

English as an Additional Language (podcast group) - Outline

Introduction

The podcast is a response to a question from a headteacher with several children from Hong Kong who have joined the school. The headteacher feels they are struggling academically but is unsure whether this is because they are not yet proficient in English or because they have additional learning needs, particularly as they can hold conversations in English.

1. Differentiating between learning needs or issues relating to learning English as an additional language (EAL)

EAL categories

According to the 2021 school census, 19% of state school pupils have EAL.

EAL is a relatively broad term which includes learners from a variety of backgrounds:

- Children who were born in another country and moved to the UK,
- Children who have lived in the UK for most of their life but speak other languages at home,
- Children who were born in the UK to parents who speak other languages at home,
- Children from established ethnic communities and
- Refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants.

English language proficiency can be considered as a scale with children moving along the scale as they become more proficient in English:



Differentiating between EAL and learning needs

Demands on an EAL learners:

- Adapting to a new culture, e.g. foods, housing.
- Accessing curriculum in academic English.

Adapting to these challenges depends on (Rosamond et al.):

- English language proficiency
- Access to the curriculum

- Supportive learning environment
- Additional learning needs

Stages and development of EAL

- A “silent period” (Clarke, 1992)
- Basic interpersonal communications skills (BICS), everyday conversational skills, e.g. communicating with friends or peers, for example on the playground - takes around two years to fully develop.
- Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008), more complex – takes around 5-7 years to develop.
- Multilingual learners may face academic difficulties in KS2, but by KS4 they often achieve on par with their monolingual peers (Filippi et al., 2024).

Assessing EAL

‘Top tips for assessing EAL pupils’ (The Bell Foundation)

1. Adopt and embed into practice an EAL assessment framework
2. Carry out assessments in an environment that is familiar to the EAL learner
3. Consider different contexts when assessing what a learner can/cannot do in English
4. Avoid using formal standardised tests.

2. Resources and approaches relevant to working with pupils with EAL that are applicable both for use by staff in schools and by Eps

Supporting early stages – emphasis on talk and discussion

Supporting academic English – e.g. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Framework (SIOP; Short and Echevarria, 1999).

Evidence based interventions

- Systematic reviews from Murphy and Unthiah (2015) and Oxley and de Cat (2021) found the most effective approaches were those that offered specific targeted support on vocabulary. Other approaches in the studies they looked at focused on reading comprehension, shared reading, technology software and teacher CPD. Caution about generalising findings.
- Using Makaton to support the development of children’s understanding and their ability to express themselves through speech (The Makaton Charity, 2023; Mistry & Barnes, 2013)

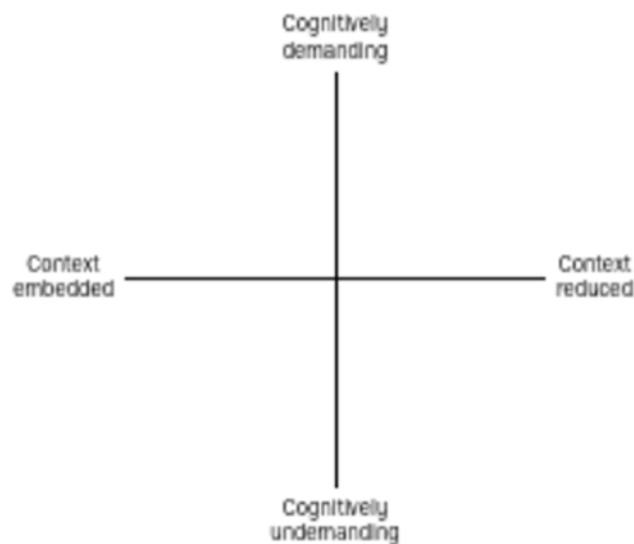
Support strategies from The Bell Foundation

Five key principles:

1. Multilingualism as an asset
2. high expectations with appropriate support
3. an integrated focus on language and content
4. Effective and holistic assessment
5. Social inclusion

Contextualising Language

The Cummins quadrant for supporting children with EAL



Cummins' (1984) two-dimensional model of language proficiency as cited in Dunsmuir, Frederickson & Cline, 2024

Supporting social inclusion

- Children need to feel safe and secure
- Children need a sense of belonging
- Make sure everyone knows how to pronounce the child's name
- Incorporate the learner's home language in greetings and classroom routines
- Support social connectedness through peer mentors or buddies
- Ensure clear communication with home
- Understand cultural differences