



Guidance - literacy for older learners

SUPPORTING LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Have you ever had an EAL learner in your class who has limited literacy skills in English? This is something that many class and subject teachers in upper primary and secondary schools have encountered. Teachers often feel they don't have the skills to support these learners.

This guidance is designed to give you an understanding of how EAL learners develop reading skills and to suggest some practical ways you can support them, in any area of the curriculum.

To begin with, it is helpful for you to have an understanding of what is involved in reading. Reading is a complex skill which involves a number of processes interacting. Some of these processes relate to interacting with text, others relate to understanding of language more generally.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE

This document is designed to help you identify practical ways you can help the EAL learners you are working with. It is divided into sections, which relate to the different processes of reading outlined above. In each section, you will find:

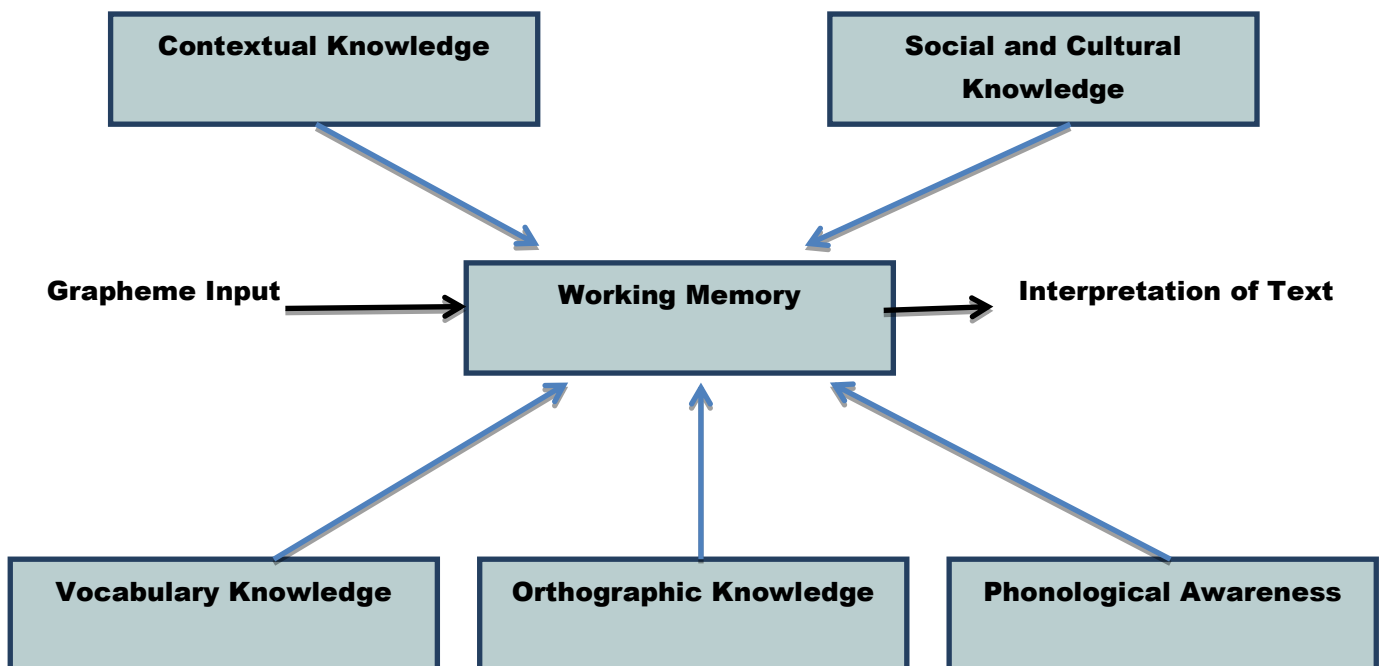
- More detail on the skill/process
- The areas that EAL learners may find difficult
- Some strategies you can use to help develop that skill/process
- Links to further reading or resources

You will find that many of the strategies will also be useful for other learners.

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THE READING PROCESS



*Reading requires the interaction of **both** bottom-up processes **and** top-down processes*

INTERACTIVE PROCESS

This interactive model of reading acknowledges that reading requires the interaction of both bottom-up processes, such as decoding skills (including phonological and orthographic awareness) and top-down processes (knowledge of context and culture) in order for one to be able to read effectively (where 'effectively' can be defined as the ability to derive comprehensible meaning from printed words).

Definitions:

Grapheme input – the written representations of sounds

Contextual knowledge – knowledge of the topic

Social and cultural knowledge – knowledge of the world and culture

Vocabulary knowledge – words and their meanings

Orthographic knowledge – understanding of written conventions eg punctuation, spelling, capitalisation

Phonological knowledge – understanding the sounds of language and speech

Working memory – short term memory concerned with linguistic processing

Interpretation of text – understanding of the text

EAL learners may have difficulties with any or all of these aspects of reading and will need support to develop all of them.



