

**English as an Additional Language  
or Dialect: Teacher Resource**  
**Advice for Teachers**

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This is an excerpt from ACARA's English as an Additional Language or Dialect: Teacher Resource. It contains Advice for teachers of EAL/D students. The complete resource can be accessed from

[http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/eald\\_teacher\\_resource/eald\\_teacher\\_resource.html](http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/eald_teacher_resource/eald_teacher_resource.html)

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## 4. Advice for teachers of EAL/D students

This advice will assist teachers to support EAL/D students in accessing the content of the Australian Curriculum and to recognise and make use of the linguistic and cultural resources that these students bring with them to the classroom.

It includes information about:

- linguistic and cultural factors that affect EAL/D students' learning
- teaching strategies to support EAL/D students access the learning in content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum.

It provides indicative advice that teachers could explore further with specialist EAL/D teachers and within the specialist EAL/D documents and resources used in the states and territories. Specific annotations to content descriptions in the English, mathematics, science and history learning areas of the Australian Curriculum have been developed for publication in late 2011. Some of the major aspects identified in the content description annotations that apply across learning areas are presented here.

The EAL/D Learning Progression (page 8) is also an important reference for teachers. Teachers should provide support and select and implement teaching strategies that are relevant and appropriate to EAL/D students' phases of English language learning described in the progression.

### Linguistic and cultural factors that affect EAL/D students' learning

EAL/D students require specific support to learn and build on the Standard Australian English (SAE) language skills needed to access the general curriculum, in addition to learning area-specific language structures and vocabulary.

The information below aims to help teachers understand students' linguistic and cultural diversity so they can prepare learning experiences to meet the needs of their EAL/D students. It focuses on some of the major English language features that EAL/D students may find challenging, and cultural factors and other experiences that may affect their learning including:

- oral language development
- differences between languages and writing systems
- differences in ways texts are constructed
- how cohesion is created in texts
- other features of sentence structure in English
- English vocabulary items that pose particular problems for EAL/D students
- other considerations for teaching EAL/D students
- EAL/D students' prior schooling
- intercultural understanding
- assumed cultural knowledge
- EAL/D students' expectations of schooling.

## **Oral language development for EAL/D students**

Competency with spoken language is a crucial prerequisite of learning. In most Australian classrooms, this competency is assumed as teachers use oral language to convey instructions, information and explanations for classroom activities. Even in the early years of schooling, new concepts, including concepts about print, are taught primarily through teacher talk and student response. EAL/D students will have varying levels of oral language proficiency that will impact upon the degree to which they are able to participate in learning.

Oral language takes different forms. In Australian classrooms, it can range from conversational language, where students communicate informally and socially, to academic language, where students use English (SAE) in formal and academic situations, and in ways that are specific to each curriculum area. Sometimes EAL/D students can give the impression of fluency with English, but closer analysis reveals their proficiency may be limited to the more informal social and playground language contexts — and vice versa.

EAL/D students use oral language to discover and negotiate meanings and understandings in and about their new language. For EAL/D students, classroom talk may range from casual conversations about lesson content or procedures to specific explanations about the forms and features of Standard Australian English. Providing opportunities for constructive classroom talk will support EAL/D students' cognitive development, language learning, reading comprehension and writing skills.

Standard Australian English is not the only variety of English used in Australia. An EAL/D student's home language or dialect should be recognised and acknowledged as a legitimate mode of communication alongside English (SAE), and will be a valuable resource for learning in the mainstream classroom.

## **Differences between languages and writing systems**

English uses phonemes (sounds) and morphemes (words and the parts of words that convey meaning, such as the negative prefix *un-*, the plural *-s*, and the past tense *-ed*). The phonemes and morphemes used in English are different from those used in other languages. For example, in tone languages tonal variations and stress patterns are used to communicate meaning.

Not all languages have written traditions, and in many cultures oral communication is privileged over written communication. For students from these traditions and cultures, understanding the differences between written and spoken language, and recognising the emphasis placed on proficiency in written English in Australian society, will be challenging. Many EAL/D students do not bring an awareness of print with them to the classroom.

Not all languages are alphabetic, and EAL/D students who have some literacy in their home language may understand print differently. Some EAL/D students will have experiences with other languages that are not alphabetic. Some languages have different directionality, with print read from right to left or from bottom to top. Students from these language backgrounds will require specific instruction in the construction of English letters and the directionality of written English.

English letters vary in the degree of congruence between the upper and lower case — from the very similar *Ss* to the dissimilar *Qq* — and some letters may be formed differently in print

and handwriting, or when using different font styles. This can be particularly confusing for EAL/D students who are unfamiliar with the English alphabet.

Punctuation is used differently in different languages, and EAL/D students are likely to have different understandings and expectations of punctuation. Some alphabetical languages use capital letters differently from English.

### **Differences in the ways texts are constructed**

Textual forms are socially constructed. For example, essays are not structured in the same way in all cultures.

Each learning area has its own repertoire of written text types, all of which have language forms and features that need to be explicitly taught.

