

## Practical ideas to facilitate the child with EAL in the classroom

### Physical Environment

- *Pictorial / visual clues*

These can be used as an aid for understanding and to outline the chronology of certain oral activities or procedures such as timetables, introduction of activities, layout of the school, days off, trips, and extra-curricular activities. These can also be used as clues to aid comprehension when decoding a written text.

- *Content of library*

There should be a variety of books in the class library such as dual-language books, high interest/low ability books, English-Polish/Iranian/etc. dictionaries, picture dictionaries, big books, and fact and fiction books.

- *ICT*

PhotoStory 3 to enhance the language experience approach in subjects such as SESE (local buildings), writing (recount or procedural genres), and reading (shared reading).

PhotoStory 3 can be downloaded for free at

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.msp>.

A number of useful websites are also available to support translation and the creation of materials to use with EAL learners.

- *Resources*

Each classroom should have a variety of age-appropriate concrete materials, age-appropriate big books and literacy activities, for example, barrier games, sequencing cards, photos, picture cards and oral language teacher resource books.

### Organisation and Classroom Management

- *Communication*

When the child is in the silent phase it may be useful to establish a communication code between the teacher and the child. This could be a simple gesture or flashcard that displays a lack of understanding on the child's part or it could be a more sophisticated dual communication code between the teacher and the child.

- *Buddy system*

“Buddying” a child with EAL with another newcomer of the same linguistic background and with an Irish child for different parts of the day. This can be organised for certain activities or for certain periods of time such as a day or a week. The buddies can be rotated regularly to promote independence and inclusion.

- *Peer tutoring*

A child with EAL can work collaboratively with an Irish child for certain activities such as practical maths tasks, the writing process, comprehension strategies and oral language activities. This also works well in other subject areas.

- *Collaborative groupwork*

All children in the class can be taught how to work collaboratively in a group. This involves acknowledging shared responsibility and shared ownership of the task, practising speaking and listening skills, assigning roles within the group such as a recorder, a reporter and a timekeeper. Groups can be devised in many ways, for example, ability groups, mixed-ability groups, similar interest groups, age groups, friendship groups, class groups, similar needs groups, random groups and project groups.

- *Project work*

When several children with a common language are in the class, for example, they all have Latvian as their first language; they can work together on a project in this language. They can first present a draft format to the teacher in English who can make suggestions and recommendations in relation to the content. They can use this feedback to provide the basis for creating subsequent drafts in their first language. This collaborative work allows newcomers with various levels of English language proficiency to work together at the same level in their first language. This can then be presented to the whole class and used as a stimulus for language awareness.

- *Teacher collaboration*

The mainstream teacher and the language support teacher can work together to establish the strengths and needs of the child or groups of children. They then plan their teaching collaboratively to facilitate the necessary learning experiences. This will take place both in the language support room and in the mainstream classroom through a combination of team teaching and withdrawal. The checklists in the IILT publications can be very useful for this type of assessment, for example, the *Up and Away* (IILT, 2007)

and the '*Together towards Inclusion' a Toolkit for Diversity* (IILT, 2007). The language support teacher will also have identified areas of strength and weakness through using the *Primary School Assessment Kit*, and in addition to this the mainstream teacher will be assessing the child on ongoing basis through teacher observation, teacher-designed tasks and portfolios.

- *Team teaching*

The mainstream teacher can work together with one or all of the support teachers, for example, the language support teacher, the learning support teacher, the resource teacher and the resource teacher for travellers. This involves collaboratively planning and delivering a programme of work which is tailored to meet the needs of all children in the class. This model of support promotes inclusion and is an effective use of time and human resources. There are various models of team teaching, all of which can be adapted and modified to suit the needs of a particular group of learners and the resources available. Model A involves four teachers, for example, each teaching an aspect of early intervention such as oral language, phonological awareness, sight vocabulary and phonics. These groups can be rotated every 15 minutes or daily or weekly. Model B involves 3 teachers, for example, each teaching an aspect of the English curriculum such as comprehension strategies, the writing process and oral language. Model C involves 2 teachers, for example, each teaching an aspect of the English curriculum which is based on the novel such as comprehension strategies for fiction and improvisational drama. Model D involves 2 teachers, for example, both teaching the same content in Maths such as capacity. A reduced pupil-teacher ratio is one of the advantages here. Model E involves 2 teachers, for example, one teaching the whole class and the other supporting. Collaborative planning and shared ownership are the key elements of success for team teaching. The needs of the children must be addressed at all times, for example, referring to the IPLPs, IEPs and language programmes on an ongoing basis.

## **Teaching Strategies**

- '*Talk for talk's sake*'

A culture of talking for talk's sake should be encouraged in the classroom. This involves the teacher organising activities so that discussion is an in-built part, for example, information gap games. Discussion time should also be included at the end of these

activities so the children can share experiences and provide feedback. Pair work such as think, pair, share allows for the maximum amount of interaction at any one time. Discrete oral language should be on the class timetable and should be a regular part of the mainstream classroom. The five contexts for oral language are talk and discussion, play and games, story, poetry and rhyme, and improvisational drama. This use of oral language should also be encouraged across all the other curricular areas.

- *Teacher modelling*

Scaffolding learning and language for all children is vitally important but particularly, in relation to the child with EAL. The gradual release of responsibility model is based on the work of Vygotsky. It requires the teacher to model the activity/process first while thinking out loud. This leads to sharing, where the teacher continues to model the activity but asks the children to contribute ideas. Then the children work in pairs/groups, eventually leading to the children doing the activity/process independently. This gradual release of responsibility model works particularly well with the writing process and comprehension strategies in English, and also with problem solving in Maths. This methodology comprises explicit teaching and guided pair/group work and so is ideal for the child with EAL.

- *Language experience approach*

Shared experiences such as trips, activities, projects and sporting events can be used as a basis for language development. This language, which comes directly from the children, can then be used for shared writing (report, recount or procedural genres), shared reading activities, phonological awareness activities, sight vocabulary games and oral language activities. This approach is particularly effective with the newcomer child because the language is contextualised and so is in a meaningful context for the child.

- *Free writing*

All children in the class should get the opportunity for free writing on a regular basis. The child with EAL should be allowed to choose which language he/she wishes to write in at this time. This allows for the child's first language to be valued and developed, which research suggests has a significant positive link with successful second language acquisition. It also allows a child with poor English language proficiency to use his/her literacy skills to perform at a higher cognitive level. This can help to alleviate the child's frustration which may be particularly evident in the senior classes if he/she cannot write fluently in English.

- *Active learning*

The children should be active in their own learning at all times. This learning should be engaging and stimulating for the children.

- *Oral language in literacy*

Oral language should be an integral part of the comprehension strategies used in the mainstream class and should also be a significant factor in a child's response to reading. This oral language emphasis should also be evident in the writing process, for example, the gradual release of responsibility model. This emphasis will be very effective in including a child with a low level of English proficiency in both reading and writing activities.

- *Total physical response activities*

This is a method of teaching language using physical movement to react to verbal input. It is particularly useful for a child with little or no English because they can still participate in the activity. The types of TPR activities can be generally categorised into body movements, for example, "stand up, sit down"; objects, for example "show me, give me"; pictures and flashcards; and storytelling.