Finding sounds in real life contexts

PHONICS FOR OLDER LEARNERS

Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing of the English language by developing learners' phonemic awareness—the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes - in order to teach the correspondence between these sounds and the spelling patterns (graphemes) that represent them.

Why is it important?

- It gives learners word attack strategies and the skills to break down unfamiliar words.
- It ensures that learners don't have to rely solely on visual memory for reading and spelling

Phonics teaching and the development of phonological awareness will enhance bilingual learners' English reading progress.

EAL learners usually develop the ability to decode very quickly but their comprehension skills often take longer to develop. This means that you need to ensure that EAL learners have the opportunity to develop their language and vocabulary as well as learning phonics.

Challenges for EAL learners

- Learning phonics without an understanding of social language and vocabulary
- Decoding without comprehension
- Learning phonics without a relevant curricular context

Strategies for EAL learners

- Use subject specific and content material to introduce and reinforce letter recognition, beginning, middle and ending sounds, blends, rhyming words, silent letters
- Looking at patterns within key words
- Using individual words to construct sentences and reinforce meaning
- Use real life contexts and vocabulary learners know.

You can see an example of this approach in this resource:

[Early literacy for older EAL learners](#) (available from the EAL Service)

This is an example of a programme which encompassed phonics instruction alongside vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skills.

SELECTING TEXTS

What is it?

Recognition of which texts better support young EAL learners

Why is it important?

You should take care to select appropriate texts and publications as some are more suitable than others for enabling access to the subject matter.

Challenges for EAL learners

- Lack of good visuals to support the text
- Confusing or unclear layout
- Unfamiliar or hard to read fonts
- Cultural suitability
- Too much text
- Unfamiliar vocabulary/subject specific terms

Strategies for EAL learners

You should make sure that EAL learners are exposed to a wide range of texts, including dual language books. EAL learners who are not literate in their mother tongue will benefit from seeing and experiencing different languages in their written form. Other strategies include:

Discussing the text through the visuals

- Explaining cultural specific content
- Pre-reading activities; looking at front and back covers, reading the blurb, directionality, discussing visuals of character and setting, identifying fiction or non-fiction, identifying genre and prediction.
- Teaching subject/story specific vocabulary
- Encouraging highlighting of unfamiliar words
- Using highlighters or colour coding to help the learner identify specific information.
- Providing language rich experiences to widen vocabulary through games, role play and engaging in a variety of activities to 'play with the text'
- Providing copies of graphic novels, abridged versions of prescribed texts and non-fiction books with clear photographs and clear headings which help learners find information.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

Here are some useful links where you can read more or find resources.

You can read more about the role of phonics for EAL learners here:

<http://www.naldic.org.uk/eal-teaching-and-learning/faqs/EAL-synthetic-phonics/>

More about vocabulary

<http://www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Professional%20Development/Documents/NALDIC%2023%20Murphy.pdf>

Activities about genre

<http://www.ereadingworksheets.com/genre/genre-activities/>



VOCABULARY

Words and phrases – being able to hear, read, say and write words, understanding the meaning, knowing related words, knowing the correct word to use in different contexts, understanding the concept

Why is it important?

Native speakers have an estimated vocabulary size of around 60K words when they leave secondary education. EAL learners tend to have a smaller vocabulary in English than native speakers. Vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading comprehension.

Challenges for EAL learners

- Increasing vocabulary size
- Understanding depth of vocabulary
- Knowing idioms and collocations (raining cats and dogs, pay attention)
- Knowing the best word to use in context

Strategies for EAL learners

You should make sure that EAL learners are exposed to a wide range of English words. Don't always simplify things for them and encourage them to find out or work out the meaning of new words for themselves.

- Meaningful exposure - provide meaningful interactions with a wide range of words, not lists to memorise
- Meaningful use - students should think actively about what words mean and how they connect to other words and be encouraged to use them
- Polysemy – direct instruction about different meanings of same word and when they are used
- Structural analysis – recognise elements of words eg prefix, suffix, to help decipher meaning
- Cognate identification – where L1 is from a related language, look out for similarities in words that have come from the same source

AWARENESS OF GENRE

Why is it important?

EAL learners need to develop knowledge of text types or genres

Awareness of genre can help the EAL learner to

- Choose the appropriate genre for purpose
- Understand how texts are organised
- Interpret the text and make them aware that texts which have the same purpose will have similar structures and language features
- Make sense of the text they encounter

Challenges for EAL learners

EAL learners may have limited exposure to different types of texts in English

Strategies for EAL learners

- Exposure to different genres eg making good use of the school library
- Explicit instruction on conventions and style of different genres
- DARTS (directed activities related to texts) activities which ask EAL learners to sort/group information in a text
- Highlight selected sections of text to draw attention to features of information organising and formatting
- Compare authentic examples of genre and discuss common features
- Make sure EAL learners know their way around the textbook
- Visual displays of different genres in your classroom – genre posters, genre specific vocabulary

FINDING INFORMATION

We read to find out specific information from texts. It could be for enjoyment or to study for an exam or to find out information from timetables.