Text types, their purposes, and the language forms and features used all shift subtly across the curriculum areas. For example, historical recounts require the creation of narratives based on researched facts, characters and events, and are different from the types of personal or imaginative recounts that are created in English. An experiment report in science is different from a business report. EAL/D students require significant support in understanding these differences.

### **Cohesion in English texts**

Cohesion is the way that links are made within a text to hold it together and give it meaning. It refers to the grammatical and lexical relationships within a sentence, paragraph or longer text.

The English language has numerous ways of achieving cohesion. These include, lexical cohesion, reference, ellipsis and connectives. Some of these techniques present particular challenges for EAL/D students, as well as important learning opportunities.

- Lexical cohesion is the use of word associations to create links in texts. Links can be made through the use of repetition of words, synonyms, antonyms and technical vocabulary that is linked by class and subclass. Persuasive writing uses emotive vocabulary and modal verbs such as *must*, *should* and *cannot* to present a cohesive and convincing argument.
- Reference is used when the writer 'refers' to an object, an issue or a person in a different way (for example, by using a pronoun). EAL/D students need to be able to track these reference words throughout a piece of text in order to comprehend descriptions, recounts and explanations in particular.
- Ellipsis occurs when words or phrases are omitted because the idea or meaning can be implied or inferred from what has already been stated. This cohesive device can cause particular challenges for EAL/D students when used in questions and task instructions. (For example: *There are 12 pieces of pizza. When you take away 4 [pieces of pizza] how many [pieces of pizza] are left?*)
- Connectives create cohesion by signposting the reader through a text. They may be used to sequence events (*first*, *next*, *while*, *after that*); to add information (*moreover*, *additionally*, *as well as*); to compare and contrast (*on the other hand*, *while*); to offer counter-arguments (*however*); to justify (*therefore*); to relate cause and effect (*so*, *as a result*, *causes*, *makes*, *leads to*, *forms*, *results in*). Connectives serve different

language functions depending on the purpose of a text; therefore, different words and phrases are more likely to be encountered in certain curriculum areas than in others.

### **Other features of English sentence structure**

Syntax refers to the order of words in a sentence or other meaningful utterance. Word order differs in all languages, and English conveys meaning through syntax to a greater degree than many other languages. Emphasis is created by putting the most important information at the beginning of the sentence, such as the use of the verb in imperative sentences (for example, **Underline** the multiples of 3); while different effects are achieved by delaying particular pieces of information (for example, to build suspense in a narrative).

Simple, complex and compound sentences are used in English. Simple sentences contain one verb. Compound sentences join two simple sentences through the use of conjunction. Complex sentences combine a simple sentence or independent clause and a dependent clause. Understanding and correctly using dependent and independent clauses poses particular problems for EAL/D students.

Tense tells when in time something has happened — in the past, the present or the future. Tense is marked through the verbs. Not all languages mark time in this way, nor in the complex manner of English, which has more than nine tenses. These are not interchangeable and they are used to make fine distinctions of meaning. Different tenses are often used in English within the one text or even within the one sentence.

Predicting and hypothesising in English requires the use of conditional language structures. Complex sentences with multiple verb structures and tenses are common (for example, *I **think** this book **will be** good for **learning** about dinosaurs; If I **turn** the shape one more time, then it **might make** a diamond; I **think** the chocolate **will melt** if we **put** it in the sun).*

Reasoning and explaining require the language of cause and effect (for example, **First** I had 10 blocks, **then** I put ten more blocks **because** I was going up in lots of 10; The golf ball is heavy, **so** it rolled faster).

Questions are formed in various ways in English. Many of them are unique to the language, and are therefore quite challenging for EAL/D students. For example, forming a question requires the student to change the position of the verb and the subject (for example, *Can I?*) or else to use a question word (for example, *Why did this happen?*). The auxiliary verb also takes on the tense as opposed to the main verb (for example, *X **happened** because ... / Why **did** X **happen**?*).

Phrases are the parts of a sentence that give more information about the verbs or nouns in the sentence. Noun groups or phrases can be made by adding adjectives. In English, we prefer an order for adjectives in noun groups (for example, *a beautiful red balloon* rather than *a red beautiful balloon*). This preference for opinion adjectives before factual ones is intuitive for native English speakers because of their immersion in the language, but must be explicitly taught to EAL/D students.

The passive voice is a feature of many academic texts, including persuasive texts and scientific explanations. Use of the passive voice allows the speaker or writer to remove the actor as the theme of the sentence, when the actor is not important or is not the focus of the

sentence's main message (for example, *Water is used [by whom?] for many purposes; Clouds are formed by condensation*). Questions formed using the passive voice reverse the usual order of the number sentence in mathematics and pose particular challenges for EAL/D students (for example, *if 8 is subtracted from 10* means  $10 - 8$ , not  $8 - 10$ ).

