shared experience as well as a first language, for example children who came to England as refugees. On other occasions it will be important to group children with contrasting experiences or to ensure a range of different 'experts'.

For further guidance see the leaflet *Group Discussion and Interaction: Making it work in the classroom* in DfES (2003) *Speaking, Listening, Learning in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2* (Ref: 0626-2003G).

For other examples of collaborative activities that are particularly useful for children learning EAL, see Dictogloss and Detectives in unit 2 of *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

## Drama

Drama provides unique opportunities for children to speak and listen in a variety of roles. This enables children learning English as an additional language to develop their understanding of how to use language appropriately in a range of situations beyond those they would normally experience. Children can explore the range of factors which contribute to variation in talk, including the speaker's purpose and their relationship with the listeners; they can view incidents from different points of view, make changes and discuss the impact of characters speaking or behaving in a different way. Children are not dependent entirely on oral language to convey meaning. They can use their whole bodies to create meaning and convey particular effects. Listening and understanding is enhanced for all children when oral language is accompanied by appropriate gestures, facial expressions and reactions. Drama is an effective way for children to communicate what they have learned in any area of the curriculum.

Drama also provides opportunities for children to use their whole language repertoire creatively, drawing on a rich range of meanings and sources of humour available within bilingual communities, as well as developing dramatic situations derived from children living in two cultures as well as two languages.

When children are discussing dramatic effects and how they have been achieved, they could include the impact of code-switching between languages and the possible reasons for this, for example to facilitate understanding, to emphasise a point, to create a sense of belonging to a particular group, to convey a concept not easily spoken about in English and so on.

## **The importance of sharing the value of speaking and listening with bilingual parents**

Parents have a key role in supporting the school's work in speaking and listening and the importance of explaining how talk contributes to learning throughout the whole curriculum. In addition bilingual parents need to understand that talk in any language helps children to develop key aspects of learning such as the ability to reason and solve problems. Often parents from minority communities feel ill-equipped to support their children's learning in school if English is not their strongest language but again they should be encouraged to understand that rich communication using their strongest language is the best way to support their children's learning in school. Parents should be confident that the school values their child's bilingualism and that research shows that this has the potential to confer an intellectual advantage as providing children with opportunities to continue to use their first language for cognitively demanding tasks supports the development of their additional language. Concepts, knowledge and skills developed in one language transfer readily to additional languages.

For additional guidance on speaking and listening see unit 4 of DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 0031-2006PCK-EN).

## **Links to Early Years Foundation Stage**

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework for learning and development from birth to five sets out requirements for practitioners to plan and deliver an enjoyable and challenging curriculum across all six areas of development from which no child should be excluded. None of the six areas can be delivered in isolation from the others: they are equally important and dependent on one another.

For children learning English in addition to the other language(s) spoken at home, the EYFS Framework recognises the importance of maintaining and developing that home language for children's cognitive, personal and social development in direct accordance with the advice set out in this paper.

Some children for whom English will be learned in addition to the language(s) of the home may be in settings as babies; practitioners need to ensure they and the child's parents or carers have a shared understanding of language development, the benefits of bilingualism and the importance of maintaining and developing the language of the home. This understanding is crucial to the development of all communication, language and literacy skills and underpins all potential learning.

Practitioners should value linguistic diversity and provide opportunities for children to develop and use their home language in their play and learning. These children will be at many stages of learning English as an additional language.

Learning opportunities should be planned to help children develop their English and support should be provided to help them take part in other activities by, for example:

- building on children's experiences of language at home and in the wider community by providing a range of opportunities to use their home language(s), so that their developing use of English and other languages support one another
- providing a range of opportunities for children to engage in speaking and listening activities in English with peers and adults
- providing bilingual support, in particular to extend vocabulary and support children's developing understanding
- providing opportunities for children to hear their home languages as well as English, for example through the use of audio and video materials.

For further details, see

- DfES (2006) *The Early Years Foundation Stage: Consultation on a single quality framework for services to children from birth to five* (Ref: SESCO6-18).
- J Rose (2006) *Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading* (Ref: 021-2006DOC-EN)
- DfES (2005) *Leading on Inclusion* (Ref: 1183-2005G) at [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/1146355/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/1146355/)
- DfES (2006) *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years* (Ref: 2132-2006DCL-EN) unit 4 *Speaking, Listening Learning: Working with children learning English as an additional language* (Ref: 0013-2006PCK-EN)