Why is it important?

Helps learners to find a piece of information in a text and allows them to become active learners.

Challenges for EAL learners

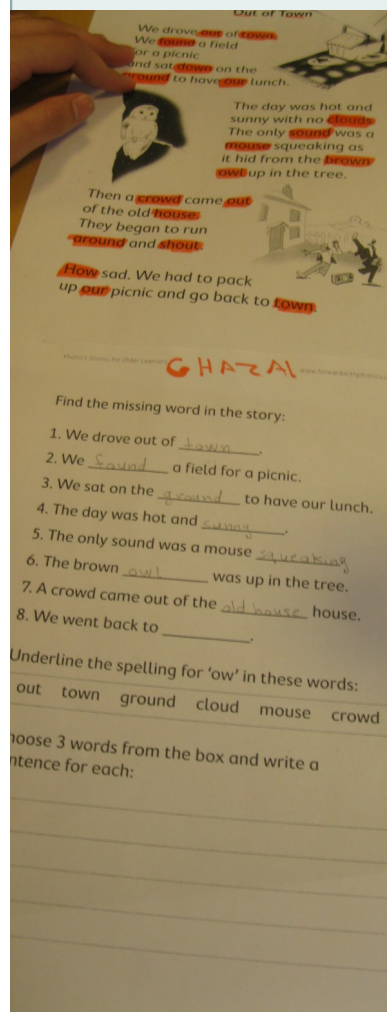
EAL learners may have difficulties with

- picking out specific information
- distinguishing significant information from minor details
- unfamiliar text structures

Strategies for EAL learners

- Skimming and scanning techniques to help learners to find specific information without reading the whole text. For example:
- Read only the subheadings or titles of the paragraphs
- Read the first sentence of each paragraph to find out what it is about

- Look for words in bold letters for important pieces of information
- Look for bullet points that might contain the information you need
- Inferring - Provide tasks to teach learners to “read between the lines”. For example:
 - Look for verbs, adjectives and adverbs
 - Decide how ideas relate to each other
 - Try to imagine what is happening
 - Look for clues get them to be a detective!
- Predict/Preview - to help learners to read for the main ideas. For example looking at the Headlines, headings and subheadings, illustrations and captions can signal important main ideas.
- Use highlighters to mark essential concepts and vocabulary
- Organise information in various types of graphic organisers, flow charts etc.



ANALYSING AND EVALUATING TEXTS

Why is it important?

The ability to evaluate and develop a personal and critical response to text is fundamental to developing an informed and personal response to text

Challenges for EAL learners

- EAL learners are more likely than their peers to lack the background knowledge necessary to respond fully to text
- EAL learners may be challenged by idiomatic language which does not translate literally
- EAL learners may find it difficult to access texts which are not differentiated appropriately

Strategies for EAL learners

- Support access to text using key visuals, pictures, diagrams and

graphic organisers such as Venn diagrams and concept maps.

- Ensure that texts are accessible at the learner's level of English language proficiency
- Explicitly teach comprehension strategies such as reader-generated questions, summarising and monitoring comprehension.
- Ensure that comprehension tasks are scaffolded in the initial stages to encourage independent learning when analysing and evaluating text
- Plan interactive activities around reading and interpreting texts : Sharing ideas, comparing perspectives and coming to agreement or disagreement are all ways that learners can use the language of the text in meaningful ways

EAL SERVICE

The EAL Service provides support for children and young people who are learning English as an Additional Language in Glasgow's educational establishments.

We also support education staff who are working with EAL learners through CPD, professional learning opportunities, provision of resources and more strategic support.

If you would like to find out more or if you think we could support you in your establishment, please contact us - details below.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Understanding a text goes further than a basic understanding of the key concepts within a text or knowing the main ideas. To have a deep understanding of a text, EAL learners need to have actively engaged in higher order and challenging activities such as deducing, predicting, inferring and using information they have gathered to draw conclusions and offer opinions

Why is it important?

Understanding text is the fundamental purpose of reading and allows learners to deepen their knowledge, become informed and develop opinions as critical readers

Challenges for EAL learners

- EAL learners can often struggle to understand a text because they have not been able to take their time and read the text at their own pace.
- Texts can often present challenges to learners if they are not culturally appropriate
- The skill of inferential reading is likely to be more difficult for bilingual learners

Strategies for EAL learners:

- Allow EAL learners enough time to read and think about the text and use the strategies outlined in the above sections
- Ask EAL learners to summarise the text
- Ask for opinions
- Debate an issue
- Restructuring a text into different formats such as Venn diagrams, concept maps
- Engage in role play and drama activities
- Use effective questioning to encourage learners to 'read between the lines' and understand inference

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