### English vocabulary for EAL/D students

The vocabulary of EAL/D students will be dependent upon where they are on the EAL/D learning progression and their prior education. For some students, it is simply a matter of attaching new words to known concepts; for other students, both the concept and the word will be new.

The English language has adopted words throughout its evolution. Understanding the historical evolution of the language helps explain many of the spelling anomalies in English. Understanding word origin provides EAL/D students with an important tool for remembering and comprehending new vocabulary.

English words are constructed by both their sounds (phonemes) and their meanings (morphemes). Reading, writing and spelling are all aided by an understanding of this underlying structure of words. English has 26 letters and 44 phonemes, and each phoneme has an average of 12 different graphic representations. Sounds and letters match only about 12 percent of the time, compared to almost 100 percent matches in some other alphabetic languages. In more phonetic languages, decoding is predictable, and spelling is not a challenge and is not taught. Similarly, spelling is not a requirement in languages that use symbols to represent entire words (logographic languages).

Extent of vocabulary knowledge is one of the best predictors of literacy success. EAL/D students will not have had the same continuous exposure to English vocabulary, nor the same 'prior knowledge' to build upon, and so special attention must be paid to vocabulary development in the classroom. This is equally important for spoken and written language learning.

Even 'everyday' vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly. EAL/D students often don't know the English vocabulary for everyday home and family items because they use their home language in these contexts.

Subject-specific vocabulary is challenging because EAL/D students will have had limited exposure to these words. In mathematics, for example, words such as *tally*, *prism* and *quotient* would not have been encountered by EAL/D students in any other context. Instructions and questions such as *Draw the **object**, What **material** is it made of? What is the **product** of 3 and 5?* require explanation to students who are still operating at the literal or concrete levels of comprehension.

The vocabulary of feelings and emotions is challenging for EAL/D students, as it is frequently abstract. Often, language is learned through visual reinforcement, and this is not always possible for abstract nouns. EAL/D students are more likely to know this vocabulary in their home language.

Words have different meanings in different contexts, and this can be especially challenging for EALD students. For example, in science *hard* is a property of a material, not necessarily the opposite of *easy*.

Words themselves sometimes contain the concept being taught, and so the language and the content are often effectively learnt in conjunction with one another. For example, the number words reflect the number concepts that they represent (for example, in Greek 13 = ten three, 14 = ten four, and so on). Knowledge of morphemes within words helps develop comprehension and expand vocabulary.

Vocabulary items that pose particular problems for EAL/ D students include:

- Modal verbs (for example, *will, may, might, should, could*) are used to modify the certainty of verbs and are mastered late in the language learning progression of EAL/D students. Many languages have no modality. Students from these language backgrounds will need support in understanding how a degree of certainty can create nuance or indicate deference. Other languages are more honorific and indirect, and students from these backgrounds will also need assistance in manipulating modality for correct effect.
- Nouns in English can be characterised as ‘countable’ or ‘uncountable’. Countable nouns can be described with numbers (for example, *10 marbles*), and we ask questions about them using the word *many* (for example, *How many marbles do you think are in the jar?*). Uncountable nouns can’t be described with numbers, and we ask questions about them using the word *much* (for example, *How much water do you think is in the jar?*). This distinction comes intuitively to native speakers of English, but not to EAL/D students who have less experience with the language to hear what ‘sounds right’.
- Prepositions in English are often used idiosyncratically or idiomatically (for example, *in the air, on high, on a high*) or to denote subtle differences in meaning (for example, *on the desk, at the desk, under the desk*).
- Phrasal verbs are particularly challenging. These are combinations of verbs and prepositions. The addition of the preposition gives the verb new, and often multiple, meanings (for example, *turn up* as in **Turn up** the radio, *When did he turn up?* and *That’s a turn up* for the books).
- The English articles *a, an* and *the* pose difficulties for EAL/D students. Their usage in English is particularly complex and sometimes arbitrary (for example, the use of the definite article *the* to refer to both the specific case, as in **the** cat next door, and the general, as in **the** whale is the largest mammal, and the seemingly arbitrary use for **the** Earth but not **the** Mars).
- Smaller words with dual meanings can be extremely confusing for EAL/D students (for example, the exclusive *or* in the instruction *Choose either option 1 **or** option 2* versus the inclusive *or* in *Dogs **or** cats can become good family pets*; the difference between *a few* and *few* in *I have **a few** friends* and *I have **few** friends*).
- Nominalisation is the changing of a verb (usually) into a noun. This condenses text and removes the thing responsible for the noun in most cases (for example, *people **migrated** to Australia* becomes **migration** to Australia). This makes text denser and less accessible to EAL/D students, but is a necessary feature of academic writing.



EAL/D students will need a significant amount of practice to understand and use these nominalisations.

- The language of comparison in English includes the use of the comparative adjective forms. These include adding *-er* to one- or two-syllable adjectives (for example, *This book is funnier*) and using *more* for three or more syllable adjectives (for example, *This book is more beautiful*). Exceptions such as *more fun* (not *funner*) and the irregular comparative adjectives such as *better* (not *gooder*) need to be learnt. For most native English speakers, knowledge of the correct forms is intuitive.
- Abbreviations are used often in non-narrative texts. It is important to teach the source words of the abbreviations in order to support EAL/D students' understanding of the concept that the abbreviation is representing (for example, in mathematics *3-D* = three-dimensional, *kg*, *cm*, and so on). Understanding of 'common' abbreviations should not be assumed with EAL/D students.

### Other considerations for teaching EAL/D students

Some students in the Beginning phase of English language learning will go through a silent period where they choose to listen rather than attempt to speak using the new language.

Many EAL/D students who are refugees and asylum seekers have endured experiences of extreme torture and trauma prior to their arrival in Australia; and all refugees have experienced to some degree emotional and psychological trauma by virtue of the fact that they have been forcibly dislocated from their homes, families, friends, cultures, and so on. This might manifest in a number of different ways in the classroom, from total non-responsiveness and elective mutism to acting-out behaviours (for example, violence, self-harm, insolence), to mistrust and resentment towards authority figures, to an inability to concentrate, to disengagement from classwork and non-completion of homework tasks and assignments. There might be additional triggers (for example, news reports of bombings, war statistics, sinking of refugee boats, bad news or no news from their homelands about the fates of family members and friends, denial of visas, and so on) that will revive some of these symptoms. These experiences will directly impact on students' general learning and their learning of English in Australian classrooms.

EAL/D students are bilingual learners, and they are already language learners in at least one other language. They are an important resource in developing the language awareness of all students in the classroom. The maintenance of the home language of EAL/D students is important for their English language learning as well as for the preservation and development of their cultural identities and family relationships. Research indicates that bilingual speakers have significant learning advantages over monolingual speakers.

Many classroom tasks require the use of language that is particular to school: academic language as opposed to playground language. While many EAL/D students may appear proficient with social playground language, they struggle with the more formal language of the classroom. Some of the common stumbling blocks are highlighted below:

- Undertaking research requires developed information literacy skills, including knowledge of and access to information sources, and relatively advanced reading skills that may be beyond the language proficiency levels of EAL/D students.

Students may not be proficient in analysing the veracity or appropriateness of sources. Specific direction is advised in the initial stages of inquiry.

- Identifying a point of view requires the student to be able to decode the text, then analyse the word choice and how this affects the reader/viewer/listener.
- Justifying a point of view — in many cultures, students are not expected to develop their own opinion on texts. The ‘expert’ opinion is seen as correct, and students are required to learn and reproduce these opinions. This means that some EAL/D students may experience difficulty in providing both an independent opinion and in understanding how to justify this opinion.
- Mathematical language can be metaphorical, eg describing number as a container (for example, the chances are 1 in 10 — where the number 10 is used as a metaphor for a container, or when we ask the question 'how many 4s are there in 44' where the literal answer is 2). This may cause conceptual difficulties for some groups of EAL/D students who do not have the cultural conceptualisation of a metaphorical approach to number.
- Inferences can be made through an assumption of cultural knowledge, or through an understanding of a range of vocabulary (for example, good synonym knowledge), or from the use of reference words (for example, this to refer to a process described in the previous sentence), or through literary devices such as metaphor. EAL/D students will need to be given specific instruction in relation to all of these language features in order to access meaning in texts.
- Idioms are expressions that are particular to cultures. They may not make sense to those learning them, and they are usually difficult to remember and to reproduce confidently. The use of idiomatic language in the classroom requires further explanation to EAL/D students (for example, Let’s be as quiet as mice).
- Extended metaphor relies upon the student seeing the connection of the metaphor. EAL/D students will need explicit support in this area to appreciate the nuances of language that create these metaphors.
- Understanding humour usually requires advanced language skills and is often very challenging for EAL/D students. Humour is reliant on cultural knowledge and an understanding of quite abstract language and a broad vocabulary (for example, puns and metaphors).
- Irony relies upon the audience understanding the context that causes irony. Without shared cultural knowledge, this will be difficult for EAL/D students to understand and appreciate.
- Parody relies upon shared cultural knowledge to identify what is being parodied. It may be useful to give EAL/D students access to the original material so that they can better understand the connections between this and the parody. Parody also involves humour that is culturally specific. Therefore, students may experience difficulties in understanding the entertainment or aesthetic value of a parody.
- Diagrams in non-narrative texts are informational and are different from the images that students usually create intuitively (for example, in mathematics diagrams of rectangles must be representative of the features of rectangles, with straight parallel edges; in science diagrams require accuracy in size relationships and colour when recording an experiment — these expectations must be made clear to EAL/D students).

## ***EAL/D students' prior schooling***

Students who have not had a continuous cumulative experience of the Australian curriculum may or may not possess the necessary prerequisite skills, conceptual knowledge and understanding to complete tasks. EAL/D students' understanding of curriculum area content must be monitored constantly.

Alternatively, some EAL/D students may have come from systems where they are competent in mathematics and other skills beyond those described in the Australian Curriculum for their year level. For example, in mathematics many EAL/D students will have the conceptual skills to solve numerical problems, but will struggle with the language required to interpret written mathematical problems or to construct word stories to accompany numerical equations. The contextual material is often included in word problems, which adds a cultural or linguistic dimension to the calculation. The extra information may distract or confuse EAL/D students who may have a much greater understanding of mathematical concepts than they are able to demonstrate if assessment occurs through word problems. Thus, teachers should be mindful of whether it is language that is preventing EAL/D students from demonstrating mathematical achievement. Even numerical work requires language for explanations. All mathematics lessons are also language lessons

## ***Intercultural understanding***

All students, including EAL/D students, have cultural resources that give them alternative perspectives on issues and phenomena, as well as experiences and knowledge. These are resources to be drawn upon to add to the learning and experiences of all students in the classroom.

However, while they have their own unique and valuable experiences, EAL/D students, particularly new arrivals or those in remote locations, may not have had experience with 'taken-for-granted' environments such as the beach and the bush, or urban experiences such as cinemas and shopping malls, or else they may not have an understanding of some of the signs and stories that teachers might assume are shared knowledge (for example, an EXIT sign, nursery rhymes). Some EAL/D students from refugee backgrounds may only now be experiencing technology and school environments after spending many years in camps.

Schooling systems around the world are vastly different, and students may come with very little prior knowledge in a given field or very extended knowledge. Contextual and visual information that we often assume is supportive of learning is often culturally loaded. EAL/D students may not have experience with the cultural context or images of some books (for example, the bush and *Australiana*). Other examples of 'taken-for-granted' knowledge in classrooms include collecting data for surveys (for example, *Which TV shows do you watch? Which cereal do you eat for breakfast?*). Therefore, teachers should not assume 'everyday' data is available to all students. Teachers should not assume that EAL/D students have had similar exposure to the media or to the same social issues. This lack of experience can make it challenging to complete independent study tasks (for example, identifying relevant issues for a research inquiry)

## Assumed cultural knowledge

Not all currencies use decimal systems. Many EAL/D students will have concrete experience, and samples, of other coins and money systems, some of which do not work on decimal systems.

Not all cultures approach mathematical problem solving in the same way. There are multiple approaches to division and multiplication, for example, and many students from Asian and Middle Eastern countries have experience of the abacus as an everyday tool for mathematical functions.

The Gregorian calendar used in the Western world is not the only calendar, and EAL/D students may have expectations and experiences of other solar or lunar calendars, including the Chinese and Islamic calendars. For example, placing time on a line relevant to the birth of Jesus Christ — BC, AD — is culturally constructed; some students may not conceptualise time in this linear sense at all. In history, the backward documentation of time in the BC era may cause confusion for students because of the backward notation of the years and timespans.

The telling of time is constructed differently in different languages, and this often reflects concepts of time in different cultures. For example, in some languages *half past four* is constructed as *half to five*. Teachers need to be aware of these differences to better understand if problems with time-telling are linguistic or conceptual.

Temperature is not universally measured by the Celsius scale. Some EAL/D students may have different experiences and expectations of temperature measurement scales.

Different cultures use different ways of classifying objects according to their needs. For example, an Aboriginal student may classify plants according to edible or inedible, rather than species.

Students from different cultures will have different perspectives as to what is or is not ethical. For example, students from First World and Third World countries may differ because something that may be unethical in one country is a question of survival in another.

Family relationships and roles are not described in the same way in all cultures. For example, in Aboriginal families,  *aunty* has a broader definition than a sister or sister-in-law of your mother or father. Similarly, the roles and duties within families may differ between cultural groups, and may not conform with Western conceptions.

Historical views are reliant on perspective, and it is important not to assume prior knowledge. Teachers may be building on an alternative version of the events being studied, or on a total lack of knowledge of the events.

## EAL/D students expectations of schooling

Not all EAL/D students will have had previous schooling experience, and school experience is not the same around the world. Many learning behaviours that are encouraged, expected and rewarded in Australian classrooms are not what EAL/D students may have experienced in previous schooling experiences or within their community in general. Following are some examples of possible differences:

- The skill of ‘inquiry’ and of challenging commonly held beliefs is a Western educational tradition, and not all EAL/D students will have experience of this.
- Not all cultures value the sharing of feelings and an individual’s thoughts in the school setting. For some EAL/D students this may be confronting, embarrassing or just unfamiliar. Therefore, some reticence to contribute or participate in activities of this sort may be for cultural reasons.
- Not all cultures interact in the same way. For example, turn-taking may not be the norm, or students may appear to not be listening, appearing distracted or walking around the room while actually listening. Distracted behaviour may be cultural.
- Body language, ‘personal space’, eye contact and gestures are linked to culture, and some EAL/D students will use and interpret body language gestures differently. For example, a nod of the head means *no* in many Middle Eastern countries; direct eye contact can indicate respect (or a lack thereof) in different cultures, and so on. It is important not to assume that body language is a universal language. Teachers must be mindful that students schooled in one culture may take years to ‘retrain’ themselves to different conventions of gesture and body language. Explicit and sensitive assistance in this area is recommended.

## Teaching strategies to support EAL/D students access the learning in content descriptions

This section contains an overview of teaching strategies and considerations that will assist mainstream teachers to adapt their teaching to cater for the specific learning needs of EAL/D students in their classrooms.

Teachers can support EAL/D students by:

- identifying a student’s level language proficiency using the EAL/D learning progression (page 8)
- utilising students’ cultural understandings
- building shared knowledge
- making the procedures and expectations of the learning environment explicit

These strategies will be suggested, where relevant, in the EAL/D annotations attached to the content descriptions in the learning areas of the Australian Curriculum (to be published in late November 2011). However, this overview will assist teachers and schools in planning their teaching programs to ensure that they are inclusive of the needs of all students.

### *Utilising EAL/D students’ cultural and linguistic resources*

It is important to recognise that EAL/D students (and all students) bring a range of cultural and linguistic resources with them into Australian classrooms. These resources can be:

- used to build EAL/D students’ English language learning and their curriculum content knowledge
- shared in the classroom for the benefit of all students. When the curriculum directs teachers to consider cultural and linguistic knowledge and attitudes, teachers should

look first to the students in their classrooms to make use of the cultural and linguistic resources already present.

Teachers should actively:

- invite EAL/D students (and all students) to share their cultural and linguistic knowledge and experiences. This creates an inclusive space for EAL/D students in the school environment, as well as providing opportunities for deep learning and intercultural understanding for the entire class
- allow students to make use of their first language to make sense of Standard Australian English and to facilitate the learning of new concepts. Using a bilingual teaching assistant or more able student from the same language background to explain concepts in the students' home language is encouraged. If the desired outcome is the presentation of knowledge in a report, then allow EAL/D students to undertake part or all of the research in their home language.

### ***Building shared knowledge***

Effective teaching and learning practices are those which build on shared knowledge and understandings. While EAL/D students bring many valuable cultural and linguistic resources with them to the learning context, their experiences, understandings and expectations are often different from those that are assumed as 'common knowledge' in Australian classrooms.

The curriculum often refers to the familiar and the everyday; however, the 'everyday' is determined by our social and cultural contexts. It is important to check whether EAL/D students possess 'everyday' and 'real-life' knowledge assumed by many curriculum tasks. For example, mathematics problems teaching interest rates often create scenarios around banks and hire purchase that are unfamiliar for some EAL/D students. To build shared knowledge around the concept, the class can view films, make visits to a bank or do roleplays.

Excursions and hands-on experiences are important tools for building shared knowledge prior to asking EAL/D students to demonstrate understanding through language. The use of concrete objects before requiring work in the abstract is important, especially in mathematics and science (for example, building models and nets before doing work on volume in mathematics, conducting experiments before writing reports, making an object before completing the written procedure, walking around the neighbourhood before drawing a map, and so on).

Visuals and gestures are an important part of building shared knowledge prior to embarking on deeper learning. Ensure that visuals or real-life objects accompany written words to help EAL/D students make the meaning connection, and take care that a broad and inclusive view of the 'familiar' and 'everyday' is portrayed in the classroom. However, it is important to note that visuals are also culturally loaded. For example, an Australian-style letterbox at the front of the house is non-existent in most other cultures and in remote communities in Australia where mail is delivered by other means; diagrams of electrical currents are meaningless to refugees or asylum seekers who have been in a camp with no electricity for their entire lives; even a picture of a Western-style toilet is initially unfamiliar to a child who has grown up with

other styles of toilets. It is important not to assume that images and context are automatically helpful for all students.

Allowing EAL/D students to draw before writing provides a concrete reference tool for building written vocabulary (for example, draw the process of the recipe just cooked by the class, prior to having students write the recipe).

### **Ensuring pedagogies of entitlement and language support for EAL/D students**

EAL/D students have the same capacity to understand the content of the Australian Curriculum as other students; however, they require support with the English required both to access the curriculum and to demonstrate achievement. Therefore, it is important to identify the language requirements of tasks while still maintaining the integrity of curriculum area content.

A pedagogy of entitlement and language support requires that teachers select and use a range of strategies that build language skills while simultaneously allowing EAL/D students access to the content of the curriculum. Broad pedagogical principles are provided below, along with some illustrative examples

**Explicit teaching** of EAL/D students is crucial in all aspects of language and across all curriculum areas. For example:

- teaching the sounds of English (SAE) to EAL/D students whose pronunciation is causing communication breakdown, paying particular to the final sounds of words, which often affect meaning (for example, *He walk[ed] to school yesterday*)
- teaching the way sounds are pronounced in English (SAE), including showing lip and tongue positions for challenging sounds such as *th*
- explicitly teaching the purpose of upper-case letters, and making clear the differences between upper-case and lower-case letters, particularly when they are quite dissimilar (for example, *Dd, Ee, Qq, Rr*)
- working on intonation (rise and fall of speech) and stress of particular words so that they are more easily understood by the audience (for example, the word **syllable** is stressed on the first syllable). An EAL/D student may just as easily say *syllable* or *syllable*, thus making the word more difficult to comprehend for listeners. This support with pronunciation will increase EAL/D students' confidence with speaking in public
- providing text structure frameworks within which to write specific text structures (for example, narratives, scientific investigations, reviews), along with models of the texts
- drawing attention to the specific tenses and sentence structures required in particular texts
- providing a glossary of technical vocabulary particular to the text or topic being studied
- providing clear instructions of each step required for the completion of a task or homework assignment
- teaching the skills of skimming and scanning
- teaching ways to use different registers of English (SAE) appropriately in school, taking into account audience and purpose (for example, playground language,

informal language in the classroom, speaking to teachers, academic specific language)

- encouraging classroom talk and using discussions as the vehicle to teach new vocabulary and concepts to EAL/D students. For instance, when students contribute ideas and vocabulary to a discussion, teach that contribution back to the whole class to ensure that EAL/D students have shared understanding while simultaneously building their vocabulary (for example, act out abstract concepts such as 'enthusiasm' and 'sadness', or draw facial expressions for 'miserable', 'excited', and so on)
- using classroom roleplays to explicitly teach ways to use language appropriately depending on context and relationship between speaker and listener.

**Teaching in context** is vital to aiding communication and comprehension. While EAL/D students require explicit teaching, it is important not to remove language from its original context and study it in isolation. Words and phrases only mean what they mean in the context of the sentences and texts that they appear in, and the language structures used within texts are intrinsically linked to the social context and purpose of the whole text. When grammar is studied out of context, students lose the understanding of using language differently in different contexts. Some useful strategies include:

- using cloze exercises to teach specific language features (for example, the sequencing connectives in a scientific explanation)
- using information retrieval charts to pull out key information and language features from a text
- providing synonyms to build a vocabulary of possible alternatives for words in context and doing substitution exercises to gauge the impact of different words with similar meanings (for example, considering the effects and effectiveness of different modal verbs used in a persuasive text: *school uniforms **must** be abolished; school uniforms **should** be abolished; school uniforms **could** be abolished*, and so on)
- doing phonics work in the context of words that students clearly understand (for example, first teach the meaning of the word in the context of the text, and then unpack the phonemes of the word). Isolating the phonemic parts of words, particularly common vocabulary items, helps both writing, reading and pronunciation (for example, **th - i - s**)
- examining and consolidating understanding of grammatical functions such as tense within the texts the students are reading (for example, noticing the use of an irregular verb in a text and adding it to a bank of irregular verb conjugations).

**Scaffolding and support strategies** underpin effective teaching and learning for EAL/D students. The writing cycle model that will be familiar to many mainstream teachers is crucial for EAL/D students. Sequencing and repetition of controlled, guided and independent tasks (for example, modelling of an exemplar text → deconstruction of the text → joint reconstruction of the text → independent construction of the text) will assist students to understand the structure, patterns and language features of the text.

Other strategies for supporting learning include:

- providing visual supports and gestures for key words and concepts so that all students can follow the gist of information when new material is being introduced



- referring to stories or events that are familiar to the students
- placing EAL/D students with a buddy, rather than in a larger group, for discussion and group work so that they have only one language input to process and so that the buddy can better adapt their language to suit the language level of their EAL/D buddy
- providing text frameworks and sentence prompts to support writing
- providing writing guides and glossaries to support reading
- monitoring the language of teacher instruction to ensure that it is at a level commensurate with the student's phase of English language learning.
- providing alternative oral explanations, and using and encouraging circumlocution
- ensuring that explanations and paraphrasing don't use vocabulary more complicated than the target word or concept
- avoiding confusing colloquialisms or idiomatic language (for example, *How many times does 4 go into 12?* is not linguistically simpler than *What is 12 divided by 4?*)
- avoiding distracters and information that is extraneous to the task at hand, maintaining a focus on essential subject terminology or instructional language.

**Modified assessments and tasks** allow EAL/D students to demonstrate understanding of curriculum content while they are developing their English language skills. Reading and writing at each year level assumes a cumulative knowledge of English language and literacy skills, including spoken English, which many EAL/D students have not yet acquired.

The EAL/D Learning Progression *for* provides an initial tool for mapping EAL/D students' language learning journeys, but the more detailed and nuanced descriptions found in the specialist state and territory documents are recommended to ensure that students receive instruction targeted at their specific needs. Progress should be checked against these each term.

Some examples of modified task design and assessments include:

- EAL/D students will be able to understand task instructions and incorporate teacher feedback at levels commensurate with their phases of English language learning. Use the EAL/D learning progression to identify the language capabilities of each EAL/D student (for example, instruction in some of the past tenses will be ineffectual for students in the Beginning phase of English language learning).
- Identifying a point of view requires decoding of the text and analysis of word choice and rhetorical features and how these affect the reader, viewer or listener. EAL/D students will be able to engage with this type of task at different levels: some will be able to decode; others will be able to analyse; and more capable language users will be able to identify and discuss how the audience has been positioned by the writer or speaker. It is important to realise that EAL/D students are continually developing their English language skills, to check their progress regularly and to adapt teaching and learning activities accordingly.
- EAL/D students in the Beginning and Emerging phases of language learning should start with literal questions supported by visuals. Students in the Developing and Consolidating phases should have a strong literal understanding before moving on to inferential questions.
- When asked to retell an event or experience, EAL/D students in the Beginning and Emerging phases of language learning could put visuals of main events into the

correct sequence, while Developing students in the early years might write sentences using a teacher's modelled example.

**Practice, preparation and revision** are important components of successful language learning. EAL/D students need multiple opportunities to use language, particularly spoken language, yet they often receive the fewest. They need to use language often, and have the opportunity to plan, rehearse and review their use of language.

Strategies include:

- providing opportunities for classroom talk to develop EAL/D students' cognitive abilities and oral language skills
- giving EAL/D students opportunities to repeat new vocabulary or phrases. For example, when introducing a new topic, set up 'speed dates' where pairs of students move on to new partners, asking the same question to collect data. This opportunity to hear the same questions and provide the same answers to new people in one-to-one interactions is valuable oral and aural practice for EAL/D students
- modelling spoken explanations and providing opportunities for EAL/D students to repeat those explanations using the same language features and sentence structure (for example, for mathematical problems)
- creating a print-rich classroom environment (for example, labelling classroom realia, displaying visuals with new vocabulary, creating wall charts with sentence structures, grammatical points, text features, and so on)
- providing word lists and definitions of challenging words prior to introducing new texts and topics (for example, a list of culturally-specific words when reading a novel in English, nominalised verbs used in science such as *filter* → *filtration*, *decant* → *decantation*, *evaporate* → *evaporation*, vocabulary clines, lists of comparative language, examples of connectives, and so on)
- keeping personal dictionaries where EAL/D students can write new words, the context the word appeared in, and its definition in English as well as in their first language.

### **Considerations relating to EAL/D students and the school learning environment**

For some EAL/D students, the school experience will be a new one; others might have had schooling experiences that are markedly different from Australian school contexts. Teachers must make explicit their expectations of classroom behaviours, while simultaneously being sensitive to the experiences of their EAL/D students.

Examples of differences in school behaviours and expectations include:

- Many students will have come from a schooling system where they were required to work individually rather than collaboratively. This means that group work skills need to be outlined explicitly and rewarded positively. Teachers should also be aware that there might be cultural sensitivities when assigning groups. While students will need to overcome these sensitivities in time, they may be deeply ingrained and it can be advantageous to pay attention to these in the first instance. A discreet conversation with the student/s before commencing group work activities will be useful in avoiding

any issues (such as mixing boys and girls, certain ethnic groups, or different mobs). There may also be certain unseen cultural distinctions within students of the same cultural group, meaning that one student has more or less 'power' than another. This can also impact on group work.

- Students may not join the class on the mat with other students simply because it has not been their experience at school to sit on the floor, which may be considered dirty and demeaning. Other students may not join the class because their previous experiences have given them more autonomy regarding the events in which they choose to take part. Teachers should carefully explain the purpose of the activity and its connection to follow-up tasks so that students can see the benefit of joining in.
- It is important to explicitly teach class rules and parameters for engaging in discussions, active listening, and so on as not all cultures interact in the same way, and school experiences vary significantly.
- Speaking in front of groups may be challenging for EAL/D students. They may be more comfortable in one-to-one interactions. Students may be particularly conscious of their accents, and other students may find different accents amusing, thus exacerbating the self-consciousness of the EAL/D students. Teachers should give students a chance to present in smaller groups or take time out to practise their delivery.
- Teachers encourage self-correction in classrooms (for example, self-editing written work, or as a measure of comprehension when conducting Running Records). However, self-correction requires an innate sense of what sounds right in English and what makes sense. EAL/D students do not have this sense of the language and cannot easily self-correct. Teachers must be very explicit with these EAL/D students about their errors in pronunciation, grammar, expression and spelling, and how to correct these errors, so that the students can apply this new knowledge about English in other texts and utterances.
- Some EAL/D students will have alternative perspectives and experiences of historical events, scientific phenomena or mathematics strategies. Teachers can invite their contributions to class discussion, talk to them well before the class and ask for their contribution, thus giving them time to prepare (for example, EAL/D students with advanced mathematics skills or different calculation strategies can be invited to share their solutions and processes with the class, and thereby expand and confirm for all students the existence of multiple approaches and strategies).
- EAL/D students will have varying experiences with information and communication technologies (ICT), from no exposure to technology at all to sophisticated usage. Peer support can be provided for EAL/D students with no exposure to ICT, and EAL/D students experienced in ICT can provide ICT support to others even when their English language skills are still developing.